Dispatchers in Dutch stand up

Women's History Month
Women mariners take on the sea and myths

Ed Flynn
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Beyond Dubai: getting to real port security

By James Spinosa
ILWU International President

The Dubai Ports World controversy demonstrated how very little the media and politicians know about how international trade operates. The volume of their outrage bordered on hysteria and nearly drowned out the few voices of reason. But the long-overdue recognition of American ports’ vulnerability to terrorism has given the ILWU an opening to more widely address the issue of what port security really is and how it really is achieved.

Not that there aren’t some legitimate concerns raised about a foreign government operating an American port terminal when the country in question has some suspicious ties to terrorist activity. But the situation was never as extreme as it was portrayed by the press and politicians.

Arabs never bought the ownership of U.S. ports. They couldn’t. The ports are owned by local government agencies. When DPW made a deal with British-owned Peninsular and Oriental Steamship Navigation Co. (P&O), all it bought were leases in six East Coast ports to operate a terminal in them. The lease is on terms the local port authorities negotiated with the British company. And by U.S. federal law, security matters are still dictated and enforced by the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Customs Bureau.

But that is where the real issue lies. What are these laws? Are they adequate to provide real security? And who and how will they be enforced to be effective?

The Marine Transportation and Security Act of 2004 designated the Coast Guard as the lead enforcement agency for the nation’s port security program. In 2004 the Coast Guard issued comprehensive and detailed regulations to meet those goals. Unfortunately, due to business cost concerns overriding security concerns, many of the Coast Guard’s regulations have not been implemented.

Still, the ILWU is pushing for some basic practices to be started as soon as possible.

• Maintaining and checking secure electronic seals on all containers to detect and deter tampering are the most essential parts any port security program. Most containers are sealed with mechanical bolts that can be cut and replaced or have doors that can be removed by dismantling the hinges. These containers come to American ports from all over the world on flag-of-convenience ships with ownership obscured by legal papers and crewed by sailors only they have reviewed. All this leaves our ports vulnerable.

• And yet fewer containers are inspected in West Coast ports than before 9-11, and many terminal operators have made a policy of discontinuing such inspections because of the costs. All “empty” containers entering the ports, whether by ship, truck or rail, should be inspected to confirm they are truly empty.

• Since there is no requirement making anyone responsible for sealing empty containers, and since they may have traveled long distances for days or been parked on city streets or otherwise presented with opportunities for tampering or smuggling, inspection should be required. Besides, inspecting empties is relatively cheap and quick.

• Containers carrying dangerous cargo or hazardous materials should be properly documented and placarded and kept separate from others.

• Controlling access to port facilities needs tightening. Currently truck drivers are granted entry with little authentication of identity and no inspection of their “sleepier cabs.” Once inside the terminal, these drivers have unlimited access to all areas without oversight or supervision. In the busiest terminals the drivers are the largest single group of workers there, often hundreds of them at a time.

• All port workers should be trained on the basic requirements of port facility security plans, the detection of security problems and the proper response and evacuation procedures during a security incident. Today most terminal operators refuse to share their security plans with dockworkers on the grounds of “confidentiality.” But we cannot protect ourselves or our ports if we are excluded from security initiatives.

We have been making the point that port security is worker safety. Our lives and those of our families and communities around the ports are literally on the line. We are the ones who have the most to lose should the port security apparatus, currently full of holes, fail us.

So we have been taking the opportunity of this new-found interest in port security (and our newly mobilized public relations machinery) to focus on the real problems that need attention, not the intrusive background checks and screening much of the so-called security plans have been dealing with up until now.

ILWU Director of Port Security Mike Mitre presented testimony on our view of port security before the U.S. Senate’s Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee Feb. 28, and ILWU security liaison Gary Brown of Local 23 testified on March 3. We have established the ILWU as a major player in the national debate on port security and we will continue to press our position to protect our jobs, ourselves and our communities.
Agents get on board with OCU

Boarding agents at two Long Beach companies have opted to join ILWU Local 63 OCU (Office Clerical Unit). The agents at Schenker Steamers Logistics voted 3-1 to join for the union March 1. Two days later those at Merit Steamship Agency voted 2-0 to join.

Though Schenker operates all over the world and Merit is a small West Coast firm, their boarding agents do similar work and face similar pressures.

The agents work in offices, on the docks and around town. They book and depart ships, help handle immigration paperwork for the vessel and its crew, arrange for repairs, medical appointments and transportation and deal with other problems as they arise.

