

**ILWU Contract Negotiations:
The Confluence of Politics, Economics and Labor**

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ABSTRACT

There is an understudied relationship between union contracts, economics, and politics. This paper provides an historical investigation into the relationship between International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) contracts, economics, and politics, at both the state and national levels, from the union's formation in 1937 through 2008. Although the ILWU is only one case, and is unique among U.S. labor unions, we argue that it can serve as a model for effective political unionism, combining organizational strength with democratic practices. We discuss how the ILWU impacts the economy, focusing on the implications of having a powerful union in such an important structural position, and how employers and the state use political intervention and legislation to respond to such power. From there, we examine how the ILWU uses lobbying, legislation, and activism to maintain its power on the docks and push its larger political agenda. Empirical support is provided via historical content analyses of ILWU contracts, convention minutes, and union newspapers, which reveal how the union exerted its power and when it was and was not able to influence policy outcomes. Analyses also reveal when the state intervened on behalf of the union, when it intervened on behalf of employers, and—perhaps most importantly—when the state intervened on behalf of economic stability. The paper concludes by discussing the impact of our findings on union-state relations and the larger labor movement.

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Introduction

The U.S. labor movement reached its apex in the mid-1950s. Since then, deindustrialization (Morris and Western 1999; Wilson 1987; Wilson 1996), the decentralization of labor markets (Western 1997), technological advancement, and employer hostility (Freeman 2007; Levi 2003) have caused union membership, mobilizing power, and political strength to decline. However, over this same period, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) has, despite a few setbacks along the way, maintained and arguably increased both its control of the waterfront work environment and its political clout. The ILWU today is thriving while many other unions are flailing. What explains this divergent outcome?

Ironically, the same factors undermining most U.S. labor unions have strengthened the ILWU. Telecommunication advancements, global and regional trade agreements, and an increasingly liberalized marketplace have together led to record levels of offshore production and increases in U.S. imports. The boom in global trade from Asia has led to record tonnage coming through West Coast ports, which support 8 million U.S. jobs and account for twelve percent of the U.S. gross domestic product (PMA 2008e). With incredibly generous wages, benefits, and pensions, ILWU members are the direct beneficiaries of such gains. They achieve this by combining a strategic structural position with long-standing traditions of democracy, solidarity, and militancy. This in turn enables them to negotiate strong contracts and to have unprecedented economic and political influence on both employers and the state.

The United States was reminded of the ILWU's strategic structural location and political influence in late 2002, when the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) locked the union out during the middle of contract negotiations. Costing somewhere between \$2 billion (Hall 2005) and \$10 billion (Cohen 2002), the lockout had the potential to destabilize the entire U.S.

economy. Container ships lay stagnant in the water for ten days, the Christmas shopping season got off to a late start, West Coast governors and legislatures intervened on both sides, and President Bush invoked the rarely-used 80-day injunction provision of the Taft-Hartley Act, forcing the employers to allow the union back to work—the first time Taft-Hartley was ever enacted in this way. The union, meanwhile, used strong negotiating strategies, media outreach, and political leverage to secure all of its major contractual demands, overcoming pressure from employers, the press, and the Bush Administration. This has led some critics to suggest the ILWU has become too powerful.

This paper is an investigation into the relationship between ILWU contracts, the economy, and politics, at the state and national levels. To understand contemporary relations, we must first briefly explore the ILWU's historical commitments to militancy, participatory democracy, and the union hiring hall, showing how the union utilized these forces to secure strong contracts during the logistics revolution and the 2002 lockout. We then discuss the economic and political implications of having a powerful union in such an important structural position, and how government attempts to limit and to legislate said power. Finally, we examine how the ILWU itself uses lobbying, legislation, and activism to maintain its power on the docks and to push its larger political agenda at the state and national levels, using Washington State as an example. Historical content analyses of ILWU contracts, convention minutes, and union newspapers reveal how the ILWU exerted its power and when the exertions were effective. Analyses also reveal when the state intervened on behalf of the union, on behalf of employers, and on behalf of economic stability.

In the end, we find that the ILWU applies its power more effectively in some areas than in others. We argue it combines its strategic structural position, used as a “choke point” (Silver

2003), with its participatory democracy and control of the labor supply to make strong demands on both employers and the state. In particular, the ILWU is highly solidaristic and successful in contract negotiations, and very effective in lobbying government over contractual issues. It is also generally successful at blocking pro-shipper, anti-ILWU legislation and state interventions on the docks more broadly. However, this limited influence is extended beyond the ports, to a certain degree, and the ILWU is more influential in some regions than in others. The ILWU is less effective in pushing its larger political agenda, particularly when the union may be divided over issues, or when it has less strategic power. We also find that, despite incredible strength, the ILWU is still vulnerable to the same economic and political forces affecting other unions. The paper concludes by discussing the impact of our findings on union-state relations and the larger labor movement in the United States.

The ILWU's unique history and contract negotiations¹

Formation of the union

The ILWU story begins in 1934, with the resurgence of West Coast dockworker organizing after a decade in which the docks were dominated by dangerous work, the exploitative “shape-up” hiring system, and the use of “fink halls” by company unions.² New Deal legislation such as the National Recovery Act made company unions illegal, and opened the door for the East Coast’s International Longshoremen’s Association (ILA) to organize the region. But ILA organizers demanded only conservative wage gains, while ignoring other issues, and this angered rank-and-file leftists who wanted safer work, impressive wage gains, union hiring halls, and coastwise bargaining. The new members voted out the ILA slate in regional elections, replaced them with

¹ This section draws from Levi et al. (2009) and Kelly (2009). Please see either for a more detailed ILWU history.

² The shape-up was an exploitative system in which hundreds of men would form a circle around a hiring foreman. The foreman was supposed to choose the most able-bodied men but usually resorted to patronage and giving work to their friends or ethnic group. This contributed to the existing inequality generated by casual work. Fink halls were company-controlled hiring halls using steady gangs and kickback systems (Kimeldorf 1988; Larrowe 1955).

radical leaders such as the Australian Harry Bridges, and called a coastwise strike on May 12th, 1934. The strike lasted until July, when police shot two Bay Area strikers, leading to the infamous San Francisco general strike. The city was shut down for four days before the government called for arbitration and employers capitulated to all of the longshore workers' major demands.

The new union hiring halls controlled the labor supply, equalized wages, and fostered solidarity, leading to the widely held belief that “the ILWU is the hiring hall” (Wellman 1995: 60). Controlling the labor supply improved the union’s bargaining position with employers, enabling members to impose restrictive work rules and to have veto power over employer policies. The hall also brought wage equalization through “low man out” dispatching, in which the members with the fewest recorded hours received work first. The coastwise contract included joint expiration, arbitration, and safety standards, along with impressive wage and benefits gains. It extended the hiring hall’s democratization of work across the region. Most importantly, it created a united worker front against employers, preventing factionalization and capital flight.

Harry Bridges was elected president of the ILA’s West Coast division in 1936 and the majority of the West Coast locals voted to split from the international later that year.³ In 1937, they renamed themselves the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union, with Bridges as president. He worked with the rank and file to craft a democratic constitution that included radical provisions such as: one person-one vote for all elections, strikes, and contract negotiations; low officer salary caps; open convention participation; and a minimum vote of fifteen percent for recall referenda (ILWU 1938). The constitution also outlined ILWU

³ Only Tacoma and three other small Washington locals remained in the ILA.

commitments to racial equality, radical unionism, and social justice. It established the union as one of the most participatory organizations in the country.

The ILWU's unity enabled members to effectively use strikes as negotiating tools throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Rank-and-file members participated in over 90 "quickie" safety-related strikes between 1934 and 1936 (Finlay 1988; Kimeldorf 1988). Employers tried to eliminate quickie actions and the union-controlled hiring hall in 1936 contract negotiations, leading to a 99-day strike. The ILWU ultimately retained control of the hall and gained safety guarantees, but officially gave up work rules and quickie strikes. Employers again tried to take on union-controlled hiring in 1946 and 1947. The ILWU won both times, but only after a 52-day strike in 1946 and multiple attempts by employers, throughout the 1940s, to use the Taft-Hartley Act to deport Bridges for Communism. Employers routinely buckled under financial losses, while the ILWU kept control of hiring and secured their best contracts yet (Kimeldorf 1988; Larowe 1955).

In 1949, employers created the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) to manage all contract negotiations. The new organization made wage and benefit negotiations standardized on a coastwise level. Relations stabilized at this time, as employers and union leaders alike realized that prolonged contract battles could turn into crippling stalemates. Strikes disappeared for almost thirty years, in what is now referred to as the ILWU's "new look" era (Kimeldorf 1988; Larowe 1955). Meanwhile, the ILWU continued to make assertive contract demands and gradually expanded to encompass warehouse workers in California, longshore workers in Alaska and Western Canada (under different contracts), and a wide variety of service workers in Hawaii, among others. The hiring hall was so effective that Bridges, West Coast employers, and the

government all repeatedly suggested it as a solution to destabilized East Coast dock relations (Jensen 1974; Larowe 1955).

From “Mechanization and Modernization” to the Logistics Revolution

By the late 1950s, the combination of high ILWU solidarity and coordination between the union and employers made negotiating containerization relatively easy compared to other longshore unions.⁴ Bridges organized a “mechanization and modernization” (M&M) agreement encompassing the entire coast. The agreement included a sacrifice of work rules, a reversal on weight limits, and managerial prerogative on technology and gang sizes, in exchange for jurisdiction over new technology, a 50-mile radius for ILWU cargo control, and a \$5 million annual benefits package (ILWU/PMA 1960). Most of the package was allocated to wages and pensions for members losing work hours. The agreement officially created the crane operator position: a new class of comparatively high-paid, skilled work. Employers wanted crane operators to avoid work rotation and become “steady men,” arguing that the training was much more difficult than that for other positions. This created tension among the members, particularly in the deep-water ports of San Pedro and the Puget Sound. Members there correctly predicted that containerization and crane usage would grow rapidly—but incorrectly predicted that this would undermine local union power (Finlay 1988).

