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Save the union

Everywhere you look, ILWU members are fighting to keep what theirs.

The Longshore Division's doing it in contract talks. The PMA wants to take back benefits, take away work and shred the arbitration system that has served so well to keep the waterfront moving. We've seen the same arrogance from employers all over the country, across the world, in this age of global greed. The ILWU has stood with union brothers and sisters all over. Now they're standing with the ILWU, as the Solidarity Day rallies featured on page three show. Elsewhere members face equally tough fights. Some are local, some global. Some are won, some just begun.

Gutty action by a group new to the ILWU, backed by solidarity from the LA/Long Beach longshore locals, stopped China Shipping as it was snatching out of town. An Easter weekend ULP strike by Local 6800, described on page nine, ended with a contract for 30 new office clericals. The company had to ship its furniture back from Houston and pay a healthy signing bonus. The local organized three other jobs in the specialty and this spring we can expect to see a total of 99 jobs and giving 99 people the peace of mind that comes with security and good wages.

Without a port, there's no jurisdiction. Members of longshore Local 18, warehouse Local 17, maritime Local 34 and warehouse bosses Local 91 are rolling up their sleeves to save the Port of Sacramento. The story on page five explains. A West Sacramento neighborhood group called QUAD put an initiative on the November ballot that would re-draw the city's zoning map—and foreclose the Port's future in the process.

The measure bans new industrial development in much of the city, including land owned by the Port. But the Port needs to bring in new revenues, generating more taxes to offset declines in its traditional commodities. Even the impartial analysis done for the City Council concluded, "Overall, the effect of the Initiative would be to damage, if not completely undermine, the Port's ability to carry out its mission of adding additional maritime commerce in the Sacramento region."

Previous encounters with QUAD have exposed them as an anti-worker lot with a fondness for bending the truth. Their plan would kill good family-wage union jobs—including nearly 300 belonging to ILWU members—and bring in low-wage, mostly non-union service jobs instead. They don't seem to give a flying flip. But they're slick talkers and they've put a lot of misinformation on the air already. The Sacramento merchants will have to do a lot of walking and a lot of talking to save this piece of ILWU ground.

The glass half-full side of things, it's crunch time for Fast Track, as you will see in the Washington Report on page 4. This plan page Couze and basically gives the President license to sign any jobs-rights-and-earth-destroying deal he likes. It has to come up for one more vote in the House and the Senate Representatives before it passes. You know what to do.

Marcy Rein
Organizing Dept. Communication Specialist

Brothers and Sisters, it's good to see you all turn out here. Today is an historic day. In ports across the country longshore workers and Teamsters are standing together to demand justice on the waterfront, to demand that the shipping and stevedoring companies negotiate a fair contract with the ILWU that guarantees our health care benefits and our pensions, and to demand that they recognize the efforts of port truckers to unite with the Teamsters. Here in Oakland we also stand with the SEIU Local 790 port workers whose contract also expires Monday and who are also facing cutbacks and outsourcing. And we have with us today representatives from workers unions around the world, pledging their support for our struggles. This is a great show of worker solidarity.

It is the kind of solidarity we need all the time, but even more when we face difficult contract negotiations. Because we know what they have in mind for us. We've seen it before, at other times and in other places.

First they try to separate the community from the unions, planting stories in the media that say the unions have special interests, interests separate and different from the community. Then they start to outsource our jobs to weaken our position. And then they try to pick us off one at a time. But it's not going to work this time. This time the community is not going to fall for the bosses' propaganda. And this time the unions are going to stick together.

But this time there's a new twist. Ever since Sept. 11 the government and employers have been using the excuse of national security to attack workers and unions. When we exercise our rights to collectively bargain new contracts with better wages and conditions, when we enforce those rights the only way we can is by collectively withdrawing our labor in a strike, they claim we are unpatriotic. But these are our legal rights. There is nothing unpatriotic about American workers insisting on their rights under American law.

Because one of the effects of the Sept. 11 attacks was a weakened economy, the government and employers say that when the economy is disrupted by a labor dispute, by workers demanding our rights, they say we are aiding the terrorists. But the real measure of a prosperous economy is whether the workers have a good standard of living, whether we have healthcare, whether we live in communities with clean air, good schools and good housing. We are not terrorists and we are not aiding terrorism when we demand a share of the wealth we produce everyday on the job.

Waterfront workers are facing these terrorism accusations not just as we negotiate our contracts. There is legislation in Congress right now—the Maritime and Port Security Act—that treats every worker like a terrorist suspect. Everyone will have to pass an FBI criminal background check to be able to keep their jobs. Many of the crimes listed in the legislation that could cause workers to lose their jobs have nothing to do with terrorism. And there is no reason to believe any port worker would blow up their job and their community. But the government and the ILWU employers, who are mostly foreign shipping and stevedoring companies, are trying to say that American work ers, the same workers who produced the economic boom of the 1990s and keep international trade moving, should now be viewed as the enemy.

