Dock Strike Leader Blasts 'Let 'Em Starve' Editorial

SAN FRANCISCO — Should workers on strike be starved into submission? Apparently, the Heart-owned San Francisco Examiner thinks they should. In a recent editorial, the pro-war, anti-everything-else aerospace publication said that strikers should not be eligible for public aid or food stamps or any form of assistance.

In a biting reply to the editor, ILWU Northern California Area Secretary Chairman James Herman denounced the editorial, arguing that "this is about like the terrors under which the slave owners gave their slaves their later treatment than they did the human beings they call people—because people were more valuable."

Herman, who is also president of clerks' Local 34, said in part: "None of this (famine cheating) gets public aid unless they are in desperate need of the basic necessities."

"Inasmuch as stockholders of the shipping companies feel little, if any, deep pangs of guilt over food and necessities during a strike—let alone any reduction in their usually sizable incomes—the strike—can only be said to be ships themselves and the machinery should have starved, in a social sense, with the workers."

"Yes," Herman wrote, "strikers have contributed as taxpayers to welfare funds and are entitled to draw on those funds when in need. You ignore this issue when you mistakenly conclude that this argument ignores the fact that they are out of work by 'choice.'"

"This is nonsense. They are out of work because of necessity. They have no funds to match the handsome subsidies which the strike layers receive from the government."

"These federal subsidies, paid for in large part out of workers' taxes, enabled the ship owners to move to a different country club than does the longshoreman with five kids, a frightening mortgage, and a bundle of installment payments."

The quote is from Herbert R. Northrup, Director of Industrial Research of the University of Pennsylvania, who said that feeding hungry strikers made strikes longer and settlements higher. He says, 'I don't want to starve to death, but I know collective bargaining can't work unless the strike hurts both sides.'"

ONE HORSE, ONE RABBIT

"Mr. Northrup has a glib way of saying that he wants the employed to temporarily forego a little of their profit and that he wants the striker to stop eating. That's equality. Fifty-fifty—one horse and one rabbit! Don't feed the idle ships and don't feed the strikers."

"On the other hand, we want to play fair. Our position is that ship owners who meet the same political standards as the agencies require their strikers to meet be allowed to apply for food stamps and other accoutrements of welfare aid. 'Fair and square, we say.'"

Pickets Demand a Half To Stall of Food Stamps

OAKLAND — Local 10 strikers have a feeling that Alameda county welfare authorities are playing games. Herman, Local 10 welfare director, says strikers thought two days of picketing of the county welfare office (Aug. 2 and 3) bought an agreement with William Rainey, the county's assistant welfare director.

But a few days later they weren't sure.

At issue is the stalling or denial of food stamps to strikers. As samples of what brought about the strike line Cothrist cited two incidents:

One dock striker, who went to the welfare office in his native home, fulfilled all the requirements for getting stamps. He thought he was all set—only to be told he had to produce Social Security cards for minor children.

Welfare officials told men that all who were processed by July 21 would get stamps for July. One man was processed by July 20—and then was told he would have to wait until August.

The two days of picketing ILWU representatives met with Rainey on Aug. 4. He appeared to agree that such games were out, and pledged that if difficulties arose at lower levels he would work with the strikers on them.

But as of Aug. 10 strikers were still complaining, and Cothrist was skeptical. Rainey's good faith in promoting to expedite food stamps for eligible strikers.

But Business Gets $30 Billion Handouts Without Any Fuss

SAN FRANCISCO — If a striking longshoreman could lay in registering for food stamps or welfare this week, picked up an old newspaper and read things that were not as bad as they seemed.

Not for the owners of the shipping industry, who have already been allotted a year in welfare payments from the federal government.

The "half billion, one item in an Associated Press story which estimated that government handouts to 'the enterprise' total $30 billion a year."

"The $30 billion is an estimate," the story explained. "No one, in the government, or out or in, knows exactly what the figure is."

One reason no one knows is that much government aid to business is hidden, or as Prof. C. Lowell Harris of Columbia University put it, "There is strong preference for forms of subsidies which help conceal the nature of the receipt."

"Backdoor subsidies...from tax breaks, incentives, allowances and other considerations...were valued at $5.9 billion a year.

"Subsidies to agribusiness (with small farmers getting a few crumbs) were valued at $6 billion and $8 billion a year."

"Loans and insurance to companies doing business overseas...last year the total face value of these was $6.5 billion."

"Transportation subsidies...$450 million each to U.S. mail, $45 million to airlines; $172 million over five years to help computer railroads buy 875 new passenger cars."

"Federal aid for private enterprise...said the AP story, "is more than twice the government spends for all its welfare programs."

ILWU: Nixon on Wage Lids

President Nixon's declaration last week that he has an "open mind" about establishing a wage-price review board seemed to catalyze another flood of Congressional agitation for wage-price controls.

Nixon said Congressional hearings will help him make up his mind, and Congressmen of both major parties leaped into the breach to urge wage-price regulation.

Whatever the President's state of mind, that's one issue on which ILWU has firmly made up its mind for a long time.

ILWU's position was reiterated at the Nineteenth Biennial Convention last April.

"The ILWU is opposed to the imposition of wage-price controls," the convention declared. "Economic recovery is dependent on higher wages and full employment."

The officers' report to the convention blasted the argument that high wages cause inflation and must, therefore, be controlled.

"The primary cause for the present inflation in prices has been government spending for defense and the war in Vietnam," they said.

"In the present inflation prices were on the way up long before wage gains tried to keep pace."

"As the Wall Street Journal noted late last year, 'Labor costs are not the Frankenstein monster they're often cracked up to be.' In 1970 labor costs per unit of output rose much less than they had in 1968 and 1969, but prices soared.

"In such basic industries as steel, auto, and chemicals there are a limited number of sellers (three major auto makers, three or four major steel producers) and a large number of buyers. The sellers rig prices so they don't have to compete with one another price-wise."

"Phrasing it another way two years earlier, the officers report to the Eighteenth Convention said:

"The fact of the matter is that all companies raise their prices when ever they can get away with it. The reason for this is the persistent drive for higher profits."

As against wage-price controls the officers' report this year proposed an economic program to improve the condition of workers and to increase mass purchasing power. Among the specific items were:

"Higher wages and job security.

"Higher social security payments.

"Improved workers' compensation and unemployment insurance benefits.

"Welfare reform which will significantly improve the lots of the poor and the near poor.

"Higher minimum wages.

"Necessary steps to control the spread of monopoies in critical sectors of the economy and means to control collective price agreements.

"PLCkSTING can also be lonely, see below.

ILWU Locals 8 and 40 repounced read and dock strikes at Terminal 4 in Portland. From left, Michael Hard, UTU; the Cavanaugh brothers, Pat and Hank, fomed in Local 8 for brown and good nature, and Jack Hammer, Local 40. Pickets had put away a hefty lunch, compliments of the St. Johns Cafes. Picket shak (right), a former dock shelter, provided welcome shade from 90 degree heat. Rail strike has since been settled.

"Photo by Dick Phillips"