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Congressional members that strengthens ILWU access and credibility. Our political action work and the energy and organiz-
ing skills of ILWU members volunteering in campaigns in other states has won, if not the national election, many statewide and local races and gained for our union almost legendary stature in the U.S. labor movement.

The solidarity the ILWU has shown with the grocery work-

Caucus moves Longshore forward

By James Spinosa
ILWU International President

The Longshore Caucus did a terrific job of moving the
Division forward at its meeting in early April. Delegates
representing every longshore, clerk and walking boss local
on the Coast stayed focused and on course with the strategy set
out in our 2003 Caucus aimed at putting ourselves in a strong
position before entering into the 2008 contract negotiations.

That caucus, opening just a few months after the ratifica-
tion of our hard-fought 2002 contract victory, set the priorities
and goals of our preparations for 2008, established a commit-
tee structure to deal with the key issues confronting us and
devised a budget to allow us to follow through on our plans.
The delegates this time continued to develop the program of
not only building our traditional "inside game”—strengthening
the rank and file’s knowledge and solidarity and using arbitrations
and day-to-day contract enforcement to be better positioned for
bargaining—but also inventing our non-traditional "outside game”—using political and legislative action to protect our union
rights during this period when there is an anti-worker majority
in Congress, further strengthening our ranks and building one
of our local, national and international union solidarity work,
ensuring the continued involvement of our communities in
community involvement and designing new ways to get our word
out to the public and the media.

The Education Committee has been running seminars for scores of local officers and rank-

and-file activists, armoring them with knowledge and grow-
ing a new generation of ILWU leaders. They have
gone back to their locals inspired to spread that knowl-
edge of their union to their brothers and sisters, multiplying the number and power of

activates members on the docks.

Among the educational plans for the future is a seminar on the importance and fragile nature of our top-notch health cover-
tage. It will hit home to each of the four areas of the Coast so that all members will have the opportunity to attend and learn
about the issue most vital to our families, and one that has tra-
titionally been the bottom line of all our contract bargaining.

The Clerks Technology Committee has been aggres-
sively defending the most threatened ILWU jurisdiction on
the waterfront—the work of marine clerks and handling
of cargo across West Coast docks. The committee, working
closely with the Longshore Division’s top officers, has been
strategically using the language we negotiated in the 2002
contract to protect every job we can. This is where the employ-

ers—and the Bush administration under the guise of Homeland
Security—are looking for the weak link in our jurisdiction chain.

The Caucus also continued to approve and improve our
new "outside game," building ILWU power and influence out-
side the negotiating room. Our Legislative Action Committee,
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Longshore Caucus prepares for 2008

by Steve Stallard

W ith an ever watchful eye towards the 2008 contract negotiations the ILWU Longshore Division’s Caucus met in Palm Springs April 4-8, reviewed and examined its last year of activities and then set the direction for the next year. In its report to the delegates representing every longshore local on the Coast, the Caucus Committee, consisting of International President Jim Spaulding, President Bob McEllrath and Coast Committee members Ray Ortiz Jr. and Joe Westmoreland, reviewed the work and accomplishments. In depth review and discussion took place in the reports from the committees focusing on each area of concern.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Education committee chair Dennis Brueneck (Local 54) reported on the successful “History and Traditions of the Longshore Division” week-long seminar in May and the Caucus Division last September for some 150 members.

Mr. Brueneck described the three member education projects his committee is planning for the future. The first will be a Pension and Welfare Benefits workshop that will be held in each of the four areas on the Coast. The second will be an “International Solidarity and Relations” seminar that will visit localities with an ever watchful eye for international solidarity and include the history and participation of the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) and the International Dockworkers Council (IDC). The third will be another area workshop on the Longshore Division’s safety code, including the history of the code, the standard testing with the Marine and identifying it for on-the-job safety. The Education Committee was expanded to include representation from all the major Longshore Division locals as well as the current committee members.

PORT SECURITY

Peter Peyton (Local 63), chair of the Legislative Action Committee that works closely on port security issues, opened the discussions by handing out a report warning the Caucus that the Bush administration is fast-tracking ground checks that could screen ILWU members off the docks and further limit access for ILWU clerks. Peter Peyton pointed out that in violation of Homeland Security law, employers have never been a study of hearing loss problems on the waterfront although longshore workers know it’s a common hazard. The committee is planning for the future. The Caucus voted to do so. In a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation, Cruise Ship Committee chair Joe Donato (Local 13) reported that his committee is examining the various West Coast ports handling cruise ships. The committee is trying to get uniform loading and jurisdiction coastwide and make sure all the cruise companies comply.

PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Committee chair Dave Arwin (Local 13) reported that his committee is continuing with its program of training local officers and rank and file to speak to the media and outside community organizations.

