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Beat Bush in November

By James Spinosa
ILWU International President

In less than 10 months—D—Day, Nov. 2, 2004—the future of our country and that of the whole world will be decided. If George W. Bush wins another four years in the White House, both houses of Congress remain controlled by the Republicans, the labor movement will be facing its biggest crisis since the McCarthy witch hunts of the 1950s.

The fate of all American working—union and non—union—of working people around the world, of human and civil rights and of the global environment hang in the balance. Fathoming the depths of damage Bush has done in the three years since he lost the election—while knowing he faced another race—it’s hard to imagine what he’ll dare to do if he wins this time and doesn’t ever have to face voters again.

Between war, globalization, unemployment and privatization, working people haven’t faced so grim a reality since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Back then a desperate working class mobilized in large part by the West Coast Maritime Strike of 1934 and its victory that established the ILWU, stemmed the tide of the corporate greed of the 1920s. It brought unions, decent wages and conditions and basic human dignity to workers. It paved the way for employer—paid vacations, health care and pensions—all now under attack by the employers and the Bush administration.

Once again the ILWU is challenged to become a force in turning the labor movement into the leaders of a social movement. Even if the deck seems stacked against us, we are not without hope. This union has faced odds this tough before.

The ILWU’s International Convention last spring decided almost unanimously that beating Bush in November 2004 is the number one goal of the union. We don’t stand much of a chance of moving forward on our other programs until Bush is out of the way. We are already moving on the Convention’s mandate and are continuing to develop our strategies to stop Bush’s war on workers.

First, all members must donate as much as they can to our Political Action Fund. It is an unfortunate truth of politics and power that money opens doors when our rank— and—file legislators go to the halls of Congress to lobby for our issues, be they port security to protect our longshoremen, or cabotage laws to protect our ILWU members, or support for the domestic sugar industry to protect our sugar workers in Hawaii and California’s occupational health and safety, Social Security or trade agreements that affect all of us, including all American working people.

One thing we learned during the 2002 longshore contract struggle, when Congressional Republicans were threatening to pass laws taking away our rights to strike and bargain collectively, is that we need friends in high places. And if we are to withstand the employers’ continuing onslaught of slanders against us, we need to make sure that those who stood up for our union instead of another four years in the White House. With your contribution, the job you save may be your own. (See page 4 for details on how to donate to the ILWU Political Action Fund.)

But money alone is not enough. We need every ILWU member to become a political activist. First you must be registered to vote so your voice can be added to the chorus calling for change.

But the ILWU, although strong and vocal, is a small union. So we need each member’s voice to be amplified. That means you need to make sure everyone in your family eligible to vote is registered, and that all your friends and their families, friends and co—workers are registered and understand what is at stake for working people in November.

From there we need to turn to our communities. The ILWU needs to be visible in our communities, leading and inspiring by example. You can join these coordinated efforts by volunteering at your local. Your local officers will help you plug in with the work of the ILWU, District Councils—the political organizations of the union in each region—and the area’s Central Labor Councils—the political coalition of all AFL—CIO unions locally.

On June 20 the ILWU International Officers and Coast Committee men convened a meeting of the officers of our District Councils, our Coast Legislative Action Committee and other political activists in the union to map out and coordinate our fundraising, campaigning and lobbying efforts. Your union has a plan and we are moving with it.

But the ILWU will not be acting alone. We are already working with the national AFL—CIO to multiply our efforts. While we will focus most of our attention on the states where we live—California, Oregon, Washington, Alaska and Hawaii—we plan to take our influence nation—wide.

In the November 2002 Congressional elections we pioneered a new program with the AFL—CIO, sending more than 30 members to campaign in battleground states, those swing states where the vote was close and we could help make the difference between victory and defeat. Our ILWU political road warriors were an inspiration to union members wherever they went, galvanizing the campaign and getting out the vote. In 2004 we are planning to send at least 100 ILWU activists out on the campaign trail.

We do not stand a chance of moving forward on our programs until Bush is out of the way.

We don’t stand a chance of moving forward on our programs until Bush is out of the way.
January 2004

**ILWU rallies to support grocery workers**

by Tom Price

Grocery workers in Southern California are feeling the pain as their strike/lockout enters its fourth month. While the basics are losing millions of dollars, workers are losing their health coverage. Without help, they might not be able to hold out much longer.

But they are not alone. Unions around the country are rallying to their cause. The AFL-CIO is throwing its full weight behind the contract fight, as it did with the ILWU longshore contract in 2002 and theチャイナファイター five-month struggle a year before. And the ILWU, led by its Southern California locals, has stepped up and pledged more than $1 million to keep the workers’ families fed and to help workers in their hour of need.

The ILWU’s International Executive Board has declared this struggle a top priority and set aside $1 million specifically for the cause at its Dec. 11-12 meeting.

