Local 20 accepts contract with health care cuts

Interview with IDC leader Julian Garcia

Bloody Thursday along the Coast

INSIDE
TWIC savaged at public hearing
Election 2006: High stakes and huge opportunities
Non-longshore ILWU members also subject to screening
Container work returns to Portland
Hiring Hall Shares the Work

Excellent article, and to the point, was President Spinosa’s report in the April 2006 Dispatcher.

I well remember when I started as a longshoreman back in 1940. There was little of any work for permit men and while waiting for a job to come up, I went to a little nearby beanery to get a bowl of soup. I sat down next to a long-time longshoreman who was eating his first better lunch than I. He asked me if I had a job and, when I said no, and that I didn’t think I could make enough at work to hang on, he said: “Hang on, kid, stay with it until you become a regular and you will do all right.”

When I questioned why I, he replied; “Because the guy that got the first job would not get his second until you got your first.”

He was right and we all got work, sometimes frugal and sometimes good, but we all worked and that is a universal rule that comes with the hiring hall.

But now I wonder, the discrepancy of pay, the forming of the elite’s articles that you write in OUR news—newspaper when the dispatch was made possible by the dispatch hall. I wonder about this dependence of our longshoremen with our face-off with the employers, which came of all that came before. Yes, I do wonder.

Walter Williamson, Local 23, retired

A Salute to the ILWU

To the members of the ILWU, elected officials and especially the rank and file.

My father, Arthur Pepper, was a longshoreman’s son whose family migrated from Finland to the San Francisco and Los Angeles harbors. All my growing up I would listen at the kitchen table as he related the stories, the truths of the struggle, the hardships and the times, that occurred during the on-going battle for the benefits enjoyed for all of us who followed.

As a daughter, sister and wife of longshoremen I have benefited greatly due to the hard working men and women of the ILWU. Now once again I am being cared for as a widow. I can live in my senior years thanks to you and I do thank you—A salute to you all!

Mrs. G. R. Scott, Survivor

Send Them Back

I am upset about the articles that you are writing in The Dispatcher concerning illegal immigrants. The Editors are right to write in OUR letter report on all of you. Make it sound like we are backing the illegal immigrants. Nothing could be further from the truth. Everyone that I have talked to in Locals 13, 63 and 94 have stated that they feel that illegal immigrants that have entered this country since President Reagan gave amnesty to five million immigrants and rounded and returned to their home country, I’m not talking about 50 percent or 75 percent, 100 percent of the members that I have talked to feel that these illegals should be returned to their country.

I have been a member of Local 13 for 47 years. I look forward to serving in my final year of Dispatcher and I read it from front to back. A lot of the members that I asked about these articles and illegals that you are writing in OUR newsletter told me that they no longer read the comment about what you will do something about it.

Richard Mondor

Local 13 #33212

Food for Retirement Thought

My name is Ron Schmid— they used to call me “Dirty Box Boy”— starting at 19 years of age. I’ve been a permit man since in the 1980s before, during and after Bloody Thursday. I was referred to then as a soap box orator. He had hundreds of others fought and persevered for the rights of the working man. As a very young child my father was referred to as one of a longshoreman back in 1940. There was little if any work for permit men and while waiting for a job to come up, I went to a little nearby beanery to get a bowl of soup. I sat down next to a long-time longshoreman who was eating his first better lunch than I. He asked me if I had a job and, when I said no, and that I didn’t think I could make enough at work to hang on, he said: “Hang on, kid, stay with it until you become a regular and you will do all right.”

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TWIC savaged at public hearing

Local 13's Ole Olson questioned the fairness of the TWIC background checks.

ILWU Security Liaison Gary Brown complained about TWIC's costs to workers.

were many waterfront businesses that turned out at the Long Beach hearing to introduce themselves to federal officials and say that the proposed rules could drive them out of business.

"We understand the enormous political pressure your departments are experiencing to make the ports secure and safe," said Ray Lyman, of Catalina Express, that runs a pub- lic ferry to the island 26 miles off the coast from Los Angeles. "But it should be even more important to do it right, not to put industries out of business and force commuters to drive 100 miles to get to their job."
by Lindsay McLaughlin
ILWU Legislative Director

The ILWU Legislative Action Committee met in Washington, D.C., June 15, 2006, and made a list of recommended priorities for the union in the upcoming mid-term elections this November.

The committee is recommending that the union exercise its power at its command to change the direction of the nation, raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for the primary and Senatorial elections throughout the country and send rank-and-file members to Washington, D.C.

We need leadership that will help address the chronic underfunding of education, infrastructure and jobs. The ILWU Legislative Action Committee has worked closely with several important political leaders to ensure that the issues of critical importance to ILWU members are brought to the forefront of the political agenda.

