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President George W. Bush is a chip off the old block. Like his daddy, George H. W. Bush, he has risked everything on Iraq and is facing humiliation from a tinpot dictator. In the meantime, with his tax cuts for the rich and billion dollar contracts for his corporate pals, the U.S. national treasury is being plundered like an Israeli museum. And the terrorists’ dieses can be tied to their daily lives and the “jobless recoveries” that unleash the fear of terrorists whatever government or multinational corporations. From the Roman Empire to the British and all those others in between, every great power has fallen under the weight of its own expansion. But Bush and the Republicans have learned as little about history as they have about economics.

When Ronald Reagan ran for president in 1980 pledging huge tax cuts (mostly for the rich), massive new military spending and a balanced budget, his Republican opponent, George Herbert Walker Bush, called his program “voodoo economics.” Now that old black magic is the official policy of the George W. Bush administration. And like a pin-poked doll, the economy is being cursed. The costs of carrying on protracted guerilla wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the costs of “rebuidling” the infrastructure the U.S. bombred into the Stone Age during those wars continue to mount as fast as the body bags. After running his $350 billion tax cut through Congress last spring Bush asked for an additional $87 billion to spend on the wars this fall. It passed with little debate or opposition.

Imagine the uproar if Congress dared to spend $87 billion on health care, education, or job creation without specifying exactly where that money was coming from. Now imagine where any money for such programs will come from now that it’s been thrown down the bottomless maw of empire building. Then try to imagine why.

Bush is at a loss to explain it. From the weapons of mass destruction to the Saddam-9-11 link, the rationales for the Iraq war continue to crumble. Now we know that Bush, Colin Powell, Condoleezza Rice and Donald Rumsfeld all lied when they told us that the exigencies of the cold war were invincible and could get away with anything. Certainly they could militarily overwhelm almost any country. But could they hold it, occupy it and administer it while they lied to us? Could they take a nation’s armed forces, but could they control them? Could they use the events they set in motion—the inevitable hatred of the invaded occupier, the conflicts among the country’s long feuding factions, the oppression of the Iraqi Jews and the morale of U.S. soldiers like the Vietnam jungle did not long ago? They could strike preemptively, but could they preempt the chaos that actually erupted?

And chaos is costly. But Bush is so committed to the strategy of fear that he extends the American oil empire that he is willing to risk, not just the U.S. economy and the world economy, but also his own reelection.

It took out his daddy. We can only hope for— and organize for— like father, like son.

It’s the economy, Stupid

By James Spinosa

ILWU International President

The decades-long war by shipowners on dockworkers and their unions has been going on to different frontiers around the world for years. And as the conflict rages on, we see more and more clearly the ties between governments and multinational corporations. The newest attack is wider and deeper than any before. It is being planned by dockers’ unions in the 15 countries of the European Union. The European Parliament is on the verge of passing new WTO-style legislation that will supersede laws in every member country that protect union dockers’ jobs. This legislation, the European Port Directive, will allow shipowners to have seafarers do dockers’ work and allow terminal operators to bypass registered union dockers and hire casual labor to load and unload ships. In the name of “free market competition” union dockers will be eliminated and wages and working conditions in European ports will plummet.

Understanding the global implications of the current EU assault, the ILWU sent representatives to the Ports of Rotterdam and Barcelona to support the European dockers’ protest against the Port Directive (see story page 3). Our delegates marched with brothers and sisters from the European Transport Workers Federation (the European affiliate of the International Transport Workers Federation) and later visited our friends in the International Dockworkers Council in Spain to express our commitment of solidarity. It was a good first action, but it will not be enough.

We know this because last year we saw the multinational and their cohorts in the Bush administration gang up on the ILWU Longshore Division. Wal-Mart, The Gap, and dozens of other manufacturers and retailers that have switched production to the sweatshops of Asia came together—with the aid of our employer group, the Pacific Maritime Association—to become the West Coast Waterfront Coalition. They encouraged the Bush administration to act against us. The power of the government—with its use of the Taft-Hartley injunction and threats to legislate away our union rights—coupled with the might of the employers and their allies nearly did us in. But with some strategic thinking, focused unity within the ILWU and the AFL-CIO, the solidarity of the international dockers’ unions and a little luck, we surmounted and won a contract that puts us in a position to keep our jobs and standard of living.

We know this because we saw the struggle of the Charleston Five in 2000. Members of Locals 1422 and 1771 of the East and Gulf Coast International Longshoremen’s Association stood up against the shipowners’ attempt to set up a non-union operation in the ILWU’s Charleston stronghold. Again the shipowners used the legal system against longshore workers. South Carolina’s right-to-work (for less) law gave the legal cover for scab operations. The state attorney general tried to use the police and the courts to criminate new members legitimate pickets against the stealing of their jobs. But again the solidarity of the ILWU, the AFL-CIO and the international dockers’ movement won out, and the state attorney charged against the five longshore workers were dropped.

We know this because we saw the wharfies of the Maritime Union of Australia targeted in 1998. The country’s right-on-government passed a series of new laws restricting union rights. Then the government backed the second-largest stevedoring company on the continent as it locked out the union workers and tried to run the docks with scabs. But again domestic and international solidarity actions stymied their plans and the MUA retained its jurisdiction.

We know this because we saw the Liverpool dockers sacked in 1995. The employers, in cahoots with the government, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher had engineered the repeal of the laws protecting union dockers’ work. The domestic unions were weak. Despite the ILWU’s financial aid and our actions against the Neptune Jade in Oakland and Vancouver, B.C., the international dockers’ movement—supported by the right-wing government passed a series of new laws restricting union rights. Then the government backed the second-largest stevedoring company on the continent as it locked out the union workers and tried to run the docks with scabs. But again domestic and international solidarity actions stymied their plans and the MUA retained its jurisdiction.

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ILWU joins Euro docker protest

by Tom Price

When the European Union announced Sept. 29 that it would pass a new law scrapping port job safeguards, dockers were ready. On the same day at least 8,000 maritime workers demonstrated in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, effectively closing the world's largest port.

The demo was sponsored by the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) through the International Transport Workers Federation. Another 4,000 in Barcelona, Spain, protested in an action sponsored by the International Dockers' Council, with which the ILWU is affiliated.

The new legislation, known as the European Port Directive, would allow seafarers and non-union temp workers to do dockers' jobs. The European Commission (EC), the executive body of the 15-nation European Union, sold the Directive as a competition-enhancing measure. A parliamentary committee approved the EC's plan and it will go to the full Parliament later this year. Dockers see it as a scam that pits trained union dockers against casuals and sailors in a race to the bottom.

International shippers and terminal operators see this as the wave of the future for all ports.

The ILWU delegation at the Rotterdam port march with their banner in the Sept. 29 demonstration in Barcelona, Spain.

The ILWU is affiliated with the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) and the International Dockers' Council (IDC), which is the executive body of the 15-nation European Union. Dockers for Coordinadora, the IDC's executive body, coordinated a protest in Barcelona, while the ILWU coordinated a protest in Rotterdam. The two groups coordinated for the rally.

The ILWU delegation headed to Rotterdam to join the massive march against port casualization. "It was just overwhelming," said Ray Familathe, assistant coordinator for the Dutch dockers' union, who came over. "It was a lot for us and it means a lot about how the struggle will go in the international ports."

The ILWU delegation stood on a dead end street. The police blocked off the other end of the street where the buses were, trapping the ILWU delegation in the middle.

"The police told us to move forward, toward the main conflict," Familathe said. "When we moved up the police told us we had to march the other way. We looked behind us and saw armored vehicles and cops coming behind us."

"Finally Niek Stam got the police to back off and we left. It was an eerie feeling. It reminded me of the WTO situation in Seattle. The cops were provoking a conflict. The dockers came to march, to say that the ports of Europe should be worked by registered dockers, and that seafarers should not load and discharge cargo, and that we're not going to allow terminal operators to be casualized."