This fight is all about health care and who pays. Workers, retirees, and union members, will have coverage. The grocery companies are proposing a plan that within a few years would slash coverage to almost nothing. The employees have said publicly they are willing to take the losses of a prolonged strike to reap the savings of not paying for their health care. About 60,000 members of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union at 659 stores have been affected. If the Southern California workers go down, the company is expected to shut down all their operations.

While people are getting more aware of this issue, Unions around the country are feeling the pain as their strike/lockout enters its fourth month. While the basics are losing millions of dollars, workers are losing their health coverage. Without help, they might not be able to hold out much longer.

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Bush moons nation's transportation needs

By Lindsay McLaughlin
ILWU Legislative Director

President Bush could create hundreds of thousands of good-paying jobs by funding the nation's transportation needs while at the same time dramatically improving the safety of the American people, but Bush is on the moon.

The Bush administration unveiled its transportation funding plans for the next six years May 14, 2003, a plan inadequate to meet the nation's transportation needs. The proposal would authorize $247 billion over the next six years, in spite of the fact that the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) says that the U.S. would have to invest at least $375 billion to begin to meet the need. The Bush administration has given Congress the spotty encouragement that it does not have money to meet the transportation infrastructure that would benefit the country now and in the future. But, we apparently have enough money to go back to the moon.

Bush has spent all the nation's reserves on massive tax cuts for the wealthy and the occupation of Iraq. Those are his priorities—not jobs, not safety and not the welfare of the American people.

Why should America address the highway and transportation needs of the country? First and foremost, funding will enhance public safety. Each year 42,000 motorists are killed in the U.S. Nearly a third of all fatal crashes each year are caused by substandard roadway conditions or roadside hazards. Highway fatalities remain the leading cause of death for young drivers. On top of these personal tragedies of deaths and injuries, the economic cost of these accidents is more than $230 billion per year.

Secondly, highway and transit funding creates thousands of good-paying jobs. For every $1 billion invested in federal highway and transit spending, 7,500 good-paying jobs are created or sustained, according to the Bush administration's own figures. Highway and transit spending has been shown to stimulate economic activity for the nation. The nation's economy produces by decreasing time spent on the road, and encourage new job-creating developments. The federal share of the nation's freight moves on highways, an annual value to the economy of $184 billion.

Finally, considering the congestion and highway safety impacts of insufficient investments in transportation alone, our economy is losing $300 billion per year because we are not investing the necessary resources to maintain and improve our nation's transportation system. We cannot afford to continue to shortchange these systems. To effectively reduce congestion, to increase mobility, to truly improve highway safety and to achieve continuing long-term increases in productivity and economic growth, we must invest in our nation's transportation future. But we may be the miss the boat on this initiative, because Bush is going to the moon.

A bi-partisan solution to this problem is being proposed. Rep. Don Young (R -AK) and Rep. James Oberstar (D -MN) have introduced the Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users. This bill would provide $298 billion on highway programs for the next six years and increase public transit funding $69 billion over the next six years. The proponents claim the legislation will create 1.7 million new jobs by 2009.

Recently, the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure asked for transportation unions' thoughts about the bill, including our overall view of it and ways to improve it. We made several suggestions that would greatly advance the interests of ILWU members.

First, the ILWU supports the bill's commitment for ferry transportation. The Transportation Equity Act allocates up to $125 million for the construction of ferry boats and ferry terminal facilities. This increased funding has already been allocated among three states: Alaska, New Jersey, and Washington. Yet the San Francisco Bay Area ferry system currently has the third largest passenger ridership, and has launched an initiative to more than double that. This critical transportation project will greatly help to alleviate bridge traffic in the Bay Area. The ILWU and other transportation unions have asked Young and Oberstar to include a set-aside for the San Francisco Bay Area.

Secondly, the ILWU asked the sponsors of the legislation to ensure that chassis maintained at the docks are safe to be taken over the road. Chassis, special trailers fitted with wheels used to transport shipping containers, are vital to intermodal transport in the U.S. Global shipping companies transport goods to the U.S. in large containers, thousands of which are mounted on chassis and hauled by trucks to their final destination. Yet these chassis are not sufficiently inspected for structural or mechanical defects, nor are they maintained to federal standards, placing motorists on America's highways at risk.

Current law allows chassis owners—usually steamship lines and global shipping companies—to evade responsibility for the safety of their equipment and does not penalize owners for safety problems with their equipment or for safety violations. Instead, motor carriers and their drivers are held accountable when an unsafe chassis is discovered by law enforcement officers on the road, despite the fact that they do not control the equipment. Motor carriers and their employees do not have the expertise to inspect chassis for defects, and more importantly, they are not authorized to perform any necessary repairs. This places drivers in the untenable position of being financially responsible for unsafe equipment that they ultimately can do nothing about.

So the ILWU requested legislative language in the bill to require equipment inspectors to inspect and maintain all intermodal equipment under their control, and be held responsible if a chassis fails to meet federal motor carrier safety regulations. In addition, this language should require the DOT to establish a process to remove violations for unsafe chassis from the records of drivers and motor carriers.

