Pols back ILWU demand: U.S. out of negotiations now!  
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Southern California ILWU crashes Maersk party  
page 3

Longshore cartoonist Bob Nixon passes  
page 7
Sometimes it is necessary to remind ourselves that not all Republicans have horns and want to take food out of the mouths of widows and retirees. In fact, the first Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, had views on the vital importance of labor that would probably get him booted out of the nodding galleries and, if he ever became a longshoreman, screened off the deck as well.

In his first address to Congress, delivered Dec. 3, 1861, Lincoln chided those who, who was not involved in the vital interests as superior to labor. He questioned the efforts "to place capital back to work if they dare to strike!"

And as far as Lincoln’s first point about labor having a superior claim to representation in government, he meant not only to people who work for a living outnumber those who own for a living, but those who make the capital have a superior claim to those to whom merely own the capital.

The Bush regime is up to its ears in corporate scandal, and just as Bush moves to deny union representation by the National Labor Relations Board, Homeland Security government workers he’s caught bedding down with longshore employers whenever we had to worry about was a stained blue dress?

This edition of The Dispatcher takes on this corporate-government collusion, beginning on page two where Vice President Mr. McElrath stands in for President Spinoso in his of the AFL-CIO staff, the Longshore Division and the ILWU. Mr. McElrath expressed the government’s position that disruptions in the ports could be construed as a Homeland Security issue. Eliaho Chao voiced the need for us to get a contract without any labor disruptions. We had a follow-up meeting with a top Labor Department attorney who flew out to San Francisco to speak personally with the Coast Committee. He outlined for us the options the Bush administration was looking at should there be problems on the West Coast, including putting up a Tattle-Harry injunction thereby forcing us back to work, and passing new federal laws to limit our rights.

The government attorney also threatened our Coastwise contract. He said the Bush administration might break the "bilateral monopoly" between the ILWU and the PMA so the union would have to negotiate port-by-port or terminal-by-terminal. He also said the administration could order federal troops to block ports if any disruption in trade occurs, even if the employers lock us out.

Sweeney and Trumka were not shocked by the threats made by the government, but they were surprised when the government appeared to admit to a Portland Oregon Times article (Aug. 4) that these threats were actually made to the ILWU.

The main thing that upset people at the AFL-CIO meeting was the prospect of troops being used in a labor dispute. The ILWU is not alone in facing government interference. The Homeland Security laws are interfering in organizing other workers such as airport screeners.

Staff members from the AFL-CIO and our legal staff worked together on a resolution which supports the ILWU and criticizes the Bush administration’s interference. The AFL-CIO Executive Council passed it unanimously.

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HUNDREDS of longshore workers and their supporters packed the Banning Landing Community Center over the weekend to protest the joint state legislative hearing on federal intervention into the port labor negotiations. Bush administration threats to workers’ civil rights have outraged unionists and elected officials across the country.

Even before State Sen. Richard Alarcon (D-San Fernando), chair of the Senate Labor and Industrial Relations Committee, introduced the first witnesses, he and other elected officials set the tone for the day. “When Bush got involved in the negotiation process, we felt it was absolutely necessary to hold this hearing,” Alarcon said. “It’s an inappropriate use of federal power that’s unconscionable to use concerns about Sept. 11 to block the collective bargaining process. That’s the right of American workers.”

Assemblymember Paul Koretz (D-West Hollywood), chair of the Assembly’s Labor and Employment Committee, also opened by criticizing Bush interference in the bargaining process. This administration has made legal unions into a threat, he said.

The joint committee heard witness after witness as members of the community, followed by an open forum. Labor witnesses included Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, Executive Secretary-Treasurer Miguel Contreras, ILWU Legislative Action Committee Chairman Peter Peyton, ILWU longshore Local 13 President Ramon Ponce de Leon, Teamsters West Port Organizer Smith and Kevin Kucera, president of International Longshoremen’s Assn. of Machinists Lodge 1484.

Contreras denounced the administration’s intervention into the collective bargaining process as part of an anti-worker policy. “From day one Bush had an agenda to crush unions,” he said. “[The] president should be allowed to rob American workers of their best wages and working conditions.”

Peyton testified that the ILWU, in the spirit of Harry Bridges’ historic Mechanization and Modernization Agreement that negotiated how contemporary technology was to be shared between labor and management at West Coast docks, had offered a technology proposal that gave the employers every advantage while the ILWU was left with nothing. “The employers rejected it. They said, ‘We have an alternative to your one,’ ” Peyton said.

But the employers rejected it. In a new attempt to clear the deck of the PMA’s cry for a solid proposal on technology was a red herring issue,” Peyton said.