The M&M agreement both extended and altered the ILWU’s legacy of job and jurisdictional control. By signing the agreement, the union essentially traded larger work forces and gang sizes for lucrative pensions for exiting workers and a high degree of job security for remaining workers. There was no compulsory retirement or redundancy in the agreement (as there has been in similar technology agreements), but there was a large payoff for workers

⁴ The ILA, for instance, struck over containerization seven times between 1959-1971. Three of these strikes were wildcat actions not endorsed by union leadership. Five of them ended with Taft-Hartley injunctions. See Kelly (2009) for a detailed comparison of ILWU and ILA responses to mechanization.

willing to voluntarily retire early. This dramatic reduction in the workforce, coupled with significant wage and benefit increases for those who stuck around, was a double-edged sword for ILWU members (Bonacich and Wilson 2008; Finlay 1988; Killingsworth 1962). No one realized how much containerization would impact the ILWU in just a short while. Due to the greater number of steady men, along with other changes in shipping patterns, San Pedro quickly moved from having the third highest traffic volume in the union to being the busiest port in North America. Thanks to the added tonnage, earnings among dockworkers at the San Pedro local increased dramatically, as did the number of steady men (Finlay 1988).

The rank-and-file renewed the M&M agreement in 1966, but then refused it in 1970, claiming the buyout was not enough. They felt M&M undermined job security, and they wanted to stop employers from using steady men, which violated the principals of rotation and hurt union solidarity and bargaining positions. Members in smaller ports across the Northwest and in shallow-water areas, such as the San Francisco side of the Bay Area, feared that containerization of larger, deepwater ports would undermine local jobs. In 1970, they voted to strike over M&M. Bridges and other International leaders went along reluctantly, despite threats from President Nixon (Mills 1982). The strike lasted a total of 134 days. The members held the picket line, but could not take the long-term losses the strike inflicted. Employers held their ground and refused to give up steady crane men. The strike ended in the spring of 1971, after the federal government passed an omnibus transport act that threatened to bring compulsory arbitration to the docks. The men returned to work with a package worse than the one they had been protesting.

However, the ILWU has kept its jurisdiction, and as a result of increased trade with Asia, membership has been re-expanding since the 1980s. A recent hiring wave has brought

membership close to pre-M&M levels (PMA 2008b). More importantly, the increasing strategic significance of West Coast shipping to the U.S. economy has given the ILWU a privileged position when negotiating contracts. The West Coast ports controlled less than one percent of the U.S. GDP in the 1930s and 1940s. By 2000, they controlled seven percent. By 2008, they controlled over twelve percent (PMA 2008e). The majority of this growth came from shippers capitalizing off of the East Asian trade boom and the logistics revolution of the 1970s and 1980s, which would have undermined ILWU power if the union had not secured earlier gains such as coastwise bargaining. The ILA never achieved such dramatic success on the East Coast, where structural power has declined.

Table 1. Total West Coast TEUs, % Containerized and Tonnage, 1971-2009

Year	PMA TEUs*	% Containerized	Tonnage^T
1971	494,542	17	48,477,674
1976	1,365,981	30.4	76,289,936
1981	2,075,637	31.2	112,960,157
1986	3,924,612	46.5	143,410,262
1991	5,663,125	53.1	181,457,462
1996	7,663,900	60.4	216,320,789
2001	10,823,126	67.8	253,369,173
2006	15,288,871	72	361,112,847
2009	12,953,045 ^A	74	90,002,816 ^B

Source: Pacific Maritime Association Annual Report - Various years

* = TEU or "Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit" is the basic unit of measurement for containerized cargo.

T = Total Tonnage shipped. Includes non-containerized cargo.

A = Calculated by multiplying 2008 amount (15,238,876) by PMA's projected decrease of 15%

B = Shipped as of March 2009

Table 1 displays the growth of West Coast containerization from 1971 to 2009. Total container TEUs (Twenty-foot Equivalent Units – the basic unit of measurement for containerized cargo) have grown consistently across these four decades. Containers were approximately seventeen percent of West Coast cargo in 1971, thirty-one percent in 1981, fifty-three percent in 1991 and sixty-eight percent in 2001. Today, they represent 74 percent of all revenue tonnage

shipped through the West Coast. Tonnage has also increased steadily over the long run. The current global economic crisis means tonnage will most likely not grow significantly this year, but history suggests it will return to normal growth levels after economic recovery.

Table 2. Growth of US maritime shipping by Coast, 1981-2006

Year	TEUs (in thousands)		% of Container Market		% change from 1980	
	West/Pacific Coast	East/Atlantic Coast	West Coast % of market	East Coast % of market	West/Pacific Coast	East/Atlantic Coast
1981	2,596	4,486	33.9	58.7	74%	103%
1986	5,998	5,806	47.1	45.6	171%	133%
1991	8,377	7,002	51.3	42.9	239%	161%
1996	11,203	10,046	49.5	44.4	319%	231%
2001	15,951	13,009	52.0	42.4	455%	299%
2006	24,683	17,491	55.6	39.4	704%	402%

SOURCE: Bureau of Transportation Statistics

NOTE: The West Coast TEUs in this table are different because it includes both loaded and unloaded containers in U.S. international maritime activity, along with transshipments.

Table 2 compares the growth in containerized shipping between the East and West Coasts, starting in 1981 and ending in 2006. In 1981, West Coast ports processed 2,596,000 TEUS and controlled 33.9 percent of the market. East Coast ports processed 4,486,000 TEUS and controlled 58.7 percent of the market (with the other 7.4 controlled by the Gulf of Mexico). The West Coast surpassed the East in 1986 and its increase accelerated throughout the 1980s-2000s. In 2006, West Coast ports processed 24,683,000 TEUS and controlled 55.6 percent of the market. The East Coast processed 17,491,000 and controlled 39.4 percent of the market (with the remaining 5 controlled by the Gulf). East Asian trade no doubt counts for the majority of the switch. West Coast growth decelerated in recent years and global shipping is currently stagnating. Still, when comparing 2006 numbers to the percent change since 1980, the West Coast has increased 703 percent, compared 402 percent for the East Coast (BTS 2009).

Table 3. Total Revenue Tonnage* and percent of Total by area, 1971-2006

Year	WA tonnage	WA percent	SOCAL tonnage	SOCAL percent	NORCAL tonnage	NORCAL percent	OR tonnage	OR percent
1971	12,236,932	20.5	17,651,182	29.6	13,940,170	23.3	15,804,772	26.5
1976	17,183,436	22.5	23,669,432	31	15,228,579	19.9	20,358,536	26.6
1981	26,447,199	23.4	40,148,958	35.5	19,812,005	17.5	26,551,995	23.5
1986	31,785,641	22.2	61,592,944	43	21,305,460	14.9	28,707,266	20
1991	43,551,694	23.8	77,660,215	42.5	26,338,816	14.4	35,180,325	19.3
1996	47,277,171	21.9	105,870,123	49.1	24,595,731	11.4	37,938,300	17.6
2001	42,847,982	16.9	150,145,500	59.3	26,345,130	10.4	34,018,952	13.4
2006	62,350,153	17.3	221,674,479	61.4	38,677,631	10.7	38,366,287	10.6

Source: Pacific Maritime Association Annual Report - Various years

* = Total tonnage shipped, includes non-containerized cargo

Table 3 examines the effect of containerization on revenue tonnage and the percent of the shipping market controlled by West Coast longshore regions. The biggest shifts have been in Southern California and Oregon. Southern California went from 12.23 million tons of cargo and 20.5 percent of the market in 1971 to over 220 million tons and over 61 percent of the market in 2006. Oregon went from 15.6 million tons of cargo and 26.5 percent of the market in 1971 to 38 million tons and only 10.6 percent of the market in 2006. Oregon’s decline is explained by its inland port system on the Columbia River and the 20th century decline of the logging industry. Northern California went from 13.94 million tons of cargo and 23.3 percent of the market to almost 39 million tons and only 10.7 percent of the market in 2006, also a significant drop. The Washington ports, primarily located in the deepwater Puget Sound, have fared much better. Washington went from 12.23 million tons of cargo and 20.5 percent of the market in 1971 to 62 million tons of cargo and 17.3 percent of the market in 2006. Later, we argue that the dramatic shift in California’s power divides the union over local issues and limits its effectiveness in the state legislature. Conversely, Washington’s relative stability increases local effectiveness.

We argue that the ILWU’s combination of structural position, job control, and solidarity allows its members to be the direct beneficiaries of shipping growth. The union strategically used job control to negotiate every wave of logistics technology, expanding its structural strength at each step. Most importantly, the ILWU used strike threats to gain control over crane training

and operations. Employers initially wanted in-house training for all crane operators, which would have given them control over most steps of the crane operations process and made crane operators elite workers. The ILWU resisted by demanding its own training programs. The issue came to a head in 1977, when the union used a strike threat to secure crane training for anyone who wanted it, thus creating a larger supply than employers need. Employers feared a strike and allowed the ILWU to keep the program (Finlay 1988). It is still in use today.

The ILWU also used strike threats in the mid-1990s, to delay the implementation of automatic container scanning and to allow workers in under-utilized ports to travel to nearby active ports for work, thus preventing two outcomes of modernization and de-industrialization felt by many unions. They feared automatic container scanning would eliminate clerk jobs and be a first step towards much wider automation. They felt cutting off work from small ports could lead to a smaller workforce, eventual de-unionization and potential replacement by scab workers. ILWU contract negotiators signaled that they were willing to strike over both issues. Employers took the threats seriously, deciding that the long-term benefits were not worth the risks (Finlay 1988; ILWU 2000). The issue of automatic scanning was delayed until the 2002 negotiations.

The 2002 lockout and contemporary negotiations

After thirty years of relative peace, employers decided to challenge the ILWU's job control by redefining container-scanning jurisdiction, a job normally performed by ILWU clerks. They also wanted to re-negotiate healthcare. The contract bargaining and subsequent lockout provided the perfect test of ILWU solidarity, economic influence, and political clout, and ultimately reinforced the union's control of jobs and technology on the docks. The union ended up sacrificing 600 clerk positions, but only after improving overall job control through increasing benefits, guaranteeing jurisdiction over new technology, and organizing several groups of

previously non-union dockside workers. The lockout also reminded the world of the ILWU's centrality in the U.S. economy. Realizing the extent of ILWU solidarity and the devastating impacts of port closures, employers returned to conciliatory bargaining by the 2008 negotiations.

The 2002 story begins in 1999, when the PMA leadership underwent a restructuring and Joseph Miniace was hired as CEO. One rationale for the shake-up was the ILWU's success in contract negotiations during the 1990s. A former Ford plant manager, and a former Vice President of Human Resources at Ryder Trucking, Miniace had a history of anti-union activity. The PMA hoped he would bring his expertise to the negotiating table and strip the ILWU of some of its unprecedented job control. Miniace restructured the PMA negotiating team and took the ILWU head-on during the 2002 contract negotiations, using help from the mainstream media, the Bush Administration, and the recently created West Coast Waterfront Coalition (WCWC): a private organization representing powerful shippers such as Wal-Mart. He employed an aggressive negotiating style not seen among employers since the 1940s (Bonacich and Wilson 2008; McGinn 2005).

