Liverpool 10th anniversary: Dockers gather to remember, rededicate

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 remembers the past to better the future

By James Spinosa
ILWU International President

Time goes so fast in our hectic, modern world that taking the time to look back—even a short while—is hard to find. Seeing the events and trying to figure out what they mean for our future is even harder. But what happens to the ILWU, our members and their families, and what happens to the working people of this country and around the world depends on our figuring it out.

In late September I and 15 other ILWU officers and rank and file flew to Liverpool, Great Britain. We went to participate in a commemoration of a dock worker struggle 10 years ago that has defined port labor relations around the world since (see story page 3).

As part of an anti-union campaign in Great Britain in the 1980s conservative Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s government abolished the country’s National Dock Labour Scheme set up after WWII that nationalized the ports and guaranteed job security for union dockers. The ports were privatized and casual, non-union labor was hired and replaced by non-union workers. In response, the dockers, who had a history of solidarity, taking actions in support of South Africa’s anti-apartheid movement, against Chile’s military dictatorship and others, tried to organize an international movement in support of themselves this time.

The ILWU understood the significance of this episode early on, understood that if long-unionized dockers in a major world port could be quickly replaced by casual workers laboring without guaranteed wages and conditions, it could happen to any long-established union. Our members contributed heavily to the struggle, giving the movement its power. Japanese dockers, their co-workers were fired and replaced by non-union workers. In response, the dockers, who had a history of solidarity, taking actions in support of South Africa’s anti-apartheid movement, against Chile’s military dictatorship and others, tried to organize an international movement in support of themselves this time.

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By Jack Heyman

O
nce again dockworkers from around the world met in Liverpool Sept. 23-24, this time not to co-ordinate solidarity actions for the Liverpool dockers, but to recognize those unions that participated in the worldwide actions and learn the lessons of their actions and network union members of the Transport and General Workers Union (T&G) honored their picket line, as they had always done. All 500 dockers were sacked by the employer, Mersey Docks and Harbour Company.

Starting the weekend’s main event, Liverpool dock steward Jimmy Nolan opened by reminding participants that the gathering was not a celebration because the dockworkers did not win their struggle, rather it was a commemoration of a struggle that resulted in the loss of jobs for dockers, the breakdown of solidarity, and the need for future waterfront battles.

The Liverpool struggle began 10 years ago when young dockworkers spontaneously set up a picket line over substandard wages and working conditions. They organized a one-day strike that led to the sackings of 500 dockers and the end of the union movement.

The dockers’ struggle inspired other dockers around the world to take action. The Neptune Jade action, named after the ship that was forced to return to Australia because it carried Loading boots (unions) instead of unloading boots, was a significant moment in the worldwide awakening to dockers’ rights. The ship was unloaded in Australia and the crew was imprisoned for refusing to unload the ship.

In the end the Liverpool dockers lost because they couldn’t mobilize a mass picketing on the Mersey docks to stop scabbing. That key element of solidarity was betrayed by the lack of support of their own union, the T&G, the Trade Union Congress (Britain’s AFL-CIO) and British Prime Minister Tony Blair's New Labour Party.

Bob Crow, General Secretary of the ILWU, International Longshore and Warehouse Workers Union (ILWU), whose union was recently purged from the New Labour Party, said in his keynote address, "I have to understand how the employers have been able to mobilize and get an upper hand in globalization." He said that in the group of 15, 20 years we are now doing the same thing, looking up with organizations and networking around the world in solidarity. We are closing the world tighter and tighter so we can put together actions much quicker than we did for the Liverpool situation.

Receiving warm applause for his open and honest appraisal, Frank Leys, Secretary of the ILWU Pacific Coastal Section, acknowledged that mistakes were made by the MUA, a five million strong organization during the Liverpool dispute. The T&G never supported the strike, making it unofficial and thereby illegal. Since the T&G was an ILT affiliate, the ILT didn’t support the dockers either.

"Staying silent has never brought the workers forward," Leys said. "Mistakes of the past will be remembered in order to avoid repeating them."

He exhaled all dockworkers to unify now in order to fight and defeat the European Union’s Port Directive on "self-handling" that would allow ships’ crews to do longshore work in Europe, and in the PNLR and ILWU, it moved to sue the individuals who were on the picket line for the financial hit its member companies claimed they took because of the picket. The PMA subpoenaed documents with information about who they were from the ILWU International, The Dispatcher, and Locals 10 and 34. Eventually the PMA hauled then-International President Brian McWilliams and Dispatcher Editor Steve Spinosa into court, seeking to have them found in contempt of court and thrown in jail if they continued to refuse to turn snitch. The ILWU won that case based on a ruling that found that the Dispatch was a newspaper, had a First Amendment right to gather information without the interference of the government.