There have been numerous congressional hearings on these matters, and the ILWU Legislative Action Committee has been a strong supporter of legislation that will address these issues.

The Legislative Action Committee lived through the 2002 longshore strike, which ultimately resulted in the ILWU's survival, and the union has been facto...
Non-longshore ILWU workers also subject to screening

By Lewis Wright

"You know longies here in L.A. or over there in Iraq are just working stiffs trying to do right by their families. You can see it here in these pictures. They remind me of some of the guys I worked with," said Joe Kordich, retired ILWU Local 13 longshore worker.

Joe was visiting a photo exhibit this past March entitled Iraqi Worker-Behind-the-Scrap Metal: Joe Kordich checks out photos of Iraqi longshore and oil workers by labor journalist David Bacon at an exhibit at ILWU Local 63's hall in San Pedro, Calif. The photos, some of which appeared previously in The Dispatcher, were taken during visits to Iraq by David Bacon, labor writer-photographer and depict Iraqi workers on the docks and in the oil fields of Basra Iraq. The photos show workers unloading ships, rigging oil wells, attending union meetings as well as showing their regular family lives. One group of workers, the families living next to a military dump, showed radiation-contaminated scrap metal. "These are hard living conditions, but those workers look tough, and that woman," Kordich said, pointing to a photo of an Iraqi union leader, "looks like she could build her own at any longshore meeting." Joe smiled as he left the exhibit, pointing to a thumb tattoo on his shoulder at the photos saying, "You know, with their strength combined with our water, we could kick some ass." Local 63 held its opening after its membership meeting March 1 and kept it up for a month. People from all over the area came to see it. Some visitors even brought imag es of oil workers as well as longshore workers, it was shown at the Steelworkers PACE Local 8-675 in Los Angeles in February. There the hat was passed and money "The exhibit is now at ILA Labor Center in Oakland, a Con-Agra flour factory on the Alameda Estuary and a sugar factory in Antioch. In Antioch they handle bulk cement, bulk metal and oil." In Antioch they handle gypsum, wallboard scrap metal, ammonia and liquid sulfur. They have a warehouse and perform maintenance work on the port. Joe Kordich said that ILWU members with IDs will have an advantage in getting jobs on the docks, Sacramento warehouse Local 17 Dispatcher RA Forrest Burdine said, "In a way, it's an opportunity for union members." Local 18 has a laundry room where people can come in off the street. "If I have a readily available list, then a lot of members who aren't working will have a way to be able to go to the longshore side," Burdine said.

Local 17 workers handle rice, fertilizer, bulk commodities, fly ash and do all kinds of work in the port such as unloading railcars. But while there are advantages to having a security card, "the port side is a massive loss of privacy and due process, and a presumption of guilt if a person is denied a card." "The whole concept of port security, in that they're vetting people, it is such a façade," Gratz said. "It has nothing to do with port security, it has more to do with longshore workers. Port security should include the health and safety of the workers, not just property." Long before the government came up with TWIC, the Inlandboatmen's Union of the West had its own system, the Inlandboatmen's Security Interim Screening Program, "We have already lived the life of being vetted, probed and vetted," said Cote. "Unlike 30 years ago, a sailor today would lose his document if he got a second DUI and not be able to work." Non-union companies are speaking up loudly against this system, Cote said. "They rely more on un-affected work a liquid bulk terminal." They recognize data as flawed, or "We have already gone through background checks by the state, so this is not yet an issue for the members," Cote said. "But probably will have to go through the TWIC process." "We don't really know how it's going to affect our members, but some of our members could lose their jobs because of immigration status or prior activities that they've already paid their debts to society for," Pecker said. "If they've been vetted, they're probably going to have a hard time in the TWIC process." Local 6 members who may be affected work a liquid bulk terminal and a general warehouse in San Francisco, and another cotton plant in Oakland, a Con-Agra flour factory on the Alameda Estuary and a sugar factory in Antioch. In Antioch they handle bulk cement, bulk metal and oil. In Antioch they handle gypsum, wallboard scrap metal, ammonia and liquid sulfur. They have a warehouse and perform maintenance work on the port. Joe Kordich checks out photos of Iraqi longshore and oil workers by labor journalist David Bacon at an exhibit at ILWU Local 63's hall.
Dockworkers have realized again that we can do it

Interview with IDC leader Julian Garcia

The ILWU belongs to two international dockworker federations—the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), a more than 100-year old group, and another under transportation workers like sailors, truckers and rail and airline workers, and the newly formed International Dockworkers Council (IDC), which is just dockworkers.

The IDC held its founding First Assembly in Charleston, South Carolina in March 2001 during the celebration of the Charleston 5 victory. Julian Garcia, the leader of the Spanish dockers' union Coordina dor, was elected leader or General Coordinator of the IDC. Garcia retired as leader of the Spanish union, but has continued on as leader of the IDC.