Arian proposed that over the next year the committee will continue to increase the union’s web site, establish an e-activist network like moveon.org and a ‘third Coast longshore’ communications seminar to train 90 members in various communications skills.

The committee also proposed promoting International Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams’ annual Black History and Labor programs coastwise and using the new documentary on the 2002 longshore contract struggle currently in production to tell the union’s side of the story to national and international audiences.

401(k) COMMITTEE

Committee chair Dan Imbagliazzo reported that most participants in the Longshore Division’s 401(k) plan are taking advantage of the choices in the fund. The committee is proposing an increase in the maximum per hour employee contribution from $8 to $12 per hour. The committee also plans to develop guidelines to measure the performance of the various funds available to the union’s 401(k) participants.

BUDGET COMMITTEE

Committee chair Steve Hanson (Local 8) walked the delegates through a 13-page Longshore Division’s expenses for the last year. Hanson reported that the Division has never been a study of hearing loss problems on the waterfront although longshore workers know it’s a common hazard. The committee is planning for the future. The Caucus voted to do so. Hanson reported that his committee is examining the various West Coast ports handling cruise ships. The committee is trying to get uniform loading and jurisdiction coastwide and make sure all the cruise companies comply.

Caucus delegates lineup to hit the mic and debate proposals.
A favorable combination of growing trade and political action is enabling the ILWU Canada to increase its revenue opportunities at West Coast ports. By forming community coalitions and lobbying, the ILWU has prepared to work with the industry to streamline inland cargo infrastructure and convince employers to hire more people. This happened just as explosion increases in trade threatened to swamp the ports.

The ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach led the way in total revenue tonnage, recording one and 19 percent increases respectively. In container tonnage, the two ports generated two and 21 percent increases, respectively. These numbers reflect huge volumes, as the two ports handle more than half the total U.S. West Coast trade. But other ports also benefited from the growth spurt too.

Prince Rupert, British Columbia, the western most jurisdiction of the ILWU Canada, provides a deep harbor that’s a day and a half closer to Asia than any other West Coast ports. Soon it will have a new container terminal.

“We are expecting big changes here,” Longshore Local 505 Secretary-Treasurer/Dispatcher Tom MacDonald said. “Eventually we should increase from 35 last year to 115 million TEUs on and off the ships. The port also registered a 54.1 percent increase over the previous year. The port also broke its previous record in a single month with 1.8 million TEUs on and off the ships. To meet the demand for labor, the local will register more longshore workers.

“We recently registered one group of 50, and that will mean 175 people since last November, and 85 in the first quarter,” Local 19 President Herald Ugles said. “We’ve increased our ID casual list from 115 people to 280. Right now we’re looking to see how many unidentified casuals we need. We’re more than doubling crane training, we’re doing four people a week on top-pick training, and we’ll up our semi [truck] training to 40 to 50 per month.”

Growth continues as record imports from Asia enter the West Coast. There’s even a modest increase in U.S. exports. The nearly $1 billion spent on Seattle’s port infrastructure over the last dozen years and the expansion of Hanjin Shipping to Pier 46 will ensure Seattle remains a major port.

Local 19’s battle against the gentrification of Pier 46 began about a year-and-a-half years ago. With the pier next to downtown, some developers thought it would be a good idea to make condos and coffee shops out of the waterfront. Local 19 aligned itself with others concerned with keeping an industrial base in the city.

“We realized we had to fight this together or we’d all lose,” Ugles said. “We approached the mayor’s office and put him to our point of view. We helped get two new port commissioners elected. Just recently Hanjin signed a five-year lease extension for Pier 46 that will bring their tenancy to 2015, with two more five-year options. That put the nail in the coffin of the developers’ plans.”

The local is also working special project ships that send U.S.-made mining equipment to Russia. “It’s good work, a lot of hours lashing,” Larson said. “It’s hard work that pays a lot of people to work. The ships are new, but aren’t of the size that still uses the Panama Canal. It’s amazing to build a new ship that looks like an old victory ship. This trade is expected to go on for years.”

The Port of Seattle could have lost much of its harbor, but longshore Local 19 forever now the need to keep Seattle a maritime center and fought to prevent gentrification along the waterfront. That successful battle is now paying off as Seattle’s cargo volume sets new records.

Seattle experienced the fastest container handling growth of any port in North America in January 2005, with a 54.1 percent increase over the previous year. The port also broke its previous record in a single month with 1.8 million TEUs on and off the ships. To meet the demand for labor, the local will register more longshore workers.

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The local is also working on keeping Pier 90-91 maritime and helped elect City Councilman Dave Della, a former longshore worker, to work with the ILWU on saving Pier 46 and now working to save Pier 90-91, the old Navy pier, from condo developers.

“We have to play in the political arena in this new age because our fights aren’t just down on the docks anymore. They’re all over the place,” Ugles said.