What they want is to legislate a contract in Washington, D.C., and if they change the rules, they are working this agenda with the West Coast Waterfront Coalition and the Busch administration while doing very little to negotiate in good faith in San Francisco,” Peyton said.

Ponce de Leon spoke of how the PMA has been using the Bush threats as leverage to make cuts in ILWU members’ compensation. “Our families need health and welfare benefits maintained,” he said. “We have a proud history of taking care of all our members—current and retired. The ports’ shipping volume is at an all-time high, breaking records month after month. We’re not going to accept any proposals to reduce benefits for people who have dedicated their lives to the ports, nor are we going to accept a two-tiered system that divides our membership. We take care of our own and we’re not going to allow the PMA to change that.”

Smith noted the Teamsters have withheld threats of Taft-Hartley injunctions. During their 1997 UPS strike, then-House Speaker Newt Gingrich called for then-President Clinton to intervene, claiming the strike would cripple the national economy. Clinton refused. “This allowed UPS and the Teamsters to gain the upper hand at the bargaining table,” Smith said.

“The employers support the ILWU, and if they choose to strike, we will not cross their picket lines,” Smith added. “If the Bush administration chooses to lock ILWU members out, then our members will not move the contain- ers off the docks.”

The Machinists also closed ranks behind the ILWU.

“Bush needs to understand that on issues of federal intervention, the American labor movement will remain unified,” Kucera said. “PATCO won’t happen again.”

Sen. Alarcon noted that Robin Lander, the head of the West Coast Waterfront Coa- lition, the retailer group that has been bashing the ILWU in the press and lobbying against it in Washington, D.C., gave an invitation to testify. But she sent a letter stating that the WCWC had no relationship to the PMA. The audience laughed in derision when Alarcon read it aloud.

Assemblymember Joe Miroma said that President Clinton has bashed the ILWU in the press and lobbying against it in Washington, D.C. Smith added. “If the Bush administra- tion is simple—stay out. We will work out our differences at the bargaining table. The ballot is the only decision that workers have.”

“Today we are beginning phase two of our bargaining, making the companies accountable,” said Dave Arian, the alternate negotiator for Local 13. “Maersk says they’ve been good to us. But if they’re our friends, where’s our maintenance of benefits?” Arian asked.

Though Maersk supports PMA’s proposal to cut the union’s healthcare plan, the company reportedly blew more than a half-million dollars on its party. Maersk built a wall of containers between the rally site and the city, but the demonstrators roared their demands loud enough to be heard.

“Today is the day we tell the federal government, the Bush administration, we’re not going to accept any proposals to reduce the benefits theyوار,” Arian said.

“We were almost outnumbered by the two Coast Guard boats and two Port Police boats,” said ILWU Local 13 member and IFT Inspector Rudy Vanderheide. “But when we went across the bow of the Coast Guard cutter, two ensigns stood at attention and saluted us. That’s cool, these guys are behind us.”

Adding international pressure to the ILWU’s cause, members of the Danish dockers union Specialbevaviourdbundet Denmark (SD) delivered a letter to Maersk Sealand executives at their headquarters in Copenhagen the same day. “We strongly urge you to speak to President Bush to resolve the outstanding negotiation issues with the ILWU,” said the SD.

LA hearings slam feds, back workers

Crashing the party
Bush administration bonchos seemed to think they could bully the ILWU and get away with it. Their ham-handed meddling in the Longshore Division contract talks with the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) blew up in their faces Aug. 12. Thousands of ILWU members and allies hit the streets at Long Beach, San Diego, Oakland, Portland, Tacoma and Seattle that day, appalled at the assault on workers' civil rights and outraged at the prospect of National Guard troops working cargo.

Elected officials from Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-SD) to mayors and many council members in the port cities backed the union's demand that the government get its nose out of negotiations and let the collective bargaining process work.

"This crowd in the White House amuses me every day, talking about the free enterprise system and how we shouldn't see government involvement," Daschle told participants in the Portland rally. "But now they don't want collective bargaining and they want to come in and deny you fight, fight and fight."

Some 3,000 ILWU members and friends waved red-white-and-blue signs as they marched through Long Beach for a rally in front of the PMA building. Los Angeles City Council members Janice Hahn and Eric Garcetti and Long Beach Council members Dan Baker and Tonia Reyes Uranga joined them, as did Los Angeles County Federation of Labor Secretary -Treasurer, speaks in Oakland.

Executive Secretary-Treasurer Miguel Contreras. San Francisco Mayor Willie L. Brown, Jr. went on record with his support for the ILWU at a morning press conference, with San Francisco Central Labor Council Executive-Secretary Treasurer Walter Johnson at his side.