At the same time these foreign companies are fighting any legal requirements to examine the real security risk to our ports, the thousands of containers that arrive everyday from overseas. The employers don't want to take the time to check those containers to see if they carry terrorists or terrorist weapons because the delays would cost them money.

There is no clearer example of what this national security game is really all about—destroy American unions so that big business can make more profits.

We are here together today to say we won't stand for that. We demand real national security. The security of our jobs and livelihood, the security of healthcare for everyone, the security of our communities and environment. And together we will settle for nothing less. An injury to one is an injury to all.

ILWU Titled Officers

JAMES SPINOSA
President

BOB McELLRATH
WESLEY FURTADO
Vice President
Vice President

JOE IBARRA
Secretary-Treasurer

Published monthly except for a combined July/August issue, for $5.00, $10 non-members, by the ILWU, 7018 First St., San Francisco, CA 94122. The Dispatcher welcomes letters, photos and other submissions to the above address © ILWU, 2002.

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Solidarity Day rallies unite labor

By Steve Stallone

With negotiations in the its longshore contract bogged down over issues of maintaining health benefits, increasing pensions and making sure new technology is not used to outsource jobs, the ILWU and its many allies joined in a day of action to show their support for the local, national and international labor movement and in its communities.

Besides support for the ILWU contract negotiations, the rallies also were meant to show solidarity for the Teamsters' drive to organize the port workers, and, in Oakland, for the SEIU port workers contract talks with the Port of Oakland where they face issues of cutbacks and outsourcing of their jobs.

Since the Coast officers and the Negotiating Committee were in San Francisco for the contract talks, much of the focus was on the rally in Oakland. Some 1,000 members of the ILWU, the Teamsters, the SEIU Local 790 port workers, other unionists and community people—many wearing the blue bilingual t-shirt saying “Unity on the Waterfront/Unidad en los Puertos” and bearing the logos of the ILWU, the Teamsters and the ILA—gathered at the Port of Oakland’s Port View Park under sunny skies to cheer speakers, express their solidarity and show down on barbeque supplied by longshore Local 10.

Teamsters General President James Hoffa took a break from his negotiations around the UPS contract in Detroit to join ILWU International President Jim Spinosa on the event’s stage. Earlier that morning Hoffa had sat in on ILWU talks with his employer group the Pacific Maritime Association. Hoffa told the crowd he had a few choice words for the employers.

“I walked into the negotiating room today and told the PMA that the ILWU does not stand alone,” he said. “The 1.4-million-member Teamsters union is with them. If you lock out the ILWU; you lock out the Teamsters.”

Spinosa also addressed the assembly, pointing out the historic nature of the solidarity symbolized in the day’s gathering and countering the notion that workers in action threaten national security.

“When we exercise our rights to collectively bargain for new contracts with better wages and conditions, when we enforce those rights the only way we can do this is by collectively withdrawing our labor in a strike, they claim we are unpatriotic.”

But these are our legal rights. There is nothing unpatriotic about American workers insisting on their rights under American law. (For the full text of Spinosa’s speech see page 2.)

International Longshoremen’s Association Local 1422 President Ken Riley flew in from Charleston, South Carolina to join in the solidarity meeting. Thanking the ILWU for its generous support helping win the freedom of the Charleston Five recently, he came to return the favor. “We are standing ready. We are on high alert. If they take on the ILWU, they will take on the ILA on the East Coast.”

Kees Marges, secretary of the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) Dockers Section and Julian Garcia, general coordinator of the International Dockworkers Federation (ITF) Dockers Section and Council (IDC), both pledged their members would do whatever is needed to assure victory for the ILWU in the contract talks.

Art Pulaski, Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the California Labor Federation AFL-CIO, declared the entire state’s labor movement backed the ILWU in its contract struggle.

Gunner Lundberg, President of the Sailors Union of the Pacific, also promised his union’s support.

California Lt. Governor Cruz Bustamante came to the rally to express his support for the ILWU and other unions. State Senator Richard Alarcon, chair of the Senate’s Labor Federation, sent a special message of solidarity after having to cancel his appearance at the last minute due to an emergency state budget meeting.

The next day national politicians also lined up with the ILWU Senator Edward Kennedy and all seven of the Democratic Senators from the ILWU states of California, Oregon, Washington and Hawaii sent a letter to President Bush telling him they believe his administration should stay out of the contract talks.

“We urge you not to intervene in this ongoing labor negotiation. We believe that any such intervention would be harmful to the swift resolution of this negotiation,” the Senators’ letter read.