Lastly, the ILWU testified before a Congressional panel concerning the congestion crisis around our nation's ports. We specifically emphasized the crisis in Southern California concerning the I-710 freeway and the bottleneck of trucks in and out of the Ports of Los Angeles/Long Beach. As a consequence of our voices and others, the bill includes a section on freight intermodal connectors which would make freight related highway projects designed to relieve congestion eligible to the federal funds. Additionally, the bill includes a section regarding projects of national and regional significance. Under current law, surface transportation programs rely primarily on formula capitalization. High-cost transportation infrastructure facilities that address critical national economic and transportation needs. The Act for the interior of the country from Bush's agenda.

At this point we simply do not know whether the nation will receive comprehensive six-year transportation bill that meets the needs of the nation. Much depends on how far Republicans are willing to go to fight a Republican administration's and its budget priorities. Bush is spending at least $2 trillion in new future spending on things like Mars and moon explorations, new tax cuts, missile defense and marriage promotion.

At the same time, his priority is to cut biomedical research, health care, job training, veterans funding and transportation programs. We specifically emphasized the congestion crisis around our nation's ports. We specifically emphasized the crisis in Southern California concerning the I-710 freeway and the bottlenecks of trucks in and out of the Ports of Los Angeles/Long Beach. As a consequence of our voices and others, the bill includes a section on freight intermodal connectors which would make freight related highway projects designed to relieve congestion eligible to the federal funds. Additionally, the bill includes a section regarding projects of national and regional significance. Under current law, surface transportation programs rely primarily on formula capitalization. High-cost transportation infrastructure facilities that address critical national economic and transportation needs. The Act for the interior of the country from Bush's agenda.

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PROP 56: BUSTING BUDGET GRIDLOCK

Republicans played California politics like a banjo—Democrats played like a violin, but pitched in. The 2002 ballot was the year California voters got their comeuppance. The ballot was long, but not as long as the state's spending gridlock, and the list of Republicans' bond Whether the results of November's elections will bring prop 56 to life is not yet clear. But what is clear is that the radical Republican minority was tossed out of office last fall. But with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, despite his campaign promises to leave it alone. His budget proposals, is faring badly under Schwarz- neberger, despite his campaign promises to leave it alone. His budget proposals, is faring badly under Schwarz-
SOLIDARITY BEATS THE ODDS FOR LOCAL 17

Finally the former Fleming workers in ILWU warehouse Local 17 could exhale. They ratified a contract with the new employer, C&S Wholesale Grocers, after an overwhelmingly margin Jan. 17—ending two drifted years of upheaval and fights to strong solidarity with the Teamsters.

Around 170 Local 17 members worked at the Sacramento distribution center for Fleming, the top U.S. grocery distributor. They covered all the routine warehouse jobs except for the hostler, palletizer and forklift positions filled by Teamsters Local 150 and the inventory clerk jobs, which are non-union.

The ILWU group learned in early 2002, after its main customer, K-Mart, went bankrupt, Local 17's jobs were lost that year. Fleming began shedding its retail stores and the SEC started looking into its accounting practices.

Local 17's contract with Fleming was set to expire May 31, 2003. Negotiations began in March. Fleming declared bankruptcy April 1. At the table, management demanded a 10 percent salary cut, while the Teamster warehouse division demanded an 8 percent increase. But Fleming's unstable situation meant business and we had a united front," Willie Adams said. "We told them to respect picket lines. The higher rate will still give them to keep all their holidays and the vacation accrued under Fleming's. The new management agreed to honor Local 17 members' seniority and past practices at the shop, and to keep the contract language allowing them to respect picket lines. The agreement will expire May 31, 2007, giving them a common expiration date with Local 150 for the first time.

"For a new company coming in that has a third of the business the old one did, this is a good contract," Jenkins said. "I don't know if we would've done better with a solvent Fleming."

Burdan gave lots of credit to his fellow negotiating team members—Wyatt, Jenkins, Carter, Brian Gerring, Ernest Vasquez and Chief Steward Dale Parson.

"This is one of the best teams I've seen," he said. "A few months before, these guys didn't know if they'd have jobs. The company thought they could use the four factor, but the whole bargaining unit upheld the ILWU traditions and principles of fighting back. We pulled together and got this done."

FERRY WORKERS FIGHT FOR THEIR JOBS

Ferry Workers Fight for Their Jobs

Thanks to union solidarity, political pressure and strategic organizing, some 130 food service vendors aboard the Washington State Ferries may yet get their jobs back.

Washington State Ferries management announced Dec. 30, 2003 it could not reach an agreement with Sodexho, the food service vendor aboard the ferries, to extend its contract and keep the galleys onboard for the next two years. They gave up six of 12 sick days per year and will lose two days of vacation next year—but they get to keep all their holidays and the vacation accrued under Fleming.