The union is supporting rail and road improvements that will help ship eastern Washington agricultural materials and coal to the Midwest. The area is also working to keep its port open and competitive for years to come.
es at West Coast ports

products to the coast.

The local working with Yakima
to get federal grants for rail improve-
ments, including new bridges so roads
can carry enough trains and trucks
to move about $3 million to complete
to cover out the year for Pier 18. The port also
approved $10 million to create an off-
dock yard for containing liquid ches-
in storage. SSA will operate it and
ILWU people will work it.

The ILWU people will work it.

The local is working with Yakima
about $3 million to complete these
projects, and the ILWU, Washington,
D.C. office has worked with the groups
lobbying to get the money.

The port will reopen Terminal 25
this summer and add three new
rail cars. SSA has four new cranes
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I got back from that first trip I transferred into the American-born. I had two brothers. My father was a little salt to substitute for butter. My mother made tisements for merchant seamen. They were des-switched over to the deck. Pretty soon I worked ship out with some old school chums. I've been there. By the time they found out about it I was a milk drink, too, with hot water and evaporated a timekeeper at a park that ran along the Hudson. We had general quarters often because of German submarines within the convoys. I saw one ship go down, but I got lucky. I made it through. In Italy we were bombed and strafed. Going up the Italian coast a bomb was dropped two, three hundred yards in front of the ship. It sounded like a giant steel ball had dropped on the deck. The ship stopped, shuddered, and then went on again. Man, I thought I was a tough guy, but I didn't like that. At all. I was 16 and I thought, "What in the hell am I doing here?"

I also consider myself lucky because I had shipmates, guys I lived in the same room with, who were charter members of the NMU and had been in the '34 strike on the West Coast and who had fought the fascists in Spain. They just hammered me over the head with unionism. I soaked it up like a sponge. So I emerged from World War II as a red hot union man.

In 1946, the year after the war ended, the CIO marine unions set up a Committee for Maritime Unity (CMU), which to me was the greatest. Harry Bridges was the prime mover behind CMU. This was when the AFL and the CIO were still separate. Our seven CIO unions included the radio operators, the marine engineers, the independent Marine Firemen, Oilers, Water tenders and Wipers, the Inlandboatmen, the MCS, the NMU and the ILWU. The idea was that we would negotiate as one, strike as one, and settle as one. We were all primed and ready to strike on June 15, 1946. Our big goal was one national agreement date. This was also the first time I heard that naval Australian twang of brother Bridges. There was a strike rally in New York City. Harry got up and spoke. I remember thinking, "That's what I want to hear." Then President Truman announced, "You strike and we'll send in the Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard to load and unload the ships." With the kind of unity and spunk we had back in those days, we told him, "Go ahead and try it."

Well, Harry contacted longshore unions the world over. Telegrams poured into Truman's office until they were stacked up good and high. They all said, "Load a ship and sail it with military scabs and it will not be unloaded in this country. It will sit until it rots." Unfortunately, McCarthyism was beginning to rear its ugly head, and Joe Curran, who led the NMU, sabotaged the CMU. He joined the ranks of the red-baiters. Harry, of course, was the main target. Curran got everybody to vote to leave the CMU, including the members of his own union. So the NMU lost all its power.

At the same time the NMU took a big right turn internally. Under the guise of patriotism it began to function in a dictatorial way. Those of us who had been in the union a while, and a lot of the old-timers, thought it was wrong. We decided to carry on the struggle. We kept going. We walked out again. Our slogan was, "Equal pay for equal work." We were out for three weeks, but we won it. I was just a kid. It was my first time with a picket sign. I'll never forget it.

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The ILWU consisted of the ILWU, the IWW and the ILGWU. Whitey Kelm is the focus of this month's oral history. He has been a dedicated unionist since he was a 16 year-old merchant seaman during World War II. Screened off American ships in the McCarthy era, Kelm helped vanquish the blacklist through concerted legal action. He became a longshore worker and an ILWU steward in 1943. Any time the word went out to defend the union, he was there. Now and then he would lead a "little minor aberration," to quote a phrase from his oral history interviews. Yet Kelm always answered the call.

Local 10 activist Herb Mills was Kelm's long-term partner on the San Francisco waterfront. In the mid-1960s Kelm and Mills started a five-dollars-a-month club in support of the farm workers organizing drive. This was the club that Don Watson took over and led for several years. Ultimately it collected thousands of dollars for the new United Farm Workers. Kelm became a movie extra and then a busy film and TV actor in the 1970s. He played a factory plant manager in the celebrated labor classic, "Norma Rae." Kelm continued to work on the waterfront while acting until he retired out of Local 13 in 1990.

After he retired Kelm moved to the Rocky Mountains, where he continues to help the ILWU in his own way. For years he has been a major contributor to the Harry Bridges Institute, the Harry Bridges monument project, the Harry Bridges Chair at the University of Washington, Ian Ruskin's Harry Bridges documentary film project, and the Cropa Crane Labor Landmark Association. In addition to his extraordinary generosity on behalf of these ILWU-related causes, Kelm personifies a generation of ILWU members who experienced World War II, worked on the waterfront afterwards, and fought for unionism throughout their lives. I interviewed him at his mountain home in 2004.