The key 2002 negotiating issues were automatic container scanning and healthcare packages. Employers reintroduced automatic scanning and pushed to eliminate 600 clerk positions, noting that ports throughout Europe, Asia, and the U.S. East Coast had already instituted such practices. They also wanted a two-tier benefits package similar to the ones recently negotiated by the ILA and California grocery workers. The union wanted to protect member jobs and benefits, and the rank and file demanded dramatic increases in healthcare coverage. The PMA framed the negotiations as a matter of technological progress and efficiency versus luddism and union featherbedding. ILWU negotiators framed them as corporate greed and speed-ups versus union jurisdiction, solidarity, and the universal right to healthcare. The

union employed traditional negotiating strategies, including making assertive demands, offering trade-offs, and selectively using slowdowns at strategic choke point ports. Miniace did not back down (McGinn 2005; Olney 2003).

Negotiations came to a stalemate on September 26th, after the ILWU engaged in a “safety program” at strategic ports that the PMA claimed led to a 60 percent reduction in productivity (McGinn 2005). Employers locked the gates the next morning. The docks were shut down for ten days before the federal government intervened, using a Taft-Hartley injunction (only the second successful injunction in ILWU history, and the first one ever used during a lockout) to force employers to let the union work until January (Inquiry 2002). Dozens of container ships were unable to deliver cargo on time. Many retail stores missed important early Christmas shopping season deliveries. Tons of perishable cargo had to be destroyed or allowed to rot. Estimates put the overall economic cost of the lockout at as low as \$2 billion (Hall 2005) and as high as \$10 billion (Associates 2001; Cohen 2002). Regardless of the exact figure, the lockout had a tremendous impact on thousands of jobs throughout the global logistics and shipping industries, and on the economy as a whole.

The economic results of the lockout varied for major U.S. corporations and for each West Coast state. Toyota claimed sales losses of \$80 million from port congestion, and The Gap laid off workers in several California stores. Backlogged shipping companies in California dramatically raised container costs and charged ports steep congestion fees (Lemke 2002). The lockout almost caused serious food shortages and economic destabilization in Alaska, which is dependent on the Port of Tacoma for most of its food shipments. Luckily the non-PMA Totem Ocean Trailer Express agreed to bypass the lockout and work with the ILWU. Longshore workers in Washington also continued working military cargo and cruise ships, which provided them income throughout the lockout. Washington Governor Gary Locke lauded locals for agreeing to do the work

and noted the state was probably least hurt by the lockout among West Coast states (ILWU 2002; Olney 2003). California and Oregon ILWU members later followed suit, but only after incurring large losses.

Both sides used extensive media outreach and political lobbying throughout the lockout. The WCWC secured regular guest spots on Fox, CNN, and network news. The union faced an uphill battle against an employer-aligned political administration and a hostile media, largely because employers misdirected consumer frustration by misrepresenting the lockout as a strike. But the ILWU garnered support from the independent media, the labor movement, and the Democratic Party. Western Governors, Washington Senator Maria Cantwell, and California Representatives Barbara Boxer and Nancy Pelosi all spoke publicly in favor of the ILWU and asked the Bush Administration to stop intervening on the docks (ILWU 2002; McGinn 2005; Olney 2003). Rank-and-file ILWU members launched a media campaign to re-educate consumers about the lockout. They received increasing mainstream attention for their viewpoint, particularly as academics started defending the union and criticizing the administration for a hasty intervention (McGinn 2005; Olney 2003).

Both parties negotiated during the injunction and the ILWU returned to work before it was over. They agreed to a new “technology framework” (Bonacich and Wilson 2008), in which the ILWU sacrificed the disputed clerk jobs for the introduction of scanning technology, in exchange for guaranteed jurisdiction over all new technology, finding new positions for all clerks, and organizing new types of workers at each port. The union kept its benefits plan and secured strong wage and healthcare gains, including a 58 percent increase in pensions. The ultimate trade-off was similar to the one arranged during the first M&M agreements, allowing the union to keep its most prized possessions. Over 90 percent of the membership supported the final contract. The consensus among academic and journalistic sources is that ILWU members

came out on top (Hall 2005; McGinn 2005; Zuckerman 2002). They accomplished this by transmitting their organizational capacity, democratic culture, and structural privilege into the contract negotiations.

The PMA fired Miniace in 2004 and the ILWU voted in new President Bob McElrath in 2006. These changes constituted a return to “new look”-era politics, in which both sides recognized the potentially devastating outcomes of a port closure. Employers returned to more conciliatory bargaining strategies during the 2008 negotiations and ILWU negotiators agreed to further introduction of technology, which they ostensibly traded for improved healthcare. Both sides abstained from posturing and managed to avoid every major problem of 2002. They started preparing for negotiations two years in advance, giving them much more time to work through issues before they became severe. The contract expired on July 7, 2008, and the union started using traditional slowdown and work-to-rule negotiating strategies. However, they were more selective in using slowdowns than they had been in 2002, and they never reduced productivity to the extent they did during the 2002 safety program. They agreed on a new contract on July 29th (Mongelluzzo 2008).

The current global recession may be one of the first forces to truly undermine ILWU power. Ironically, this is partially due to the union’s growth over the last several years. The recent hiring wave brought thousands of new casual workers to the docks, all of them hoping to eventually obtain full ILWU member status. The Bureau of Transportation Statistics estimates shipping will decline thirteen percent in Los Angeles and twenty five percent in Long Beach in 2009 (BTS 2009). As of early 2009, most casuals were working one or two days a month on the dock and taking second jobs elsewhere. Hours among full members are also spread thin, with many working only a few days a week. Employers are contractually obligated to pay into

pension funds based on per-worker assessments. This means labor costs are increasing despite reduced demand. The combination of a depressed economy, high wages, an enlarged workforce, and low demand for labor may provide employers with the ammunition they need to take on ILWU power once again.

This is not the first time the ILWU has faced overwhelming odds during an economic crisis. Harry Bridges organized his first contracts in the midst of the Great Depression and the M&M agreements across two recessions. The union has overcome employer and government attacks that used economic hardship as a means to challenge ILWU autonomy. Bridges challenged Nixon's wage freeze in the 1970 strike, as well as employer attempts to push concessionary bargaining in negotiations during the 1980s. Furthermore, and fortunately for the union, the gravity of the current recession was not realized until shortly after members signed the 2008-2014 contract. A full recovery by 2014 would prevent employer maneuvering, but further economic woes could force a re-negotiation. Regardless of what the future holds, the ILWU will most likely weather the current crisis better than other unions, largely owing to the union's history of strong contracts.

Table 4.a displays ILWU base wages, income, membership, and hours worked for five-year increments between 1951 and 2006, and projected for 2009. Wages and income are converted into constant 2009 dollars. Several factors are immediately noticeable. First, the union has enjoyed consistent wage and income growth, and has never dealt with concessionary bargaining or wage freezes—unlike the East Coast ILA, which repeatedly dealt with both in the 1940s and '50s and again in the 1980s and '90s (Monaco and Olsson 2003).⁵ Secondly, ILWU

⁵ The ILA went through concessionary bargaining in 1986-90 and wage freezes in the 1990s. In 2004, the wage for a worker entering the industry was \$16.00 in New York and \$22.00 on the West Coast. The base wage for the average full ILA members was \$25.00, while the base wage for a full ILWU member was \$30.68. The average ILWU *longshore* member currently makes \$92,000 a year (with longshore incomes topping out at \$150,000). The

wages increased dramatically after M&M. Wage increases have slowed since then, but are still impressive. Longshore membership dropped significantly between 1961 and 2001 due to attrition under M&M, but the 2000s' lottery hiring has re-expanded membership to pre-M&M levels. Man-hours initially declined dramatically and then grew through the 1990s and 2000s, but at a fraction of the rate of TEU and tonnage growth. The gains to efficiency are unparalleled in other industries. Some estimates suggest a six-fold increase in West Coast longshore productivity between 1960 and 1980 (Bernstein 1982; Finlay 1988).⁶ The current recession is expected to create a fifteen percent decrease in 2009 West Coast containerized shipping.

Table 4a. Wages, Average income, Membership and Work Hours by 5-year increments, 1951-2009^T

Year	Wage*	CPI Adjusted to 2009	AVG Income	CPI Adjusted to 2009	Longshore membership	Hrs worked
1951	\$1.97	\$16.15	unknown	unknown	14,000	20,461,101
1956	\$2.45	\$19.29	unknown	unknown	14,000	22,225,791
1961	\$2.88	\$20.57	unknown	unknown	13,941	22,293,093
1966	\$3.88	\$25.70	unknown	unknown	13,218	26,653,343
1971	\$4.70	\$27.81	\$8,895	\$52,633.14	14,274	14,838,081
1976	\$7.52	\$28.27	\$17,089	\$64,244.36	10,783	16,600,000
1981	\$12.22	\$28.75	\$31,058	\$73,077.65	9,910	17,100,000
1986	\$17.27	\$33.73	\$44,905	\$87,705	9,472	16,100,000
1991	\$21.78	\$34.19	\$52,725	\$82,771	9,215	16,609,551
1996	\$25.68	\$34.99	\$68,847	\$93,797	9,120	18,044,370
2001	\$27.68	\$33.43	\$83,212	\$100,498	8,083	23,464,267
2006	\$30.18	\$32.04	\$92,041	\$97,708	13,986	33,967,337
2009 projected [^]	\$31.18	\$31.18	unknown	unknown	13,986	18,578,490

^T PMA reports don't report longshore income before 1971.

Average of all registered longshoremen. Clerks and foremen not included.

*wage measures the base contractual wage for A & B members. Identified casuals receive less.

[^] Hours calculated multiplying projected decrease by previous year's total

Source: Pacific Maritime Association

average New York ILA *member* makes \$87,000. The New York amount averages longshoremen and clerks (who generally make much more). The same average for the ILWU was \$105,000 (ILA Rank-and-File Committee 2004).⁶ In 1960, 14,215 West Coast longshoremen shipped 723,899 containers and a total tonnage of 28,495,619 over 23,757,382 man hours. In 1981, 8,059 longshoremen shipped 35,285,833 containers and a total tonnage of 112,960,157 over 17,100,000 man hours. This is under half the man hours for over four times the tonnage and forty-eight times the number of containers. The gain to efficiency was about 600 percent (Mills 1982; Bernstein 1982).