Oakland Mayor Jerry Brown addressed the crowd of 1,300 at the late-afternoon rally in front of the Oakland Federal Building.

"You can count on the City of Oakland," said Brown. "We say 'Butt out, let's bargain in good faith and share the wealth responsibly.'"

Some 80 unionists and community leaders came out to Tacoma's press conference. The 25 elected officials in attendance included Mayor Bill Baarsama, Port Commissioner and longshore Local 23 Vice President Dick Marzano, Pierce County Council Chair Harold Moss and State Rep. Steve Conway, who chairs the Washington State House Commerce and Labor Committee.

"It wasn't hard to get people out because we'd been working in the community for years," said Vance Lelli, Local 23 member and President of the Pierce County Central Labor Council. "A '34 vet named Tiny Thompson gave a speech about 11 years ago that some of us really took to heart. He said, 'The big fight's coming, and you've got to do three things to get ready. You have to have your solidarity with other unions, and get your political action and your community services in gear.'"

About a dozen Harleys vroomed in solidarity at the head of the 60-car, three-bus caravan from Tacoma to Seattle. The buses brought ILWU members and supporters from Olympia and Aberdeen as well as Tacoma. Another bus came down from Bellingham carrying two-thirds of the Local 7 membership, adding to the impressive turnout by members from the smaller ports. Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels, King County Executive Ron Sims and others addressed the crowd of 2,200 ralleying at Pier 66.

At the end of the day, the demonstrations made their point so clearly that even mainstream media got it. Headlines and newscasts up and down the coast carried the message: Bush, butt out. And the next day, it was back to business at the table.

"The rallies up and down the coast made it clear that port cities

Los Angeles City Councilmember Janice Hahn (front and center) joined some 3,000 ILWU members and friends marching to a rally in front of the Pacific Maritime Association Building.

Clarence Thomas, ILWU longshore Local 10 Secretary-Treasurer, speaks in Oakland.

Bald statement of solidarity made at the Seattle rally.
Public officials speak out for the ILWU

As the depth of the Bush administration’s disrespect for collective bargaining has been revealed, ILWU members and officers called on their elected officials to speak up for workers’ civil rights. Many have already answered the call.

U.S. SENATORS/REPRESENTATIVES

Senate Majority Leader
Tom Daschle (D-SD)

House Minority Whip
Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco)

U.S. Reps. David Wu (D-Portland), Barbara Lee (D-Oakland), George Miller (D-Martinez), Xavier Becerra (D-Los Angeles), Hilda Solis (D-El Monte), Grace Napolitano (D-Norwalk), Jane Harman (D-Venice), Dana Rohrabacher (R-Huntington Beach), Nellie Gorbea (D-Honolulu) and Patzy Mink (D-Hilo)


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Washington Gov: Gary Locke
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Bill Lockyer
Oregon Secretary of State
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Washington Assemblymember
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Don Gardner
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Wilma Chan (D-Oakland), Alan Lowenthal (D-Long Beach), Paul Koretz (D-W Hollywood), Judy Chu (D-Monterey Park)

California State Senators
Don Perata (D-Oakland), Richard Alarcon (D-San Fernando), Betty Karnette (D-Long Beach), Gloria Romero (D-Los Angeles)

MAYORS

Willie L. Brown, Jr., San Francisco
Jerry Brown, Oakland
Bill Baarsama, Tacoma
Greg Nickels, Seattle

CITY OFFICIALS

City Council President
Peter Steinbrueck, Seattle

City Council President
Ignacio De La Fuente, Oakland

City Councilmember
Nancy Nadel, Oakland

San Francisco Board of Supervisors President
Tom Ammiano

The Los Angeles City Council unanimously passed a resolution in support of the ILWU. The Long Beach City Council passed a similar resolution.

COUNTY OFFICIALS

King County (Seattle) Executive
Ron Sims

King County Council Chair
Cynthia Sullivan

Pierce Co. (Tacoma) Council Chair
Harold Moss

Multnomah County (Portland) Commissioner
Diana Litt

Alameda County (Oakland) Supervisors
Keith Christen and Alice Gandt

OTHER OFFICIALS

Oakland Port Commissioner
David Kramer

Tacoma Port Commissioner
Dick Marzano

Linda Joseph, SEIU Local 616 Staff Director, shows her support for the ILWU.
Local 14 mourns Richard Peters

by Marcy Rein

 Herman Zwald, the last remaining supercargo in longshore/ marine clerks Local 14, remembers being on top of one of the hatches on the MV Bis Arrow with the walking box on the night of June 1. “Every time the crane would come back, we’d have to move or we’d’ve been knocked off,” Zwald said. “It’s type of ship is not people-friendly.”