In other parts of the demonstration there were clashes between protesting dockers and police. At least 20 dockers were arrested.

Like others there that day, Familathe said the police were provoking a fight to turn the media's attention to a riot rather than the issues the 8,000 dockers were protesting.

The Sept. 29 protest in Barcelona, organized by the IDC-affiliated Coordinadora dockers' union, targeted not only the European Directive, but also Spain's attempts to impose a national law similar to it. A three-day strike over self-handling in Italy, Cyprus and Greece closing ports with the exception of passenger and vital cargo. Southern French workers went to Barcelona to protest, while Northern French dockers went to Rotterdam.

The day of action began at 2 p.m., coinciding with the Rotterdam activities. Workers rallied and marched through Barcelona to the docks, with less police harassment than in Rotterdam.

"It has been a success. All Spain is stopped," Julian Garcia, general coordinator of Coordinadora and of the IDC told news services.

Although the various docker unions pulled off their strike actions successfully, they have not yet stopped the Directive and more actions may still be needed.

"The European Directive is really a template for what the EU will probably insist on for everybody at the next WTO negotiations," Familathe said. "This in itself is a major issue not just to the European dockers, but every docker in the world. The WTO has extreme powers. Many of us don't understand how deep rooted their powers are."
OSHA approves vertical tandem lifts

By Lindsay McLaughlin

WASHINGTON

OSHA has approved the use of vertical tandem lifts in container operations. The approval comes after a three-year review of the practice following an accident in 2003.

The approval could have a significant impact on the longshore and shipping industries, which have been divided over the use of vertical tandem lifts. The practice involves lifting containers using multiple lifts to avoid overloading single lifts.

"This is a significant victory for the ILWU and our members," said ILWU President Jeff Smith. "We have been fighting for this for years and have been met with resistance at every turn."

The approval was reached after a three-year review by OSHA, which concluded that the practice was safe and effective. OSHA conducted a comprehensive review of the practice, including consultations with industry representatives and unions.

"We are happy that OSHA has recognized the benefits of vertical tandem lifting," said ILWU Legislative Director Justin McNichols.

"This approval is a win for workers and the shipping industry alike. It means that we can continue to operate safely and efficiently while providing a fair wage to our members."

The approval comes after a series of accidents involving vertical tandem lifting. A recent accident at the Port of Seattle left a worker seriously injured.

"This is a reminder of the importance of safety in our industry," said McNichols. "We must continue to work together to ensure that we have a safe and healthy workplace for all workers."
When trade representative George Osbud Ong’w’en of Kenya walked out of the WTO’s meeting Sept. 14, he seemed to be following South African President Thabo Mbeki’s suggestion that maybe the developing world delegates should join the protestors on the sidewalk.

Then ministers from 22 other countries followed him, including the Indian and Chinese ministers. That made it official—the fifth World Trade Organization’s ministerial meeting in Cancun, Mexico had collapsed. Those 23 countries represent 68 percent of the world’s population and more than half of the world’s population.

This is over,” Ong’w’en said. “We have just had a second Seattle.”

Anti-globalization corporate activists cheered and expressed hope that the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) might be in for a similar fate Nov. 20-21 in Miami. The rift came down to poor farmers and the interests of corporate agribiz. Those interests, represented by their governments in the U.S., Canada, and the European Union, generally desired a change in WTO rules that would allow them to dump huge agricultural surpluses into poor countries. This drives local farmers off their land and into the pockets of Third World cities, a trend already happening in Mexico under NAFTA. U.S. corporations also want Roundup, also the world’s most popular herbicide, to be sold in other nations to buy genetically modified crops and use the companies’ patented seeds, something opposed by the EU and Third World.

Developing countries point out the hypocrisy of taxpayer-paid agricultural subsidies that blatantly violate free trade principles. Their ministers had attempted to get the wealthiest countries to end these earlier in the five-day session, but the developed countries refused. Last May President Bush signed a $190 billion, 10-year subsidy bill—an 80 percent increase over the previous subsidy. While sold as a helping hand to family farmers, nearly three-quarters of the money will line the pockets of just 10 percent of American farmers. The result is actual large corporations. Just three agribiz firms control more than 80 percent of the market for Roundup and other glyphosate-based products. Z

But other corporations lost out as well—enormous multinational corporations lost out as well—enormous multinational corporations.

The AFL-CIO has initiated a “Vote no on the FTAA” campaign to give union members a voice on the trade issue. Canadian farmer Percy Schmeiser became an unlikely David fighting the gargantuan Goliath when he sued in 1997 for having a field contaminated with its genetically modified (GM) canola. Schmeiser lost the initial case and an appeal, and faced a court order to pay $130,000 to the company. Monsanto used a provision under NAFTA, Chapter 11, that allows it to sue in a foreign country to protect its “intellectual property,” in this case the GM genes in the seed. This is a perfect example of what is in store for the 34 Western Hemisphere countries meeting in Miami this November to expand NAFTA to the entire Hemisphere. U.S. corporate interests want a Chapter 11 type provision in FTAA and eventually in the WTO. Roundup is a potent herbicide that kills all weeds except those that have Monsanto’s Roundup-resistant gene. Had Schmeiser used Roundup he would have killed the vast majority of his crop. Canadian agricultural experts claim Schmeiser’s crops were killed rip-off” apparently, not the ministers in Cancun.

The U.S. probably won’t find many fools in the Miami meeting of the FTAA this November either. The plan is to stuff a NAFTA agreement—containing the threat of “guerrilla media” events staged inside the Convention Center.

The city of Cancun was itself a victim of water privatization by an Enron subsidiary, and the result was a 400 percent increase in water bills and a decline in service. Earlier this year as many as 100,000 Mexican farmers protested U.S. grain dumping and got some tariff protection against U.S. dumping, and a threat of WTO action from the U.S. But the failure of this round exposes the fatal flaw in WTO organization that also killed the famous “Battle of Seattle” WTO meeting in 1999. The “free trade” ideologues work under the illusion that each country must open its economy as an act of free will, and expose its people to corporate rule by the major powers. However, the organizational set-up of the WTO requires a consensus agreement by all countries involved, and who would agree to such a blatant

Help stop the FTAA

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Watchmen's contract goes to the eleventh hour

Watchmen's Local 75 entered into the longest bargaining session in memory and came out with a six-year deal that maintains benefits, raises pay and provides a 55 percent increase in pension payments.

The marathon bargaining began in January, shortly after the Longshore Division ratified its contract with the same employers' group, the Pacific Maritime Assn. Before it ended July 3 the watchmen got a pretty good look at the employers who came after the Longshore Division with knives sharpened for cutbacks.

"They came at us with ‘you have nothing to give us, the clerks are giving up jobs, what are you giving up?’" Local 75 Secretary-Treasurer Michael Terry said.

It went on like that for six months, but gradually the non-economic issues were settled or taken off the table. After the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 the watchmen's jobs have become more stressful and demanding, but management's attitude seemed to be that these front-line port security workers weren't worth professional wages and working conditions. So with that in mind the union presented the PMA with a July 3 strike deadline.

With [longshore Local 10 President] Henry Graham always looking behind us during the negotiations, and support from Locals 34 and 91, I explained to the employers it would cost them more if we shut down the waterfront," Local 75 past-president Rene Susim said.

"The last day, July 3, was awesome," Terry said. "The final session was 13 hours long at the Local 34 hall. At 6:30 p.m. they said: ‘We’ve done everything we can do, we’ve given everything we’re authorized to give you.’ Then [ILWU International Research Director] Russ Bargmann suggested we not walk away but tell them we were going to dinner and we’d meet them back at 8 p.m.; they could make their phone calls.”

So each side had a chance to chill and see what they could offer. Clearly the employer took the strike threat seriously.

"About 45 minutes later the Coast Guard calls and says the PMA said we were going out at midnight," Terry said.