Another group of 45 Democratic Congressional representatives, led by California’s George Miller, sent a letter June 28 to both PMA CEO Joseph Miniace and ILWU International President James Spinosa urging them to bargain in good faith “without using bargaining strategies that may take advantage of current national security concerns or that rely on hoped-for government intervention.”

The letter goes on to say “We are disturbed by reports that the PMA...is manufacturing a ‘labor crisis’ and undermining prospects for a contract settlement. This apparently is being done to secure the U.S. government intervention to, in turn, leverage economic gains the PMA may not be able to achieve in contract negotiations with the ILWU.”

ILWU longshore locals in Southern California organized a similar rally of nearly 4,000 people at the Local 15 dispatch hall in Wilmington. In Seattle 1,000 workers and supporters, joined by a contingent of Canadian ILWU longshore workers, rallied at the Pier 25 gate. In Tacoma some 750 people turned at an unused port satellite yard for a Solidarity Day rally. In Portland 300 members and supporters rallied at the Local 8 hall and were joined by Teamsters and other local unionists.
The House of Representatives passed the “Maritime Transportation Anti-Terrorism Act of 2002,” legislation June 4 that does include criminal background checks on longshore workers. The Senate passed its version last December. Now the House and Senate must appoint delegates to work out differences between the bills.

The House bill establishes a transportation security card system for individuals who have unescorted access to marine facilities. The Department of Transportation envisions four levels of security, from unescorted access to the port to Areas A-1 or A-2, which are subject to higher scrutiny. Security committees. The House bill would require FBI criminal background checks and credentialed of our workers is unnecessary, and other factors that may show the individual does not pose a terrorism risk.

The Senate bill would introduce a chip that requires no card to enter the port. The bill provides that any individual may be denied a card if the Secretary of Transportation determines he or he poses a terrorism risk. Individuals could be denied cards if they are found to be terroristic or have criminal records.

The legislation doesn’t include a list of what constitutes a terrorism risk. Individuals will have to be evaluated through regulation. Each Secretary could decide, but the bill said the bill had in mind such crimes as treason, sedition, espionage and smuggling.

The Secretary of Transportation would establish an appeal process for those denied cards. The Transportation Department must determine the applicant’s eligibility for a security card. The determination must be made in a timely manner and in accordance with any applicable law.

The House bill would require FBI criminal background checks on those working in the port’s secure areas. This term “secure area” is yet to be defined. The House bill gives the Transportation Department the authority to define secure areas as they see fit. The good news is that the Bush administration has not granted the President broad powers to submit trade agreements to Congress for consideration. It is not known whether the Department of Transportation will make the necessary regulations.

The Senate approved an Amendment that would require criminal background checks and Federal Bureau of Investigation checks on longshore workers. The Senate bill requires workers to submit to background checks and fingerprints. This would be a step forward in ensuring the safety of the American people. The Senate bill requires workers to submit to background checks and fingerprints. This would be a step forward in ensuring the safety of the American people.

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Ballot battle may seal fate of Sacramento Port
By Marcy Rein

Anticipating an overflow crowd, the West Sacramento City Council moved its April 3 meeting to the gym at Our Lady of Grace School. A sea of people kept piling in by 8:30 p.m., the time set for the meeting's hot item, they filled every seat and lined the walls.

Jeans and union jackets dominated one side of the gym, suits and office attire the other. The suits belonged to members of West Sacramento Quality Urbanization and Development (QUAD), a group composed mostly of property-owners from the newly minted subdivision, the Southport.

They all came to talk about land use at the Port of Sacramento.

QUAD brought out tearful mothers warning about toxics, and accused union members of intimidation and thuggery. "The Port unleashed the construction unions on our city," QUAD Vice President Bob Martin said. "We lost our livelihoods for my union's good." The Port is my livelihood, "I'm offended," ILWU longshore Local 17 veteran Derek Gordon said. "We should let out-town construction unions and the Port run this city."

Union members rebuffed the insults. "I'm offended," ILWU longshore Local 18 member Derek Peterson said. "I am not a thug. I am offended seeing the lawyer go to the bathroom with a bodyguard. I take this personally. The Port is my livelihood," he said.

The big red digital clock would mark eight hours before the meeting let out now it seemed that long clash was just an early skirmish in the battle for the future of this blue-collar city on the Sacramento River—and for the life of the port that provides jobs for a few hundred ILWU members and feeds the region's economy.

PORT REVIVAL?

The Port of Sacramento has seen a marked upturn in cargo business for most of the past 10 years. Because it relies on shipments of rice, wood chips and other bulk commodities, it suffers the whims of international markets. The ups and downs directly affect union members of ILWU Local 18, warehouse Local 17, clerks Local 54 and warehouse Local 91. Almost two years ago, these locals decided they needed to make some sound economic moves to ensure the Port's future, and their own.