Table 4.b breaks down average ILWU income by region. Southern California and Washington longshore workers make the most money, at an average of \$91,458 and \$89,302 a year, respectively. They have also seen the most consistent and large-scale growth in income, owing primarily to increased container traffic after mechanization. Northern Californian longshore workers make an average of \$79,147 a year, almost \$12,000 less than Southern California, and have enjoyed consistent but smaller income growth. Oregon longshore workers currently make an average of \$86,189 a year. This is significantly more than Northern California, although their income growth is more unpredictable and even declined during the 1996-2001 period. This is explained by member attrition in the 1980s, relocation to busier ports after the collapse of the logging industry in the 1990s, and fewer new hires in the 2000s.

Table 4b. Area Longshore Average Income by 5-year Increments, 1971-2009*^T

Year	WA income	NORCAL income	SOCAL income	OR income	Total AVG Income
1971	NA	NA	NA	NA	\$8,895
1976	NA	NA	NA	NA	\$17,089
1981	\$34,835	\$27,598	\$34,424	\$32,514	\$31,058
1986	\$42,498	\$37,397	\$46,258	\$41,170	\$44,905
1991	\$54,060	\$52,306	\$54,896	\$51,420	\$53,668
1996	\$64,283	\$61,462	\$75,504	\$61,616	\$68,842
2001	\$72,254	\$65,781	\$88,249	\$57,533	\$82,895
2006	\$91,290	\$77,532	\$96,307	\$83,090	\$92,041
2009 projected ^A	\$89,302	\$79,147	\$91,458	\$86,189	\$89,219

Average of all registered longshoremen. Clerks and foremen not included.

*PMA income averages include wages, pay guarantee plan, holidays, vacation and travel

^T Annual reports don't start reporting income until 1971 or by state income until 1981

Source: Pacific Maritime Association

Table 4.c breaks down longshore membership and hours-worked by region, and compares them with coast totals. Membership has fluctuated in all regions. It decreased significantly in all areas throughout the 1970s, but increased in Southern California and Washington during the 1980s and continued to increase in Southern California throughout the 1990s and 2000s. Membership in Northern California and Oregon decreased dramatically

throughout the 1980s, and Oregon's membership continues to decline. Both Northern California and Washington experienced slight membership declines in the '90s, followed by significant increases after the early-2000s hiring wave. Hours-worked follow a generally similar trend for most groups. They fluctuated for all groups, but have ultimately increased dramatically for Southern California; somewhat less so for Washington. They have decreased somewhat for Northern California and quite dramatically for Oregon. Still, the older Oregon longshore workers have seniority and enjoy much higher incomes than younger Northern Californian members.

Table 4c. Area Longshore Membership and Hours Worked by 5-year Increments, 1971-2006

Year	WA		NORCAL		SOCAL		OR		TOTAL	
	mem	hrs	mem	hrs	mem	hrs	mem	hrs	mem	hrs
1971	1,927	3,641,215	3,247	3,724,353	3,044	4,443,612	1,939	3,907,365	14,274	14,838,081
1976	1,610	3,116,925	2,744	2,530,047	2,624	3,707,277	1,817	2,994,972	10,783	16,600,000
1981	1,777	3,083,423	2,143	2,246,160	2,409	4,495,585	1,725	2,698,532	9,910	17,100,000
1986	1,614	3,319,183	1,576	2,876,071	2,846	7,689,225	1,407	2,439,345	9,472	16,100,000
1991	1,363	3,525,862	1,301	3,167,642	3,036	7,521,732	1,113	2,394,315	9,215	16,609,551
1996	1,329	3,452,040	1,037	2,477,016	3,120	9,934,161	981	2,181,153	9,120	18,044,370
2001	1,344	3,197,834	1,277	2,868,691	4,671	15,581,396	900	1,816,346	8,083	23,464,267
2006	1,880	4,987,176	1,558	3,549,011	7,390	23,434,628	885	1,993,522	13,986	24,220,506

Source: Pacific Maritime Association

Income and hours differences aside, it is clear that ILWU members across the West Coast are benefiting greatly from containerization and increased trade with East Asia. Southern California's and Washington's memberships and wages have grown dramatically, and Northern California has seen resurgence in recent decades. Oregon has been the only place to suffer genuine membership loss, but much of it has been through relocation, and the older active Oregon membership still makes high average incomes. We argue the union achieves all of this strength through combining early militant gains such as the coastwise contract with contemporary structural privilege.

An analysis of ILWU power in contract negotiations

An emerging literature suggests post-industrialism and “Just-In-Time” (JIT) manufacturing and delivery give workers in strategic structural positions improved chances of using strike threats to secure increased wages, benefits, and political power (Silver 2003). For example, machinists in a single plant can halt delivery of horizontally integrated automobile components. This is particularly true for longshoring, where containerization has made shipping a “choke point” in the global supply chain (Bonacich and Wilson 2008; Mongelluzzo 2008; Silver 2003). However, structural privilege alone does not account for ILWU power, and structurally similar longshore unions such as those in Rotterdam, secure weaker contracts (Kelly 2009). We argue that the ILWU is a strong organization today because it combines early commitments to democratic and militant unionism with a modern-day privilege in structural position. The union maintains power by making extremely assertive demands, using strategic tradeoffs during contract negotiations, empowering rank-and-file participation during all steps of the bargaining process, and selectively using “choke point” strike threats over both contractual and political issues. It combines these forces to secure strong contracts and control of technology, and is also major political presence in the U.S. labor movement.

Table 5 lists the ILWU’s most important historical non-wage contractual demands. The union’s tradition of strong contracts began in 1934 when Bridges and other leaders made militant demands for the hiring hall, work rotation, and broad improvements in wages, benefits, and work rules. The work rules improved safety standards and secured individual longshore workers’ control of daily work, giving rank-and-file members leverage when negotiating with employers over work assignments, sling weight limits, shift rotation and contract grievances. In 1937, the union officially traded the work rules for a wide range of union benefits, including holidays, cost

of living raises, overtime pay, insurance and official sling weight limits (ILWU 1938). It was the first major instance of trading an early militant gain for expanded, more traditional union benefits.⁷ Codified sling weight limits made many work rules redundant.

Table 5. Major Non-wage Contract Demands

DEMAND	1ST DEMANDED	1ST ACHIEVED	Lost
Coastwise Contract	1934 ILA contract	1934 ILA contract	NA
Closed registry/hiring hall	1934 ILA Contract	1934 ILA Contract	NA
Dispatcher/rotary gangs	1934 ILA Contract	1934 ILA Contract	NA, but gang size decreased after M&M, crane operators steady.
Restrictive Work Rules	1934 ILA Contract	1934 ILA Contract	1938 and 1959
Hours/Work week	1934 ILA Contract	1937 contract	NA
Safety/Sling weights	1937 contract	1937 contract	First M&M agreement
Sick days/injury leave	1937 contract	1937 contract	NA
Vacation/ Paid holidays	1937 contract	1937 contract	NA
Comprehensive safety code	1941 contract	1951 contract	NA
Pensions	1954 contract	1954 contract	NA
Seniority System (A, B, Casual)	1954-60 contracts	1954-60 contracts	NA
Container Language/M&M	1957 Longshore Caucus	1960 M&M Agreement	NA
Jurisdiction overhaul tech.	1957 Longshore Caucus	1960 M&M Agreement	Never lost, revised in 2002.
50-Mile Container Radius	1960 M&M Agreement	1960 M&M Agreement	1975
Job security/Widespread Travel	1960 M&M Agreement	1960 M&M Agreement	NA
Two consistent days off/week	1971 contract	1971 contract	NA
Limits on hours as steady-men	1971 contract	1978 contract	NA
Crane training	1978 contract	1981 contract	NA
Relocation from underutilized ports	1993 contract	1993 contract	NA
Technology framework	2002 contract	2002 contract	NA

Source: ILWU/PMA Pacific Coast Longshore Contract (various years); ILWU International Convention Proceedings (various years).

It is this combination of expanding earlier gains and making trade-offs for new ones that made early ILWU contract negotiations so successful. The union consistently improved wages and benefits while making few sacrifices and never engaging in concessionary bargaining. When the union made a genuine sacrifice, it was always accompanied by expanded job control. The 1937 work rules sacrifice secured control of the hiring hall and standardized negotiations. The 1960s sling weight sacrifice secured control of all new positions generated by technology.

⁷ However, the work rule elimination was never fully enforced on the docks. Many rank-and-file members and employers unofficially behaved as if the work rules were in effect throughout the 1940s-50s. Employers allowed this out of fear of slowdowns and strike threats. Work rules unofficially remained until as late as the 1st M&M agreement, when the union gave them up for expanded jurisdiction over technology (Finlay 1988; Wellman 1995).

This continues into the modern era, when, for example, the 2002 clerk position sacrifice reaffirmed control of technology and expanded ILWU control over new positions. The hiring hall, coastwise contract negotiations, and jurisdiction remain the cornerstones of ILWU power, while unions such as the ILA or the Australian Waterfront Workers Federation have lost some or all of these provisions to employer hostility and government intervention (Kelly 2009).⁸

Another key contributor to successful ILWU contract negotiations is the union's mobilization of the rank-and-file, who play important roles throughout the process. This begins several months before negotiations, when the union encourages all members to write resolutions suggesting improvements to the contract. Each local then elects representatives to attend a Longshore Caucus, where they spend a week narrowing down hundreds of resolutions to a couple dozen major demands to forward to the contract negotiation delegation. The negotiating team is an elected body consisting of executive board members, one member and an alternate from each major local, and a single member and alternative representing all smaller locals. The negotiators are generally local officers, but a significant minority is from the rank-and-file. This ensures new generations of strong negotiators steeped in contractual language, keeps the rank-and-file informed, and fosters union solidarity throughout the negotiations and during potential strikes or lockouts (Wellman 1995; Kelly 2009), as displayed in 1971 and 2002.⁹ It also leads to contract ratification rates generally falling between 80 and 95 percent (PMA/ILWU Various years).

⁸ The only ILWU contractual gain lost to government intervention was a 50-mile jurisdiction radius for all container handling around ILWU ports. The ILA had the same clause. The Supreme Court found both illegal in 1975.

