



*a rank and file newsletter for maritime workers*

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# DEFEND OUR UNION!

## STOP GOVERNMENT INTERFERENCE IN ILWU LOCAL 10 ELECTIONS!

In an unprecedented dictatorial move, the federal government has stopped Local 10 from holding union elections. For 70 years the feds have tried but were never able to control our union.

How is that possible for such a democratic and militant union? Because two disgruntled members who were disqualified by our Constitution from running for office in 2005 and 2006 went to the Department of Labor with their complaints. Rather than take their case to the membership for a democratic vote through a Constitutional amendment, they brought in the feds.

On Nov. 4, 2007, federal judge Vaughn Walker ordered the elections cancelled and a Department of Labor-supervised election in its place. Is it an accident if the feds prevent the Local 10 membership from electing officers and delegates to the Contract Caucus, which will determine our contract demands and negotiators? During the last contract negotiations, the Bush administration threatened to occupy the West Coast docks with troops if there were any job actions. Then after the employers, PMA, locked us out, Bush forced us back to work under the slave-labor Taft-Hartley

Act. That's the class nature of the government, pure and simple—to front for the employers, to do their dirty work.

Both Democrat and Republican presidents have used Taft-Hartley against unions. In 1948, maritime employers threatened a lockout. ILWU longshoremen voted 92% to strike with other maritime unions. Democratic President Truman invoked Taft-Hartley. Back in the day, every important question was put to a vote to the rank and file. In June 1948, ILWU mobilized to contest Taft-Hartley at the courthouse until it was so crowded that longshore workers overflowed the courtroom into the corridors.

ILWU longshore voted 94.3% to refuse to comply with the Taft-Hartley provision that unions had to sign non-communist affidavits. Therefore, employers were not required to bargain with the negotiating committee since ILWU was defying NLRB's regulations. Union solidarity, here and internationally, paid off. By November, employers and the government dropped the demand that the union sign the affidavits, as it would have lengthened the strike. It was a defiant victory for

the ILWU.

Harry Bridges and the longshoremen who founded this union, and helped build the trade union movement in this country, used to say that we can take on the attacks from outside the union, but it is attacks from the inside that will destroy this union. To bring inside our union one of the most anti-labor administrations in U.S. history is a crying shame. Bush has had to dump Defense Secretary Rumsfeld and Attorney General Gonzalez of the Department of Justice. Both departments, along with the Department of Labor (DOL), were involved in the threats against ILWU during the 2002 contract negotiations. Earlier this year, the NLRB ordered that the Inlandboatmen's Union (IBU) and the Master Mates & Pilots (MMP) not to picket Hornblower on the San Francisco waterfront after that company fired its union workers. You can't picket a company that steals your job?! Just more government unionbusting!

Bush's DOL will bring "democracy" to the ILWU like he's done in Iraq, at the end of a bayonet. Asking the DOL to run a fair election is inviting the fox into the chicken coop. Bush stole the 2000 presidential election in Florida as cops blocked black people from voting and in 2004 in Ohio by miscounting votes in working class neighborhoods. And having them rewrite our union Constitution? That's both crazy and dangerous! DOL, contrary to our Constitution, wants to allow members "not in good standing for one year" to run for office. What's next, ruling that members don't have to pay dues to run for office?! Allowing strikebreakers to run for office? Bush violates the U.S. Constitution daily with

"signing statements", warrantless phone taps and torture. And after the feds are finished running our elections, maybe they'll want to put our union in trusteeship or takeover our hiring hall like they did to the ILA on the East and Gulf Coasts. Using the excuse of Jimmy Hoffa's ties to the mob, the

feds took over the Teamsters' pension fund, bet everything on the stock market and lost half the pension fund! In 1978, striking miners defied Taft-Hartley invoked by Democrat President Carter and ripped up a proposed sellout contract being pushed by Arnold Miller, the reform candidate imposed on the miners by the federal government 5 years earlier. Where will it end? We've got to stop this government interference now.

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Our local has a proud history of taking progressive stands. Recently, we've taken actions against the war, in defense of immigrant workers' rights and against government repression of constitutional rights. We've rallied to defend two of our union brothers who were attacked in the name of "port security" by police in the port of Sacramento and voted not to allow government agents into our hall to sign up longshoremen for the "electronic shackle" known as the TWIC card. Now, this reactionary government is stopping our union from exercising its democratic right to vote in a union election. The precondition for democracy in the unions is independence from the government.

- **Stand up for your rights!**
- **Oppose all government intervention in union affairs!**

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