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The team and the IBU have a relationship concerning labor protections in the RFP process," IBU President David Freiboth commentcd. "If WSF wishes to modify those protections they are obligated to barg. The IBU did just that and Sodexho went back to WSF with its offer. WSF would not accept the Sodexho terms and offered a two-week extension to try to work out a longer deal. Sodexho found this unacceptable and decided to shut down its operations as of midnight, Dec. 31. Informal informational pickets started going up at terminals the next day.

The financial troubles in the WSF system is directly linked to Initiative 199, passed in November 1999, and subsequent legislation eliminating the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (22 of the votes of all motor vehicles) in the state of Washington. Loss of the car tax revenue sucked 20 percent of the operating funding and 75 percent of the capital funding from the public ferry system. WSF management is now looking to make up some of that lost revenue by taking money from union workers.

Earlier last year Sodexho informed WSF that it did not want to continue its contract with WSF under the current terms, claiming they were losing too much money. WSF then started the process for Requests for Proposals (RFP) for new food services vendors that did not include long-established worker protection language to give preferential hiring to the existing galley workers and to honor the terms and conditions of their current contract. The IBU filled an unfair Labor Practice charge against WSF because of the omission passed Dec. 8. The union won a huge victory when the Marine Employee's Commission, the state body that governs labor relations in the WSF, ruled that WSF had violated labor law and ordered it to rescind the RFP's that did not contain worker protection language.

"The state and the IBU have a relationship concerning labor protections in the RFP process," IBU President David Freiboth commented. "If WSF wishes to modify those protections they are obligated to bargain with the IBU."

WSF is currently engaged in an effort to reach court action, to get the MEC ruling overturned. The first RFP round produced no bidders for the contract and WSF put out new requests with letters of intent due Jan. 9. As of Jan. 13, 21 companies submitted letters of intent for on-shore food and beverage services. Final proposals are due Feb. 10.

WSF has asked potential bidders to contact the IBU about their proposals. According to Dennis Conklin, any new vendors must now honor the current terms and conditions of the contract and rehire laid off Sodexho workers. As of press time only one potential bidder has contacted the IBU and expressed interest in good news for IBU workers, the earliest that a full-scale galley operation could be up and running wouldn't be until late March or April.

The IBU is continuing to run informational pickets and inform the public that they need to contact their legislators, the state Transportation Commissioners, as well as the governor to put pressure on WSF to come to an agreement and reopen the galley.

WSF CEO Thorn's vision of a new way to do business aboard the ferries has resulted in the loss of jobs from an agreement to reopen the galley. WSF CEO Thorn's vision of a new way to do business aboard the ferries has resulted in the loss of jobs. Inconvenience for thousands of ferry riders every day, and the loss of any revenue the state could have continued to make from the concessions for a period of three to four months.

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—Jay Schiebold and Peter Hart

ELECTIONS BRING BIG CHANGES IN LOCAL 142 LEADERSHIP

HONOLULU—As the result of local-wide elections held last November, close to half, or 13 of the 27 elected full-time offices of Hawaii's Local 142, will be filled by new people.

The biggest change occurred in the top offices of the local, where five of the seven executive positions will be filled by new people, including the three highest officers—president, vice-pres-
ident, and secretary-treasurer—we are newly elected. Former Hawaii Division director Fred Galdones will take the load as president and Maui member Donna Domingo will serve as vice-president. Guy Fujimura is the only incumbent, having served as the local’s secretary-treasurer since 1985.

The next highest positions are the four division directors—two in Hawaii, one in Maui, Kauai, and Oahu—who administer the work of the union in their division. Three of the division directors will be new to the job, however, all three have many years of experience as business agents.

After serving 20 years as a business agent, Willy Kennison will take on a new position as head of Maui division. Former business agent Richard Baker will take over as Hawaii division director. Baker served 15 years as a business agent. Dave Morii will take office as the new Oahu division director. Morii has 11 years of experience as a business agent. Kauai’s director, Clayton Della Cruz, is the only incumbent, with 20 years of experience and as a full-time officer.

The three titled officers and four division directors also serve as the local’s legislative coordinators. They serve monthly to coordinate the work of the union at the state level. In addition, the division directors also serve as the chief negotiators and grievance handlers.

Of the 20 elected business agents (BA), who carry out the day-to-day work of the local, more than half or 11 will be fairly new to the job. Six were newly elected and another five business agents were mid-term appointments, serving less than two years in office.

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Jack Mulvoy

STEWARDS TRAINING
EMPOWERERS RANK AND FILE

Stewards at mine, mineral processing plant, have a day and a half to prepare to attend an intensive training workshop sponsored by the ILWU International Executive Board. Stewards are away on union business, all stewards and local officers attended the workshop. Some of the stewards included alliance division workers from longshore Local 13 and chemical processing/packaging workers from Local 20.

Some of our stewards are pretty well seasoned, but we figured we could all learn something. Local 30 President Trinidad Equisvel III got in touch with the International Executive Board regarding the training program.

The training program was initially developed under the direction of former International Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer Joe Ibarra. Willie Adams stepped into the role of Assistant to Ibarra and will hold that position and he and Ibarra led the training.