In pre-trial motions the charges against two of the three only named defendants, Local 10 activist Jack Heyman and the Golden Gate chapter of the Labor Party, were thrown out and the court restricted PMA to suing only those it allegedly had evidence committed illegal acts on the picket line. But the court allowed PMA to continue.

The Neptune Jade action will leave a high watermark on the pilings of international dockworker links, especially the Coordenaclora of Spain, that were brought into play. These bonds were forged at international conferences in support of the Liverpool dockers.

In the tradition of Harry Bridges’ good Aussie friend, Tas Ball, then-head of the waterfront workers union, Paddy Crumlin, National Secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) spoke poignantly about the practical reality of the state of trade unions and of class struggle globally. He praised the Liverpool dockworkers for their courageous struggle and criticized Bill Morris, then-General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union, for not supporting the strike.

The ITF should have played a strong role in supporting the Liverpool dockers in making sure it was a win...not a loss," Crumlin said. He said now the movement was the “experience to go forward” and “we’ve learned the lesson from the Liverpool struggle: unions must organize properly, supporting rank-and-file workers on the job, and organize globally.”

As an example, Crumlin cited the ILWU’s solidarity action during the Seattle strike. The Columbus Canada had been loaded by scabs in Australia and because of the labor-community picket in the port of Los Angeles, the ship was forced to return to Australia to be loaded by union wharfies before it would be discharged on the U.S. West Coast.

He pointed out that dockworkers’ unions are being targeted by maritime employers and governments because of their progressive stands, including dock protests against wars like in Vietnam and Iraq.

“They are systematically taking on us because we are a threat to what they are doing to our societies and our global market, and I’m proud of that,” Crumlin said. “We’ve identified the enemy and most of us here have looked the devil in the eye and we find we are prepared to stick together and work together, the devil always blinks.”

How international labor solidarity works—The Neptune Jade action

The activities commemorating the 10th anniversary of the start of the Liverpool dockers’ struggle began with the showing, appropriately, of the video “Solidarity Has No Borders: The Journey of the Neptune Jade.”

"There were many actions in support of the Liverpool dockers during the course of our two-and-a-half-year struggle, but one stands out, the Neptune Jade," Liverpool dock steward Terry Teague said when introducing the video. The Neptune Jade action will leave a high watermark on the pilings of labor history because of its boldness, level of solidarity, and results.

"The action came at just the right time because after two years in disguise the State’s spying went public and this picked ‘em right back up," Michael Spinosa, a Neptune Jade picket captain and defendant Robert Spinosa's attorney, noted.

It enabled the stewards to keep the dockworkers together. Like a needle in the water, it reawakened workers’ awareness of the importance of international solidarity. It became the model for other solidarity actions that followed, like the 1988 boycott of the Columbus Canada in Los Angeles in support of the Australian wharfies and the action by the Spanish dockers against the Nordana shipping line in support of the Charleston Five longshore workers.

Since previous arbitrations restricted the employer group, the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA), from retrieving its losses due to industrial actions by the ILWU, it moved to sue the individuals who were on the picket line for the financial hit its member companies claimed they took because of the picket.

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ILWU International President Jim Spinosa presents Liverpool dock stewards Jimmy Nolan with a plaque from the ILWU recognizing the historic struggle of the Liverpool dockers.
We had expected the Senate to take up this issue several weeks ago, but Sen. Mike DeWine (R-OH) and Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) put a hold on the issue in lieu of the legal case in the legislation that would force companies with low credit ratings to bump up their pension contributions. The sponsors of the legislation say it’s a form of assurance that if companies go bankrupt, at least they will have put some money in their pension funds for current and future retirees. The requirement would kick in if a company’s credit rating went to junk bond status for two consecutive quarters. But the United Auto Workers and the AFL-CIO say that’s unfair. They say plenty of companies have fluctuating credit ratings, even those that are considered junk bond status, yet they keep their pensions. Secondly, a company is struggling financially, as indicated by its low credit score, why penalize it by making it pay out cash that it needs for operations? That might push it into bankruptcy and will eliminate its pension plans or freeze out new employees from participating in the pension.