I was born in New Jersey in 1928 and lived there until I went to sea in 1944 during World War II. My mother's parents were born in Finland and my father's in Germany, so I'm second-generation American-born. I had two brothers. My father was a timekeeper at a park that ran along the Hudson River. He collected the money from the concessions. But he died when I was eight and we had a struggle. This was during the Depression and here we were a fatherless family.

My mother worked nights as a nurse. We used to go to church on Sunday, eat bread and then flavor it with a little sausage to substitute for butter. My mother made a milk drink, too, with hot water and evaporated milk. Then she'd put a spoon of sugar in it to give it some flavor.

I went to high school, or at least made a pass at it. Actually I wanted to work and I wanted to go away to the war. When I was 15 there were adver-tisements for merchant seamen. They were desper-ately needed because they were getting killed right and left. The merchant marine was the most dangerous part of the war effort. But I couldn't even get into the war fast enough to suit me. I jockeyed my birth certificate so I could jump the gun and get in by the time they found out about it I was past 16 and was already sailing.

My first voyage to sea I got a trip card with the old CIO Marine Cooks and Stewards Union (MCS). I washed dishes all through the Mediterranean and back. Never had such dish pan hands. When I got back from that first trip I transferred into the CIO National Maritime Union (NMU) so I could ship out with some old school chums. I've been union ever since.

I went as third cook and as soon as I could switch over to the deck. Pretty soon I worked my way up to able-bodied seaman (AB), painting, splicing rope and wire, overhauling tackle, steen.

Ted "Whitey" Kelm

Edited by Harvey Schwartz
Curator, ILWU Oral History Collection

Introduction by Harvey Schwartz

Ted Whitey Kelm

Whitey Kelm is the focus of this month's oral history. He has been a dedicated unionist since he was a 16 year-old merchant seaman during World War II. Screened off American ships in the McCarthy era, Kelm helped vanquish the blacklist through concerted legal action. He became a longshore worker and an ILWU steward in 1943. Any time the word went out to defend the union, he was there. Now and then he would lead a "little minor aberration," to quote a phrase from his oral history interviews. Yet Kelm always answered the call.

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grabbed me under the belt in back, flung me against this truck and said, "Now, get the fuck out of here." That's the only time in my life I owed my safety to a cop! I went around the corner and got right back into it though. We ran the Teamsters off, too.

In the early 1950s, as the Korean War got going, the government began to screen seamen off the ships. You'd line up on board and some young guy in a uniform would peruse your seaman's papers and disappear. The commissioner, he said, "Oh, yeah, one of them long-shoremen and I came back to the union. Then and I knew everybody in the union. Besides, this day they call 'em "California papers." As soon as you went on a ship and had your paperwork in order, he'd put his hands in his pockets, lean back and have a go round with me. We were friends, but he liked to argue and he'd provoke it. In the main it was an easy feather in the steady man issue, 9.43 in the contract. That was Harry's thing and I didn't like it. My point was that nothing should bypass the hiring hall.

Around 1964 there was a civil rights drive on the hotel industry in San Francisco. There was a demonstration at the Sheraton Palace Hotel. The ILWU endorsed it. That was all I needed. I went over there with Tom Lupher and some other Local 10 guys. We picketed, then entered the building and sat down on the floor. Four or five of us long-shoremen linked arms. They came to arrest us. I said to the cop, "These are union men you're messin' with now. This ain't going to be easy." And, boy, it wasn't! Lupher and I hung on to each other and the cartilage I was always proud, too, that what I called the "marks of Cain" on 'em. There was some special stamp to this day they call 'em "California papers." As soon as you went on a ship and had your paperwork in order, he'd put his hands in his pockets, lean back and have a go round with me. We were friends, but he liked to argue and he'd provoke it. In the main it was an easy feather in the steady man issue, 9.43 in the contract. That was Harry's thing and I didn't like it. My point was that nothing should bypass the hiring hall.

The 1971 longshore strike was four-and-a-half months of picket duty. I was part of the showcase picket line at Fisherman's Wharf. Once I had a little minor abrasion with a Pier 45 official who used a fork-lift to move some pre-packaged loads of paper onto the dock. I looked him right in the face and said, "You don't drive no fork-lift and you don't move any cargo. Don't you pull that no more." He started crying an ice pick. I just looked at him and let him go into his office and sit there. But he never again touched a fork-lift.

I was always proud, too, that what I called the "quintessential" painting my wife Callie made of the 1971 strike was hung in the ILWU's International Library in San Francisco. Callie passed away many years ago, but our children, Eady and Shari, still live in the city.