They formed the Port Advisory Alliance (QUAD), the West Sacramento Building and Construction Trades Local 165, Engineers and Scientists of California Local 20 and Masters Mates and Pilots—and began collecting signatures to form the “Southport Initiative,” to protect the Port in the future.

In late 1993, leader McGowan, who is president of the ILWU in West Sacramento and former City Council member, said. "They've cited the Port in the initiative to include "all that area owned and operated by the Port of Sacramento wherever located in the City of West Sacramento."

"Some 270 ILWU members do longshore work at the Port, or warehouse work for companies that ship through the Port. An economic impact study of the Port done by Martin, O'Connell Associates showed how the effects of economic activity at the Port ripple through the region. More than 550 people worked for the Port or for companies that used the Port when the study was done in 1993. Another 500-plus people had jobs providing goods and services for the individuals who spent $10 million to $12 million earned at the port generated another $1.05 in the local economy which was then "multiplier" effect.

Those earnings would take a hit if service jobs replaced Port jobs. "High-paying union jobs would be lost and replaced by low-wage non-union serv- ice jobs," Local 17 Business Agent Everett Burdan said. "The proposals won't admit it, but they would destroy our ability to make a decent living and buy homes here. We'd be reduced to serving them in their fancy restaurants and shops. This is the height of arrogance."

The Port of Oakland offers a case in point. It runs Oakland Airport as well as the fourth-largest container terminal in the nation and a waterfront real estate development at Jack London Square. Wages for mar- shaling jobs in Port terminals averaged $25 per hour in 1999, according to a study by the Center for Labor Research and Education at U.C. Berkeley. Workers in Jack London Square's hotels, restaurants and shops averaged just under $11 an hour.

Planners look at wages because the dollars people make, the more they put back into the economy, according to West Sacramento Redevelopment Director Val Toppenberg. They also consider the revenue generated by various land uses.

Residential development often consumes more revenue than it contributes in sky-high cases, because it uses more services such as police, fire and recreation. "We're blessed with a decent property tax base so our hous- ing does pay for itself now," Toppenberg said. "Warehouses and offices create more upside than residential," he said.

The city has been trying to attract more shopping and other com- mercial enterprises, but it's been slow to attract ailing Port enterprises. QUAD wants everything, but the initiative's passage won't change regional economic trends.

"Development in the Sacramento area is going east and north out 1-50," continued on page 11.
PRO SAYS, "GO AWAY."  
WE SAY, "NO WAY."  
ILWU warehouse Local 6 members shut down Professional Messenger's San Francisco board for three hours May 24. The bike messengers and drivers struck on the busy morning before the Memorial Day weekend to protest Professional's unfair labor practices. The union filed charges with the NLRB the day before over the company's failure to bargain in good faith and its active encouragement of a petition to decertify the union.

"We're wondering, when are they going to start negotiating," said bargaining team member Anthony Koutos. The company proposed a two-tier wage scale, with pay cuts for new hires and no raises over the life of the three-year agreement for current employees. It sought takebacks in health care, mandatory drug testing, and mileage reimbursements below the legal minimum.

"We're not saying we can't pay you more, we're saying we can find people who will work for less," said employer negotiator Ron Hulteng of the infamous union-busting firm Litter Mendelsen.

Members reported being asked to sign a decertification form and many of the workers admitted they felt threat­ened but they didn't feel they had a choice.
Workers on strike.

The lumber came from British Columbia. The small-diameter logs were loaded on log trucks and carried to a mill in Toledo, Ore. where they became two-by-fours and wood chips. In the past Newport was a major log shipping port. In the future, log barges may begin arrive every 90 days or so.

—A.C.A. More

ITF General Secretary David Cockroft (third from left) and IFT Latin America Regional Secretary Antonio Fritz (left) and IFT President Jim Spinosa (second from left) and International Vice President Bob McNulty (right) held a longshoremen bargaining session at the PMA’s offices in San Francisco to express their organization’s support for the ILWU.

INTERNATIONAL MARITIME UNIONS SUPPORT ILWU

As the ILWU Longshore Division faces the toughest bargaining in several decades, maritime and other unions from around the world and their international federations have pledged their support in case the current standoff becomes a showdown. The following organizations have sent solidarity messages to the ILWU in the last couple of months.