We recognize though the ILWU community is pleased that the Senate bill attempts to take action regarding the crisis, the airline pensions, there is great consternation that the single-employer plan provisions make workers pay the price for pension reform. In a letter to the Senate, the ILWU and the PMA said there is a real concern that unfair provisions include new restrictions on benefit increases and future pension contributions. The current Senate legislation as well as cuts in federal pension guarantees.

“Not only are arbitrary and numeric limitations on pension accruals and benefit increases unfair to workers, but the sugar coating of recent pension plans. The courts agreed to let United Airlines renege on nearly $10 billion of its pension promises to 134,000 of its workers. But this isn’t just about United. It’s about corporate America breaking their promises to workers. Many companies that are not shirking their pension obligations by filing for bankruptcy or other means. The outcome of the airline aid legislation could bear on whether Delta, flying under Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, can avoid pension contributions to save cash. Such a move would allow cash-strapped airlines to suspend pension payments, up to certain limits, to the PBGC. The number of labor unions along with their employers are working in a coalition to reform the pension laws. As a result, the ILWU and the AFL-CIO have put their pension plan from these new airline laws. The outcome of the airline aid issue could bear on whether Delta, flying under Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, can avoid payments to the PBGC to save cash. Such a move would allow cash-strapped airlines to suspend pension payments, up to certain limits, to the PBGC. The number of labor unions along with their employers are working in a coalition to reform the pension laws. As a result, the ILWU and the AFL-CIO have put their pension plan from these new airline laws. The outcome of the airline aid issue could bear on whether Delta, flying under Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, can avoid payments to the PBGC to save cash. Such a move would allow cash-strapped airlines to suspend pension payments, up to certain limits, to the PBGC. The number of labor unions along with their employers are working in a coalition to reform the pension laws. As a result, the ILWU and the AFL-CIO have put their pension plan from these new airline laws. The outcome of the airline aid issue could bear on whether Delta, flying under Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, can avoid payments to the PBGC to save cash. Such a move would allow cash-strapped airlines to suspend pension payments, up to certain limits, to the PBGC. The number of labor unions along with their employers are working in a coalition to reform the pension laws. As a result, the ILWU and the AFL-CIO have put their pension plan from these new airline laws. The outcome of the airline aid issue could bear on whether Delta, flying under Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, can avoid payments to the PBGC to save cash. Such a move would allow cash-strapped airlines to suspend pension payments, up to certain limits, to the PBGC.
Aetter more than four years of incessant tax cuts for the wealthy and corporations, George W. Bush and Co. are now preparing to come back to the table for another huge tax cut focused on the expense of workers and consumers in America.

Congress has passed record tax cuts every year from 2001 through 2004, with more than 90 percent being distributed to the wealthiest taxpayers and corporations. Last April, the House of Representatives passed—and now the Senate is considering—another $1 trillion handout to the rich by repealing the Estate Tax, also called the "Death Tax." It is a tax hoars of the super rich pay when the head of the family's estate dies and leaves his or her property to their beneficiaries.

Even before the current proposed Estate Tax cut, less than one percent of wealthiest families remained subject to the tax. By 2005, 52,000 eligible for the tax had been reduced to only 13,700 out of the more than 2.6 million heads of households who died that year. And for that two percent, there was still a $1.35 million deductible—leaving a 55 percent tax on the estate applied.

Following Bush's 2001 Estate Tax cut, less than one percent of wealthiest families remained subject to the tax. By 2005, 52,000 eligible for the tax had been reduced to only 13,700 out of the more than 2.6 million heads of households who died that year. And even their deductible level has been raised to $4 million and their tax rate has been reduced to 45 percent. Furthermore, under the current law, by 2009 the deductible will be raised to $7 million, and only 2,400 will be subject to the tax at that time.

Still, Bush and his wealthy backers have been pressing hard throughout 2005 for immediate and permanent repeal of the current law. In addition, the Senate is currently preparing to come back to the table for another huge tax cut focused on the expense of workers and consumers in America.

By Bill Orton

Maritime trades workers toiling amidst the belches of truck exhaust and ship emissions face a dramatically heightened risk of contracting leukemia and other forms of cancer, according to experts who spoke to a gathering of union officials in Long Beach Sept. 23.

"The ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles are the single largest source of harmful pollution in the South Coast Air Quality District," said Richard Takishii-Drury, an attorney and a former adviser to the Clinton Administration's EPA panel on environmental justice.

Statistics show that 70 percent of all cancer risk in Harbor area is due to diesel particulate matter, a situation now made worse by a ruling from a NAFTA panel that allows older, dirtier Mexican trucks into the US.