"We had been getting close all along, and when they came back we made progress. It finally boiled down to maintenance-of-benefits and a $4.35 increase over six years, our first six-year contract. The pension went from $67.80 per month per year of seniority to $105, a 55 percent increase over the six years. The downside was bringing in a two-tier system. Right now people in the union make $21.45 and their hires will make $14.58 an hour.”

Susim retired Sept. 1 after 32 years of service to his local. Contracts negotiated during his ten years as president raised wages from $13.12 an hour to $24.47. Pension benefits will have gone from $39.80 per month per year of service to $105 by the end of this contract.

The guards were very appreciative of the support they got from the International and other locals.

"James Spinosa [International President] came to break a logjam. Joe Ibarra [former International Secretary-Treasurer] was very helpful. Bill Nelson from walking bosses Local 91 came in, Local 10’s Henry Graham was invaluable, not only for his presence, but also for his advice," Terry said.

"Local 34’s [Secretary-Treasurer] Russell Miyashiro was very good in helping us as was Russ Bargmann. Russ helped us understand the numbers and how much MOB was actually going to cost.”

The members ratified the contract July 23.

"It was grim, I don’t look forward to that again. But we got help from Spinosa who came in and told the employers ‘Guys, knock this off, this is small potatoes, we don’t need problems over this stuff,’“ Terry said. “I called the Coast Guard 18 minutes before we were to go on strike and told them we had settled. We wrapped up at 11 at night. Perhaps we’ve seen too many movies, when everything has to go to the bitter end.”
LOCAL 8 COMMITTEE TO DEFEND LOCAL 10 B.A. JACOB HEYMAN

Alameda County District Attorney Tom Orloff announced in late June the county was pressing charges against ILWU Local 10 Business Agent Jack Heyman, who was arrested during the April 7 police riot at the Port of Oakland. Portland's longshore Local 8 responded quickly, voting at its July 9 meeting to set up a defense committee to raise funds for Heyman's case and support Local 10 in its suit against the police, who injured nine longshore workers in the April 7 riot. The committee consists of Local 8 members Jack Lee, Doug Carew, Ken Ovati, Jack Mulcahy and Teamster Truck Driver Leith Kalb.

The committee began by assisting Portland's Independent Media Center (IndyMedia) and Labor for Peace and Justice bring Heyman to events they were organizing. The groups wanted to show the underlying relationship between the U.S. government's war on the world and its similar attacks on civil liberties, workers rights, immigrants and labor unions at home.

IndyMedia presented "Shots on the Docks" by Steve Zeltzer's Labor Video Projects July 14 at the Clinton St. Theatre. The film depicts the Oakland police attack on anti-war demonstrators and Local 10 longshore workers. Heyman spoke afterwards, reconstructing the event and participating in a question-and-answer forum.

The following night the same format was repeated at the ILWU Local 8 hall, with the help of Local 8 longshore worker Peter Parks and Portland Labor for Peace and Justice. Participants at the two events raised $300 for the defense fund.

The Local 8 Defense Committee's next project was a fundraiser at the Local 8 hall again in the fall. With assistance from Local 8 Secretary John Robinzon, the Executive Board members, and the rank and file, a rock band festival was held in the large parking lot area outside, while Visiotopic's electronic music show with high-tech laser lights and effects went on inside.

New ILWU Columbia River Organizer Vanessa Veselka and her band The Pinkos donated their time and talents, as did the Teamsters Local 206 Band and numerous DJ's with their sound machines.

Teamsters Local Union 206 kicked off the event by pulling its semi-truck and trailer into the lot, setting up its sound system and playing labor tunes.

The fundraiser was a fantastic way to involve the local community with the ILWU. The video "Shots on The Docks" played throughout the night and allowed the people in attendance to see the kinds of tactics being used by government agencies in attacking civil liberties and ILWU members.

Approximately 135 people attended the event and helped the defense committee raise more than $500 to support Local 10 and defray Heyman's legal defense costs. A big thanks must go to the Teamsters, the bands and the DJs, all of whom donated their time and equipment, as well as the brothers and sisters of Local 8 who helped make the night a success.

—Jack Mulcahy

PENSIONERS CONVENTION TACKLES ISSUES AT HOME AND ABROAD

The new officers elected at the convention are: President, Arne Auvinen of Longview, Washington; Vice President, Joe Lucas of San Francisco, California; Recording Secretary, Al Perisho of Wilmington, California; and8 Secretary, Barbara Lewis of Portland, Oregon.

The new Executive Board members are: Lou Leveridge, Los Angeles Harbor Area; Cleophas Williams, San Francisco Bay Area; Steve Martieza, Southwest Oregon Small Ports; George Gornick, Portland; Ken Swanger, Columbia River Small Ports; Daryl Hedman, Washington Small Ports; Paul McCabe, Seattle; and Bill Duckett, Vancouver Island.

The Convention adjourned in memory of Larry Clark, union activist and member of ILWU locals 40 and 49, and Tab Bull, late General Secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia.

The PCPA's next convention will be held Sept. 12, 2004 in Burnaby, B.C.

—Arne Auvinen, PCPA President

PROTESTING THE "WAR AT HOME"

Nearly 200 people scaled the heights of San Francisco's swankiest neighborhod to protest the presence of Homeland Security Chief Tom Ridge July 23. Supporters of a new trial for Mumia Abu-Jamal and other political prisoners joined with those protesting the war on civil liberties and labor rights to protest Tom Ridge voicing support for Bush administration policies. (When he was governor of Pennsylvania, Ridge signed Abu-Jamal's death warrant.)

Longshore Local 10's Clarence Thomas spoke, as did San Francisco Labor Council Secretary-Treasurer Walter Johnson.

"As many of you may know, the ILWU was part of the war at home when this same Tom Ridge called our International President Jim Spinoso during contract negotiations suggesting any work stoppage would be against national security," Thomas said. "That's not about national security, it's about corporate greed and undermining our leverage at the bargaining table."

Johnson made labor's agenda for next year very clear with the chant: "2004—Bush No More!"

Thomas summed up the goals of many just before the crowd filtered back to work.

"What we need is to build an economic, social justice, anti-corporate globalization movement with an anti-war agenda that can turn this country around," he said.

—Tom Price

• Support a Comprehensive and Universal Health plan (under the same resolution adopted by the ILWU International Convention earlier this year);

• Call for a meeting between the PCPA, the Titled Officers and the ILWU International Executive Board to discuss a proposal offering the services of the PCPA, the Washington Alliance of Retired Americans and the California Congress of Retired Persons to help draft legislative matters of importance to ILWU members, both active and retired;

• Increase life insurance for pensioners from the current $5,000 to $10,000 (to be referred to the next Longshore Division negotiations);

• Call for the overturning of the entire NAFTA trade agreement, which continues to have a disastrous affect on the economies of the U.S. and Canada and the lives of their citizens;

• Resist the "Right to Work" movement;

• Call for provisions for assisted living and extended nursing care for the aged and

• A Call for the USA Patriot Act and Patriot II.

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The PCPA's next convention will be held Sept. 12, 2004 in Burnaby, B.C.

—Arne Auvinen, PCPA President

This group of volunteers from Marine clerk's Local 40 and longshore Local 8's "Readiness Fair to promote public involvement in education. The fair's name is a pun on "ready" and "read," as in reading a book. This year they raised nearly $500 in cash and school supplies.

Members began collecting a month before the Aug. 23 fair. On that day they did everything from passing out supplies and balloons to cleaning up the lot. The fair benefits kids in the North Portland area, the neighborhood home where most of the two local's members work.

PORTLAND LOCALS PROMOTE EDUCATION AND INVOLVEMENT

The ILWU Pacific Coast Pensioners Association (PCPA) held its annual convention Sept. 15, 16 and 17 in Portland, Oregon, with 283 members and guests attending.

As always, the delegates had a good time. They enjoyed a dinner at a local restaurant, a movie of social interest, a banquet with dancing. But the Convention was not all fun and games.