⁹ This is juxtaposed to the ILA, where the contract negotiation delegates (and International Convention delegates) are almost exclusively older officers loyal to the international leadership, and the rank and file never participate in International negotiations and rarely do in local ones. They also frequently strike their own leadership (Kelly 2009).

Strategic strike threats are the ILWU's greatest contract weapon, particularly as the global supply chain becomes more integrated, but it was the all-important strikes of the 1930s and '40s that established the ILWU as a powerful bargaining agent and political actor. These strikes occurred when longshore workers enjoyed less structural privilege, and they required high levels of organization and militancy. For the first time ever, American employers were seriously willing to discuss issues of work rotation, safety, hours, and disability. The 1934 strike led President Roosevelt to pass the National Longshore Act, explicitly specifying a longshoreman's rights as a worker. Roosevelt believed this would prevent disruption on the ports, but its primary effect was to give longshore workers a legal pretense to use against employers in contract negotiations. This enabled the ILWU to transition from a weaker structural position to a stronger one with little conflict (Kelly 2009). It aided the union in dealing with Taft-Hartley, and contributed to the new look and M&M eras, when the occurrence of strikes diminished while the economic impact of strikes grew dramatically. Since then, any strike threat by the ILWU has major ramifications for employers and the economy.

The ILWU also has a long history of using political and non-contractual work stoppages to signal union solidarity and political militancy to employers. Most recently, longshore workers across the West Coast held a one-day work stoppage on May Day of 2008 to protest the Iraq War and treatment of Iraqi workers. This broad display of solidarity took place only months before the 2008 contract negotiations, and signaled to employers that if the membership was willing to strike over politics, then they would undoubtedly do it over contract negotiations as well. It thus served the dual purpose of reinforcing the ILWU's radical self-image and simultaneously

creating more bargaining leverage.¹⁰ The combination of this high degree of militancy with a privileged structural position makes the union an economic and political powerhouse.

This combination also makes employers take strike threats seriously. Strikes have the ability to cost the PMA millions of dollars—and the U.S. economy billions of dollars—over the space of just a few days. They affect a diverse swath of workers across the Western U.S. in a number of complimentary, shipping-dependent, just-in-time industries. It is not surprising, then, that employers have over time acquiesced to ILWU demands over crane operation, work relocation and technology, among other issues. The demonstrably real threat of strikes is precisely what enables ILWU members to command high salaries and make bold demands on both employers and the state. The union almost always comes out on top. But how well does it fare? What impacts does ILWU strength have on the members, their surrounding communities, and the larger economies? Are the impacts justifiable?

The economic benefits and drawbacks of ILWU power

With daily control of over twelve percent of the U.S. GDP (PMA 2008e), the ILWU can have powerful and far-reaching economic impacts on workers, employers, consumers, and the state.

The ILWU provides better wages and benefits not only for its members, but also for workers in associated industries and port communities. The union also has a positive impact on local education, working class civic engagement, and rates of unionization (Wellman 1995).

However, ILWU power also means higher expenses for employers, the state, and ultimately consumers. This generally manifests as increased shipping costs at West Coast ports, which shipping companies pass on to consumers. It can also lead to dramatic shortages, price increases, and layoffs in associated industries in the event of a prolonged strike or lockout (Cohen 2003).

¹⁰ This argument is proffered and developed further by Levi and Ahlquist (forthcoming), where they explore how the union uses political action to generate rank-and-file belief in ILWU ideals and signal strength to employers.

ILWU longshore members are among the highest paid blue-collar workers in the world. The base wage for a full longshore member is \$30.68 per hour. A-men working full-time easily earn over \$100,000 annually, along with what some call the “Cadillac” of benefits packages (ILWU 2008b; PMA 2008c). They have one of the country’s most comprehensive insurance programs, including zero co-pay for most doctor visits and \$1.00 co-pays for prescriptions (ILWU/PMA 2008). Such high wages and benefits have improved inter-generational mobility for longshore families. Many children of early ILWU workers were the first in their families to attain college degrees, and most earn more than their parents. A significant number of second- and third-generation longshore workers actually remain on the docks during college, or return to longshore work after obtaining degrees (Wellman 1995).

ILWU benefits extend beyond longshore workers, to the broader union and the community at large. The union has locals in industries and occupations as diverse as inland boatmen, warehousing, sugar and pineapple plantations, hotels, bookstores and a grocery store in inland Canada. Members in all of these industries generally make more than similar workers, even those represented by other unions (ILWU 2008b). More importantly, the ILWU has worked to improve the “social wage” of its local communities. Harry Bridges’ racial integrationist stance contributed to African-American upward mobility throughout the ILWU’s jurisdiction, and particularly in the Bay Area, where the ILWU supported affirmative action, anti-segregation, and black unionization drives (ILWU 2008b; Tait 2005). The ILWU was also the main force behind Hawaiian statehood, the creation of citizenship for Hawaiian ethnic minorities, and the unionization of Hawaii’s largest industries (sugar, pineapple and tourism). The long-run effect on wages, benefits, and intergenerational mobility among Hawaiian ethnic groups has been immeasurable (ILWU 2008b; Zalburg 1979).

Of course, not everyone gains from the ILWU's power. Employers and industry critics argue that ILWU workers are over-paid and that their benefits packages are outrageously expensive (Burnson 2008; Mongelluzzo 2008; PMA 2002; 2008d). They frequently compare the ILWU with the New York ILA, where longshore workers receive an average base hourly wage of \$25.00, make \$80,000 a year, and have much lower benefits (Committee 2004; PMA 2002). The PMA claims ILWU pensions and benefits cost \$3 billion annually. These are the most perennially difficult contractual issues. This was clearly evident in 2002, when delayed benefits negotiating stalled technology negotiating, and contributed, in part, to the lockout. Shippers argue that extremely costly benefits lead to larger overall container tariffs or "box costs," an expense they pass on to retailers and consumers (Mongelluzzo 2008). Such high costs are driving them to find alternative, non-ILWU shipping routes, such as new ports developing in British Columbia and Ensenada, Mexico, and a new "super ship" canal being created in Panama (Raine 2008).

There is a large degree of truth to these claims. The average cost of ILWU labor per container shipped in 2007 was \$115 and close to \$200 in San Pedro.¹¹ This is significantly higher than ports such as Hong Kong and Rotterdam, where low rates of unionization and high degrees of automation enable employers to keep costs down (Bonacich and Wilson 2008). Higher ILWU box costs are also harmful to consumers, particularly during periods of high inflation or economic hardship. These costs add hefty expenses to a wide variety of imported consumer goods and are not sensitive to market fluctuation, as the ILWU's six-year contract means that the labor component to box costs is non-negotiable. The projected labor costs at the new Canadian and Mexican ports, by comparison, are much lower (Mongelluzzo 2008). These

¹¹ We calculated this by dividing the total wages and benefits paid by the number of containers per port with data obtained from the 2008 Annual Report.

new ports will be connected to the U.S. interior via a proposed new super highway running on a North-South corridor, (Flanigan 2002; Raine 2008) and connected to the world via the new Panama Canal. The result will be dramatic cost reductions throughout the inter-modal shipping chain (Raine 2008).

However, the shippers' quoted labor costs may be misleading. Shippers fold box costs into the amount they bill retailers and other clients, who in turn pass it on to customers. The shippers end up footing a relatively small part of the overall box costs, particularly longshore labor. Furthermore, the capital-intensive economy of scale within the shipping industry means that what appears as a massive total labor cost is in fact only approximately two or three percent of actual shipping costs (Bonacich and Wilson 2008; ILWU 2008a; PMA 2008a). This is an incredibly low variable labor cost compared to most other industries, including other forms of shipping. There is unfortunately little data out there comparing relative labor costs across disaggregated industries, but the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) suggests these costs generally range between 30 and 50 percent for most industries (Statistics 2009).¹² Lastly, ILWU organizers are already in discussion with Mexican and other South American unionists about how to avoid a race to the bottom in wages and benefits in the longshore industry (Olney 2003; ILWU 2008; Bonacich and Wilson 2008).

Additionally, the union is more productive and has lower box costs than its closest competitor, the ILA, which contributes to costs as high as \$200 in New York (New York Shipping Association 2008). This may at first seem similar to San Pedro, but is in fact a striking amount given ILA members' significantly lower wages, income, and benefits. It is most easily

¹² The BLS uses several measures of relative employment costs in the United States. The Employment Cost Index tracks relative changes in employment costs by quarter per major sectors but does not disaggregate the shipping industry or track years. The Industry Productivity and Costs index measures relative changes in productivity and cost per worker over time, but only within industries and does not offer standardized comparisons (Statistics 2009).

traced to the ILA's high degrees of inefficiency and corruption, along with its expensive and poorly-managed Guaranteed Annual Income (GAI) system. The GAI guarantees income to workers even if they don't receive daily employment, much like the ILWU's system. However, the GAI is subject to extreme abuse, and is applied to a larger workforce working less hours (Jensen 1974; Kelly 2009). Certain East Coast ports, such as Savannah and Hampton Roads, are in fact cheaper than the biggest ILWU ports (Raine 2008). This is primarily due to union busting, concessionary bargaining, and automation. Regardless, they lack the capacity to be a significant threat to ILWU volume.

The real potential economic hazard of ILWU power comes during prolonged strikes or lockouts, which may have a devastating impact on shipping and supplemental industries. The 1971 strike lasted 134 days and the 2002 lockout lasted eleven, not counting an 80-day federal injunction during each. Both had profound effects on retail sales, wholesalers, grocery outlets, trucking, and several other industries. Many stores ran out of stock during busy shopping seasons. Certain perishable food items went to waste or had to be destroyed. Some estimates put the costs of the 1971 strike to the PMA alone at over \$45 million a week, (approximately \$300 million in 2008 dollars) (PMA 2002; Mills 1982) and the costs of the 2002 lockout at over \$10 billion, or \$2 billion a day (in 2002 dollars) (Associates 2001; Cohen 2002).

However, several studies claim the larger economic effects of the lockout were not as devastating as PMA and media accounts suggest. Hall (2005) argues that the earlier estimates do not take into account the retail industry's preparedness for the lockout, the propensity of suppliers to seek alternative means of shipping, or consumers' ability to switch to locally produced products. A decrease in shipping can lead to an increase in supplementary industries. Hall estimates that these factors lowered the actual lockout costs to approximately one-fifth of

the original estimates. He also notes that both of the earlier findings were from sources contracted by the PMA and that the data were never made public. He adds that there is, in fact, a dearth of objective impact studies accurately measuring the effects of strikes on ports.