"Exposure in the Harbor is 10 times or more that of the general population," Takishii-Drury said.

Metzger pointed out other ways that workers are the ones on the front line of workplace pollution.

"Workers are really the canaries of occupational cancers," Metzger said. "A lot of your members are going to develop cancer that will be caused by exposure to chemicals in the workplace, like benzene. The rate of incidents is much higher in the general population."
Representing the Union: Sam Kagel and the Longshoremen

By Harvey Schwartz

In the 1930s there were lots of warehouses in San Francisco. The city was a big distributing center. You had public warehouses and warehouse houses in grocery, drug, hardware and coffee. All of them were part of the waterfront, really. Right after the 1934 strike most were still unorganized. But soon there was a conscious decision to move off the waterfront and into the warehouses. And for good strategic reasons. They were easy pickings, too, because they were paying $4, $5, $6 cents an hour with hardly any conditions. Those wages were low even for the Great Depression.

Eugene Paton was one of the San Francisco warehouse organizers. He was an extraordinary guy. I remember how Pat got recognition at this one warehouse that specialized in packing fancy Italian olives and stuff like that. Pat had the warehouse organizers and the employer not only at that plant but at others that were part of the waterfront, really. Right after the 1934 strike most were still unorganized. But soon there was a conscious decision to move off the waterfront and into the warehouses. And for good strategic reasons. They were easy pickings, too, because they were paying $4, $5, $6 cents an hour with hardly any conditions. Those wages were low even for the Great Depression.

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when it came to the Santa Cruz case, Paul—being an attorney—went through all of the steps right up to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The “hot boxcar” during the 1938 San Francisco warehouse lockout. The rail car was loaded with scab and strike breakers.

Harry thought we should take the master contract all along. He sided with, for christake, Adrien Falk, one of the main employers. We had a public meeting with the partyside there and both of them were arguing for the master contract. We used a union contract, not a “closed shop” to warehouse to warehouse. That lockout was front page news for weeks in San Francisco.

I used to discuss the situation daily with Paton, who was now president of Local 6. We always got the early editions of the San Francisco Chronicle to read Paul C. Smith’s blasts at us. Smith was the editor of the newspaper. He had not been an unreasonable, anti-union guy before. Finally we had to write him a letter asking him to be mediator. He accepted.

And I knew that when we got into mediation we would end up with a master contract. There was no way we were going to get the employers to agree to permit us to whipsaw. But we didn’t sit around and say, “Hey, they work.” You don’t do that. You suddenly come to the realization that, “Are we going to stay out another forty days with nothing happening and we’ve got our people not working?”

I immediately telephoned Jack Shelly, then the secretary of the San Francisco Labor Council. He called the chief police, whose men visited Gordon at the St. Francis Hotel, where he was staying. They asked him what he was doing in town. He said he was there to introduce a new cleaning process.

The police then saw that he went out to the airport. They put him on a plane headed East. He said, “I’ll take care of it.” He called the chief police, whose men visited Gordon at the St. Francis Hotel, where he was staying. They asked him what he was doing in town. He said he was there to introduce a new cleaning process.

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Schwarzenegger vetoes trucker bill

By Tom Price

PORT truckers lost a round in their quest to gain a voice on the job when California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed a bill that would have recognized their collective bargaining rights.

Local Senate Bill 26, introduced Feb. 25 by Sen. Joseph Dunn (D-Darden Grove), would have acknowledged that truckers are workers who should be able to collectively bargain with their employers. But in a selective victory for truck companies, Schwarzenegger claimed the bill would violate federal anti-trust laws and said it would "tip the scales of justice in favor of industry." The bill passed the Senate 24-14 and the Assembly 47-31. Schwarzenegger vetoed it Sept. 29. The bill had the backing of the Teamsters’ Union and the opposition of the Calif. Trucking Assn.

It’s typical Schwarzenegger—if anyone in the business community objects to legislation, he’s going to veto it,” said Chuck Mack, Director of the Teamsters’ Port Division. “If it has anything to do with labor and there’s an objection—it’s an automatic veto.”

The steamship companies that contract with the truckers have anti-trust immunity and are allowed to fix shipping rates among themselves. These immunities allow the companies to engage in collective activities to increase their market clout, and these activities decrease the ability of port owner-operator drivers to negotiate for higher rates,” the bill reads. Anti-truck laws deny port truckers the same privileges.