The business sessions included serious discussions on the problems of pensioners in British Columbia, spoke of Social Security; and Black and Graham also thanked PCPA and its retired members in March 2004. The Convention elected Arne Auvinen of Longview, Washington, and John Johnson of Seattle to attend.

The Convention adopted a number of resolutions, including:

• Vehemently oppose any privatization of Medicare or any prescription drug program;

• Call for new trial for Mumia Abu-Jamal and other political prisoners;

• Oppose the USA Patriot Act and subsequent legislation;
I was born Oct. 22, 1911, in Newberg, Oregon. When I was four, my parents moved to north central Washington, where my father had been a wheat farmer. In the spring of 1929 we moved to Ethel, Washington, 10 miles out of Centralia. We were going to start a dairy farm. Dad bought a bunch of heifer calves. I figured I would have to milk for 10 years—then I could hire the work done. The Crash and the Depression came in the fall of '29. Milk that had sold for $2.20 per X amount dropped to $1.10. So in 1931 we sold the cattle. We got just half of what we paid for them two years before. Next we moved to Portland, although I would go back to central Washington and work in the apples, picking and spraying.

Over the winter of '31-'32, I cut cord wood in the Portland area. I was getting $1 a cord. All split and piled four-foot wood. On a good day I could make two cords. That gave me $2 a day. I had to take my saw over to the neighbor's to file and set it—he had a vise. His name was Neal Dagen. He also happened to be a longshoreman.

Dagen was working steadily, as much work as there was in those days. When I turned 21, he says, "Hey, kid, be over at the house in the morning and I'll take you down to the hiring hall and get you a day or two's work." We didn't have a union-controlled hall then. The hall was run by the employers. The first day I was there, Dagen got me a job. We worked from eight in the morning until midnight. Basic pay was 75 cents an hour, no overtime. I still made more in one long day than I made in any week cutting cord wood.

Once freed, Ricks returned to the waterfront. He happened to be a longshoreman. Dad bought a bunch of cows. I bought a bunch of heifer calves. I planned to start a dairy farm. Dad bought a herd and piled four-foot wood. On a good day I could make ten cords. The work was evenly divided. We used the same tools. We had just different people running it and we moved the loan shark and beer joint out of there. But before the union we had 55 gangs working out of the employer-run hiring hall, 13 men to a gang. Usually those gangs were full. All the other workers, myself included, were called "extra men." They did the less organized jobs, like lining ships for bulk grain and working on the docks where there were no regular gang.

If we always refused to pay for a job, which back then kept me from getting a certain amount of work. One fellow said, "My brother is taking out an extra gang this afternoon, do you want to work?" I says, "Certainly." In an hour, he came back and said, "I need $1." I says, "Certainly, I'll loan you $1." Come payday, he didn't pay me. The second payday, I said, "Hey, where's my $1?" He says, "You didn't work for my brother!" I said, "I still want my $1." I got my $1 back, but I never worked for his brother again.

There was one gang boss who raffled off a radio. He had 12 men in his gang. Every week, everybody in the gang bought a chance on the radio for $1. I don't know how many years this went on, but there was never a drawing. If you're only making $25 or $30 a week, $12 is quite a little addition. In other cases—remember, under prohibition liquor was illegal until 1933—a bottle of moonshine whiskey passed to a gang boss bought a job.

The employers cared little about safety. If it slowed the work down, they didn't care if they killed five or six men a year in Portland from waterfront accidents. Any way you could think of to kill a man, we managed to do it. If you took me down to the waterfront, was killed just a few years after the bosses dropped a load of pipe laying in the shelter deck with one end sticking out over the open hatch.

We all got a button when we joined the union, but nobody dared to wear one before the strike. Your gang boss might have joined the union too, but if he showed up with a bunch of men with buttons on their hats, the walking boss, if he was a good company man, was not going to hire that gang. So there was kind of a blacklisting, but not as such.

Several ships were still working the morning the 34 strike started. One of my first jobs was to go around with a bunch of men to every ship in the harbor that was working and tell the gangs that everybody was out and they'd better get off the ship right now. We talked most of them into leaving. Some gangs didn't quit, but we did nothing at the time because we were just four men per group making the rounds. As the strike got going, the things we did were considerably different.

When we got organized, then those guys who were working the ships had been warned. That's why the employers kept the strikebreakers on board ship, or on the grain docks, or at Terminal 4. That way, those men didn't have to come back and work, because they had a little problem getting back on board.

One night the phone rang. It was the fellow that ran the beer up on 23rd and Barnside. He says, "Hey, we've got two guys here that sound like seacocks." We said, "Okay, we'll be there." We walked in.

Portland pickets on the first day of the great strike, May 9, 1934. On this day Ricks and others covered the waterfront telling longshore gangs the strike was on. (ILA Local 38-78 became ILWU Local 8 in 1937.)
September 2003

Lacks and the 1934 Strike in Portland

Here are two fellas sitting down, drinking. We knew three times were tough, the madams down in their rooms. They would put four to six men in a room for the duration of the strike. A lot of the area farmers were liberal, too, and donated produce to us.

I was on the soup booming detail for a while. One of my duties was to go up to the Good Eats Canteen on Burnside at 10 o'clock at night when they closed. They gave us whatever coffee and soup they had left over. We had humming committees for rooms, food, produce and everything because you couldn't get much help from other unions. In '34, what unions you had were very weak. We were what got unions going.

After the strike, the work paid 95 cents an hour. I made $210 the first 21 days. That's $10 a day. I was working pretty steady. I remember 21 days because on the 22nd day I got arrested. What happened was that a bunch of our men who were provoked by an employer agent raided this company union snack hall. A shot was fired and a scab named James Conner was killed.

When I got arrested I said, "What for?" They said, "Murder." I thought, "Ah, what a relief." This might have been for assault and battery, kidnaping or sabotage, but when they said murder, I knew I didn't do it. I wasn't there. I'd gone to the dentist that day. He was late and I was waiting alone at his office when the shooting took place. But I couldn't prove it. He had no secretary. In '34, you did well to support yourself let alone a secretary. Anyway, they picked up everybody that was any of the scabs saw or thought might be involved. I was taken to jail. You weren't allowed to call out for 24 hours. I disappeared, wiped off the face of the earth. When they questioned me, there was the assistant district attorney, "Big Bill" Browne, the head of the police Red Squad, two policemen and two detectives. You're this scared 22-year-old kid with six people throwing questions at ya and you haven't even been allowed to call out. Well, one thing, being as I hadn't been there, I could tell the truth. I didn't get confused in my story. They took us down to the City Jail and threw us into the bull pen where the drunks had been heaving their guts out. It was horrible. They were picking up two, three, four longshoremen a day. We got watery mush for breakfast with two slices of moldy bread and a little thin soup at lunch and dinner. The only thing you could buy was Milky Way candy bars. It took me 20 years before I could eat another one. After a week they moved us to the County Jail, where the food was good and they let the union or your friends bring food in to you.

There were 28 of us charged. A quirk in the law let them charge us all. Once there were 32, but we proved that four of us weren't there. When we started having our preliminary hearings at City Hall, they hauled us down and back in the Black Maria. They'd take us out at a time on a chain. We only shaved on shave day, so the public got to see these ten unshaven, rough-looking characters on the chain.

The announce that some kid who had scabbed broke down and told the police he'd seen another scab, Carl Grammer, shoot Conner. The cops found the gun, too. It matched and they had proof that Grammer did it. So we finally got turned loose.

After the strike we had our names in rotation on the dispatch board. We had to take in some scabs, including "Big Nose" Riley, who was right next to me on the list. So I got him often. I managed to work with that man for over two years, not steadily, but quite a bit, without even speaking to him. And neither, as far as I know, did anybody else in the gangs.