All Japan Seamen’s Union; All Japan Dockworkers’ Union; National Council of Dockworker’s Unions of Japan; Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers; ILWU Canada, Maritime Union of Australia and the MUA Southern Queensland Branch; Marine Engineers Beneficial Assn.; International Transport Workers’ Federation; IFT-Americas Region, representing transport workers in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Venezuela, Paraguay and Peru; IFT Fair Practices Committee, representing seafarers and dockers worldwide; Federazione Italiana Lavoratori Transporti—CGIL; Swedish Dockworkers’ Union; The Liverpool Dockers; South African Municipal Workers’ Union; Masters, Mates and Pilots; The Inland Boatmen’s Union; Canadian Autoworkers Union, Local 199; Ken Riley and the officers and members of ILA Local 1422.
Blood on the bananas

by David Bacon

Hardly any of the 300,000 banana workers in Ecuador are better off than the 25,000 banana workers in Latin America, have a union. That made it the most remarkable when last April 1,400 of them stopped work in an effort to win recognition for their nascent organization on seven plantations. The stakes were high. They asked for what was already, in many cases, legally required from them by the law: a decent wage, health benefits, a day off every week. They were fired almost immediately. Other workers on temporary contract were told that there was no more work for them.

Four days after the attack, Ecuador's Labor Minister, Martin Insauro, admitted he was unable to guarantee workers rights or safety. He told U.S. representative Peter Harding that "you need to talk to Alvaro Noboa because no one on the ground here is empowered to make a decision."

The Noboa name holds the power in Ecuador. Alvaro Noboa is the richest man in Ecuador and a leading candidate for President in elections that will replace the current president, Gustavo Noboa (not a direct relation.) Noboa owns eight banana companies in the country, and they are the only ones in which workers can organize. He has contracts with three separate companies to operate them, which then employ the workers. He effectively controls the economic situation governing wages and conditions. He has agreed to allow NGOs to work with him directly, the unions have to bargain with the unions of the companies. The effect is to reduce the improvements workers demanded much less at night and negotiate with a company in which they have no rights. They were fired, the workers again walked out the next day.

Nine days later, in the evening of May 22, the police appeared on the Noboa plantation of Hacienda Jassil and fired into the crowd, killing five. They were forced to squat with their heads down and their hands behind their backs. They were beaten and insulted and, when the police left, they were still alive. Many workers were killed and dumped in the banana plantations virtually no one is. They wanted higher wages—not surprising in a country where banana plantation wage is less than the legal minimum. Most important, they wanted legal recognition for their union and the right to bargain. Agreements that are right is guaranteed by Ecuadorian law—on paper.

In the case of the country's legal sys-
tem requires government registry of labor unions. Workers who returned to their jobs and flew a red flag for official recognition. Company representatives would demand no union wage, no lower than the minimum, which is legal labor supplies the fruit itself. The Noboa name holds the power in Ecuador. Alvaro Noboa is the richest man in Ecuador and a leading candidate for President in elections that will replace the current president, Gustavo Noboa (not a direct relation.) Noboa owns eight banana companies in the country, and they are the only ones in which workers can organize. He has contracts with three separate companies to operate them, which then employ the workers. He effectively controls the economic situation governing wages and conditions. He has agreed to allow NGOs to work with him directly, the unions have to bargain with the unions of the companies. The effect is to reduce the improvements workers demanded much less at night and negotiate with a company in which they have no rights. They were fired, the workers again walked out the next day.

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tem requires government registry of labor unions. Workers who returned to their jobs and filed a petition for official recognition. Company representatives would demand no union wage, no lower than the minimum, which is legal labor supplies the fruit itself.
Local 63 OCU saves jobs

The rumors flying around the offices of China Shipping last winter made the entire waterfront feel like a cash register with a red tab. Rumors already had moved its documentation department from Long Beach to Houston. Then management closed the whole office, said the new order, and offered relocation packages. The workers refused the offer, but rumors persisted. At that point the workers turned anxiety to action. They called ILWU Local 630CU (Office Clerical Unit) and began to organize.

Workers at Inchcape Shipping Services took the same road, then those at COSCO in Los Angeles Long Beach, who brought along their brothers and sisters at SSI, a people signed cards readily. On Feb. 1, they filed their petition for an NLRB-supervised election. The then all hell broke loose, DeGaetano said. Management held meetings and showed tacky anti-union videos. They threatened workers with losing their job if they were caught the next day. They had a flim-flam pretext the day after they wore an ILWU shirt to work. They began saying that there was a small Mexican restaurant with tinted windows one day in January. "I was nervous," one worker said.

Reassured by that meeting, Ammons and DeGaetano started talking to their 28 co-workers. "They were already stressed by the rumor, said Yogie Weinmann. She and a co-worker drove down to a meeting at the office called us," they urged Boyd and Schwab to open the books, and union negotiators realized this would not be a typical contract.

"We were thinking outside the box in these talks, trying to be creative," Zwolak said. The deal they inked June 27 made marked improvements in pay and benefits, and spoke directly to the peculiarities of their jobs.