The bill would cover drivers who own only one tractor and drive under agreements with maritime shippers. Sen. Dunn’s reasoning is that the truckers are kept unfairly poor and cannot maintain their rigs. Therefore, they must be protected by labor laws to protect its environment from the port truckers. While the National Labor Relations Act bans unionization by “independent contractors,” it does not preempt California from passing labor laws to protect its environment and its workers, according to the bill.

The bill’s supporters argued that since truckers provide their own tractors but in every other way use the employers’ facilities, they are no more independent than mechanics who bring their own tools to work.

Schwarzenegger could have looked like a fighter for the underdog if California took the lead and tried to solve the problems of port congestion and the exploitation of port workers. But he didn’t sound like the action hero in his veto.

The litigious fastmover this bill would presumably ignite is counter-productive to the cooperative work that must be accomplished to capture the economic potential afforded by growth in international trade.”

Schwarzenegger’s veto message read:

Mack, who is also Secretary-Treasurer of Teamsters Local 70 and a Teamster International Vice President, promised more action next year.

“This veto only reinforces what we already knew—he’s just a Wall Street guy—he’s not interested in the pocket of big business and he does his bidding to the detriment of workers. The worst of it is that workers who are just absolutely exploited,” Mack said. “We’ll re-introduce the bill, we’ll get it passed and, when we get a new governor, we will get it signed.”

The Change to Win leadership: (left to right) Jim Hoffa, General President, International Brotherhood of Teamsters; Edgar Romney, Secretary-Treasurer of the CTW Federation; Andy Stern, SEIU President, Joe Hansen, UFCW President; Anna Burger, Chair of CTW Federation; Terry O’Sullivan, LIUNA General President; Arturo Rodriguez, United Farm Workers President; Garlyn Lutey, LIUNA International Vice President.

By Mark Gruenberg

Paying $750 million on organizing. The Arnold Schwarzenegger vetoed a bill that would have recognized their collective meetings of the new group’s 10-person board and serve as its public face, the unorganized will be Change to Win.

The Change to Win leadership: (left to right) Jim Hoffa, General President, International Brotherhood of Teamsters; Edgar Romney, Secretary-Treasurer of the CTW Federation; Andy Stern, SEIU President, Joe Hansen, UFCW President; Anna Burger, Chair of CTW Federation; Terry O’Sullivan, LIUNA General President; Arturo Rodriguez, United Farm Workers President; Garlyn Lutey, LIUNA International Vice President.

St. LOUIS—Declaring they want to devote three-fourths of their new group’s money to organizing, leaders representing seven unions formally established the Change to Win federation Sept. 27 in St. Louis.

The federation’s unions have more than 3 million members. They are the Service Employees, Teamsters, United Food and Commercial Workers, the Laborers, the Carpenters, UNITE HERE and the Farm Workers. Of the workers the new group will leave soon—and the United Farm Workers, are former member unions of the AFL-CIO.

The new group, to be headquartered in Washington, named SEIU Secretary-Treasurer SEIU as organizing director, Tom Woodruff, before she leaves for his organizing director—a key post—and Greg Tarapanov moves from the New York-based Labor Research Association to become Change to Win’s full-time executive director.

But there, who will chair the monthly meetings of the new group’s 10-person board and serve as its public face, will keep her SEIU post. Woodruff will head its Strategic Organizing Center. This will lead the unified, union-wide coordinated growth initiatives, leveraging the collective resources of its affiliates for growth and “integrate their organizing plans,” a Change to Win statement said.

At its first-ever convention, almost 500 delegates from the unions ratified the organization’s constitution and its goals and program by voice votes. Leaders said organizing the unorganized will be Change to Win’s overriding goal.

Teamsters President James Hoffa declared Change to Win will spend $750 million on organizing. The Teamsters, on the international level alone, spent $40-$45 million and will add $5 million next year, Hoffa said. UNITE HERE’s Raynor said his union spends 55 percent of its annual budget—$30 million—on organizing.

But there is more, or maybe less, to that figure than meets the eye. That’s because the figure includes not just what the new federation and its member unions officially spend on organizing, but what their locals, councils and affiliates spend, too.

And spending next year will increase only slightly, using the funds those unorganized would have otherwise sent to the AFL-CIO in dues—minus the 25 cents per member per year they’re going to send to Change to Win.