Regardless of large differences in their projected costs, strikes and lockouts still have a massive effect on the state and national economies. One-fifth of \$10 billion is still \$2 billion, and such costs are not trivial given current economic conditions. It should be no surprise, then, that a large amount of government legislation aimed at the ILWU has dealt specifically with the union's ability to strike. Presidents Nixon and George W. Bush both attempted to pass acts banning shipping strikes in the interest of national security, and federal and state legislatures (most notably, Hawaii) have introduced similar bills on many occasions. Congress has pushed for legislation allowing foreign crews with "flags of convenience" to unload their own ships in Hawaii and Alaska, arguing that this would help alleviate hardships if the ILWU struck either area (ILWU 2000). These responses signal the ILWU's incredible importance to the U.S. economy.

The ILWU's relationship with state politics

Numerous scholars, activists and journalists have commented on the ILWU's often conflicted relationship with the American government. Some have suggested that the ILWU's privileged economic position has led the union to have an abnormally large influence on state- and national-level politics (Larrowe 1972; Zalburg 1979). Others believe that conservative legislatures and administrations have unfairly targeted the ILWU for its political radicalism, attempting to bring down the union or isolate it from more mainstream elements in the labor movement (Larrowe 1972; Zalburg 1979). Still others believe that the ILWU's influence or political importance is over-estimated, and that it is not that aberrant of a case. Many of these

investigations have largely relied on anecdotal evidence and personal testimony, or have richly addressed particular issues while neglecting others. While some of these are powerful accounts, very few have provided a wide-reaching analysis of issues across the union's history.

We attempt to clarify this problem by providing a comprehensive content analysis of ILWU-state dynamics from the union's inception through 2007. Our data come from ILWU Convention Proceedings and from the union's official newspaper, *The Dispatcher*, produced weekly from 1942 through 1944 and bi-monthly since. *The Dispatcher* tracked all ILWU lobbying over legislation of interest throughout the legislative process, and reported government activity related to longshoring, labor laws, and a host of other issues. The convention minutes reported major outcomes over each convention period. Both also cover non-legislative forms of activism (such as Political Action Committees, work stoppages, and boycotts). We acknowledge that a number of more technical, less politically-charged issues received less coverage. Fortunately, the data suggest the ILWU performs the best in these areas, so under coverage does not bias results in our favor. We also realize our results would be more robust if we had comparative cases. However, little academic attention is paid to this level of union lobbying.

We coded every major case of government intervention into ILWU union activity, port relations, the labor movement, and other issues of political interest. Likewise, we coded all ILWU efforts to proactively lobby around any of these issues, although we find that the union is generally on the defensive, particularly during conservative administrations and economic downturns. In the end, we accumulated 441 distinct cases and several broad issue categories. We then compared the success of ILWU activism around issues relating to the union contract, the union in general, relationships with the ports and employers, the labor movement, and larger economic and political issues. We also made comparisons between and within ILWU states

(California, Oregon, Washington, Hawaii and Alaska, using Washington as a specific example).

We consider any long-term political campaigns starting as failures but ultimately succeeding (such as the movement against the Poll Tax or for Hawaiian statehood) as failing in their first years and succeeding in their final years, with the intervening years ignored. We discuss aggregate results below, then turn to detailed descriptions of the most important cases.

Table 6. Aggregate Information from Content Analysis, 1942-2007

Type of legislation	# of occurrences	# of ILWU successes^a	Ratio success/failure	Proportion of total^a
Port	81	68	0.84	0.08
Union	162	116	0.72	0.16
Contract	73	51	0.70	0.07
Labor Movement	281	171	0.61	0.27
Economic	170	104	0.61	0.16
Political	275	159	0.58	0.26
Total	1042	669	0.64	1.00
Total Cases	441	281	0.64	1.00

Source: *The Dispatcher* and International Convention Proceedings

The number of successes and proportion of total columns add to more than one because legislation often fell into multiple categories.

Table 6 displays our aggregate results. The ILWU had an overall lobbying success rate of 64 percent. With an 84 percent success rate, the union was most successful at lobbying over port-related issues, such as cases that dealt with technical or structural issues, or shipping regulations within specific ports, cities, or states. Lobbying in this area was frequently over non-controversial issues mutually beneficial to the union and the employers. It therefore makes sense that the union would have a high success rate. However, some of these issues—particularly those dealing with port security—were highly political. The ILWU was generally successful on these as well. Below, we argue that this success is due to the issues' immediate connections to union well-being and the union's ability to mobilize its members.

The ILWU has a 72 percent success rate in lobbying over ILWU-specific issues. Early ILWU activists pushed for multiple pieces of longshore legislation such as the Longshore and

Harbor Worker's Compensation Act, and subsequent generations lobbied to improve coverage and benefits payments. They have also spent a great deal of energy lobbying over defining dock work and longshore jurisdiction. This was particularly important in the case of foreign ships flying flags of convenience, to be discussed below. The union has also continually intervened on legislation affecting non-longshore members. The biggest example of this has been repeated attempts to amend the Sugar Act, by blocking subsidies to beet sugar production and including protectionist language for Hawaiian sugar and pineapple producers. The more varied and confrontational nature of union-related lobbying—as compared to port-related issues that benefited both the union and the employers—is doubtless a contributor to lower relative success rates.

Contract-related lobbying appears similar to union-related lobbying and is in many ways commensurable. We treat it as a distinct category because there are a remarkable number of cases in which the government attempts to intervene directly in the contract process, particularly following strikes or lockouts and during conservative administrations. This is not surprising given the U.S. economy's extreme sensitivity to longshore strikes and the ILWU's history of labor militancy. What may be surprising, however, is the union's remarkable ability to withstand such interventions. The ILWU has been successful in 70 percent of its contract-related lobbying, despite six failed government attempts to ban longshore strikes or create compulsory arbitration. This receives extensive discussion below.

Labor movement issues include anything related to the AFL-CIO, the broader labor movement, collective bargaining, and work-related legislation in general. The majority of the 150 cases come from the ILWU's early years and deals with defining union membership, strike laws, and collective bargaining rights. The Wagner Act, Taft-Hartley, and Right-To-Work

legislation are the most important of these issues. The ILWU is successful in 61 percent of its reported lobbying on such legislation. This suggests that either the ILWU has a rather large influence on political processes, chooses winning legislative coalitions, or is on the winning side of history. We are unable to adjudicate based on the current evidence, but suspect each factor is present.

Efforts centered around economic issues (e.g., taxation, minimum wage, unemployment insurance, price ceilings and trade) are less successful than efforts in other areas, but more successful than we originally expected. The ILWU has historically been unequivocally committed to increased social services, lower taxes for the poor, and tax-and-spend policies in general. It has routinely backed far-reaching social security and welfare policy, often with little success. However, this has always been balanced out with an emphasis on practical and local issues, such as gradual increases in state minimum wages and lowered sales taxes, resulting in an overall success rate of 61 percent for economic issues. This, too, receives discussion below.

Finally, the ILWU's attempt to influence American politics has been both its most far reaching and least successful venture into lobbying. We recorded 275 major cases of intervention on political issues as diverse as civil rights, McCarthyism, foreign policy towards dictatorships, Apartheid, the World Trade Organization, Mumia Abu Jamal, and others. We find the ILWU has a 58 percent success rate. With many of these issues, the ILWU commences or joins long-term campaigns that are ultimately successful. The overall success rate would appear much smaller if we were to include every case of ILWU lobbying over a given issue in a given year. Hawaii statehood alone was a 20-year campaign. It ultimately won, but only after numerous failures. This, too, receives discussion below.

Table 7. Aggregate Information from Content Analysis - Relative State Success Rates, 1942-2007

Type of legislation	# of occurrences	# of ILWU successes ^a	Ratio success/failure	Proportion of total ^a
Hawaii	34	27	0.79	0.07
Oregon	41	28	0.68	0.09
Washington	50	33	0.66	0.11
California	71	43	0.61	0.16
Alaska	10	5	0.50	0.02
National	252	151	0.60	0.55
Total	458	287	0.63	1.00

Source: *The Dispatcher* and International Convention Proceedings

The number of successes and proportion of total columns add to more than one because legislation often fell into multiple categories. The total number of occurrences is higher than the number of cases because some were listed as both national-level and state-level issues.

Table 7 compares the relative success of legislative action both in ILWU states and nationally. The union has been most successful in Hawaii, where its strategic structural position and long-lasting connections to the state legislature have led to a 79 percent success rate. This supports the argument that a privileged structural position leads to increased political influence. ILWU lobbying is successful 68 percent of the time in Oregon and 66 percent of the time in Washington. Both states have very active District Councils and deal with similar economic and political issues. ILWU political involvement is slightly less successful in California. The union has historically involved itself in many more issues in California, including many beyond its political reach. The Northern and Southern California locals also have less in common with one-another than do the Washington locals, despite being in the same state. The somewhat lower success rate could thus be due to disinterest or infighting between California locals and divisions. Legislative action in Alaska apparently only leads to a 50 percent success rate, but we believe this is an artifact coming from under-reporting in the *Dispatcher* due to the small size of Alaska locals and their separate contact. Finally, lobbying is only successful 60 percent of the time on national issues. Much like California, we argue this is most likely due to the larger political

nature of national issues and disagreements among ILWU locals and states, along with a larger body of other federal-level actors.

Table 8. Aggregate Information from Content Analysis - Washington State, 1942-2007

Type of legislation	# of occurrences	# of ILWU successes ^a	Ratio success/failure	Proportion of total ^a
Port	13	12	0.92	0.12
Union	18	13	0.72	0.16
Contract	8	4	0.50	0.07
Labor Movement	30	22	0.73	0.27
Economic	20	15	0.75	0.18
Political	22	13	0.59	0.20
Total	111	79	0.71	1.00
Total cases	50	33	0.66	

Source: *The Dispatcher* and International Convention Proceedings

The number of successes and proportion of total columns add to more than one because legislation often fell into multiple categories.

Table 8 examines ILWU effectiveness in Washington State. With the exception of contractual lobbying, Washington locals follow the same general pattern as the overall union (although at higher rates). They are extremely effective in lobbying over port-related issues. This is most likely due to a much more amicable history with local ports, their importance to Washington trade, and a mutual interest in remaining competitive with Southern California. They are successful in lobbying over general union issues. This includes issues related to the affiliated Washington Inland Boatmen and local ferry operators, both of whom have lobbied extensively with the union for job protection. The lower level of contractual lobbying success also makes sense. The majority of successful contractual lobbying is done at the National level, whereas state-level lobbying frequently centers around adjudicating differences in state and national-level policies. Labor movement and economic lobbying follow national union trends, although at ten percent higher success rates. This is most likely due to the ILWU's strategic importance in the Washington economy. Finally, larger political lobbying does not deviate from national trends.