The two-person board helped equalize pay. Some people at the high- er end saw their pay go up a few per cent, but they saw much more, including one worker whose wages nearly doubled. The company assumed the whole health insurance premium for workers and their families.

The contract also sets a minimum of four hours' pay for any call-out after hours. "If you have to get out of bed and go board a ship at 2 a.m., you'll get at least four hours for that," Zwolak said. Before, the board- ing agents would only get paid for time spent on board and transit time, with no consideration for the stipend caused by such calls.

"We hope our contract will open doors, because we're first-half waiting agency to go under collective bargaining," Zwolak said.

Contact your organizer
Northern California Organizers
Jerry Martin 415-775-0533
Agustín Ramírez 415-775-0533
Southern California Organizers
Rodolfo Gutierrez 310-835-2770
Columbia River Organizer
Michael Cannarella 503-223-8657
Puget Sound Organizer
Paul Bigman 206-448-1870

The Dispatcher 9

Local 63 OCU's Easter weekend ULP strike idled this China Shipping vessel. Shop steward John Smith shows the container business, the arbitrator ruled the picket bond fide. The ship sat.

"This was ILWU stockbook," Schwab said. "It was perfectly legal, but we get certified and can hook ourselves to the vessel, that gives us big stick."

The company had agreed to begin bargaining April 10. "We told them we'd be there on the line and they needed a signed contract or the bottom of the ship rusted out and fell to the bottom of the harbor," Fageaux said.

Management flew out honchos from the Coast Coast Negociating stretched into Saturday night as about 20 China Shipping workers had huddled together and chanted and sung and snatched cat- naps in DeGaetano's truck. Longshore workers handling ships made sure they were taken care of, Smith said.

"They kept bringing out pots of coffee. They ordered Mexican food on their breaks and called us, Hey, come get some. People would go by and yell, Keep it up, be strong." Working Easter Sunday, Fageaux and Schwab came out to check the basics of the agreement, then announced the deal was done. "We've had a nervous few days, laughing and crying and hugging," Smith said. "You'd have sworn we just won an Oscar." The agreement gave all the work- ers a $15,000 signing bonus. All the people who'd been fired got their jobs back. The temps even got a week off with pay while they were for their desks and computers to be shipped back from Houston. And the company agreed not to move more than 10 miles away for the duration of the two-year contract.

Without their quick action, the workers would've lost big. "The company representative actually admit- ted to John and Steve they had planned to let us up on April 10. They planned to get a 'no vote', then give us our walking papers," DeGaetanos said.

Few weeks after the China Shipping drive started, workers at COSCO in Los Angeles heard their company had purchased a building in Long Beach. They were already stressed by understaffing and over-supervision, unpaid overtime and stagnant wages, said Yogie Weinmann. She and a co- worker, also meeting with the OCU hall in Long Beach with China Shipping and Ingcapers.

"You walked into the meeting and just felt everybody working as a team," she said. "You sensed one goal between 30 individuals: Save our jobs."

Six days later COSCO workers filed for an NLRB election covering the 33 people in the Los Angeles office and 9 in Long Beach. The company shelled out $5,000 for a cons- ultant to run an anti-union rap in large groups, small groups and one-on-one. Weinmann said. They spread rumors and tried to sow divisions. In response the pro-union workers held weekly lunch meetings to check in and support each other, and reached out to other OCU members.

Vessel-sharing agreements brought them in touch with members from COSCO in Los Angeles, Germany, and Evergreen. "If it weren't for all the brothers and sisters from Local 63 who supported us, we'd probably be in Phoenix," Weinmann said.

With 30 people voting May 2, the ILWU won 18-12. The contract ratified June 1 more than doubled many work- ers' wages, bringing them to the OCU standard $31 per hour. It obliged the company to stay in the area for two years—and it brought 14 more people under the ILWU umbrella.

COSCO handles its documenta- tion through a company that is a subsidi- ary, Support Services International (SSI). The day after the COSCO vote, SSI workers learned their office would close July 2. SSI management made sure everyone at the office was already trying offered a wage increase and promising not to move, Maria Boyd said. "They were just trying to give us this so we wouldn't go with the union," she said. "Then after we got notice some of the girls in the LA office called us." They urged Boyd and her co-workers to go meet with Local 630CU.

Fageaux and Schwab suggested that if a majority of SSI workers signed cards, they could be covered under the COSCO contract then be negotiated. The COSCO workers went for it.

They were willing to hold up negotiations, give up a little money," Boyd said. "I thought, We cannot win. If someone's willing to help us, we have to try."

Twelve of her 14 co-workers signed cards. The plan worked. "Sometimes I pinch myself. Is this real?" Boyd said. "We not only kept our jobs, but we're making more. It's really a miracle."