What I disliked was black sand. The sacks were small but they weighed 150 pounds. So it took two guys to pick 'em up. When you bent down you had to have signals with your partner or you'd bump heads. Cause the damned package was so small. It was a real awkward situation. But the Scotch ships were nice. They had Scotch whiskey. Chivas Regal was the best.

When I was a B man Harry used to pop into the hiring hall. If he was wearing a top coat he'd pull his hands in his pockets, lean back and have a go round with me. We were friends, but he liked to argue and he'd provoke it. In the main it was an easy feather in the steady man issue, 9.43 in the contract. That was Harry's thing and I didn't like it. My point was that nothing should bypass the hiring hall.

One time word got around that they needed people at the Local 6 hall. Curtis McClain, who was Local 6 president in the 1970s, asked us to picket this place at 8th and Mission Streets in San Francisco. Pretty soon here come a crowd of at least 20 scabs. Leading 'em was this big bastard. I went up to him and said, "That's far enough, scab." Next thing I know I'm being restrained by a couple of cops. I'm struggling to get free and this cop raises his club. He was gonna bust my head open. I went over to the sidewalk, and said, "Keep your damn hands off him. He'll get in the truck by himself."

Tom got in the wagon and they took us to jail. Vince Hallinan, one of the lawyers who had worked for Bridges, bailed us out again with his own money, which was also in jail. Norman Leonard, another lawyer who worked for Bridges, defended us. He was a speaker and he said, "You're not Illinois; you're not New York. You had us all weeping. We all got acquitted except for Tracy Simms, the young woman who had led the picket line at Fisherman's Wharf. Once I had a little minor abrasion with a Pier 45 official who used a fork-lift to move some pre-packaged loads of paper onto the dock. I looked him right in the face and said, "You don't drive no fork-lift and you don't move any cargo. Don't you pull that no more." He started crying an ice pick. I just looked at him and let him go into his office and sit there. But he never again touched a fork-lift.

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Workers protest workers’ comp cuts

by Tom Price

A year after Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger’s workers’ compensation bill became law, the proposals are rolling in via wheelchairs. That’s what happened April 28, Workers Memorial Day, as about 150 people demonstrated at the California state capitol against Schwarzenegger’s reforms in remembrance of injured or killed workers who died or injured on the job.

Many demonstrators were disabled workers battling the system that was intended to take care of them. As many as 100,000 cases sit in courts as injured workers sue to get care and compensation. The system postpones workers’ compensation awards based on “pre-existing injuries.” Longshore Local 10 member Mike Taylor told the crowd, “Pre-existing injuries is that a word they love to use,” he said. “It wasn’t hurt when I got there, but it was pre-existing when I left.”

Another worker, a state employee who traveled from San Diego to attend the rally, has spent a year trying to see a workers’ comp doctor and has had to take care of his injury on his own. Carol Ong, Chair of Governmental Affairs Comm, for the Assn. of Flight Attendants, told the rally that airline unions had made a deal in 2000 with the FAA and OSHA to get OSHA safety jurisdiction on airplanes. The Bush administration failed to implement it, and now flight crews have no OSHA protection. Flight attendants suffer four times the average injury rate.

“Remember, when you’re on an airplane, you’re also exposed to hazardous conditions,” Ong said. “Did you know that planes are sprayed with pesticides that can last for six weeks? The spray is toxic—it can lead to rashes, swollen eyes, and breathing and reproductive problems.”

Labor activist Steve Zeltzer, one of the demonstration organizers, expressed little hope for Schwarzenegger.

“Just last month I went to see my doctor there for my workplace injury. I had to go to a lawyer to get treatment for his injury back when the insurer erroneously said it had been pre-existing,” Teamster Jeremy Steward lost an arm to an accident at UPS and has been telling his story. “I’m going to continue to fight, not just for myself but for my kids and for justice and equality. If the company has not provided proper equipment and he now has tendinitis and and carpet tunnels in his other arm.

“Just last month I went to see my five-year old at school. For the first time it dawned on me that I couldn’t applaud my daugh- ter,” Steward said. “I’m going to con- tinue to fight, not just for myself but for my kids and for justice and equal- ity. If the company has not provided proper equipment and he now has tendinitis and carpet tunnels in his other arm.

The April 26 events are part of a national campaign to preserve Social Security. It would divert at least $12 million from insurance companies, reported in the media. Social conduct- ed a study that compared pre-reform and current compensation rates for severely injured workers and found payment cuts ranging from 63 to 100 percent.

Since the insurance companies control the system it would only seem natural that they would profit from it. Zenith National Insurance, with two-thirds of its business in California workers’ comp, reported a 57 percent increase in net income for the first quar- ter of 2004 over 2003. AIG, California’s largest workers’ comp insurer, reported a 19 percent increase in profits despite taking a huge loss on hurricanes and earthquakes. Other companies did much better. Overall, insurers paid 45 cents in claims on each dollar taken in as premiums, according to the April 14 Contra Costa Times. Schwarzenegger’s many campaign committees received $1.2 million from insurance companies, $560,000 from those doing workers’ comp insurance.