When the strike was over I was happy to have a little money to spend, which before I didn't have. I owed the kid at the service station $2 and I could pay that off. Today, The Oregonian says we are upper middle class on account of our good wages. Years ago we were looked down upon and called hoodlums. I do recall that Matt Moebius, one of our '34 leaders, was a Wobbly (a member of the radical Industrial Workers of the World, the Wobblies) and got to be again, on the Wobbly side and against Communism, but now I think they did more for the union and getting organized than any other.

We have to have a radical. The rest of you may hate your condition, you may go along, so long as you need some no-good so-and-so to stir it up and get you going. I think nearly all of our early top men were like this. I do recall that Matt Moebius, whether you could prove it or not. Now I don't know about Harry Bridges, but it takes someone like him to get things going and to stir things up.

I also feel we have to organize to stay alive. You just can't stand alone. You need people to back you when you have trouble. Taking in the sales people at Powell's Books, which we did recently in the new Local 5, hits my sense of humor as a good thing. It was more of a two completely opposite types of work together.

Rex Smidt

Marvin Ricks' mug shot from his 1934 arrest and his strike card.

HISTORY PROJECT

The VII, Part I

Marvin Ricks

The 1934 Strike

Portland

We kept them 12 hours a day, seven days a week. Well then, we had these 40 men that could go anywhere at any time to reinforce. And we did make two complaints.

They did capture our navy too. One of our fellas had a fishing boat that we used for a patrol boat. At Terminal 4, we were working a ship. We made slingshots and pulled up to the ship and started shooting at the pilot and the slip bosses. They were throwing shackles at us, or whatever they could find. I don't think anybody hit anybody. But they swore off John Doe warrants for the four or six of us in the boat. Then the Harbor Patrol confiscated our navy—they took our boat away and tied it up.

When the strike started, nearly all the regular police were our friends. They were working men. Then, pretty soon, you had all the good guys uptown, directing traffic, and you had every bad guy at every gate, at every dock on the waterfront. We kept them up 12 hours a day. We had other squads of us on the shift I was on. If there was trouble at a dock, they called for us and here came 40 men with a dozen riot guns. It was all hurry. Throughout the strike, the police were hired, including addresses. So they sent us a list every week of all the special officers for free. One night a sandwich, which were wrapped up and nicely with the girls' cards inside. Broadway Cab delivered the sandwiches for free. One night a few of us felt sick, so one of the sports, the waterfront, plus a bunch of special officers who happened to run into us and started shooting at the winch driver and hatch patrol confiscated our navy—they took our boat away and tied it up.

We only shaved on shave day, so the public got to see these ten unshaven, rough-looking characters on the chain.

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Marvin Ricks' mug shot from his 1934 arrest and his strike card.
Local 142 Convention is democracy at work

Story and photos by Steve Stallone

The 23rd triennial Convention of ILWU Hawaii Local 142 showed ILWU rank-and-file democracy in action. The Sept. 15-19 gathering in Honolulu brought together 425 delegates representing the local’s 18,000 members who work in such diverse industries as tourism, sugar, pineapple, longshore and general trades.

The delegates worked diligently, often meeting late into the night in their committees to fashion the Constitutional amendments, resolutions and policies that will guide the local for the next three years. Actions passed by the Convention become official after they are ratified by a plebiscite vote of the rank and file.

The theme of the Convention was “Defend our Rights...Protect our T

tions and policies that will guide the

in action. The Sept. 15-19 gathering in

President Eusebio “Bo” Lapenia set

they get to vote once every two years,

American workers have no union,”

American workers enjoy the rights

passed by the Convention become

Plain and simple—a workplace with

thousands of government workers.

Lapenia went on to point out how

“the other 86 percent of

American workers have no union,”

Lapenia said. “These workers live under a part-time democracy. Yes, they get to vote once every two years, but then for eight hours a day, five days a week, every year, they must live and work under the absolute control of their bosses. Plain and simple—a workplace with no union is a dictatorship.”

Lapenia went on to point out how Bush took away the union rights of thousands of government workers.

“It is unbelievable that this can happen in a free and democratic country,” he said. “It is even more unbelievable that the person responsible for doing this is the President of the United States who, by his example, is telling all employers that it is okay to bust unions.”

Lapenia’s remarks started what would become a week of Bush-bash

ing and preparing for a 2004 campa

pass to toss him out of the White

house.

ILWU International President

James Spinosa pressed the attack in

his speech to the delegates, telling them that taking out Bush is the union’s top political priority. Later in the Convention Dave Gregory of the AFL-CIO gave a power-point presentation on the union movement’s strategy to defeat Bush in 2004. The Convention embraced that policy by reaffirming the resolutions passed by the ILWU International Convention last May, including those calling for the union to mobilize against Bush in the upcoming elections.

Again echoing the International Convention, Local 142 delegates passed a resolution calling for health care for everyone and pledging the local to work for a single-payer system.

Recognizing that the local’s retirees outside of longshore generally do not have health benefits, the Convention took what may have been its most important and visionary action. The delegates voted to establish a Volunteer Employees Benefici

ary Association (VEBA) Trust as a way to buy health benefits more economi

ally as a group. The Trust would be funded by contributions from each unit that agrees to participate in the trust at $3.00 per member per month beginning in 2004. The Trust would fund post-retirement benefits for future retirees and assist current retirees with purchasing group med

ical and prescription drug coverage.

The delegates also passed a number of other significant resolutions. One calls on the local to adopt a comprehensive political action education program to teach business agents and unit officers how to more effectively mobilize members for political action. Understanding the non-stop push by employers for concessions, especially in the hotel industry, the delegates passed two bargaining related resolutions. One calls on the local’s leadership to aggressively pursue job security language in all contracts, and another directs all local negotiators to oppose employer attempts to insert “open shop” language into contracts.

The delegates agreed to six amendments to the Local 142 Constitution from the earlier convention in the Oahu longshore chair to attend all West Coast Longshore Division negoti

ations. Plus, one giving the Local’s Titled Officers the power to assign the chief negotiator for any unit’s first contract and another putting the Local’s Constitution in line with the International Constitution by requir

ing that all donations to local candid

ates’ campaigns come only from ILWU members and retirees.

The Convention took time out of its busy work schedule for moving testimonials honoring several long

time officers who are retiring. These included Local 142 President Lapenia, Vice President Bobby Girald, Kauai Business Agent Jesus Guirao and organizer Calvin Werner.

The delegates also heard from sev

eral guest speakers, including Inter

ational Vice President, Hawaii Wesley Furtado and new International Secretary Treas

urer Willie Adams. They were also treated to a history lesson from Ab Quon McElrath, the long-time Local 142 social worker/staffer who has been a part of the ILWU from the early days of organizing in Hawaii. Ian Ruskin gave a special performance as Harry Bridges, speaking to the delegates about the ILWU’s original organizing in Hawaii in the 1940s and then tak

ing on Bush, his war in Iraq and his disastrous economic policies.

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IBU protests privatization

by Peter Hart and Jay Ubelhart

The Puget Sound Region of the Inlandboatmen’s Union, the ILWU’s marine division, came across its members and at least 250 other people from local unions and community groups held a rally down at Pier 52 on Salmon Dock on the waterfront Sunday, Aug. 10. The spirited demonstration, echoed by IBU Puget Sound Regional Vice Jeff Engels, protested the attempt by the management of the Washington State Ferry (WSF) system to downsize or privatize 150 jobs now held by IBU workers in the galleys aboard the ferries.

Eileen McKinley Stackman, an IBU galley worker, gave a passionate speech at the rally. “We have a right to work for family wage jobs and medical benefits so we can pay our bills,” Stackman said. “We voted down now, we lose everything.”

Several labor and political leaders showed their support for the rally. Some of the IBU’s 150 members who work in the galleys of the Washington State Ferries, speaking at the Seattle waterfront rally to save these jobs. Effective Oct. 13, 2003, breaking with its past practice, the WSF has sent out a “Request for Proposal (RFP)” without any union protections to any local or national food and beverage vendor. This means that the 150 union galleys jobs could be replaced by lower paying non-union jobs or perhaps even by vending machines. Six Teamsters employed by Sodexo who deliver food and other products to the ferry system and eight members of HERE Local 8 who work at the Starbucks concession at Seattle’s Pier 52 also stand to lose their jobs. The Marine Employees’ Commission, the state agency that governs labor relations in the WSF system, held a hearing on this RFP Sept. 22.