The IDC backed the ILWU during its 2002 contract fight and was instrumental in stopping the European Union's attempt to privatize and casualize European ports. It has been growing and gaining strength over the last few years. Garcia came to the Longshore Caucus in Vancouver, B.C. last May to report on the organization's activities. While there Dispatcher editor Steve Stallings had a chance to sit down with him and ask him a few questions.

Q: It's been four years since the founding First Assembly of the International Dockworkers Council in Charleston. What changes have happened in the organization since then?

A: There have been positive changes and new additions. Some of them are important, especially from strategic sites in the world. We've also needed during this period that unions don't need large structures to be effective, that it's quite possible, as some have said, that large structures slow the organization down too much. We need, admittedly, a qualitative leap and we have reached a membership of 50,000 dockworkers, starting from an initial membership of 12,000, but we need to have contingents in as many places as possible.

The fact that there have been affiliations is important, but more so is the important work that has been done in areas that are strategic, close to the Indian Ocean, in southern Africa: Réunion Island, Mauritius, Madagascar, South Africa. That whole area has become a vital zone for the transfer of goods. We've had a very interesting meeting in the Indian Ocean, but we must bear fact.

We also have a close relationship with our fellow dockworkers in Uruguay, from Montevideo, who have made a comeback from a brutal dictatorship, especially where trade unions are concerned. I think we will soon have members in Montevideo. We are also very close in Malta: Malta is an important island in the middle of the Mediterranean, a hug in a way that we would almost close the Mediterranean circle. We have members throughout the south, in the Magreb and Cyrenaica.

We are also working with the ex-Soviet republics because they are slated to play an important role in the Black Sea and northern Europe. And a very important event was a meeting held three weeks ago in Brazil, attended by more than 220 delegates from all those countries. We've been notified that seven or eight unions will be affiliating with IDC because we understood the need to open a permanent office in Brazil, given that country's enormous size, more than a country, it's a continent in itself. This means our growth is significant, but more importantly, I think that we can really say that IDC has solidified as an organization.

Q: One of the most important things that's happened in recent years is the European ports package. The European Union is trying to pass legislation to privatize and deunionize the ports there. Obviously people felt like everything was on the line there. How big a victory was that for European dockworkers as a whole, but also, how important was the organizing and the victory to the IDC getting stronger?

A: Well, it's been decisive. The dockworkers have been decisive in that, that we may currently be one of the few collective organizations in the world that can stand up to governments and powerful captains of industry if we really get organized. In one day we mobilized 45,000 dockworkers and over 10,000 demonstrated on one day's notice.

The result was convincing. We came from almost 20 different countries, 17 European ones I think with help from Australia, the United States, from Poland. And of course the IDC is recognized all over the world as an organization that can hold its own at the table, knows how to take action and is therefore a well-established organization.

Q: Let's talk about the Mexico situation. What is happening now is that a lot of the shipping companies are building capacity there to try to bypass the ILWU, a big concern for us. Having the Mexican dockworkers reorganize is very important. How do you see that happening? Where is it going? Do you see a role for the ILWU in there?

A: I don't think it's a matter of what role the ILWU can play, but rather the role it should play. The verb tense is very important. The ILWU should play a fundamental role in the reorganization in Mexico.

Mexico is the premier laboratory where large corporations are trying out what they want to accomplish elsewhere in the world. There are company unions, where employees work long hours, for poor wages and no social security after their workday is over, if it's ever over. It's a situation that's being exploited by the companies. It's gone from a situation in which the unions were exploiting the workers to one in which there is a shameful exploitation by the companies. I think we have to invest a lot of money and effort into revitalizing that whole situation. There is no doubt they are going to have a very hard to take a lot of traffic away from the U.S. West Coast.

I was in Manzanillo in January, in Tampico and Vera Cruz. I didn't get to Lázaro Cárdenas. I think I saw enough. I was there long enough to take the pulse of the situation and see the reality and the great disgust the dockworkers feel towards the previous union situation, and also the unions that have of not continuing in the current situation, but rather making some great improvements.

Q: I'm wondering what kind of help they need to make that happen?

A: I think they need real support to face the multinationals we have in the U.S. and the shipping companies we deal with in Europe. They are the ones that have caused this whole situation. The workers are afraid the companies will get rid of them. We should guarantee that union reorganization won't lead to their termination. Right now that guarantee is a condition which must be met, or else there will not be a movement in Mexico.

Q: What do you see that the ILWU could do to help them?

A: It's not how the ILWU can help them, but rather how it can help itself. They have of not continuing in the current situation, but rather making some great improvements, because if you have that mentality I'm talking about, you'll make different decisions. It's not the same to save someone as it is to save yourself.