Employer and government political intervention and legislation

Employers and the state have repeatedly utilized political intervention and legislation to limit ILWU power. At times, it appears this intervention was legitimately used to protect consumers, national security, or the U.S. economy. The Nixon and Bush Administrations, for instance, frequently invoked national security concerns when trying to regulate dock relationships. However, much of the legislation was used as an attempt to undermine the ILWU's political and economic strength and to protect employers. Nowhere has this been more obvious than legislative attempts to reduce ILWU strike capability and job control. *The Dispatcher* and union convention proceedings have tracked numerous efforts to pass legislation targeting both.

The 1947 Taft-Hartley Act was the most successful and far-reaching attempt to target union job control and strike power. Taft-Hartley eliminated secondary boycotts and "closed shops," made it illegal to unionize foremen, made union members sign non-communist affidavits, and gave the federal government the right to use 80-day injunctions against any strike seen as a threat to national security. Employers asked the government to intervene in the 1947 negotiations, eliminate the closed-shop hiring hall, and deport Bridges for supposed Communism. This led to a protracted strike ending in ILWU victory. The union waited out the employers, who lost so much money that they were forced to completely accept the hall. The National Labor Relations Board later found that the ILWU had indeed been violating Taft-Hartley and fined the union millions of dollars, but employers were so fearful of another strike that they completely dropped their case (*Dispatcher* 1947a). It is one of the only cases in U.S. history of a union not complying with Taft-Hartley and surviving intact. Other unions faced injunctions, contempt of court charges, and even larger fines. Some, such as the United

Electricians (UE), were so crushed that they never returned to their pre-Taft-Hartley strength (Lichtenstein 2002).

Any attempts to target ILWU strike power have all ended in failure. There have been at least six federal attempts to make maritime strikes illegal. Members of Congress pushed for the Compulsory Maritime Arbitration Act in 1964 and again in 1966 (ILWU 1967). The act would have made it illegal for maritime unions to strike, and mandated federally provided arbitrators. Nixon reintroduced more politicized versions of the act in 1970 and 1972. Both the Emergency Public Interest Protection Act and the Crippling Strike Prevention Act failed (ILWU 1975). The ILWU was at the center of the lobbying effort against both incarnations. They worked with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) to build broad coalitions against the 1960s acts and with the “entire labor movement” against the 1972 act (ILWU 1967; ILWU 1975).

Conservative Congress members attempted to introduce anti-strike language into the Hawaiian Commerce Act throughout the 1970s. They wanted to add 160 days to any Taft-Hartley injunction against strikes affecting Hawaiian commerce, including any on the mainland. They drew inspiration from the Hawaiian Dock Seizure Act of 1949, when the territorial government attempted to break a 171-day Hawaiian longshore strike by taking control of the docks. However, it had been unable to prevent mainland ILWU longshore workers from refusing to load or unload Hawaiian cargo, which was harder to regulate than local actions. The ILWU eventually won the 1949 strike (Hitch 1992). Supporters of the 1970s legislation thought it would overcome this thorny issue, but the union saw it as an underhanded attempt to gain control of all West Coast docks. The ILWU worked closely with the Teamsters and the AFL-CIO to block the language every time it was introduced. They convinced liberal Congress members that the act was more of an effort to break ILWU power than to protect Hawaii,

particularly as the state was doing more trade with Asia and might not be so crippled by an ILWU strike (ILWU 1975).

The most recent effort to regulate ILWU strike power came in 2005, when the Bush Administration attempted to label waterfront strikes as a form of economic terrorism in its Transport Security Improvement Act. Much like attempts under Nixon, the act required compulsory arbitration and made waterfront strikes illegal. It would have subjected striking workers to federal law, treated waterfront work stoppages as felony offenses, and given Homeland Security permission to investigate and wire-tap union leaders and activists. ILWU lobbyists felt this was yet another attempt to undermine union power under false pretenses. They successfully eliminated all references to waterfront strikes as economic terrorism before pushing liberal members of Congress to support a highly re-worded act (McLaughlin 2006).

National security interests spread far beyond strikes. The government has also tried to limit who can secure work on the docks, arguing that people with leftist political backgrounds posed security threats. There have been at least seven federal attempts to screen ILWU workers. This began with the Red Scare-era “waterfront worker screenings,” which were designed to remove Communists from the docks. The screenings started on Naval docks in 1948 but spread to all commercial operations by 1950 (Kimeldorf 1988; Robertson 2009). ILWU members bitterly resisted the screenings, arguing that they undermined civil liberties and removed the most activist members from key organizing positions. 95 percent of delegates voted in favor of a 1947 convention resolution condemning screenings and they unanimously supported another, similar resolution in 1951. International leaders acceded after receiving threats from the military (Robertson 2009). Rank-and-file members expressed deep frustration at the International and

vowed never to let the union be forced into such a position again. The screenings stopped in 1952.

ILWU members have successfully resisted all other attempts to screen, although it became more difficult in the post-9/11 era. In 1970, the Nixon Administration attempted to pass the Defense Facilities and Industrial Security Act. The act intended to re-introduce waterfront screening, ostensibly to remove anyone with a felony criminal record from waterfront employment. However, it also included clauses for affiliation with radical organizations and resistance during wartime, again targeting leftist members. The ILWU mounted a lobbying effort to resist the legislation, this time without the support of the labor movement. It seems the issue was too industry-specific for the AFL-CIO (of which the ILWU was not a part at the time) to officially endorse. In a preview of screening legislation to come, the ILWU successfully blocked the act operating on its own (ILWU 1971).

Screening has become a key issue for control of the docks under neoliberalism and during the post-9/11 era. Congress attempted to introduce screening and other restrictions into 1996's Maritime Security Act and Jones Act and in the 1999 Omnibus Transportation Act. The ILWU collaborated with other transportation unions to resist the restrictions, all of which were ultimately rejected (ILWU 2000). There have been at least four federal attempts at screening since September 11th alone, more than across the union's first 65 years in existence. In 2001, the Bush Administration called for screening of all longshore workers, and termination of anyone with terrorist affiliations, certain religious affiliations, or felonies. The ILWU successfully lobbied to have screening limited to members working with high security cargo and restrict terminations to felonies involving terrorism or organized crime. The Administration re-introduced the same restrictions into 2005's Transport Security Improvement Act and Coast

Guard Authorization Legislation, when they argued for revoking applications for Transport Worker Identity Cards (TWICs) to anyone with felonies. The ILWU lobbied against the provisions for most felonies and secured due process for any longshore workers rejected due to previous arrests (ILWU 2006).

Of course, the majority of governmental interventions have been far less dramatic than those mentioned above, and have dealt largely with regulating work. However, they still have long-term ramifications for ILWU-state relations. Perhaps the most important issue is who is allowed to do ILWU work. This has come up repeatedly over the years, but culminated in 1996, when members of Congress attempted to reform the Maritime Shipping Act, re-classifying the positions of ship pilots and inland boatmen working with state ferry systems and port tug operators. The intention was to consolidate jobs and eliminate obsolete positions, potentially reducing union membership and limiting the jurisdiction of the Inland Boatmen's Union, an ILWU subsidiary. Some of the new jobs would not have been organizable. Others would have fallen outside union jurisdiction and need to be re-organized. The ILWU feared the next step would be to redefine longshore work (something the industry had suggested for some time). The union successfully lobbied against re-classifying roles, and the acts kept their original language (ILWU 1997).

ILWU predictions were prescient. Conservative Congress members re-introduced the idea in 1998, this time as a provision of the Ocean Shipping Reform Act. They first targeted Alaska-based longshore work, arguing that internationally registered ships should be allowed to unload their own Alaskan cargo under certain conditions, including when no ILWU members were available and during strikes. The ILWU was outraged at the provision, claiming it would be used to destroy longshore jobs in Alaska and across the West Coast. They also felt it would

allow ships flying “flags of convenience” to both undercut U.S. longshore wages and further exploit their own poorly treated labor forces. ILWU members lobbied to have all longshore language and jurisdictional questions removed, which they ultimately were (ILWU 2000).

The state has also intervened in who is allowed to profit from and participate in ILWU contract negotiations. In the 1950s, the union fought a drawn-out battle with the state of California over retirement issues and who was entitled to pensions. This spread to Oregon in the 1970s and early ‘80s as both states passed legislation to restrict pensioners’ voting in unions (ILWU 1985). The legislation in both states had much broader aims than the ILWU, but radical ILWU pensioners felt they were singled out in an effort to eliminate their political influence on the union during international elections and contract negotiations. Regardless of the bills’ intents, they effectively stifled one of the most active voices in ILWU politics. Still, true to form, the ILWU chose to totally disobey both laws until forced to by court order in 1985, and only then after putting it to vote by the membership (ILWU 1985; Kelly 2004).

ILWU activism, lobbying and legislation

The pendulum swings both ways, with the union attempting to intervene in federal policy matters almost as frequently as the federal government interferes with the union. The ILWU has extensively used lobbying and legislative activism throughout its 75-year history. Bridges started insisting that the union have a DC lobbyist and representative from the very beginning, and created a DC office with a fulltime staff person in 1945. The DC office came in and out of use on several occasions, but has otherwise been a relatively constant presence since its creation. The office is responsible for all lobbying and legislation tracking, creating relationships with progressive representatives or candidates, updating ILWU members through regular *Dispatcher* articles, and reporting directly to the International Executive Board. As of 2009, Legislative

Director Lindsay McLaughlin regularly produces material for *The Dispatcher*. Lobbying efforts in various years have been funded by popular member-supported Political Action Funds—to the extent that they were legal—and appropriations from the International Executive Board.

The majority of ILWU lobbying has been on contract-, union-, or port-related issues. Much of that was proactive lobbying over the issues mentioned above. ILWU leaders frequently foresaw state intervention on the docks well before official legislation was proposed, and they took action as early as possible. This is particularly true when it comes to the central issues of job control and strike power. For example, Taft-Hartley was not created or passed in a vacuum, but was the culmination of a broad anti-labor movement started by Republicans and Southern Democrats. They tinkered with local legislation for several years before attempting national legislation such as 1944's Smith-Connelly and Labor-Management Security acts. The ILWU regularly provided *Dispatcher* coverage and lobbied against the smaller state acts, even when they were in Southern Democrat or Republican strongholds. The union also repeatedly warned the rank and file and members of Congress that a national-level act was imminent, and they were one of the first forces to come out against Taft-Hartley when it was officially proposed (Committee 1944).