We promised our people we would get more involved in the International, and this is one way to do it, said Adams. We expect that stewards and secretory-treasurers training—will help us grow as stewards and new people involved in our union.

The course began with the rights and responsibilities of stewards as defined by law and by their own contract. It uses a combination of formal presentations, role-playing, and peer-to-peer interaction to increase stewards understanding of their tasks on the job. These tasks include contract administration, grievance handling, negotiations and member mobilization.

Stewards are on the union’s front line of defense. They represent the workers on the job, but they also are on the front line in representing the union to the community. Our stewards never cease their efforts to educate the community on the history of the union and its place in the community.

International staffers Russ Bargaran, Research Director, and of the Vrana, Director of Educational Services and Librarian, spent many hours developing materials for the training. Because of the widely diverse groups represented by the union, the materials have to be flexible and adaptable to different work places. Local 30 workers mine borax in a huge open pit. They are geographically isolated from each other and from the rest of the union. They also face an unusually hostile employer, the huge multi-national Rio Tinto Ltd.

The training satisfied their thirst for knowledge, and that knowledge given them the strength and courage to stand up more confidently in representing the workers. The workers at Vrana said, "It was really important for them to develop the skills in evaluating grievances to know that there were the basis for a campaign on the job."

They had a lot of new members in the local who had no previous union experience, and we need show them how to handle grievances, I think both the new and the more seasoned people really got a lot out of it."
What were these guys thinking?

TWO-HEADED SPACE ALIEN
SHRINKS LABOR MOVEMENT
by Gary Huck and Mike Konopacki
Capitalism Sucks Press
112 pages, $14.95

A BOOK REVIEW OF SORTS
by Kathy Wilkes

Readers of The Dispatcher are no strangers to labor cartoonists Gary Huck and Mike Konopacki. Their art has appeared in the paper for well over a decade, giving punch and focus to issues important to ILWU members, retirees and their families.

Case in point: Last year, at the height of the dispute between the ILWU and the Pacific Maritime Association, Mike’s “Homeland Security” cartoon of President Bush holding a gun to the head of a longshoreman was duplicated, adapted and distributed up and down the coast, much to the delight of union members and the consternation of FMA executives (especially Joe Minaccce whose name was substituted for Bush’s after a particularly nasty bargaining session).

And that’s just one example of why, for many of us in the labor movement, Gary and Mike are like old friends: always there when you need them. Their cartoons are a boon to busy labor editors, the bane of bad employers and a boost to beleaguered working stiffs everywhere.

Spoofing supermarket tabloids, their fifth and newest book, “Two-Headed Space Alien Shrinks Labor Movement,” gets its name from the fact that people often confuse these self-labeled “hirute, four-eyed cheeze heads” from Wisconsin who, since forming Huck/Konopacki Labor Cartoons in 1983, have documented with their art the shock and awe of a labor movement under siege.

In typical tabloid-ese, the book charges Huck with using extraterrestrial powers to single-handedly shrink union membership in the U.S. by more than seven percent. While vehemently denying any affiliation with the “AFL-CIO,” they admit they had havoc in mind when they put their heads together 20 years ago and started syndicating their monthly package of labor cartoons.

“We wanted to serve labor, not shrink it,” they protest. “We thought we could use humor and acerbic working-class wit to subvert the capitalist conspiracy against worker solidarity and creativity.”

Apparently they never heard of Murphy’s Law.

It comes as no surprise, then, that Pete Mueller, whose own cartoons have appeared in The New Yorker, The Progressive and other national publications, begins his foreword to “Two-Headed Space Alien” with the question: “What were these guys thinking?”

The answer is in their art.

If a picture is worth a thousand words, H/K cartoons speak volumes about the stuff that really matters to working people, the stuff the mainstream media usually ignores. Stuff like decent wages and working conditions; safety in the workplace and beheading for our families; the right and the inevitable fight to support a union; a future for our kids through a good education; a future for ourselves through retirement with dignity; employment, unemployment and underemployment; free trade vs. fair trade; America’s eroding marketplace; the “invisible hand of the marketplace” that pumps up corporate piggery and slashes our social safety net.

Despite labor’s decline there’s still plenty of move in the movement, and it’s those movers and shakers who are H/K’s most avid fans. Whatever the issue, nothing tops up the ranks like a swift kick in the seat of power, and nothing accomplishes that better than labor cartoons plastered on picket signs, lockers, bulletin boards and all over the union newspaper. Bosses really hate that.

And then there’s politics. The 2000 Florida election coup, 9/11, war and peace, blood and oil: the Bill of Rights and the USA PATRIOT Act; the twisted brain of our “Pretzel Pres”; our two-faced, one-party system, those ever-present, well-heeled, high-rolling, back-stabbing, hoodwinking, double-dealing, union-busting, money-grubbing, democracy-destroying corporate criminals—and the politicians they own.

Thank your lucky stars, H/K’s got it covered. Otherwise, pass the Prozac, please.