Q: And I think people realize that, understand and look at it that way. But still there's the issue of foreign ownership, if all those steps are followed and then a meeting is held, if we do our homework with the 51 ship owners and operators, well then I think the IDC will play a very important role, far greater than we think.

Q: Let's talk about the second IDC Assembly to be held in Barcelona in March 2005. What was accomplished there?

A: A substantial part of the objectives are being accomplished: as far as growth, as far the work around safety. The next conference is still over a year away. But I also think that there is a great enthusiasm, there is a new phase because the change I've seen in the direction the ILWU has taken, much has been clarified. I hope those changes will also be reflected in the ILWU's internationalist attitude, in both senses, out of necessity and conviction. I think that's important. And if that happens, I hope when we get to the next conference, it will be held not very far from where we are now in Barcelona, and that the ILWU will assume its duties within the IDC by then, which in my opinion, includes the leadership.

Q: Do you think you'll be stepping down as IDC General Coordinator?

A: Yes, I think there's enough work for everyone in the IDC. I don't need to be the general coordinator to keep organizing, the objective is not to be the general coordinator for the IDC, but rather to make sure the IDC is big and strong and has responsibilities within the dockworkers' movement.

Q: If you don't continue as general coordinator, where do you see yourself going from there?

A: If there is no change, I'll keep working. But if a change takes place, I'll keep working, if they let me. I'm retired, but I'll never stop being a dockworker. That's why I think I can't take from me. If they want a committed person, who is experienced, who has been in the trade for a long time, then I think I'll keep working there. And it doesn't matter to me if I'm the general coordinator or if I clean bathrooms. It's all the same to me. I want to say I'll continue to work for this job that I love, and that's all.

Q: Is there something you would like to say to ILWU members?

A: Well, first of all, I want to thank them for inviting me to the ILWU's Longshore Caucus. And I wanted to say to them that ILWU members hold a very important place in the longshore movement. That they will be a deciding factor in many of the things that will happen, and that we need to make good decisions, because their decisions will affect the whole world. So I hope they will rise to the occasion and fulfill their responsibilities.
By Bill Orton and Steve Stallone

Health care cuts, wage cuts in crowning co-pays hit an ILWU contract

In the L.A. Harbor last month as the members at the Borax processing plant were accepted concessions in their coverage to retain their jobs. Local 20 covers just 83 workers who toll at the Borax plant in Wilmington, turning raw borates into products and preparing bulk shipments out of one of the last privately-owned berths at the Port of Los Angeles. As their June 17 contract expiration date approached, Local 20 members knew they were giving in for some tough bargaining. Their employer also owns and operates the borax mine in the Southern California desert and had pushed for and won similar concessions in 2004 from the ILWU Local 30 miners working there.

"This was the toughest negotiation I’ve seen in 30 years of bargaining," Local 20 President Gary Harvey said. "The company never budged on their health care concessions demand." In 1997 the Borax company was sold to Rio Tinto, one of the largest mining companies in the world, with operations on every continent and a reputation as aggressively anti-union. With that purchase came a move toward one sided and pro-management. This caught the company off guard. The team used their time to really go into the contract and some minor changes in the long-term disability. They also got a small increase in wages totaling $5 per hour over the life of the contract and another $11 per month per year of service in pensions. Altogether, even with the new co-pays, the workers came out ahead, so the negotiating committee couldn’t recommend striking, especially knowing the company’s warehouses were stocked in anticipation. The members voted June 26 to accept the deal by a vote of 58 to 17. But the outcome could have gone either way, Harvey and others said. "The company bought this deal with the bottom line, but in the end Harvey bought us every nickel we could. We were ready to strike over the health care demands, no new money had not materialized." Through three months of talks, the company stuck to its demand that workers pay 20 percent of health care costs, although the co-pays will be phased in over the life of the contract. Now members who had never paid premiums or co-pays before will pay each time they visit a doctor or buy medicines, and a new deduction will appear on their pay stub.

"The real injury is year six until infinity," said Harvey, who points to the table in the contract that gives the local president annual review power over the company’s health care numbers Harvey plans to demand paybacks to workers if health care costs savings come about, as the company argued, if members reduce their benefit usage due to co-pays.

"We stayed in there and got the best wage offer we could," Harvey said. "Every member stays in the black through the life of the agreement. We had the authority to go out, but it would have been hard to suggest a strike in light of the wages." Dollars may have smoothed over the bottom line, but "I said Harvey and others said.

"The seniority rules also needed fixing, and the company has a union contract now that it will be hard to change. Sometimes they’d put up a fight, but later on they knew their operation was ground zero in bargaining. It helped a little in the long run.