And they stated that their core industries—hotels, hospitals, restaurants, textile, construction, transportation and others—have 50 million workers, but only 6 million are unionists. Workers they will pursue hold jobs that cannot be outsourced or which are not covered by collective bargaining agreements. Using the funds on the waterfront—that port truckers combine together and bargain as a united group they will keep her SEIU post. Woodruff will head its Strategic Organizing Center. This board and serve as its public face, the unorganized will be Change to Win’s full-time executive director.

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The bill would cover drivers who own only one tractor and drive under agreements with maritime shippers. Sen. Dunn’s reasoning is that the truckers are kept unfairly poor and cannot maintain their rigs. Therefore, they must be protected by labor laws to protect its environment from the port truckers. While the National Labor Relations Act bans unionization by “independent contractors,” it does not preempt California from passing labor laws to protect its environment and its workers, according to the bill.

The bill’s supporters argued that since truckers provide their own tractors but in every other way use the employers’ facilities, they are no more independent than mechanics who bring their own tools to work.

Schwarzenegger could have looked like a fighter for the underdog if California took the lead and tried to solve the problems of port congestion and the exploitation of port workers. But he didn’t sound like the action hero in his veto.

The litigious fastmover this bill would presumably ignite is counter-productive to the cooperative work that must be accomplished to capture the economic potential afforded by growth in international trade.”

Schwarzenegger’s veto message read:

Mack, who is also Secretary-Treasurer of Teamsters Local 70 and a Teamster International Vice President, promised more action next year.

“This veto only reinforces what we already knew—he’s just a Wall Street guy—he’s not interested in the pocket of big business and he does his bidding to the detriment of workers. The worst of it is that workers who are just absolutely exploited,” Mack said. “We’ll re-introduce the bill, we’ll get it passed and, when we get a new governor, we will get it signed.”
October 2005

LEAD seminar focuses on democracy and participation

Northern California members discuss strategy: Cesar Garibay and Jose Nunez (Local 6), Bonnie Houston (seated) and Byron Moore (Local 10), and Jack Wyatt, Sr., Local 17.

ILWU members from all sections of the union gathered in Palm Springs, California, last month to participate in the latest Leadership Education and Development (LEAD) institute. This is the most diverse and representative group of participants we've had come out for this type of training," said International Secretary-Treasurer Willie Adams.

"This is the most diverse and maximum member participation in the life of the union. "What we are about in the ILWU," said International President Jim Spinoza in his opening remarks, "is democracy—rank and file democracy from the bottom up in the ILWU and throughout organized labor. From real democracy we build real unity."

The week-long program began with an overview by Professor Elaine Bernard of the Harvard University Trade Union Program about the importance of union democracy to members—and about how essential unions are in fighting for and defending democracy for all workers.

Joe Schaffer and Rick Oglesby of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service led a day-long workshop on how ILWU members can work better together in committees and meetings, and why rules are necessary in a democracy. Max Vekich, member of clerks Local 52 and the International Executive Board, presided over a lively session on Robert's Rules of Order and other ILWU meeting procedures.

Skill-building sessions took place between several presentations about ILWU principles and traditions. Pensioner and former Coast Committeeman Bill Ward and Ian Ruskin of the Harry Bridges Project painted a picture of the democratic discussion and debate that swirled around negotiation of the historic longshore agreement in 1960 known as the Modernization and Mechanization Agreement. Ah Quon McElrath, retired Local 142 social worker, evoked the threats posed to civil liberties by anti-communism in the 1950s and anti-terrorism today.

On Thursday, the participants rose to their feet in response to a stirring performance by Local 23 member Zeek Green about the plight of workers and the promise of solidarity.

A research team from the University of Washington's Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies look on (Ali Boyd, Julianna Rigg, not shown: Jon Agnone).

"This kind of brainstorming always helps us," said Olney. "We get new leads for organizing, which strengthens the entire union in every way imaginable."

Many of the conference materials will soon be available on the member section of the ILWU website (www.ilwu.org).

Photos by Frank Wilder, ILWU clerical staff

Emilei Noceti, Local 63 Marine Clerks, leads group problem-solving exercise.

Taking about organizing in the Puget Sound area: Lance Anderson (Local 23 Tacoma), Chuck Cepeda (Local 19 Seattle), IBU national Secretary-Treasurer Terri Mast, Jeff Moore (Local 98 Seattle), Coast Committeeman (Northwest) Joe Wenzel.