"We're on duty 24/7," said Merit agent Dennis Tsui. "They come in at three, four or five o'clock in the morning and leave at seven, eight or nine at night."

The agents miss sleep and time with their families—and don't even get paid for all their hours. Merit didn't pay overtime and would weasel out of paying anything for small tasks done at odd hours, like late-night supply pick-ups. Schenker routinely had people working off the clock.

"Our workload would have us in the office until 7:30 or 8:00 p.m.," Schenker agent Luis Villegas said. "They would say, 'It's not our fault you fell behind.'"

The company also failed to reimburse workers for mileage and other expenses till they complained—and it failed to give pay raises. By January the Schenker agents were ready to quit. But they'd heard about the OCU, and decided to organize instead.

"Agents from the different companies run into each other at the customs office and at the terminals," Local 63 OCU President John Fagnaux said. "Non-union people work shoulder-to-shoulder with union members and see the difference."

Villegas had a friend at Inchcape, the first independent boarding agency to join ILWU 63 OCU—and a father who knew the difference between working union and not. "My dad always said, 'The best thing that ever happened to me was when I got into the Ironworkers.' That was a motivator for me," Villegas said.

Both Schenker and Merit put strong anti-union campaigns, like more than 90 percent of employers do when facing union drives. Drivers higher-ups dished out an assortment of pleas, promises and threats. Schenker gave a $600 "operations bonus" to each agent the day before the election. Merit at first threatened to close up shop. Later the CEO apologized for that remark and switched to asking for "just 36 days" to improve.

"That all put a little pressure on the workers," Tsui said. "Our emotions were like a roller-coaster, up and down."

But they resisted the pressure and voted unanimously. The three Schenker agents also held their...
Conservatives win in Canada, labor cautious

by Tom Price

Canada’s voters woke up Jan. 24 with a new, Conservative government that many had worried, “What have we done?”

The previous government, headed by the Liberal Party, won only 30 percent of the popular vote and 103 seats. It suffered from several scandals and the lack-luster leadership of Paul Martin, whose family owns Canada Steamship Lines. The new Democratic Party scored 17.5 percent of the vote while the minority parties split the rest. The NDP also gained 11 more seats in Parliament, and they now have 21.

For two-thirds of the voters who didn’t vote for Harper, his new government represents policies they explicitly reject. Harper has advocated an expansion of the military, growth in size and powers of Canada’s intelligence services, bans on gay marriage and withdrawal from the Kyoto global warming treaty. He has also backed advocated greater participation in U.S. foreign policy blunders. Canada took on a leadership role of the NATO forces in the south of Afghanistan March 1 and the arguments were worked out by the previous government.

ILWU Canada President Tom Dufresne organized against union-busting Harper who only has 124 seats in Canada’s 308-seat Parliament.

The ILWU also set us back, but the fact that he has a minority in Parliament should keep him in check. In the last election, a few things they want to concentrate on, and attacking the Labour Code does not seem to be at the top of their agenda. They mainly want to get re-elected.

The labor movement will hold the line on any Conservative privatization of “American” health care, Ken Georgetti, president of the Canadian Labor Congress, the nation’s federation of unions told The Dispatcher. In business Canada benefits greatly from not having to pay basic health care.

Why would anybody in their right mind want to give up what has been acknowledged in the auto industry as a $1,500 per car advantage in costs just because of our public health care? But the fact that he has a minority in Parliament should keep him in check. The last election, a few things they want to concentrate on, and attacking the Labour Code does not seem to be at the top of their agenda. They mainly want to get re-elected.

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Women mariners take on the sea and myths

By Annie Williams

"Shipping Out: The Story of America's Seafaring Women" is a comprehensive, spirited look at the women who today sail the seas for a living. Made for public television, the video documentary opens with striking images of intrepid women on tankers and tugs, rimming the San Francisco Bay or restoring old tugboats off the San Francisco Bay?

As one female tug captain, Jeanne Pinto, puts it early on, "It's really fun, pushing this huge ship around." But another woman, Capt. Carol Curtiss, tempers this with, "The thing that scares me is, if this is a hard job. It's not for every woman, it's not for every man.

To meet these women is to encounter the stuff that determination and drive are made of. Most of a woman's things, we learn how much they are dedicated to the work. Whether getting stuck in a ship's engine room accident, or being away from loved ones for months at a time, what unites these women is an undeniable, infectious passion. The best part of the video is when they talk about what they love about the job, such as when engineer Mary Helen Smith mentions "the sunsets, wind through the hair, the stuff that determination and drive are made of."