For now, China Shipping, COSCO and SSI have agreed to stay in the LA-Long Beach Harbor area for the life of the new contracts. "The hard part is just getting that initial con- tract," Fageaux said. "We feel very confident that these people will remain under contract with us for years to come. Just like all the other companies we organized years ago.

Thinking they'd done a good job, the boarding agents at Inchcape Shipping Services felt a similar pinch of worry. The company downsized from 200 people to 13 in December 2001, selling its liner division to only keep eight agents and five office workers.

Boarding agents organize for neces- sary services, from pilots, tags and linguem to medical help, and work with the plethora of agencies from U.S. Customs and the Immigration and Naturalization Service to the Department of Agriculture. Many shipping lines employ their own agents. Others hire from firms like Incline.

"It's known in the harbor that agents and surveyors are among the hardest bargaining and litigious people we've dealt with," Incline agent Robert Zwolak said. "You're up when the ship gets in, up when the ship sails, on call every three days. Pay ranges from $71 per hour for a starting agent to $21- $23 for a senior agent.

A union drive two years ago flopped, but now the remaining workers are trying to do it all over again. Zwolak filed Feb. 1 for an NLRB elec- tion. The company mounted a home- grown campaign that included a lot of free- out benefit of consultants. "Some of the information was irrelevant, all was specious," Zwolak said. "We took it with a grain of salt."

After the 9-4 vote for the union March 20, the two sides spoke directly to stark, business-like negotiations. The company sent Zwolak and his agent to open the books, and union negota- tors realized this would not be a typi- cal CTE contract.

"We were thinking outside the box in these talks, trying to be cre- ative," Zwolak said. The deal they inked June 27 made marked improvements in pay and benefits, and spoke directly to the peculiarities of their jobs.

The two-person board helped equalize pay. Some people at the high- er end saw their pay go up a few per cent, but they saw much more, including one worker whose wages nearly doubled. The company assumed the whole health insurance premium for workers and their families.

The contract also sets a minimum of four hours' pay for any call-out after hours. "If you have to get out of bed and go board a ship at 2 a.m., you'll get at least four hours for that," Zwolak said. Before, the board- ing agents would only get paid for time spent on board and transit time, with no consideration for the stipend caused by such calls.

"We hope our contract will open doors, because we're first-half waiting agency to go under collective bargaining," Zwolak said.

Contact your organizer
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Agustín Ramírez 415-775-0533
Southern California Organizers
Rodolfo Gutierrez 310-835-2770
Columbia River Organizer
Michael Cannarella 503-223-8657
Puget Sound Organizer
Paul Bigman 206-448-1870
Corporate corruption, worker death


Reviewed by Michael G. Matzka

An undocumented Mexican worker who built a rickety scaffold that collapsed, killing him, comes in search of a job, not a home. Jimmy Breslin's vivid story of a girlfriend, Silvia, who learns from her brick-making job about the isolation and danger of life in the desert, and exposes favoritism in city hall, but reporters did not deem the fallen worker worthy of copy. Not even for a lifetime of writing and professional contributions to his field of Asian Pacific-American History. Both Karl and Elaine were in the grape fields, the outlawing of the back breaking short-handle hoe in the 1960s, and won greater Mexican American political representation. Breslin's story is the reality—a worker worthy of copy.

UCLA prof wins Yawada Award

Yuki Ichikawa, left, the Director of the Dept. of Asian American Studies at UCLA, received the 2002 Elaines and Karl Yawada Memorial Award from Don Watson, a retired member of marine clerks Local 34 and chair of the Yawada Committee. Ichikawa received the award at the South West Labor Studies Association's Conference held at California State University at Los Angeles May 10 for her life to writing and teaching about and promoting Asian Pacific studies.

Born in 1936 in San Francisco, Ichikawa has dedicated her life to writing and teaching about and promoting Asian American history. In 1989 he published his groundbreaking book "The Issei: the World of the First Generation Immigrants, 1868-1924." A year later he published "Views from Within: The Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study," a book about the forced relocation by the U.S. government of Japanese people during WWII. He has also written or edited numerous articles in his field, and is considered one of the foremost authorities on Japanese American history.

The award was originally established to honor the life of Elaine Black Yawada, former president of ILWU Auxiliary 16, who died in 1988 and who is widely recorded in her biography "The Red Angel" by author Vivian Ranieri. The award honors the Yawadas' work in the fields of labor, civil liberties, women's rights, peace and interracial understanding.

When Karl, a former member of ILWU Local 10, died in 1999, the committee added his name to the award in honor of his work in the field of Japanese American Evacuation and Resettlement Study, a book about the forced relocation by the U.S. government of Japanese people during WWII. He has also written or edited numerous articles in his field, and is considered one of the foremost authorities on Japanese American history.