Workers’ comp became law in 1913. The deal was that workers would give up their rights to sue companies for guaranteed care and compensation. But with 8.6 mil- lion uninsured Californians, workers’ comp is the only care many injured workers will receive. The governor’s reforms, passed last April, allow the employers and insurance companies to choose doctors and decide on care and paycheck compensation. ILWU members from Locals 6, 10, 34 and 54 turned out to the demo.

“I wish all California unions would have come out,” warehouse Local 6 member Stan Woods said. “I’d like to see job actions for disabled workers’ rights and against the type of abuses talked about here, where somebody is threatened with crimi- nal prosecution for allegedly filing false claims when they were obviously injured on the job.”

Mass rally demands Congress preserve Social Security

By Mark Gruenberg

PAI Staff Writer

WASHINGTON (PAI)—Chanting, cheer- ing and waving signs supporting the nation’s retirement system, more than 1,000 unionists, civil rights backers, disability group members and their allies rallied April 26 to preserve Social Security.

The rally was held in the Capitol Hill demonstration, that the Republican-run Congress and wealthy President George W. Bush’s partial privatization of the nation’s retire- ment system, drew strong, united sup- port from congressional Democrats, including key players in the fight.

Churches and a former Pennsylvania director of the National Council of Churches, commented, called the Social Security preservation battle national and political. “Poll after poll show people want to protect Social Security, and that every- thing we hear from the Bush administration about it is falsehood, deception and lies,” McIntee said. “Bush has an agenda to dismant- le the Social Security, including the public pension system.”

“We have a big message to George Bush and his backers in corporate America: ‘We’re going to stop you, George Bush, dead in your tracks,’” McIntee declared.

“You can make 60 stops or 60,000 stops and we’ll beat you in every one of them,” the union leader challenged the president. “And when we defeat this, he’ll be relegated to being a lame duck president—and we’ll move a step closer to making sure this land is our land again.”
El Salvador's Acajutla Port privatized at gunpoint

By David Bacon

Acajutla, El Salvador—Long before the port was privatized, the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), workers and unions throughout the region were under attack from economic reforms that have slashed unions, 90-year-old work-places and lowered wages. Few of the assaults, however, have been as sus-tained and sharp as those against the longshore workers of El Salvador.

Their experience echoes that of the dockworkers in Veracruz, Mexico, in 1991, the Americas’ first victims of privatization at gunpoint. In El Salvador as well, the main port of Acajutla was occupied by soldiers. Using direct military force, new pri-vate operators took over the termi-nals. The Salvadoran dockers’ union was dissolved, and their efforts to reorganize it since have not only been broken, but the workers involved fired and blacklisted.

Acajutla employs approximately 1,200 workers, including 480 longshoremen. Until September 2001 their employer was the state port author-ity, Comisión Ejecutiva Portuaria Autónoma (Executive Autonomous Port Authority or CEPA), which owned the port property and administered it. The current debate over the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) has already reinforced private and public support for the privatization of Acajutla.

But sending soldiers to assure the port’s physical security was just the begin-nning of a much more ambi-uous plan. At the moment of the militarization, 38 port guards were imme-diately terminated. The following January 600-700 workers were fired. By May the last 240 worker leaders had been terminated. On Jan. 23 the union was offi-cially dissolved by the govern-ment and thrown out of its office in the port. Union meetings have been let back into the building since.

When the union sought to protect the jobs of port workers, the union contract and its own existence, Francisco Flores, then-president of El Salvador, called union members “terrorists” and “guerrilleros.” While that language may seem extreme in any country, in El Salvador from 1978 to 1989 those people so labeled were imprisoned, and often just picked up on the street and “disappeared.”

The operation of the terminals was privatized. Dockworkers are currently employed by seven private companies that operate terminals, including OPSSA, owned by the family of Francisco Flores.

The government told workers they could reapply for their old jobs, but with the new private operators. “They told people they’d be liquidat-ed, but they’d get jobs with the private operators,” Marroquín said. “But they didn’t say how they’d be paid.”

The new wage was $12 per day—cutting the daily income of longshore-men by more than 90 percent.

Following its gunpoint expulsion from the port, and its official dissolu-tion, the longshore union made three attempts to reorganize.

On May 7, 2002, union leaders called a meeting of all former members working in the port. Salvadoran labor law stipulates that if 25 percent of the former members had attended, the union would have regained its legal status. But an atmosphere of fear had already been created by the presence of soldiers, by the firings and the dark meaning of labeling workers as “terrorists.” To intensify the fear, the union’s former members were told by CEPA officials that if they went to the meeting, they would no longer be allowed to enter the port area, and would therefore lose their jobs.