The documentary introduces women like Mary Frances Culnane, the first woman to graduate from the Academy. Since 1974, women have been allowed into the academy, but very few make it. You have to be that much better, than a man, they tell you, and yet, even talking up a good set of sea legs, these women still face immense challenges of sexism and abuse, precisely because they are breaking new ground.

The story of many women in history, particularly the choice of profession. The profiles of seafaring women fly in the face of notions of gender and social constructs. It's as if getting off of land-based ideology and "shipping out" to sea, these women challenge both themselves and all of society.

As one woman notes, even talking about subjugating their femininity while out to sea, it's a telling dichotomy. On one level these women are drawn to the sea in order to escape the limitations and boundaries they've experienced on land, yet oftentimes come face-to-face with the very rules of the rest of the world, or do they want to be unique. We can make our own terms, seems to be a central concern for these women. This is where the documentary really takes off.

"It's as if they've tested themselves and proven something to themselves," says the video's director, Maria Brooks. "It was refreshing to meet them, I was awed by their daunting, their daring.

Brooks has directed other films about the maritime industry, including "The History of Merchant Mariners in World War II" and a profile of an African American Captain, "The Odyssey of Captain Healey," but in all her work she never came across stories of woman working at sea. So she started to dig.

"The story of these women is like the story of many women in history, they're like this shadowy presence, with no names or identity," she said.

The historical sexism and dramatic reenactments in the documentary, while somewhat stylistically jarring, help to put a face to those absent women, and provide a context out of which the contemporary stories can then emerge. The women behind the romanticized, caricature-like "Tugboat Annie," or the lesser-known "pirate women," remarkable women who defied tradition and intrasexual roles to launch the rich legacy of strong women commanding ships today?

While these images of early seafaring women are certainly important, the contemporary women take place much more engaging and inspiring. One story that resonates is single-mother Melody and her young son, who recently had to give up her beloved tugboat business after she had a baby. But she manages to find a job as a pot washer and make it all the way to pilot, a top job for women, she says, to be competent. But as Capt. Anne Sanborn laments, recalling her early days on ships, "The assumption was that you were incompetent by the very fact of your gender.”

As more women have entered the maritime industry, there have been slow strides toward tempering and changing—and opportunity for advancement. "You can start as a pot washer and make it to captain," a room attendant on a cruise liner attests.

Yet that struggle to both embrace and redefine one's femininity, on one’s own terms, seems to be a central concern for these women. This is where the documentary really takes off. "It's as if they've tested themselves and proven something to themselves," says the video’s director, Maria Brooks. "It was refreshing to meet them. I was awed by their daunting, their daring.

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The absence of family and the presence of the sea is, I recurrent theme. For a lot of the women interviewed, finding the right partner is difficult, not just because they are gone for so long, but because they are used to being in charge of their work and lives. And the work itself is so fascinating, so invigorating.

One thing is sure, after viewing this documentary, you do not feel like any of these women have any regrets. It's refreshing to witness the power, passion and sheer joy they share, quite cathartic about their work and lives. And the work itself is so fascinating, so invigorating.

"You want to be in command at home, as well," one of them remarks. "The truth is, they say, women becomes the central theme of the story of having to slog through and put up with, the rest of the world, and play by the rules of the rest of the world, or do we want to be unique. We can make a stand for what we are, a stand for who I am, which is not much, but hey, I'm doing it.

"Shipping Out" is an invaluable tool you can use for young people, especially young women. A 24-page study guide designed as a companion piece to help educators explore subjects raised in the documentary is also available.

As Chief Engineer Lida Pollard puts it, "Do we want to comply with the rest of the world, and play by the rules of the rest of the world, or do we want to be unique. We can make a stand for who we are, a stand for what we are, which is not much, but hey, I'm doing it.