Participants exchange insights and experiences about challenges of working constructively with different kinds of personalities in their union and community (foreground, back to camera, Tony Flaherty [Local 7] and Rachel Lohe [Local 30]; left to right Marc Cuevas [Local 54], Karen Bonkoski [Local 5], Angel Blanco [Local 13], Jerry LeMaster [Alaska Longshore Division]).
BUILDING THE COAST COMMUNICATIONS TEAM
LONGSHORE COMMUNICATIONS SEMINAR IN JANUARY

During our Longshore Division’s 2002 contract negotiations, the media became a key factor in influencing the public opinion of the community, labor, business interests and politicians. What people said about our negotiations impacted the contract bargaining process and how the politicians reacted to our contract struggle. Based on this reality, the Coast Committee, with recommendation from the Coast Public Relations Committee and approval from the Longshore Division Causus, has committed to improving our communications program. A fundamental and critical aspect of this program is to form an ILWU Coast communications team that, under the direction of the local officers and Coast Committee, assists the ILWU in promoting its messages during the 2006 contract bargaining sessions and beyond.

On Monday, January 23 through Friday, January 27, 2005, the ILWU Coast Committee, in conjunction with the Coast Public Relations Committee, will conduct a Communications seminar in Palm Springs, California at the Riviera Hotel. This seminar will include as instructors labor communication professionals with expertise in areas such as public speaking (press conferences, community meetings, outreach), print media (writing flyers, newsletters, press releases), audio/visual presentations (video and photographic), and e-activism (using e-mail and the internet to network, mobilize, and disseminate information).

APPLICATION PROCESS

The Coast Committee is looking for registered ILWU members who are committed to promoting the message of the ILWU and who will make a three-year commitment to the ILWU Coast Communications team. Registered rank- and-file longshore members interested in becoming part of the team can pick up an Application from their local officers. Applicants must turn in one copy to their local president and send one copy separately to: The ILWU Coast Committee, 1188 Franklin Street, 4th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94109. Application deadline: November 21, 2005.

SELECTION PROCESS

With the advice of local officers and the Coast Public Relations Committee, the Coast Committee will select members to participate in the seminar for eligibility on the ILWU Coast Communications team (requests for additional member participation will be considered based on space availability).

ROOM ACCOMMODATIONS, TRAVEL, PER DIEM

The Coast Committee will provide room accommodations, reimbursement for travel and per diem. Locals may choose to pay wages at their own discretion.

PORT SECURITY – PENSION SECURITY – SOCIAL SECURITY

Your Union’s Security

The ILWU International officers would like to thank all the members who donated their time, energy and money to our 2004 political campaign. We are proud of the stand the ILWU made in opposition to the Bush administration. Although we did not prevail then, events of the last year have proven we right and polls show that the majority of Americans now agree with our position. All those who contributed to our Political Action Fund in 2004 will be receiving a commemorative pin and window decal (pictured above) acknowledging their participation.

Now we are gearing up for the 2006 election cycle. The Republicans are vulnerable as the Iraq War drags on with continuing carnage and costs and no end in site, as Bush strategist Karl Rove appears to be facing indictments, and as Republican Senate leader Bill Frist and Republican House Majority Leader Tom DeLay are facing criminal charges. We stand a chance next year of stripping them of their hold on the Senate or House or both and block Bush’s continuing anti-workers agenda.

But to do that will require another all-out effort, even more than we did in 2004. We will need all our members to contribute financially as well as be ready to volunteer in our campaign efforts as the election approaches. Please fill out the attached form and send it with a check to:

ILWU Political Action Fund
1188 Franklin Street 4th Floor, San Francisco, CA 94109

All contributors will receive the new 2006 Political Action Fund commemorative pin. Contributions from outside the ILWU’s solicitable class will be screened and returned.

ILWU FEDERAL POLITICAL ACTION FUND

The Officers of ILWU request that you make a voluntary contribution of at least $5 or more to the ILWU International Political Action Fund (PAF). The purpose of this fund is to make expenditures in federal and/ or local elections to protect and advance the interests of ILWU members and the entire ILWU community.

The contribution requested is voluntary and is separate from your union dues and is not a condition of membership. You may give more or less than the amount requested and there will be no reprisals if you give less than the requested amount. Your contribution is not tax deductible.

Please send a check made payable to ILWU PAF for at least $5 or more, complete the requested information below, and mail in this envelope. PLEASE DO NOT SEND CASH. Thanks!

Any donation $50 or over makes you a President’s Club Member and entitles you to receive a PAF jacket. Please circle your size S-M-L-XL-2XL-3XL-4XL.

Name to be embroidered on jacket.