Dick Peters came on as the supercargo on day shift when Zwald went off. SuperCargo oversea loading and unloading, acts as liaisons between the shipping company and the union and supervise the marine clerks. Local 14 usually worked with just one clerk and a supercargo for two units on a ship. This meant the clerk had to move from hatch to hatch and the supercargo often went on deck to check up on things—especially if the supercargo was Dick Peters, said marine clerk Mike Hauger.

“He was very careful,” Hauger said. “If I were a short unit of pulp in the warehouse, he’d make me look two, three, four times. He really wanted to make sure that pulp wasn’t there.”

Hauger was out in the warehouse when June 2 thinking he needed to talk to Peters. He started back to the ship around 10

“Gene Bildicker called out to me, ‘You better pray for your friend,’” Hauger said. “Someone else screamed, ‘You don’t want to go up there at all!’

“Somehow Peters had slipped off a hatch and gotten crushed by a crane. No one knew how that happened. 

“When I got there, it was nowhere to hold him. I just laid my hands on him,” said Hauger, a part-time minister. “He took great pride in his work.” Zwald said company president Andy Westfall. “He was very professional, very conscientious. His death was a real body blow to all of us.”

Peter’s death robed Local 14 of a lifetime stalwart—and put new heat under an longstanding debate over safety.

Almost 68 years old when he died, Peters had more than 45 years on the waterfront. He had served the local in various capacities, including Secretary-Treasurer Larry Smith.

“On the president of the ‘60s, a trustee and an Executive Board member on off,” Smith said.

Managers at Westfall StevenJr., the only longtime employer in Eureka for most of the last 40 years, also spoke highly of Peters.

“He took great pride in his work,” said company president Andy Westfall.

“The older ships had maybe two turn-around pays, which added up to a little more than $5000. Scholarships will go to young relatives of ILWU members for whatever type of higher education they choose, from technical school to university. The Richard E. Peters Memorial Safety Scholarship can be made c/o Humboldt Area Foundation, PO Box 99, Eureka, CA 95504.
Longshore artist Bob Nixon passes
by Tom Price

Some workers are called upon to do extraordinary things. They might serve for years as officers, or go to jail for years for their political beliefs. Bob Nixon used his wit and talent to make a unique contribution to the union—as an illustrator of life on the waterfront.

During his 31 years on the Portland docks Nixon drew comics for his friends and cartoons for posters and brochures to keep them safe at work. He won numerous prizes, including a National Safety Council prize for the best marine safety poster.

"Bob and I worked together for a long time, and there was never a dull moment," longshore Local 8 Trustee Ron Hansen said. "He had an incredible sense of humor. He saw humor in everything, even in human frailties."

But it was during the 1971 longshore strike that his sisters and brothers came to see the depth of his talent to make a unique contribution to the union—as an illustrator of life on the waterfront.

"Bob's cartoons provided humor and a serious reminder at the same time," PMA Training Manager Larry Hudson said. "He made a major contribution delivering safety awareness in this dangerous occupation."

Hanson described the connection between Nixon's mechanical skills and his analytical abilities, which he translated into his cartoons. "Bob could fix anything," Hanson said. "If he didn't have a part he could make one. He just had a native ability to see through all the crap and get down to the basics."

Nixon was born March 22, 1932 and grew up in the Rogue River area in Southern Oregon. He worked in the lumber industry before joining the Merchant Marine. He moved to the island of Hawaii where he and an assistant built a beautiful home south of Hilo, Hudson said. "Bob pre-cut the building materials in Portland and shipped them in Matson containers to save costs."

He died June 11. Bob Nixon is survived by his wife Sally. He attended art school in Portland before beginning his longshore career in 1963. He was working as night side crane operator when he retired in 1994.

He moved to the island of Hawaii where he and an assistant built a beautiful home south of Hilo, Hudson said. "Bob pre-cut the building materials in Portland and shipped them in Matson containers to save costs."

He died June 11. Bob Nixon is survived by his wife Sally, daughters Linda and Susanne and son Robert Jr.

"For years we worked together in the hold, hand loading everything," Hanson said. "Bob would get his spray paint and do his cartoons on the bulkheads of the ships. He had the whole bulkhead for a canvas. People around the world would see these, and we'd get the ship back later and they would still be there. Nobody defaced them. Dockers in every port in the world saw and respected his work."

"If we are so expensive to the scheme of things by being on the bricks, don't you think we're worth a few more bucks back on the job?"

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