The ILWU has continually lobbied for legislation improving the workplace conditions and livelihood of longshore workers and other members. Much like in contract negotiations, ILWU lobbyists make extreme and highly-politicized benefits demands, only to later compromise via less beneficial packages. Most importantly, the union has regularly secured improvements in the Longshore and Harbor Worker's Compensation Act and dockwork-related sections of federal- and state-level disability and minimum wage acts. This has led to longshore

workers receiving disproportionately better benefits than most American workers.¹³ Likewise, until recently the ILWU successfully used similar tactics in killing amendments to the Federal Sugar Act that would provide subsidies to beet sugar and potentially undermining ILWU cane sugar in Hawaii (Dispatcher 1948; Dispatcher 1951; ILWU 1975).

ILWU lobbying is less successful on issues less proximate to the union. However, the ILWU puts significant energy into lobbying over larger labor movement and economic issues, often successfully, and is an outlier within the labor movement. Social Security, unemployment, medical care, taxation, and collective bargaining are the most important recurring issues receiving ILWU attention. Bridges regularly spoke to Congress about the need for full employment, the dangers of regressive taxes, and the importance of union self-determination. He regularly editorialized in the mainstream press, other labor literature, and *The Dispatcher*. He spent dozens of “On-The-Beam” columns discussing sales tax in 1943 (Bridges 1943) and Right-To-Work laws between 1947 and 1955 (Dispatcher 1947b). The ILWU was one of the main forces behind killing Right-To-Work legislation in California in 1951 and Washington in 1956 (Dispatcher 1956), and has helped keep it out of the West Coast ever since. Unsurprisingly, the leadership spent a significant majority of the ILWU’s 1940s-50s PAC money fighting Right-To-Work laws.

It is much harder to interpret the success of ILWU lobbying attempts and activism over ideological issues. Over the years, Bridges, the Executive Board, local leaders, and rank-and-file activists have put ILWU support behind hundreds of important social issues at the local, state, national, and global levels. This support ranges from editorializing in *The Dispatcher* or other papers, to passing resolutions at the ILWU International Convention, to lobbying state and

¹³ This may seem unfair to other groups, but ILWU activists would most likely argue fairness because longshoring is more dangerous than most jobs and they believe all workers should receive better benefits.

national legislatures, and even non-violent civil disobedience on the ports or in the streets. Some of these issues only held the ILWU's attention for a short while; others turned into broad, multi-year-long campaigns in conjunction with other unions or social movement organizations.

Analyzing the most important social issues is the hardest. The ILWU has been on the winning side of almost all of them, but only over the long run. Most short-term efforts have ended in failure.

Perhaps most interesting is the ILWU's long-term support of the civil rights movement. Numerous scholars and biographers recount Harry Bridges' commitment to racial equality within the union (Kimeldorf 1988; Larowe 1972; Wellman 1995; Zalburg 1979), but few discuss his remarkable effort in fighting the Southern poll taxes, supporting federal and state Fair Employment Practices Commissions (FEPCs), and pushing for various attempts at broad civil rights legislation. *The Dispatcher* covered poll taxes extensively, beginning in its first few issues and extending over a twenty-year period. Bridges frequently spoke against the evils of poll taxes in his regular "On-The-Beam" editorials. Hundreds of ILWU members lobbied and wrote letters against poll taxing in every legislative session in which it was brought up from 1938-1964. Similarly, the ILWU backed Roosevelt's creation of the Fair Employment Practices Commission and supported all future efforts to make it permanent. It also supported or helped author state-level FEPC legislation in California, Oregon, and Washington. Neither the poll-tax elimination nor FEPC were genuinely viable until the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (ILWU 1965).

Another racially charged issue was Hawaiian statehood. The ILWU was one of the main forces behind the twenty-plus year battle for statehood. Members, leaders, and lobbyists put pressure on Congress, employers, and the territorial government. They effectively linked the ideas of unionism, basic human rights, representation in government, and overcoming racism.

They routinely supported statehood legislation every year it was introduced from 1938 until it was granted in 1959 (ILWU 1959). This long-term uphill battle made the union one of the most popular political forces in the islands. It enabled the ILWU to effectively back political candidates (many of which were elected to office) and reverse a host of local anti-labor laws.

Not all ideological battles have ended in success. In fact, many have failed completely, sometimes to the point of further marginalizing the ILWU from mainstream political opinion. The union has continually advocated for broad social services and universal healthcare and against every war since World War II. It has aligned itself with the most leftist members of Congress and advised them in authoring some of the most ideologically-charged employment, welfare, and healthcare legislation, including the Murray-Patman full-employment bill and the Wagner-Murray-Dingel social security and healthcare expansion bill. ILWU support of such issues added to many conservative pundits' claims that the union was un-American at best and Stalinist at worst. Of course, none of these aims were achieved, but they were undoubtedly huge contributors to the 1940s witch-hunts against Bridges, whose later personal endorsement of socialism and opposition to the Korean War landed him a short jail sentence for sedition.

The ILWU's commitment to lobbying over ideological issues is backed-up by strike and work-stoppage threats. The union has used work stoppages ranging from one dock to the whole union and one hour to several weeks to make statements about issues as broad as pig iron, Hawaiian statehood, Apartheid, Mumia Abu Jamal, the WTO and the war in Iraq, among others. Such political work stoppages frequently occur in conjunction with contract negotiations, and they serve multiple purposes for the union. First, they provide on-the-ground leverage for radical issues that employers, Congress and state legislatures may not otherwise like to address. They also further politicize the rank and file around historical ILWU social justice values. More

importantly, they achieve the dual goals of reinforcing both member and employer beliefs in ILWU strike power and overall bargaining strength. This has spillover effects into other forms of ILWU lobbying. Thus the somewhat lower 60 percent success rate in lobbying over political issues may in fact help bolster ILWU lobbying over port, union and contractual issues. As such, it serves as an important step in explaining why ILWU contract negotiations are so successful.

Conclusion

Our research suggests that the ILWU does have an abnormally important place in the economy, that the state routinely uses economic stability as a rationale for intervening in port relations, and that the state almost always sides with employers, regardless of the party in power. However, with few major exceptions, the state is unsuccessful and the ILWU generally maintains a high degree of control over the docks. Attempts to mitigate ILWU contractual or strike power most frequently end in failure or stalemate. The ILWU over its history has consistently lobbied government over contractual, union, and workplace issues, thus offsetting some of the effects of particularly pro-employer or anti-ILWU legislation. Unfortunately, data limitations do not allow us to compare the ILWU to other labor unions. This is but another area of union data needing to be collected to encourage better analyses and understandings of labor unions, similar to what Southworth and Stepan-Norris (2009) have championed.

This high degree of success in port, union and contract-related lobbying is a result of the ILWU's structural privilege, militancy, democratic practices, and complete coastwise control of the hiring process. When combined, these forces make the union a strong bargaining force, both on the docks and in the halls of government. The state frequently attempts to mitigate this power, but always stops short of over-regulation, most likely out of fear of the potential impacts of ILWU strikes. The most strongly-worded legislation aimed at ILWU strike power or job

control always fails. The logistics revolution only furthered this power and helped to shift it from being entirely local and institutional to a mixture of international, institutional, and structural. However, economic downturns in general and the current global financial crisis in particular may jeopardize this power, particularly given the ILWU's now seemingly bloated membership rolls and hefty employer payments into pensions and benefits.

The ILWU's reach does not extend far beyond the docks, at least not in the short term. It is routinely less successful at lobbying over broader labor movement, economic, and political issues, although more so than expected. Starting in the 1930s, Harry Bridges and other ILWU leaders routinely fought for progressive economic and political reforms at the national and state levels. Most notably, they were among the main forces advocating for independent political parties, universal healthcare, civil rights legislation, state-level unemployment insurance, and Fair Employment Practices Commissions, as well as statehood for Alaska and Hawaii. They eventually won most of these battles, but sometimes only after decades of work with other progressive forces. They were less lucky in their resistance to widespread anti-labor legislation, such as the Taft-Hartley Act, or invasions of civil liberties, such as the House Unamerican Activities Committee, the Dies Committee, COINTELPRO, or McCarthyism. However, the union's commitment to radicalism reinforces its success in other lobbying and contractual arenas.

Depending on one's political position, the ILWU can either be seen as a successful, militant example by which other American labor movements should model themselves, or as a monopolistic and anachronistic union with far too much power and influence over economic outcomes in the U.S. and beyond. The ILWU's combination of union democracy, organizational strength, and structural privilege may provide clues on how to further revive the American labor

movement (Levi et al 2009; Kelly 2009). Perhaps movement leaders and union organizers could attempt to reinvigorate militancy, democratic practices, and encompassing bargaining in other structurally important unions (such as in the transport sector, or among teachers or government workers) or create new drives to unionize other structurally important workers (such as university professors or workers in medical and financial fields) (Silver 2003; Kelly 2009). This would, of course, have to be connected with a commitment to enhancing both legislative and job power at the local and national levels.

But the other side of the argument may hold equal weight. The extent of ILWU economic power and the union's ability to influence the global economy and the lives of millions of working people in associated industries remains troubling for employers and the state (PMA 2008d; 2008e; Associates 2003; McGinn 2003). Employers and conservative legislators will doubtlessly continue to challenge ILWU job control, strike abilities and benefits systems. Even pro-labor presidents would most likely intervene on behalf of economic stability if the union engaged in any extended coastwise strikes. Thus, strike threats - the primary mechanism for achieving ILWU success from the time of the Great Depression through the logistics revolution - may be an increasingly unviable tool for all parties in the future. If this is the case, then the ILWU is not a beacon of some future labor resurgence, but is instead the last survivor of an era in which enormous unions such as the United Auto Workers (UAW) had a powerful influence over states and economies. The current recession is the deepest global financial decline since the Great Depression. It is restructuring labor as we know it, and may be the final nail in the UAW coffin. However, both the ILWU and the UAW were born out of the Depression. No one knows what the future may hold for the ILWU or the larger labor movement. This too may lead to a

period of growth, particularly if other unions experiment with new strategies and commitments to democracy, militancy, widespread job control, and legislative action.

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