H/K Labor Cartoons aren’t just about sorely needed comic relief, though. They make us think, and that’s the last thing the powers-that-be want us to do. Masters at emancipating the high and mighty, H/K’s enterprise boldly goes where no one has gone before, which is precisely why the “kept press” won’t touch them with a two-foot light saber. Maybe that space alien thing isn’t so far off the mark after all.

Celebrating Huck/Konopacki’s 20-year collaboration, “Two-Headed Space Alien” also features other works by the artists, including Gary’s hilarious gag cartoons, “Oddobservations,” and moving tributes to John Lennon, Malcolm X and Lenny Bruce, along with Mike’s occasional zine, Wage Slave World News, and thought-provoking political comics for Amnesty International and others.

At $14.95, the book is a bargain and can be purchased online at http://solidarity.org/hkcartoons/. Even if you don’t buy the book, check out the website for cartoons, animations, political comics, web links and more. It’s fun, it’s funny, it’s... out of this world.

Kathy Wilkes is past editor of The Dispatcher and has done freelance work for several other labor publications, all on this planet.
January 2004

One day at a time: George Cobbs retires
By Maria Brooks

The mayor of San Francisco declared Jan. 6, "George Cobbs Day." A member of ILWU Local 10 for 38 years, Cobbs is hanging the hook. To celebrate his extraordinary career, the Local put on the glitz with a candle lit retirement dinner. The event turned into a loving tribute to a man who has offered many a second chance at life.

George Cobbs is Coast Director of the ILWU-PMA Alcoholism/Drug Recovery Program and a certified substance abuse counselor. Not under his stewardship the program has grown into a nationally recognized model, one that has been copied around the country.

Colleagues flocked to celebrate his retirement. They were members of the national organization of Employee Assistance Professionals. We met in the thousands, EAPA counselors work in recovery programs from Seattle to Maine. Cobbs has been international president of the organization. He's traveled worldwide and met with the powerful. He's even spent an evening at the White House.

Although he can schmooze with bureaucrats and charm elected brass, he appears most comfortable in the company of us shun—the down and out, the drunks and drug addicts.

"I ain't worth shit," Cobbs' voice cut through the air, "just an alcoholic who wants to change," said Honey Powell of Local 10 who went on to laudatory praises from friends and colleagues.

International Longshore and Warehouse Union
San Francisco, California

Statement of Policy in Honor of Brother George Cobbs
Upon His Hanging Up the Hook

Brother George Cobbs is a member of Local 10 from the class '65, Book No. 6651. Brother Cobbs is a pioneer in alcohol and drug counseling. Brother Cobbs is a member of Local 10 from the class '65, Book No. 6651. He is the first and only Director of the ILWU-PMA Drug & Alcohol Recovery Program. Brother Cobbs' work has helped create a community for brothers and sisters. He has served in this capacity since 1980. His leadership has promoted the development of drug and alcohol recovery programs through the ILWU and beyond.

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ASHAMED OF THE DISPATCHER

I’m an affiliate of the ILWU in Local 20 in Wilmington, Ca., and I am totally ashamed of your political stance on war, peace, and your false attitude toward the Iraq war. There probably aren’t enough points AMONG OUR WORKERS than the huggist liberal left. I hope that the Dispatchers of San Francisco with the liberal 9th Circuit Court is not the reason you’re liberal, so the Dispatchers in your Nation to a strong labor advocate, I’d vote conservative just to keep a liberal from getting into power. If I can’t stomach your liberalism. What happens on one side of the road or is it called moderate?

With your continual views and me as a veteran, I am embarrassed to be affiliated with your group, as many of your friends are as well.

To say we, the U.S., is occupying Iraq sounds like you got some Arab writing the front page, or even a terrorist, you liberal bastards.

Keep your paper and send it to someone who will read it. It does not belong in a society that will read it in the trash, where it belongs.

I am especially proud to be the first veteran member from Tacoma. I hope you will like to thank all ILWU pensioners, current ILWU members, current ILWU members, former ILWU members, attorney Bob Duggan for their hard work and compassion. They show us day to day what solidarity really means.

Mike Honey,

Chair, Bridge Fund

Professor of Ethnic and Labor Studies
American History, University of Washington

Ralph Rooker retires

After working on the San Francisco Bay waterfront for 41 years, Local 10’s Ralph Rooker has retired.

Rooker became a member of Local 10 in 1964, having worked as a longshoreman in 1969, the work in San Francisco was almost non-existent for all ILWU members. He decided to leave labor because of work availability from 1969-1973 would be critical, but he did not think he could sit on his stomach because of the one-sided, liberal spouting of... use your magazines.

There are two sides, liberal and conservative. Fanny The Dispatcher dispatcher, the person you work for.

Keep your paper and send it to someone who will read it. It does not get read here at my home, it only gets tossed in the trash, where it belongs.

Port Townsend WA

Gaston (Babe) Brochier and members of ILWU Local 20 in Wilmington, Ca., thank the ILWU workers who worked so hard for the increase of the additional wages and for all the other problems you had to go through. We who are retired appreciate your hard work and the pension increase. It was a godsend, well needed.