Workers found the threat easy to believe. Since disbanding the for-mer union, the port authority has refused to permit 25 of its former leaders to enter the port area, includ-ing Marroquín and Eduardo Fuentes Ordoñez, former chief grievance offi-cer and dock worker, who had been dismissed. The required number of workers did not attend.

The next reorganization attempt was made in September 2003. During the election campaign that year, the FMLN National Assembly. The party pub-licly denounced the violations of labor rights that had taken place, and the FMLN deputies were only supported by the party’s own delegates, who were not a majority. And after the election, FMLN efforts were made to introduce legis-lation reinstating the union and its members.

That’s when we decided to orga-nize a new union,” Ordoñez said.

On Dec. 6, 2004, 41 workers, all employed at the time by the terminal operators, signed a notarized docu-ment stating that they were constitu-ted to form a new union, the sindicato de Trabajadores de la Industria Portuaria de El Salvador (the Union of the Workers in the Port Industry of El Salvador). They had a meeting to officially form the union. Under Salvadoran labor law, if 35 workers in the same industry sign such a state-ment, the union has the legal right to exist.

On Dec. 7 the workers presented the documents to the Ministry of Labor. On Dec. 13 the Ministry noti-fied the terminal operators that the legally required number of employ-ees had signed documents forming a union.

On Dec. 14 the employers responded that the workers who had signed the petition were not employed. That morning when those workers had presented themselves as usual, they had been denied work. The companies told them this was because they’d formed a union.

Finally, on Feb. 14 the Ministry of Labor denied legal status to the union, saying that the workers who signed the documents were not employed by the terminal operators. Since the first meeting in May of 2002, they’ve been blacklisted and denied work by the terminal operators.

According to both current and former port workers, conditions have deteriorated, along with wages. In the course of eight hours, a crew of workers will unload 120 boxes, with a crew of four longshoremen, two lash-ers and one crane driver, who uses the crane on the ship. They say they don’t receive overtime or the rate of requiring an overtime premium after seven hours. There’s no fixed payday, and workers get paid 30-30 days after they work. Dockworkers are told they can’t eat during the workday, despite the fact that employers are required to provide a half-hour meal break. They sometimes have to work three straight shifts without eating, if the operator is in a hurry to unload and load a ship.

Salvadoran employers are required to make payments to the Social Security health care system, including money deducted from workers’ wages. According to dock-work-ers, the operators sometimes don’t go to the Social Security hospital, they discover that the terminal oper-ators don’t have the right to sign, and instead has pocketed the money. Workers injured on the job have no health insurance even for emergency workplace injuries, and have to cover the doctor bills themselves.

The wharves are a high-risk environment, but dockworkers Labor without gloves, hardhats, masks, safety belts, nets or even ladders. When they have to climb three or four containers, they have to climb up the containers themselves or a spreader sometimes have to work in this dangerous way even when it’s raining. According to the blacklisted workers, one man, Manuel Manzella, broke his leg while working on a crew without taking his shirt even taken to the Social Security hos- pital, because the companies try to hide their injuries.

Jamie Newlyn, South Australian Branch Secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia, interviewed the blacklisted longshore union activists as part of a labor rights delegation in March.

“What has happened to these unions is a blow to the rights and conditions of workers in Acajutla, would be a shock to longshore unions internationally, if they knew what has taken place,” Newlyn said. “We hope to bring their case before the world, so that dock workers around the world can take action in solidarity to help Salvadoran workers win their rights.”
Tacoma trainee dies without AED

The death by heart attack of Local 23 Tacoma trainee Robert Smith exposed several flaws in the first aid system on the docks. When they were most needed, there were no readily available first aid kits, CPR facilities and, most importantly, no automatic External Defibrillators (AED). A defibrillator is a device that administers an electric shock to the heart to get it beating in proper rhythm again.

Lawrence Smith was waiting for his next test while长shore Local 23's Don Faker spoke to the trainees. “He was breathing hard, which isn’t unusual for people after lashing,” Faker said. “I went over to him and got no response. I ran to the secretary asked for assistance. I called 911. I checked his pupils, they were dilated.”

Faker pulled out his walkie-talkie and called trainers Dean McGrath, Chris Schwab and Greg Cole to help. “Dean and I got him down to the CPR facilities and, most importantly, a defibrillator and a training video were at the facility. The ILWU had opposed the closing of the fire station that dispatched the ambulance, and it remains open. Dockworkers would have to wait another 10 to 20 minutes for aid if it was shut down,” said Smith.

Smith began training recently in Tacoma to become acasual. He had a history of heart disease, but hadn’t yet had a physical. The 42-year-old part-time ambulance driver enjoyed camping with his family and leaves behind a wife, a daughter, 15 and a son, five years old.