The local’s negotiators gave an extension for the contract for a week while they continued talking.

ILWU Southern California members rallied outside the Borax plant in support of Local 20.

Local 20 hits the 20 percent contribution level in the fifth year of its contract, but managed to avoid that level in the third year of their five-year contract. They also conceded changes in long-term disability and sick leave.

Each worker in Wilmington will see an increase of between $5-62 cents each year, after cost out health care against the five-dollars-a-year raise workers were seeing. Some miners actually will see a decrease in pay due to co-pays.

"Will we feel these injuries? We’re going to feel this every day for years," said Spinosa, who led longshore negotiators in the 2002 fight for the longshore contract. That contract, like earlier pacts with Borax, saw workers pay zero for health care.

"Health care is on the front burner in all collective bargaining and these contracts just turned up the heat."

As he prepared to leave office later this year, Spinosa said the new crop of leaders understand that health care is going to be zero in bargaining.

"It’s the rank-and-file I worry about," the outgoing president said.

"I have confidence in the leadership. I have confidence they will get it together," Harvey said.

"People change, they may have done something at one time, but later on they may have changed their ways and got it together," Levinson said.

6

Workers also complained that union members of any discipline on their records couldn’t get the job. The team got that lessee out on someone who had serious discipline within the last nine months couldn’t bids.

"They began by offering us 10 percent wage cuts and co-pays hit an ILWU contract," added Spinosa.

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"People change, they may have done something at one time, but later on they may have changed their ways and got it together," Levinson said.

"The seniority rules also needed a little fine tuning," Levinson said.

"The old contract allowed a temporary employee who had qualifications we didn’t have to stay and we could go.

The new contract recognizes union seniority and security. Bargaining continues into 2005 with wage increases to take on both sides. Gradually, un-dramatically and with great patience, the union is getting its message across.

"I take my hat off to the committee," Alaron said. "They were some tough cookies, they knew their operation well and they have many years of seniority, so the company couldn’t lie to us."
Coastwise remembrance of Bloody Thursday

by Tom Price

Every July 5 ILWU members honor their fallen brothers and remember that day in 1934 when two of them fell to police bullets in San Francisco. That spring and summer cops and soldiers killed six workers and injured hundreds more during what would be known as the Big Strike.

Longshore and other maritime workers struck across the West Coast May 9, 1934. The longshore workers main goals were the recognition of the union, a coastwise contract and a union-run hiring hall to replace the hated "shape-up" system, a hiring procedure in which the bosses would pick men from a crowd, often shaking them down for a bribe for a day's work.

In San Pedro workers marched May 14 on a scab encampment and were fired upon. Tom Price was killed by the arms of his brothers while John Knudsen died later from his wounds.

In Portland police fired into the picketed Longshore Local 5 in an attempt to reopen the waterfront. Some workers were fired on Senator Wagner's (D-NY) car, but the."Bill of Rights for labor" covering most of the ports, with one exception.

In Stockton police fired into the picketed Longshore Local 10's remembrance of Bloody Thursday.

The ILWU Drill Team marched in front of the stage and stood in silent attention, facing silhouettes of the fallen men, Speery and Bordoise, painted in the pavement below them. Behind them the ILWU Federated Auxiliary 3 out of Seattle sang a spirited "Star Spangled Banner" to start the event.

Pensioner Cleophas Williams spoke of the need to educate the younger members and the children in the ways of the union.

"It's so quick to update it, it makes our children enough about the union. In many cases they know nothing. We bring the check home and they get on the computer and play games. What do they know about us?" Local 10 President David Gonzales continued the theme of learning and remembering.

"We need to remember the ultimate sacrifice made by six men up front," Gonzales said. "Without them and the thousands of others, we would not have decent wages, conditions and benefits. We might still be stuck in the shape-up, not the hiring hall. We all know, if we forget the past, we are condemned to repeat it."

Inside the hall Bay Area Longshoremen's Memorial Assn. Treasurer Mike Villeggiante showed a DVD he helped produce of the history of the ILWU with additional footage show the attack on pensions and retiree healthcare many workers endure. He had discussed the idea with the Coast Education Committee and went to a labor-friendly video producer to put it together.

"It's so quick to update it, it would also be a good tool for organizing," Villeggiante said. "Sometimes it's easier to remember than to read, and that's how we deal with the kids, so that they remember a story, a song, a movie."

After the speeches, the old timers gathered in Oak Park, outside of Portland, to remember Bloody Thursday together. Marvin Ricks, a veteran of the 1934 strike, spoke to the crowd.

"We need to educate the younger numbers," Rusty said. "We have an influx of people who have no ties to the industry and need to be educated to our future."