Gaston is very ill at this point in time as well as his wife. He has his eyes light up as he enjoys to hear the news.

God bless all of you and congratulation to all those who were voted in office. Happy New Year and May God keep you safe and in good health in 2003 and beyond. Thank you very much!

Gaston (Babe) and Alavera Brochier

Local 34 retired

LELLI ORAL HISTORY APPRECIATED

Thanks to Harvey Schwartz for his wonderful oral history with Tacoma’s Phil Lelli in the November Dispatcher. Phil is a unique friend to everyone in the labor community in the Pacific Northwest, and helps guide me and others in doing labor. He and other ILWU members and pensioners in Local 23 and Local 19, Local 52 and other locals in the U.S. and Canada were and are in establishing the Harry Bridges endowed chair in labor studies at the University of Washington, which is the only endowed chair at the University and the world, and this is the most unique one. It is the only endowed chair named after a labor leader and (what a leader!) that I am aware of in the U.S., and perhaps the only endowed chair funded by hundreds of small donations from workers.

I am especially proud to be the first faculty member from Tacoma to hold this chair. I would like to thank all ILWU pensioners, current ILWU members, former ILWU members, attorney Bob Duggan for their hard work and compassion. They show us day to day what solidarity really means.

Mike Honey,

Chair, Bridge Fund

Professor of Ethnic and Labor Studies
American History, University of Washington

March 21, 2004

Ralph Rooker gets his book number

It was the allocation of work or simply on the job site. Rooker also served as a case conference delegate for the times for the local between 1983 and 2003. He attended Conventions in San Diego, and San Francisco. Rooker’s retirement will be a loss for the ILWU. We know that he will be an active pensioner, someone who will live to 100, and lend his eyesight to our membership. His undying loyalty to the ILWU, its hiring hall and membership, and to the ILWU’s Board of Directors, will be missed. It will be a loss of honesty and leadership. Thank you, Ralph, for your work and dedication over the years. You will be missed.

—John Castango

Secretary-Treasurer Local 10

NOTICE TO ALL ILWU-REPRESENTED EMPLOYEES, ILWU MEMBERS, FINANCIAL CORE NON-MEMBERS AND NEW HIRES

This notice applies to all ILWU-represented employees, ILWU members, nonmembers and new hires working in an ILWU bargaining unit, including members and individuals who happen to be new hires to the financial core non-union union or expulsion from union membership in any local or division affiliated with the ILWU, for the one year period following the date of this notice or until such time covered by a later notice of similar approval.

The information contained herein applies to ILWU International per capita and, for those working in the ILWU Longshore Division, the Longshore Division per capita, in a union security clause. This notice also applies to local dues and fees paid to any affiliated ILWU locals or divisions engaged or participating in the ILWU's, for the one year period following the date of this notice or until such time covered by a later notice of similar approval.

Please be advised that individuals working under a union security clause contained in a collective bargaining agreement, notwithstanding that they may be required as a condition of employment under such clause to pay union dues and any required registration fees and in writing to the ILWU International Secretary-Treasurer, resign or decline union membership and choose to become a "financial core member" at any time. Such "financial core members" are deemed to be in compliance with any union security clause. Members of any specific wording to the contrary, as long as they pay at least the regular and periodic financial core dues or fees properly charged by their bargaining representatives.

Please be advised, however, that financial core members deprive themselves of the valuable rights of union membership in the ILWU and their ILWU local or division. A financial core member does not have the right to vote, nominate for office, hold office, or be a candidate for office in the ILWU, nor may he/she participate in or even attend ILWU meetings or any functions of the ILWU. Such members of any specific wording to the contrary, as long as they pay at least the regular and periodic financial core dues or fees properly charged by their bargaining representatives.

 retroactive payments in respect to the financial core non-chargeable activities (e.g., legal, political, administrative, lobbying) during the one year period following the date of this notice or until such time covered by a later notice of similar approval.
January 2004

Santa visits Local 13

For more than five hours children of locked-out and striking grocery workers paraded Dec. 19 at the longshore Local 13 hall, selecting toys, feasting and meeting Santa. This year’s festivities also had a serious side, as Southern California ILWU locals banded together with pensioners and the Federated Auxiliary to provide for the children’s families.

A six-foot tall stuffed Grinch standing on a pile of coal greeted the children as they arrived. The Dr. Seuss character, who stole Christmas in the famous story, wore a sign reading “Corporate Scrooge Steven Burd.” Burd is President and CEO of Safeway, ILWU members wore elf hats and helped the kids choose presents.

Santa asked William Chavez Feipel to stand in while he finished negotiations with the elves’ and render’s union, who got everything they asked for. Feipel works as an ID mechanic in his regular job.

“With the ILWU discharging containers loaded with toys from the ships, we have always been Santa Claus on the West Coast,” said Shannon Donato, Director of the Harry Bridges Institute (HBI) and one of the organizers of the Adopt a Family program that helps UFCW families. “The union took it upon itself through Local 13 and its ‘Yes We Can’ community involvement program to organize the giant toy drive.”