The new “Ask Me” education program

Leadership Education and Development Institute (LEAD)

The Titled Officers are pleased to announce the launching of a new and innovative member education and community outreach program entitled, “Ask Me—Let’s Talk Union.” As designed by the Titled Officers and the Coast Education Committee, we are calling on all members and supporter of the ILWU who wish to maximize their effectiveness in educating union members, their families and their communities about the union’s contracts, principles, programs and activities to identify themselves as part of this initiative by wearing either the “Ask Me” button or sticker now being distributed by the International’s semi-grass roots organizing program entitled, “Ask Me—Let's Talk Union.”

Promotional materials and stickers are available at local union halls and by encouraging participation.

We expect that within a few months, hundreds if not thousands of our members will be readily identifiable by their “Ask Me” button or sticker as someone who is willing to share information about their union, their contract and the policies and principles of the ILWU.

The ILWU's third basic Leadership Education and Development Institute (LEAD) session was held Sept. 19-23, 2005 in Palm Springs, California, which will focus on “Tools for Democracy.”

Participation requires a member’s commitment to be of service to the union, to participate in new organizing programs and to be an effective union representative.

The event began after a lashing instruction session at about 11:25 a.m. Smith was waiting for his next test while Longshore Local 23’s Don Faker spoke to the trainees. “He was breathing hard, which isn’t unusual for people after lashing,” Faker said. “I went over to him and got no response. I ran to the secretary asked for assistance. I called 911. I checked his pupils, they were dilated.”

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ILWU International Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams deliv-
ered the keynote address at the A. Philip Randolph Institute: San Francisco chapter's annual awards dinner April 28.

A. Philip Randolph was a leading labor and civil rights activist of the 20th century. He helped found the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, a union of black workers on passenger trains in 1925. They won a recognition election in 1933, a victory for the American Federation of Labor and founded the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, a union that eventually became the ILWU.

Randolph participated in civil rights and anti-war activities. During World War II, he worked as a reporter and librarian at the Daily Worker, a socialist newspaper. After the war, he became president of the National Negro Congress, a group trying to build a Black mass movement with and through trade unions.

In 1959 he helped found the Negro Labor and Civil Rights Institute, a group of black workers on the West Coast. The institute became the A. Philip Randolph Institute.

By 1963 the country had broken faith and conditions were getting worse rather than better. A. Philip Randolph decided it was time to issue a call for a march that would not be denied. A quarter of a million people answered the call. They came from all walks of life, all races, all income levels and creeds. They came from all over the world. Dr. King spoke from his heart. He had done more than deliver a speech. He had sent out a challenge to the world: "We must rise to every occasion, wielding the considerable power that we possess and we must do so without apology." Adams said. "In order to live in an America that is truly a nation for, by and of the people, we must become active and responsible members of the political process who vote, lobby and campaign to ensure that our rights are protected. For those of us who have fewer days to live than the number of days we have already lived, we must renew our emphasis on the things that work. We must continue fighting for our dignity, defining ourselves, rebuilding our communities and taking personal ownership of our lives, our values and our families. We must ultimately find a way to rise beyond ourselves, beyond our limitations and find the courage to make the painful sacrifices so desperately needed. Such selflessness will not only nourish our human spirit, but will also elevate our communities and empower our nation. Let us therefore commit ourselves from this day forward to vote in greater numbers, speak in louder voices, write with sharper pens and act with firmer convictions. By doing these things we will reinvent our- selves and also our world."

Honorees at the awards dinner included Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA) as Woman of the Year, SEIU International Executive Vice President Eliseo Medina as Man of the Year and HERE Local 2 President Mike Casey as Unionsist of the Year.

Former ILWU Librarian Margery Canright passes

by Tom Price

T he ILWU Library lost a found-
ing mentor April 18 when Margery Canright died after a long battle with Parkinson’s Disease. Canright was born Oct. 25, 1917 in Colorado and was raised in California. She attended school in Pasadena and graduated from Pomona College in 1940.

As she left school Dust Bowl refugees were struggling throughout California, looking for work after their Midwestern farms had been destroyed by drought and economics. Canright took a job as a case worker for Roosevelt’s Farm Security Administration in California’s Central Valley and found ways to help those farmers. During that time she met her husband, Norman, and together they joined the Communist Party in 1941. While Norman went to war in the early 1940s, Margaret went to war in the shipyards in Richmond and later in Long Beach. She gave birth to her first son, David, in 1945.

After the war the family moved to San Francisco. Margery took a job as reporter and librarian at the Daily Worker, the newspaper and Norman became copy editor. Their second son Steven was born in 1947 and in the early 1950s she taught Marxism at the California Labor School. She and Norman participated in civil rights and anti-imperialism activities through-
Books and videos about the ILWU are available from the union's library at discounted prices!

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- 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. $5.00
- 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. $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
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- 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. DVD or VHS version $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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