Southern California: ILWU families in the Los Angeles Harbor Area enjoyed an ocean breeze, food and fun at San Pedro's Point Fermin Park, as workers celebrated the 72nd anniversary of Bloody Thursday on July 5. Point Fermin is the western tip of the Palos Verdes Peninsula and home to one of the oldest lighthouses—built in 1874—on the West Coast. As the sun set, feathers and flags and bandit costumes dance to the face of the waterfront, Bloody Thursday becomes even more critical to connect dockworkers with the roots of the struggle for the union.

"July 5 was a time to remember our fallen workers and we shall never forget them," foreman's Local 94 President Danny Miranda said. Locals 13, 63 and 94 providedburgers, hot dogs, chips and sodas and bounce houses and a play area for kids while politicians filed up to the stage to swear solidarity to the union in between sets from three local bands.
Container work returns to Portland

by Tom Price

The ZIM USA, a 3,800 TEU container ship, sailed into port at Portland’s Terminal 6 May 14 and marked the successful end of a two-year struggle to get a new container line and third container crane at the port.

The port invested $7.5 million in a new, 16-story tall super crane, the third such crane to grace the port in its 75-year history. Workers installed it May 3, with Oregon Gov. Ted Kulongoski in attendance. The port may buy a fourth crane soon.

“We worked with the port and labored through a very trying period with this crane,” longshore Local 8 Secretary-Treasurer Bruce Holte said. “The president put his foot on a limb. These are a very difficult period where we have lost a lot of our work in the hope we would attract more container work.”

Since then, the Yang Ming Line opened its service to Terminal 6 May 6 with the arrival of the containership Yang Ming Heights June 15. The Heights dragged foot traffic and general merchandise and carried away paper, refrigerated food and wood products.

Yang Ming expected to do 200 containers a year through Portland.

The ILWU, including the Columbia District Council and the union’s Washington, D.C. office, had worked for years to get other port authorities along the river and more than 200 union, city and state agencies to lobby for channel dredging nearly a decade ago. Shipping companies “K Line and B Line” also helped.

The port’s development has been slow, but not long enough, said Local 13 President Mark Mendosa, who organized the rally with other port labor activists and groups to lobby for channel dredging nearly a decade ago. Shipping companies “K Line and B Line” also helped.

“We need the PMA to give us more B-men,” Holte said. “We just brought in 15 B-men and about 60 new casuals. We’re hoping to get at least another 50 B-men.

“Politics matter,” ILWU members told at Long Beach Rally

by Bill Onlin

The ILWU’s international officers—joined by heavyweights from politics and labor—told several thousand rank-and-file members gathered July 10 at the Long Beach Sports Arena that the union’s influence in politics is more decisive than ever. They vowed to win support for a good contract in 2008.

“Politics is more of a basis today than it was just a generation ago, as Republican leaders are starting to realize,” outgoing International President Tom Price said. “We need to make sure from CNA demonstrations all the way from San Francisco to Boston—for his ballot schemes also ran into millions of dollars. That fundraising left unions and their allies always outspent.

CNA was successful because its volunteers were accompanied by uniformed nudists as they took the petitions around, and the nurses had credibility with the voters.

“They (the nurses) are very much into this because they’re committed to health care reform because of the depressing and awful system right now,” Preston said.

In a move that could shake up U.S. politics, the California Nurses Association (CNA) single-handedly gathered enough signatures to put up a ballot initiative on California’s November ballot to establish full public financing of elections. It’s the first effort in the state to ban political contributions to candidates for public office and to establish public financing of campaigns.

The effort is a mandate from the state’s voters. Prop. 32, passed by 54 percent of voters in November 1978, prohibited unions and other labor groups from making contributions to candidates for public office.

But the state’s Republicans have fought back, spending as much as $35 million in the 1990s to overturn the measure. In 2002, the California Supreme Court upheld the ban, though it allowed unions that support the ban to make independent expenditures for or against candidates.

The bill would have rolled back mandatory nurse-patient ratios in the state’s hospitals enacted under his predecessor, Democrat Gray Davis. Schwarzenegger tried to delay the mandate by executive order, too, but those efforts were defeated by voters and the courts.

The initiative was launched by CNA members across the state, supported by Californians for Medical Freedom, an organization that has long been active in politics in the state.

The measure would require hospitals to have one nurse for every 4 patients, up from the current level of 1 nurse to 5 patients. The bill would have set up a separate fund to pay for the increased staffing costs.

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Thousands rally nationwide vs. Bush NLRB’s anti-worker rulings

By Mark Greensberg
PAl Staff Writer

WASHINGTON (PAI)—Chanting, waving signs and vowing to defend their rights as workers against Republican President George W. Bush and his National Labor Relations Board, thousands of unionists marched nationwide against anti-worker NLRB rulings.