"Shipping Out" is available on DVD for $24.95 plus $4.95 mailing. Make checks payable to: Waterfront Soundings Productions / 3252 Kempton Avenue, Oakland, CA 94611.
Longshore retired, deceased and survivors

RECENT RETIREES:
Local 8—Gary Brennan; Local 10—
Arthur Shornick; Local 13—David
Eldridge; Local 19—Daniel Martinez,
Johnny Leonardi; Local 23—Wayne
Rees; Local 24—Percy Snow; Local
34—Russell Lamson, John Kucin,
Dorothy Spahn; Local 43—Bobby
Burk; Local 47—William Osborn.
Local 52—Lawrence Harn, Local 65—
Cecilia Davis, Local 91—Robert M.
Johnson Jr., Local 12—Clarence Seamon
(Pauletta), Local 21—Rae Mitchell
(Shirley), Ervin Axt, Charles Moreno
(Aurora), Jose Miranda (Pasqualino),
George T. White Jr. (San Francisco)
Spahn (Fay); Local 52—John Bruce
(Shirley); Local 53—Leland Lane;
Local 91—Michael Dairinger; Local
19—José Delgado (Adelino), Harry
Stevens (Juanita), Halsey Soderberg,
Hiroyuki Rosales (Dora), Mardus
Silvas (Dorothy), Joseph Diaz
Josey Jr. (Shelby), Paul Duncan
(Laura), José Guerrero, Richard
Laura, Local 91—Vincent Marino;
Local 94—Wayne Hamby, William
McCrae, Robert Slowick; Local
98—Donald Minken. (Survivors in paren-
thesis.)

DECEASED:
Locals 3—Jeanine, Locals 8—James,
21—Allan Halal, Local 4—Dennis
Chambers; Local 9—Jose Segura;
10—Raymond Bareno; Local
13—Eddie V Gomez, Gary Vlasich.
Local 19—Scott Shinall (Kathleen),
Local 21—Clayton Jukes, Local
29—Charles Neal; Local 63—Evelyn
Sicheneder, Freda Scorby, Kathryn
Halsey Soderberg, Hilario Rosales
Elaine Hightower, Willie Mae
Hansen, Donald Marshall, Elizabeth
Spalasso, June Pasqualino, Josephine
Naify, Alexander, Lillian Hughey,
Gwendolyn Caldwell, Hazel Cassell,
Laverna Altman, Charles Moreno
(Marion), Emanuel Taylor Jr. (Patricia),
Lenor Hennem, Paul Kollen, Jimmie
Sharp, Robert Stalling, Robert Saucedo,
Lynne Dunlop, Local 21—Rae Mitchell
(Gloria); Local 23—Charles Elkins;
Local 24—Lynne Lynch; Local 34—
Haii Garabedian; Local 40—Marvin
Gebebhard (Nancy); Local 51—Darrell

Spahn (Pay); Local 52—John Bruce
(Shirley); Local 53—Leland Lane;
Local 91—Michael Dairinger; Local
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thesis.)

Notice of Nomination and Primary Elections at ILWU Convention and Longshore Division Caucus

The tri-annual Convention will be held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, 655 Burrard Street in Vancouver, British Columbia, beginning at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, May 15, 2006, and will con-

March 2006

MAY IS MEDICAL, DENTAL CHOICE MONTH

Active and retired longshore families in the ports where members have a choice can change medical and/or dental plans during the open enrollment period May 1 to May 31, 2006. The change will be effective July 1, 2006. In addition to the May open enrollment period, members in Maritime coverage have a choice on any time within thirty (30) days prior to the Convention. The July 1, 2006 Memorial of Understanding between the ILWU and PMA provides that new registrants in the ports where members have a choice of medical plans shall be assigned Kaiser HMO Plan or Group Health Cooperative. Information on the dental plans, and Coastwise Indemnity Plan, Kaiser and Group Health Cooperative medical plans, and forms to change plans can be obtained at the Locals and the ILWU-PMA Benefit Plans office.

All nominations must be submitted to the Benefit Plans office by May 31 for the change to be effective July 1.
Ed Flynn: tough negotiator, true peacemaker
by Tom Price