The Puget Sound Region of the ILWU, the IBU National and other parts of the ILWU continue to mobilize members for this struggle. The IBU has filed an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) charge against the WSF with the Marine Employees’ Commission for failure to negotiate with the union over the content of the RFP since the WSF is acting as a co-employer holding and controlling the working conditions of the workers. The union plans other informational picketing of prospective bidders and continues to lobby state legislative representatives on behalf of the workers in the effort to save these union jobs.

Local 200 fights for new contract at old plant

After months of uncertainty and aggravation, the members of ILWU Local 200’s seafood division in Ketchikan, Alaska find themselves heading into contract negotiations, just as they thought they would this fall. But they won’t be renewing the agreement they’d built up over almost a decade with live fish packer Sodexho, the company that now holds the concession for the WSF’s galleys.

The WSF system is directly linked to Initiative 52, the Washington State Republican’s attempt to bring an end to the Washington state tax by eroding its past practice, the WSF has sent out a “Request for Proposal (RFP)” without any union protections to any local or national food and beverage vendor. This means that the 150 union galleys jobs could be replaced by lower paying non-union jobs or perhaps even by vending machines. Six Teamsters employed by Sodexo who deliver food and other products to the ferry system and eight members of HERE Local 8 who work at the Starbucks concession at Seattle’s Pier 52 also stand to lose their jobs. The Marine Employees’ Commission, the state agency that governs labor relations in the WSF system, held a hearing on this RFP Sept. 22.

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The Phillips family was buying back the facility it had sold to Wards Cove in 1994.

Phillips hired back all but two of the workers and kept the same manager in place. But even though they’d worked with the union for more than 18 years, they dig in their heels and refused to honor the Local 200 contract.

"After the initial shock of Wards Cove closing, we were relieved to just have a job," said Robert Orr, Unit 61’s attorney Peter Saltzman of Leonard, Carder LLP. "We lost health care based on hours they’d worked the previous year."

Finally Local 200 President John Bukoskey, working with ILWU attorney Peter Saltzman of Leonard, Carder LLP filed a charge against Wards Cove with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The Board found substance to their claim that Wards Cove failed to engage in efforts at bargaining, and it notified the parties it was prepared to issue a complaint.

Wards Cove decided to settle rather than defend against the complaint. Local 200 negotiated a deal that let each worker choose between maintaining health insurance through the end of this year or getting two months’ pay at last year’s average rate.

They lost health care, seniority protection, and job security, Orr said. "Everyone took pay cuts and some people took big ones. One friend of mine went from $13.41 per hour down to $10 after 18 years. His old lady went from $12.26 to $8.50."

Labor law requires that the new owner of a unionized company has to recognize the union if it hires back at least half the union represented. E.C. Phillips argued that the union could only claim a majority of the 28-year-old work force—not of the 200-plus seasonal employees who swell the workforce during the summer.

Local 200 filed NLRB charges again. "We had a precedent in the Sitka Seafood case two years ago," Bukoskey said. In Sitka, the Board reasoned that people who didn’t work enough hours in a year to earn health and welfare benefits could not be expected to return—and so shouldn’t count in the representation decision.

Again the Board prepared to issue a complaint and the employer backed down. Phillips sent the ILWU a letter Aug. 26 agreeing to negotiate a new contract. Talks are set to begin Nov. 11.

"These are going to be tough negotiations," Orr said. "Most of us would be happy to get our old contract back." The combination of skyrocketing health costs and a slumping salmon industry will make their talks even rougher. E.C. Phillips processes several types of seafood in addition to salmon, but competition from farmed salmon has sapped every processor in Alaska.

Marcy Rein
ELECTIONS AND CHANGES

Just thought I'd give a couple perspectives on current events.

First, the just concluded International Union election. Shameful. We talk about solidarity, but with more than 41,000 members we can only get 11,000 to vote. With a turn-out like that the Bush administration can just sit back and smile, knowing we're too lazy to vote in a national election, and make union busting that much easier. To the 30,000 who did not vote, who seem only to care about paychecks, I say enjoy those paychecks now because soon the Bush administration will be making them smaller and less frequent, and don't try to cry about your laziness and greed.

Love your union, give your union your dedication and loyalty.

Your union is your union.

Rene C. Susim,

on the occasion of his retirement

as President of Local 75

I'm just returned from a couple of weeks in the hospital. I didn't even know I had a gall bladder until its stones belt me. Many times during that ordeal I declared to myself and anyone within earshot—as I often have since I retired Jan. 1, 1974—

"Thank god for Harry Bridges and the ILWU!"

You never know how much you need that pension and those health benefits until the need strikes you. I want to thank all the working members for including the pensions and health benefits of us retirees in their wage packet.

—Gene Davenport

Secretary-Treasurer, Local 54

THANK GOD FOR HARRY BRIDGES AND THE ILWU!!

Some whiz-kids will probably offer any number of intellectual reasons why so few people bother to vote, but what are the working class reasons?

There are none.

I call it to know that the very jolts of ILWU members are often at the mercy of Congress, legislative fiat, and I fear that if the majority of the membership continues to sit out union elections they will vote for more than likely ignore local, state and national elections as well.

Then, after the governor thoroughly kicks their butts, they will whine about the rotten politicians who let them down, or cry about the ones who did a job on them.

How can we expect others to help us if we do not first help ourselves? It would be an easy but fruitless blunder to blame our International Officers for the poor showing. Instead, we need to get honest and place some of the responsibility for the low turnout on the secondary leadership. In other words, local officers did not go out and adequately heat the bushes in order to achieve maximum voter participation. Longshore usually has a fairly good turnout, but even there there were many members sat on their hands in my local. Most of the ILWU port employees failed to exercise their right to vote. Other Divisions had even more dire results. In the end, however, it is the non-voters who failed to fulfill their obligations.

Paul Orloff has said, "What is the use? I don't want to vote for anyone on the ballot." So don't! Write in a name! Just Vote! Participate!

The International Executive Board needs to make voter participation a top priority in our union, and look for effective ways to dramatically increase the number of ILWU members who vote. Next year there will be extremely important national elections, so this is the time to continue to do what they've done, they will also continue to get what they've got. Being a union member carries with it a responsibility. Who else speaks for working people? Big business? Hardly! Politicians who have sold their souls to corporations in exchange for large campaign contributions? Of course not! It is up to us—to you and me—and to folks just like us to see to it that people are elected who speak up for the welfare of working families at heart.

Apathy and complacency are the enemies of workers. Shame on all of you who neglected to vote.

—Richard Austin

Local 32

GOODBYE, BROTHERS AND SISTERS

How do you say goodbye to people who through the years you learned to love, respect and admire with?

I said "brothers and sisters," but to me it's more like sons and daughters. These past three years I spent seven years that will dwell in my heart forever.

I also want to thank the people who care should be in leadership roles and I will keep that in mind when I vote in the future.

Now, for the next issue, the events of April 7, and the filing of charges against brother Jack Heyman. Brother Heyman was arrested in Oakland when the police rioted against demonstrators protesting war by carrying heavy rocks. Heyman was giving the members instructions to hold down and no violence was thrown to the ground by heavily armed police—ed. I want the government to shut us up! We need to stay proactive about this.

The International Union sent my children to the Philippines. Me, the enemy of workers. Shame on all of you who neglected to vote!

My union sent my children to school, put food on the table, provided health benefits for me, my family and my job, and I will try to do what is necessary to make both successful.

—Jerry Tyler

Local 32, retired

IEB seats new members

The ILWU International Executive Board met in San Francisco Aug. 26-27 to certify the results of the International election and install the new officers.