The protests, from July 10-13, culminated in a march of more than 1,000 people on the board’s office building in downtown Washington, D.C. The crowd’s chants included “No justice, no peace!” “What’s disgusting? Union bashing!” “Labor Law unfair! George Bush unfair!” and “We don’t hire, we don’t fire.” Twenty other marches were in cities coast to coast, including Chicago, Buffalo, Oakland, Columbus and Portland, Ore.

In Chicago, protesters signed a mass letter to the NLRB, created by the Chicago Federation of Labor. In Oakland, more than 700 people, led by California Federation of Labor Secretary-Treasurer Art Pulaski and the California Nurses Association, marched.

Demonstrators protested the pending NLRB rulings on the three Kentucky cases, one involving the Steelworkers, the Boilermakers and the Auto Workers. The rulings will let companies fired for union organizing redefine “supervisor,” who is a “supervisor,” not covered by labor law, and especially which nurses are “supervisors.” It also means nurses and other workers with supervisory responsibilities will become “supervisors.” Marchers also demanded public hearings on such cases, but the NLRB denied that July 13.

The AFL-CIO, which led the marches, and the new Change to Win federation, whose unions supported the D.C. march, contend the NLRB uses the Reform Law for the Reform Act to support the board’s union bashing. Marchers also noted that five years ago, the board declared war on working families like us.

Bush’s “NLRB is the most anti-worker, anti-union,” said AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson, who led the marchers with a giant banner to NLRB’s headquaters.

You know that, I know that, but George Bush, the Bush Labor and the Bush NLRB have a different idea, she said on NLRB’s front steps. “For five years, they’ve declared war on working families like us.”

Bush’s “NLRB is the most anti-worker, anti-union, collective bargaining, anti-union board in the 71-year history of the National Labor Relations Act, and it’s time we stopped him,” declared AFL-CIO Organizing Director Stewart Acuff.

“This Kentucky River decision is one more way of taking away our rights,” as workers, Chavez-Thompson added. She promised unionists would not take the rulings lying down, but would keep marching and voting to overturn Bush and his allies.

Two cases also talked about the practical impact of the board’s pending rulings. California Nurses Association Secretary-Treasurer Martha Kohl said unions protect nurses “against the power of big corporations...and make no mistake, health care is adminis-tered by big corporations.”

Sandra Falwell of the D.C. Nurses Association and local 12nurse said the difference between being a supervisor or not, as do hospitals and patients, but not the NLRB.

“I don’t have the right to hire and fire,” Falwell commented. She added that nurses. “The NLRB should be declared hazardous to your health.”

After the D.C. marches arrived at NLRB headquarters, 10 leaders, including Acuff, Roberts, AFSCME Secretary-Treasurer William Lucy and Falwell, blocked its front doors, planning to be arrested for peaceful civil disobedience. When police refused, the 10, with police cooperation, and all the marchers, planned an acolytic busy intersection, and linked arms, awaiting the paddy wagons. Falwell added that she was not to arrest them at all, one officer told PAI. The D.C. march ended peacefully.

ILWU makes splash at AFL-CIO Trade Show

Not one ILWU member from throughout the Coast represented their union at the annual AFL-CIO Union Industries Show May 5-7 in Cleveland, Ohio.

This year’s show was promoted under the banner “Here in the Heartland so far from the West Coast, ILWU attendees bit of their work and life to Ohio.” Everyone returned home pleased that everyone appreciated the chance to bring a little bit of their work and life to Ohio.

This year’s show emphasized educating the public about trade unionism and the role union play in the economic and political life of the community. It also highlighted vital pro-worker organizations, such as the Alliance for Retired Americans and Working America, and encouraged attendees to join their campaigns.

Longshore Local 13’s Melody Jeffries had the chance to sit down with a group of high school students and answer some of their questions. When the students found out about all the opportunities in the union ranks, they were surprised to see what a difference there was between a minimum-wage, fast food worker and a skilled, union job.

One of the highlights of this year’s show was a reception at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, where the ILWU was in the spotlight. The AFL-CIO held a national songwriting contest for a new version of the “Look for the Union Label” song at the Cleveland Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. From left to right: Lanell Johnson (Local 8), Jimmy Monti (Local 13), Patricia Aguirre (Local 63), Al Perisho (Southern California Pensioners), Melody Jeffries (Local 13) Karen Brandow and Charlie King (the songwriting winners), Fran Grove (Local 54), Sean O’Donnell (Local 52) and Lesley Clark (Local 13).