The word went out through the HBI and various locals, pensioners and auxiliaries to bring unwrapped toys to the hall.

“At the Dec. 6 membership meeting every one of them walked in with a toy or an armload of toys and placed them at the base of the tree,” Donato said.

With 71,000 grocery workers off the job, the need for solidarity has rarely been greater. Warehouse Local 26, marine clerks Local 63, port pilots Local 68, walking bosses Local 94 and Federated Auxiliary 8 joined Local 13 in making it all happen. Office clerical Local 63 had a party the same day and donated extra toys to United Food and Commercial Workers locals. UFCW workers have been out since Oct. 11, when workers struck Safeway-Vons. Ralphs-Kroger and Albertsons, the other companies in the Safeway-Vons. Ralphs-Kroger and Albertsons, the other companies in the

Local 19 set up the ILWU Christmas for Kids Program as a special, tax-exempt foundation to sponsor the annual drives some 20 years ago. Members sign up to donate throughout the year.

This year the union had an opportunity to share union solidarity as well as holiday cheer with locked-out Teamsters. Local 19 supported the Darigold creamery workers when the company locked them out last August. Since then the company outsourced 60 driver jobs and eliminated 14 warehouse jobs. In all some 300 Teamsters are out of work and Darigold products are now on the AFL-CIO boycott list. Local 19’s Curt Cunningham and his partner Leona contacted Teamsters Local 86 President Mark Jones and asked what their families were doing for Christmas.

“Mark Jones told us some of the Darigold families were going to have a pretty bleak Christmas,” Curt Cunningham said. “So we offered to adopt 15 families for a Christmas party.”

Local 19 turned their hall into a party room Dec. 19 for 11 of the 15 Teamster families. The longshore workers spent about $80 on gifts per family and provided gift certificates from local grocery stores for their holiday meal. The four families that couldn’t make it got their presents from their union staff who made sure the gifts were hand-delivered.

“The regular work of the ILWU Christmas for Kids Program went on as well. Volunteers first consult ministries or social workers who locate truly needy families and then deliver the presents.”

“One of the homes we went to had no presents under the tree and eight kids,” Cunningham said. “They looked at us and must have thought ‘who are these people with longshore jackets and big red bags?’ Their faces lit up when we pulled out the presents and called out each child’s name. They took the presents and put them under the tree.”

Local 19 members also get the union’s name out and show community involvement.

“Leona and I always wear our longshore colors when we go shopping for the gifts,” Cunningham said. Leona is a past president of ILWU Federated Auxiliary 3. “She got in a conversation with an elderly couple and told them we were shopping for needy kids. They said ‘I didn’t know longshoremen did that.’ Well, there’s another convert.”

Leona Cunningham reported on another Christmas phenomena, the benefits those who give receive from their actions. Some local kids had a little trouble with the authorities the previous year and were sentenced to do community service. They carried out their stretch with the Christmas program.

“They were completely transformed,” she said. “They were so moved by giving to those who had nothing they went and donated their own presents. They came back this year to volunteer again.”

Local 23 members mobilize for holiday giving

“Within a week we had toys coming in,” Charity Committee Chair Dragan Butorac said. “The ID caseload was really above and beyond. They put the push on, they and the volunteers brought their toys early and inspired everyone else.”

The traveling longshore workers, who came to Tacoma from other ports to work, were happy to donate to a community that was not, technically, their own. Butorac and the committee went to local charities, county welfare agencies and other groups known to the local through previous drives. The YWCA and St. Leo’s hospitality kitchen provided names and addresses of needy people, and the American Legion hooked up the longshore workers with military families distressed by a parent’s deployment in Iraq.

Because so many needy people get evicted, the volunteers had to track some of them down to get them their presents.

“The toys kept coming in right up to Christmas Eve,” Butorac said. “We sold $15,000 in toys and $2,000 in gift cards,” he said. “We were happy to have a community around the holidays.”

Member participation was tremendous, Butorac said. Workers showed friendly competition to see who could raise the most money or provide the most toys. Some of the money came in $500 and $1,000 chunks from an individual or a small group.

With the hall stuffied to the rafters, volunteers worked long and hard sorting presents, loading pickups and driving to the homes of the needy. Local 23 families also found time to take toys to Everett in support of locked-out Teamsters at Darigold creamery.

“In all we had 96 bicycles, about $35,000 in toys and $20,800 in gift cards,” Butorac said. “The toy drive was the new part and a great success. The members, casuals and travelers really came out for this and they deserve all the credit.”

Christmas comes to the Local 19 hall

With Seattle’s economy in a slump, longshore Local 19’s annual holiday drive faced a special urgency this season. The members and their families were determined to respond, and 20 volunteers from ILWU families raised nearly $15,000 to buy presents and food for distressed families.

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—Tom Price

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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. $6.50
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. $11.00
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

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