The Board reviewed all the candidates' campaign financial disclosure statements to make sure they were in compliance with the Constitutional restrictions and found they were.

The International Balloting Committee (Ralph Espino, Jr., Local 16; Jack Wyatt, Sr., Local 17; and Richard Kahoalii, Local 18) reported their eligibility and counted those votes. The International Election Procedures Committee (Norman R. Feldman, Local 8; John Orloff, Local 19; and Tim Chavez, Local 29) having received no further challenges, certified that all the candidates who won should be seated.

Retiring International Secretary-Treasurer Joe Ibarra then swore in the International Officers, Coast Committeemen and new board members. The new board members then elected the new International Trustees from among its members for the next three years. They will be Larry Carleton, Local 46; John Evans, Local 8; David Freiboth, IBU; Pam Green, Local 142.

The California governor recall election looming, the new board voted to put the ILWU on the record for supporting a "No" vote on the recall and voting for Lt. Governor Cruz Bustamante in case the recall passed. The board also endorsed a "No" position on Proposition 54 (the Classification by Race, Ethnicity, Color, or National Origin initiative).

The board will meet again Dec. 11-12, 2003.

Oakland Police Dept. showed who they are, thugs under color of authority. Charges should be brought against District Attorney Thomas Orloff for filing false charges against brother Heyman.

We also need to let Mayor Moonbeam know he can't count on our support in the future. Brothers and sisters, we need to stop and realize what's happening to us, we need to come together—now—or we risk losing everything very soon. Two things in life I love other than my family—my job and my union—and I will try to do what is necessary to make both successful.

There needs to be some discussion about the dismal voter participation in recent ILWU elections. Some whiz-kids will probably offer any number of intellectual reasons why so few people bothered to vote, but what are the working class reasons? There are none.

It calls me to know that the very jolts of ILWU members are often at the mercy of Congress, legislative fiat, and I fear that if the majority of the membership continues to sit out union elections they will vote for more than likely ignore local, state and national elections as well.

The years I spent with you are memories that will linger in my heart, and I thought Maersk could not exist without me—for all the good it does me, Maersk could not wait to see me go—and I thought Maersk loved me.

I am talking to you through experience, through knowledge acquired in a lifetime, surpassing any learning institutions because it is first-hand knowledge. It is the education of the heart and mind, the finest school you can go to.

Love your union because it will not turn its back on you. Your union will always be there for you. It is not like any of those companies that you thought you can't live without and couldn't live without you.

I do not put blame on any companies. Companies are businesses and businesses do not have hearts. They exist on figures and numbers. Your union is your family, your flesh and blood. Your union shares your heartaches, shells tears, and bleeds and feels for you.

Love your union, give your union your dedication and loyalty.

Your union is your union.

Rene C. Susim,

on the occasion of his retirement

as President of Local 75

The memories that I built with you are memories that will linger in my heart, and I thought Maersk could not exist without me—for all the good it does me, Maersk could not wait to see me go—and I thought Maersk loved me.

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—Larry Carleton

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T

ieb seats new members

Retiring International Secretary-Treasurer Joe Ibarra (far left) swears in the International officers, Coast Committeemen and new board members.
Koretown grocery workers seek union of their own

By Paul Lee

In the poorest and most densely populated areas of Los Angeles, a new and independent laborizing drive has sparked controversy in an entire industry and raised hope among thousands of workers. After years of low wages, benefits and often-abusive treatment by their bosses, a group of Latino and Korean immigrant workers began an ambitious organizing campaign to form an independent local union. But unlike traditional union drives, this campaign is led by a small community-based workers' center and a committed group of rank-and-file leaders.

According to organizers, the effort began in July 2001 when a group of workers at the largest Korean American owned grocery store, Assi Super LA, walked into the offices of Korean Immigrant Workers Advocates (KIWA), an advocacy group that has long represented workers in the community since 1992. The Assi workers had just walked off the job to protest the slashing of hours and elimination of overtime in one of the store's most challenging departments.

"At that time, we were outraged by the management's cut our hours. This time, the problem had been going on year after year after the store opened," said Abel Ramos, a worker from Assi Super LA who is a leader in the campaign.

KIWA had been looking for a potential organizing target. KIWA estimates that sales at the Korean American owned stores are about double the retail food sales market in Koreatown. Imagine about 700,000 Korean American owned stores in the Southern California area, the majority of which are owned by the "Big 4" retail food chains.

KIWA had been working for years to organize retail food sales market in Koreatown. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, Koreatown had one of the highest poverty rates in Los Angeles, with 35.7 percent of families living below the poverty level compared to 14.4 percent for L.A. County as a whole. Also, the Census showed that 33.9 percent of Koreatown families had children under the age of five years old fell below the poverty line, compared to 24.1 percent for L.A. County.

In response, Asa management brought in one of the largest and most infamous union-busting firms in the country and began to hold "catch-up hearings" with the workers. After weeks of waiting, the union election took place on March 9, 2002. Fifteen percent of workers voted in the union, 50 percent voted against and 15 ballots were challenged.

"We were all stunned," said Ramos. "The vote turned out that way, but it showed on the one hand the power of the workers' perseverance to withstand almost nine weeks of a union-busting campaign and unfortunately, some workers' vulnerability to management's lies and promises," Park said. "Being low-wage immigrant workers made them especially vulnerable."

Following the election, the union filed a number of objections and unfair labor practice charges with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) and began to picket the store regularly while waiting for the Board hearings to begin. The union also filed a number of complaints with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and wage and hour violation claims with the California Division of Labor Standards Enforcement (DLSE).

"And then on Aug. 1, 2002, the unthinkable happened. Asa utilized letters it had received from the Social Security Administration (SSA) which notified the company that a number of the workers' Social Security numbers were not valid and their names did not match to suspend over 50 mostly pro-union and Latino workers indefinitely," Mariscal said. "It was a massive retaliation against our basic right to organize."

KIWA and the workers argue that Asa was taking advantage of a changed political and legal climate following 9/11.

"Before 9/11, Asa would not have done this," Park said. He cited two major shifts in the nation—the expanded use of the SSA "no match" letters and the U.S. Supreme Court's March 2002 ruling known as the "Kwoka decision."

KIWA said that its sales far surpass a Ralph's market. Immediately, the workers at other stores who were in the same situation began to organize a support base of progressive community groups and individuals from throughout Los Angeles and in New York and the San Francisco Bay Area.

KIWA and the workers argue that the "no match' letter to fire workers without fear of legal liability."

The SSA's "no match" letters do not direct employers to take any adverse action against the employees whose names and Social Security numbers fail to match. The letters are only intended to inform employers so they can clarify the discrepancies with the employee so the SSA can properly maintain Social Security benefit records.

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CONVENTION PHOTOS AVAILABLE You can get your full color 15 x 24 inch prints of the 32nd International Convention of the ILWU by sending a check for $25 payable to "The Dispatcher." Mail checks to: ILWU / 1188 Franklin, 4th Floor / San Francisco, CA 94109-6900.

Smolin-Melin Scholarship Fund announces winners

The Trustees of the Smolin-Melin Scholarship Fund (Gene Vrana, Reino Erikkila and Richard Zucker-man) are pleased to announce that scholarships in the amount of $2,500 each have been awarded to the fol-
lowing children of longshore Local 10 members attending four-year colleges full time during the 2003-2004 aca-
demic year:

Kari Christensen—San Francisco State, Pilar Guillory—University of Arizona; Nicole Heyman—University of California at Los Angeles; Dina F. Perez—Loyola Marymount; Tiffany Washington—California State University at Sacramento.

In addition, the Trustees award-
ed a $1,750 scholarship to Travina Jackson who is attending City College of San Francisco full time in 2003-
2004. The scholarship amounts in-
creased this year, without precedent for the future, due to the financial status of the Fund and the relatively small applicant pool in 2003.