The ILWU contingent presented the winning prize—a far and three nights at a luxury hotel in Maui—for the for the national songwriting contest for a new version of the “Look for the Union Label” song at the Cleveland Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. From left to right: Lalor Jensen (Local Es Es Local 8), Jimmy Monti (Local 13), Patricia Aguirre (Local 63), Al Perisho (Southern California Pensioners), Melody Jeffries (Local 13) Karen Brandow and Charlie King (the songwriting winners). Fran Grove (Local 54), Sean O’Donnell (Local 52) and Lesley Clark (Local 13).

Around 700 members of the California Nurses Association and other health care workers rallied in downtown Oakland July 11, then marched to the Federal Building. Speaker after speaker underscored the point that nurses needed union rights to strengthen their ability to advocate for their patients.
**Dorothy "Baba" Vekich**

Dorothy Vekich passed over Dec. 30, 2005 at Mother Joseph's Care Center in Olympia, Wash. Dorothy was the widow of Max Vekich Sr., longtime dispatcher at longshore Local 24, Aberdeen, Wash. She predeceased in 1984.

Dorothy was past president and a founding member of the ILWU Local 24 Federated Credit Union. Dorothy served as president for 13 years—this when a lot of longshore families couldn't get credit from a bank. The Credit Union just celebrated its 46th year.

Dorothy attended 45 of their annual meetings. Being a dispatcher's wife, she was used to calls in the middle of the night and on numerous occasions ended up calling replacements herself.

Dorothy did any muttons work during World War II as a government inspector. Her plant, Lamb Grays Harbor, and its workers, were awarded an "E" for excellence for their production of heat grenades and land mines.

Whereas Dorothy and Max, a U.S. Army veteran of the Pacific Theatre, contributed to the war against fascism and served their country proudly, they were not able to exercise their rights to protest a later, unjust war in Vietnam. Dorothy continued to protest unjust wars to the end. With her auxiliary sister, Frances Schoening, also a Local 24 widow, Dorothy participated in numerous protests of the Iraq war by Ladies in Black.

Political action was recognized as good for the union and country from the start in the Vekich house. Dorothy and Max worked to elect many pro-union Democrats, including their son, Max Vekich, Jr. With their support, he was elected to the Washington State House of Representatives. He is now a member of ILWU Local 52, Seattle clerks.

Dorothy was also active with the Twin Harbor's ILWU Pensioners Club, made up primarily of retirees and spouses from Local 24 and longshore Local 1 in Raymond, Wash.

Besides her son, Max, she is survived by four daughters Linda Vincent, Berkeley, Calif.; Marcie Miller, San Diego; Andrea Vekich, Elma, Wash.; Coleen Vekich, Aberdeen, plus four grandchildren who knew her as "Baba" (grandmother in Croatian).

**PCPA 39th Convention Plans Move Ahead**


The Convention will meet at the Sheraton Hotel, 1320 Broadway Plaza, Tacoma, Wash. 98409. Accommodations at the hotel are $124.00 for a single or double, $10.00 for each additional person. A deluxe king is available for $144.00 for a single or double plus $10.00 for each additional person; suites are also available for $234.00.

For reservations call the hotel at 253-572-3900 or reservations at 800-325-3555. When making your reservations, be sure to let the hotel know you will be attending the ILWU Pacific Coast Pensioners Assn. Convention.

There is a $45.00 registration fee for all members attending the Convention. The registration fee will cover all events planned by the Puget Sound Pensioners Convention Committee. To obtain registration forms, contact your local ILWU Pension Club or contact Bill Roberts at 360-879-6730 or Darryl Hedman 253-564-6472.

**Longshore retired, deceased and survivors**

**RECENT RETIREES:**

**DECEASED:**
- Local 4—Roger Fugman (Kathleen), Local 10—Gay Owen (Virginia), Local 20—James Lahane, James Nichuer, Herbert Vanghn, Local 29—Joseph Sotoel, Local 39—James Fleming (Lois), Richard Costigan Jr., Local 40—Royce Lint (Helen), Local 43—Gale Grassman (Virginia), Local 50—Carl Geier (Patricia), Local 59—Caroline Vukos (Joan), Local 60—Valeri Shevchenko (Mary).
- Local 57—Karen Money.
- Local 94—William Hartman.

**DECEASED SURVIVORS:**
- Local 4—Andrew Collins, Local 10—Ida Brooks, Rosina Brooks, Agnes Randson, Local 12—Winona Scott, Priscilla Jacobson, Myrtle Shaw, Local 13—Mary Madison, Juanita Martinez, Bonnie R. Trujillo, Local 20—Joe Suzzof, William D. Clark, Garland Young, Local 39—James Fleming (Lois), Richard Costigan Jr., Local 40—Royce Lint (Helen), Local 43—Gale Grassman (Virginia), Local 50—Carl Geier (Patricia), Local 59—Caroline Vukos (Joan), Local 60—Valeri Shevchenko (Mary).
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