The maritime industry lost one of its old-style cooperation over-conflict employer representatives Jan. 11 when Edmund Flynn died at the age of 89. In life he earned the respect of two antago-
nistic entities, the Pacific Maritime Assn., of which he was president, and the ILWU under Harry Bridges.
Born of Irish immigrant parents, Flynn grew up in New York City and Long Island. He won a scholar-
ship to Indiana University, where he met and married his first wife, Jean. They would be together for 50 more years until she died in 1992.
Flynn's education was interrupted-
by WWII and service in the Army Air Force. After the war he earned a law degree from Harvard in 1946 and went to work in the National Labor Relations Board.
Flynn worked as an attorney on both the labor and management sides and was president of the PMA from 1969 to 1981, coming on in time for the 1972-1973 strike.
While Bridges would be the first to characterize the long strike as a battle between labor and capital, it was also a battle of two titans. Bridges vs. Flynn.
When that happened, Bridges, the Australian immigrant seafarer who rose through the ranks tradi-
tioned by the blood of the 1934 strike, became close friends with Harry, who was also a strongman in orga-
izations through stormy but produc-
tive years.
"We didn't go to bed with the employer. It was a relationship we respected and we knew the rules—
they were employers, we were work-
ers. We understood the two never died and that we had to get along to survive," former longshore Local 10 President Cleophas Williams said.
"The union wanted jurisdiction over Container Freight Stations and the employer said, 'No,'" former Container Freight Stations negotiator Bill Ward said.
Other issues included wages and the role of steady workers. Ward remembers a typical bargaining session.
"The PMA would say 'When are you guys going to vote yourselves back to work?' and Harry would say, 'As soon as you meet our demands,'" Ward recalled.
The union also took on the feder-
al government in October 1971, when President Nixon invoked the Taft-
Hartley Act to force striking dockers back to work. After the 80-day "cool-
ing off period" the workers struck again Jan. 17, 1972. Then Nixon tried to ram compulsory arbitration bills through Congress. Bridges testified before the House and Senate Labor Committees in early February 1972.
"We have these blokes (the PMA) on this side of the table and they're going to whip them, and they're depending on you to save them," Bridges and Flynn led marathon negotiations over a long weekend, with Coast Arbitrator Sam Kagel sit-
ing in the mediator's chair. The strike ended after workers accepted an agree-
ment reached Feb. 8, 1972. The deal raised wages by 10 to 15 percent the first year, increased pensions, and improved shift differentials and guarantees for those who lost work due to automation.
"Bill said that the union had instituted wage and price controls by executive order, and, not surprisingly, his Cost of Living Council claimed the agree-
ment gave the workers too much. Rather than take the windfall for the employers, Flynn supported the increases before the Pay Board.
"Bridges' Council took 30 cents an hour away from us," former International Vice President Rudy Rubio said. "Harry said to Flynn, 'You still owe us that 30 cents.' I firmly believe that Ed and Harry kept that in mind, because it was right after that we got those $1.25 an hour wage increases.'
Rubio was president of Local 13 at that time and in that role bar-
gained with Bridges across the table from Flynn.
"We kept bargaining for retiree dental, and Flynn kept saying no," Rubio said. "In 1975 we got one of our best pay raises. Well, it was three o'clock in the morning on July 1, we had gone all night and the contract expired, and still—no dental. Harry took Bill Ward and me to see Flynn. Flynn said, as we were walking out, 'Harry, I gave you too much money. I need a nickel an hour back.' And Harry says, 'You can't have it.' Flynn says, 'You give back a nickel and you've got your pensioners' dental.' War words.
One of the things Flynn did was use his executive power to help set up the ILWU-PMA Alcohol and Drug Recovery Program (ADRIP).
"How was a man who was really compassionate about recovery," for-
mer ADRP Coast Director George Cobbs said. "A lot of things he did were without the approval of the (PMA) steering committee. He just did it because he believed this could help people.
"Cobb remembers Flynn as a tough negotiator for PMA.
"He would kick your ass when you got down to labor relations, or try to," Cobbs said. "But when it came to dealing with people, he had a lot of compassion."
Flynn helped Cobbs become a representative of the ADRP.
"First the ADRP said he wouldn't do it and he canceled the trip. He went to this house for a no-agenda dinner, he was just inviting people over," Cobbs said. "He really wanted to get to know me, and give me a chance to know him. He really believed that people could get sober.
Flynn stayed involved with the program, Bridges said.
"He taught me some pointers in golf that he had learned from Harry," Ward said. "Every time I go play I think of him. I used to take him salmon fishing on my boat and we had more fun than a barrel of mon-
keys. He said, 'I always got seasick until I went fishing with you.' He would throw a big barbecue, and if you knew Flynn you were invited."
Ed Flynn is survived by his daugh-
ters Kathy, Jennifer and Laura, sons Steven and Frank, four grandchild-
dren and five great grandchildren.
"I think of him. I used to take him fishing with you. 'He says, 'You give back a nickel and you've got your pensioners' dental. War words."
Coast Committeeman Bill Ward, ILWU International President Harry Bridges, and PMA President Ed Flynn announced the settlement of the 1971 longshore strike.
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