With these awards, the Smolin-
Melin Scholarship Fund has now dis-
tributed more than $210,000 to more
than 100 children of Local 10 mem-
bers in good standing since its incep-
tion in 1988.

Long time members of Local 10, brothers Smolin and Melin deeply believed the children of longshore
workers need and deserve a college
education—an education that has often been too expensive for their fam-
ilies to provide without assistance.


The Coast Education Committee is sponsoring educational workshops in each area of the Coast. These workshops will review the 2002 contract struggle and the plan of the Division for future challenges. The Coast Committee will be in attendance at these workshops to present a review of our struggle and offer an opportunity for rank and file to ask questions of the Division’s leadership. The workshop will also review the critical necessity of our participation in the political arena in the coming year. We encourage all registered members to make every effort to attend these workshops.

SCHEDULE FOR WORKSHOPS IN THE AREAS:
Northern California – November 3, 2003, Local 10, 400 North Point Street, San Francisco, California, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Contact persons: Dennis Buczynsker (54) and Sanders Robinson (91)
Southern California – November 17, 2003, West Coast Long Beach Hotel, 700 Queensway Drive, Long Beach, California, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Contact person: David Arian (13)
Columbia River – December 8, 2003, Local 8, 2435 NW Front Ave., Portland, Oregon, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Contact person: Brad Clark (4)
Puget Sound – December 15, 2003, Local 23, 1500 Alexander Ave East, Fife, Washington, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. (donuts and coffee at 8:30 a.m.). Contact person: Darren Williams (7)

The Coast Committee will send brochures with sign-up information, workshop agenda, etc., to all Longshore Division locals for distribution to their members and/or posting. For transportation and other logistical ques-
tions, please contact your local area education committee member listed above.

"FIRE ON PIER 32" A PLAY ABOUT THE HISTORY OF THE ILWU NOW ON VIDEO! ORDER NOW!

This past summer the stage play, "Fire on Pier 32", premiered for 6 sold out performances in San Francisco. It told the story of our union in drama and song—from the 1934 general strike through the events of the 2002 PMA lockout. "Fire" is a full length, 2.5 hour play with 11 actors and 6 brand new labor songs about us. See ILWU figures such as Harry Bridges, Henry Schmidt, and generations of rank and file longshoremen build the union and carry on our traditions! Watch scenes about the 1934 strike, the funeral of brothers Sperry and Boord, the Pacific Maritime Federation, the March inland to organize warehouse, organizing Hawaii, fighting Taft-Hartley, the 1948 and 1971 strikes, the 1960s, and the events of 2002! More than 50 ILWU historical photos portrayed during the play! No other union has ever had a play written recording its his-
tory! Get your piece of ILWU history for only:

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A Video + Audio CD or Tape: $27 + $3 s/h

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Dan Cole retires

Longtime Canadian ILWU activist Dan Cole has hung up the anchor after 51 years on the beach, 35 of them as an energetic participant in the ILWU.

Cole served as Secretary-Treasurer of longshore Local 500 in Vancouver for nine years and for three more years as Secretary-Treasurer of ILWU Canada. He was a member of almost every longshore negotiating committee for three decades and a Pension and Benefit Plan Trustee for 18 years.

He brought the major maritime unions of British Columbia together into a single administrative and meeting facility, The Maritime Labour Centre. The MLC is now widely recognized as the center of labor and pro-active activity in Vancouver.

Cole left full-time office in 1988, but remained actively involved in the union. In 1996 he and a handful of other activists rallied the Local 500 membership to demand the withdrawal of a proposal to the Minister of Labour to replace the right to strike with compulsory binding arbitration. Recognizing the strong opposition from longshoremen and all other affected unions, the proposal was never acted upon.

In 1999 when ILWU Local 518 (Vancouver) and Samplers face the loss of the majority of their work, he was chosen as chairman of the rank-and-file committee. They organized a huge rally with 1500 longshoremen and supporters, sending a message that "longshore jurisdiction was not for sale." The rally stilled all activity on the waterfront.

Major demonstrations were organized at the time when seven ILWU Pensioners were dragged into court for picketing a bulk Terminal where non-union testers and samplers were employed. The seven were eventually exonerated.

Cole brought the ILWU in 1990 into the fight to free the CharlotteFive in Canada. The Canadian locals raised thousands of dollars and he and five other Local 500 members attended the June 9, 2001 "March and Rally for Workers Rights" in Columbia, South Carolina.

Cole will be remembered for producing and distributing the publication "A Rank and File View" on numerous topics, providing reasoned arguments in defense of the union and giving current issues a much needed historic perspective. He always espoused traditional ILWU values.

At his retirement reception Cole received greetings from Vancouver City Council and community activists, including Jim Green, former ILWU International President Dave Arian, the Marine and Boilermakers Union and the Graneworkers Local 333 in thanks for his support during their recent four-month lockout.

"Ken Riley of ILA Local 1422 stated in part, "Your efforts during our struggle with the Charleston Five have been priceless, and we will always be indebted to you."

The President of the British Columbia Maritime Employers Association, Frank Puercato wrote, "Your self-defense of the union and its members was never in doubt, even though at times it put us at odds. I know you did what you thought was necessary and always in their interest. Now could ask for more."

Cole will remain active through the Canadian ILWU Pensioners organization while pursuing other political and community interests.

Longshore retired, decide their fate and survivors

Dan Cole

More awards for The Dispatcher

The International Labor Communications Association, the organization of union publication editors and communication directors in the AFL-CIO and the Canadian Labor Congress, announced the winners of its journalism/media contest for 2002 and The Dispatcher won four awards.

Dispatcher editor Steve Stallone won first place for best column for his piece "Erronegance" on the Enron scandal that ran in the January issue. Regular Dispatcher contributor Maria Brooks won third place for best feature story for her article "With Winches and Watercolors: Artists on the Waterfront" about ILWU artists that ran in the February issue. Dispatcher deputy editor Steve Stallone won first place for best column for his oral histories of ILWU legendary leaders Jack Hall and Leo Goldblatt that ran in the September, October and November issues.

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ILWU Book & Video Sale

Books and videos about the ILWU are available from the union's library at discounted prices!

**BOOKS:**
- **The ILWU Story:** unrolls the history of the union from its origins to the present, complete with recollections from the men and women who built the union, in their own words, and dozens of rare photos of the union in action. $7.00
- **The Big Strike** By Mike Quin: the classic partisan account of the 1934 strike. $16.50
- **Workers on the Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s** By Bruce Nelson: the most complete history of the origins, meaning, and impact of the 1934 strike. $13.00
- **The Union Makes Us Strong: Radical Unionism on the San Francisco Waterfront** By David Wellman: the important new study of longshoring in the ILWU. $15.00 (paperback)
- **A Terrible Anger: The 1934 Waterfront and General Strike in San Francisco** By David Selvin: the newest and best single narrative history about the San Francisco events of 1934. $16.50
- **The March Inland: Origins of the ILWU Warehouse Division 1934-1938** By Harvey Schwartz: new edition of the only comprehensive account of the union's organizing campaign in the northern California warehouse and distribution industry. $9.00

**VIDEOS:**
- **We Are the ILWU** A 30-minute color video introducing the principles and traditions of the ILWU. Features active and retired members talking about what the union meant in their lives and what it needs to survive and thrive, along with film clips, historical photos and an original musical score. $5.00
- **Life on the Beam: A Memorial to Harry Bridges** A 17-minute VHS video production by California Working Group, Inc., memorializes Harry Bridges through still photographs, recorded interviews, and reminiscences. Originally produced for the 1990 memorial service in San Francisco. $28.00
- **The Dispatcher** Beautiful, hardcover collections of The Dispatcher for 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002 are now available. These are a must for Locals and individuals keeping a record of the union’s activities. Get your copies of the ILWU’s award-winning newspaper while the limited supply lasts. Send a check for $50.00 for each volume (year) to The Dispatcher at:

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