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Information on donating personally to key state and national elections that advance the interests of ILWU members.
continue to pursue picket captain and IBU member Robert Irminger and try to force him to name others on the line. Art of Art looted the locals shut down the Port of Oakland July 22, rallied in front of the PMA's Oakland office and marched 1,000 strong to the courthouse demanding the charges be dropped, and the Coast Committee threatening coastwise action if PMA carried out the prosecution of Irminger, the employers gave in.

The Labor Video Project produced the video. Following the video showing, Steve Zeltzer of the LVP, chaired the event with Irminger and Heyman speaking, followed by discussion.

Irminger chronicled how the Neptune Jade sailed into the port of Oakland Sept. 28, 1997 from Thamesport, England, a port operated by Mersey Docks and Harbor Company which had sacked the 500 Liverpool dockers. It was the second anniversary of the strike. Labor and community activists set up a picket line in solidarity with the Liverpool dockers. At this 10th anniversary commemoration, Liverpool, steward Terry Toague presented Irminger with a plaque for his dedication to the struggle.

For three-and-a-half days longshore workers looked to the picket line, despite a court injunction ordering them to do so. Finally, the Neptune Jade, desperate to unload its cargo in a U.S. West Coast port but finding no safe haven, departed for Vancouver, Canada, another ILWU port. Labor activists across the border also set up a picket, forcing the Neptune Jade to sail for Japan. There Japanese dockworkers, well aware of the hot cargo on board, didn't touch the ship. Finally the ship sailed to Taiwan where the cargo was discharged and the Neptune Jade, now internationally notorious, was renamed.

Such power of coordinated action by workers in three different countries sent shivers down the spine of maritime companies around the globe. The website of the Neptune Jade Defense Committee was swamped by visits from global corporations fearful of the spread of solidarity.

At the Longshore Caucus held after the ILWU Convention in Portland in 2000, attorney Rob Remar, who was instrumental in helping to pilot the Neptune Jade campaign through legal channels, explained that we live in a country with repressive anti-labor legislation like the Taft-Hartley Act which makes solidarity actions, or as he employs say, "secondary boycotts," difficult for unions to organize.

"The significance of the Neptune Jade action lay in the fact that the ILWU was able to implement its policy of support for their Liverpool brothers while defending itself against legal attacks," he said.

At the Liverpool gathering Irminger pointed out how the Neptune Jade action influenced later events. "It was the Neptune Jade action which strengthened the links between Bay Area organized labor and community groups, preceding and laying the basis for a global justice movement here," he said.

In 1999, he pointed out, ILWU and other trade unions matched with young protesters demonstrating against the WTO in Seattle. And again, in 2001, global justice activists successfully picketed an Italian ship in the Port of Oakland to protest the killing of a young anti-capitalist globalization protestor in Genoa.

Jack Heyman, who had been sent to Liverpool by then-ILWU President Brian Mulligan early in their struggle in 1996, drew a direct connection from Liverpool to the Neptune Jade to the ILWU's contentious 2002 contract negotiations and the anti-Iraq War protests. When PMA and the Bush administration threatened the ILWU during the 2002 contract negotiations, he said, these activists and dockworkers internationally were readily mobilized to support the ILWU, from marches and rallies in San Francisco to parrying with right-wing politicians in the Australian press.

Heyman said when anti-war activists demonstrated in the Port of Oakland at the start of the Iraq War, longshore workers refused to unstack their picket lines as they had done six years earlier in the Neptune Jade picket line. One difference, he noted, was that Oakland mayor Jerry Brown himself participated in the Neptune Jade picket line, but he now supports the bloody police repression of the anti-war demonstration.

The veil of 9/11 "national security," had been used by the government to cover the peaceful protesters as "terrorists." Scores were shot with so-called less-than-lethal weapons, including nine longshore workers and then-Business Agent Heyman was arrested while trying to protect his members against the police assault.

Although the port was not shut down, the case against the police, ILWU Local 10 v City of Oakland, is scheduled for court in January.

"Solidarity Has No Borders: the Journey of the Neptune Jade" is available for $20 (plus $5 handling fee) from its producer: Labor Video Project P.O. Box 720027 San Francisco, CA 94172 Voice: 415-282-1906 Fax: 415-495-1369 Email: lvp@labornet.org

Fifty percent of the proceeds will go to the legal defense campaign to expose the brutal police attack on peaceful anti-war protesters and longshore workers in the Port of Oakland in April 2003. The campaign is being organized by the Transport Workers Solidarity Committee.
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. **$15.00**
- **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**
- **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. **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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