Ichikawa is the author of "Up to One Dollar Fifty Cents ($1.50) of each March and July's per capita payment to the International Executive Board. In recognition of Chavez's outstanding contribution to our country, he was posthumously awarded the nation's highest civilian honor, the Presidential Medal of Freedom, by President Bill Clinton in 1994. He was also inducted into the Labor Hall of Fame on January 1999.

Many states have now established holidays on Cesar E. Chavez's birthday, including California, which established the first official paid state holiday of Cesar E. Chavez's birthday in 1992. The Labor Hall of Fame, a non-profit organization established to honor the Yawadas' work in the fields of labor, civil liberties, women's rights, peace and interracial understanding, will be a deserving tribute to the life of this outstanding Mexican American labor leader, and would also recognize the tremendous contribution to our country of Latinos and the labor movement.

Chavez's story is the reality—a worker worthy of copy.
Fatigue factor ignored again
Towboat captain blamed for maritime disaster

by Tom Price

The towboat Robert Y. Love slammed its two barges into the Interstate 40 bridge near Webbers Falls, Oklahoma.

"There was apparently no level tow in the pilot house, and there is no requirement for one," said Capt. Richard Block of the Gulf Coastal Basin Association, which advocates for "level" mariners in the towing and offshore oil industry and reviewed hundreds of accidents involving crew fatigue. "This could have been avoided if the captain had taken the watch in the pilot house by himself."

The boat was on a two-watch system, six hours on, six off, without more than six hours sleep for anyone on board, while a Coast Guard study points out the need for seven to eight hours of uninterrupted sleep per day.

"They blame the captain, but what they don't tell you is if the captain doesn't do what he's told he won't be working there," said the IBU Regional Director of the S.F. Region Marina V. Secchitano. "The mariners say they've been on the river for too many hours, that they can't function or drive the boat, and people have to go back to the three watch system. You mean you're on watch for four hours, off watch eight hours, on watch four hours on, off watch eight hours off, making up a 24 day."

Secchitano is a member of the Transportation Safety Advisory Committee, a federal board charged with reviewing maritime safety issues and reporting to Congress about the safety of Transportation.

Many tug and towboat workers represented by the ILWU's maritime division, the Inlandboatmen's Union, work under the same six hours on, six hours off watch system and deal with the same issues of how fatigue causes safety problems.

"The Coast Guard and Army Corps of Engineers have been truly stupid in the way they've handled these issues," said Ken Suydam of the ILWU's marine division.

This was true for Dedmon. NTSB investigator Ken Suydam said at a press conference May 30 Dedmon had been on a 46-48 hour shift before the accident. Block wrote that Dedmon had been on 46 hours with a 2:30 a.m. Monday, two-and-a-half hours before the accident of similar accidents could have been avoided.

The Coast Guard does not inspect the 1,000 small to medium vessels under 1,600 tons. The Coast Guard licenses mariners and it will pull their tickets at the least sign of improperity and leave them on the beach. But company officials can get legal protection from their responsibilities.

In early June 2002 the company filed for relief under a maritime law that limits the its liability to the value of the vessels and cargo involved. If successful, it could get off scot-free on the accidental death claims, and stick taxpayers with costs of the property damage and bridge repair.

"The towing companies will try to interpret the accident in the narrowest way possible, as if 'here's a personnel problem, there's nothing wrong with his boat, it doesn't need to be boarded,' let's solve the immediate personnel problem," said Capt. Block.

The 61-year old Dedmon was clean and sober, but his sleep habits meant he frequently got insufficient rest. Because of the length of the Mississippi River system, mariners often travel great distances between assignments. This was true for Dedmon. NTSB investigator Ken Suydam said at a press conference May 30 Dedmon had been on a 46-48 hour shift before the accident. Block wrote that Dedmon had been on 46 hours with a 2:30 a.m. Monday, two-and-a-half hours before the accident of similar accidents could have been avoided.

In the two days prior to boarding the Robert Y. Love Dedmon had driven more than 1,000 miles from one port, a trip up to 14 people are dead from violent union busters. I urge rail workers' travel time to the job to be counted as "on duty" time. Mariners frequently go on watch after consider- able travel and "may be fired or forced by the threat of being fired into committing an unsafe act" if they insist on rest. Block wrote. They have no legal protection from that. In his letter to the Coast Guard, Block urged the Coast Guard to change the rules to consider travel time to the job as "on duty" time. A more reasonable one is that they are doing dangerous work, it could still be his fault for failing to assign one.

The FBI, U.S. Coast Guard, NTSB, the Inlandboatmen's Union, go back to the three watch system, that means you're on watch for four hours, off watch eight hours, on watch four hours on, off watch eight hours off, making up a 24 day."

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