

What's Our Next Move?

See On the Beam, page two



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Dockers Near Showdown

January 17 Strike Deadline; Bridges Talks to Teamsters

SAN FRANCISCO — ILWU longshoremen and clerks may be back on the picket line Monday, January 17, unless agreement is reached settling a number of crucial issues. Stuffing and unstuffing containers is the key issue. Others include guaranteed work or pay, welfare and pensions, wages, and manning.

This was announced to all West Coast longshore and clerk locals by Harry Bridges, as chairman of the Coast Negotiating Committee. Further details are spelled out in his "On the Beam" column on page two of this issue of The Dispatcher.

As of the time The Dispatcher went to press (Wednesday night, January 12) President Bridges was flying to Washington to meet with Teamster union officers to try to resolve the issue of container stuffing and, as noted in his column, to discuss possibilities of merger.

On the same Wednesday, negotiations with the PMA were recessed and both parties were on call.

However, it appeared that unless there was a break in the recess and negotiations were resumed, the January 17 extension would be ended and longshoremen and clerks would be back on the bricks.

BE PREPARED

All locals were advised to be prepared to walk out if there is no agreement the committee could recommend by January 17 to a caucus.

Bridges also noted that strike action "could well include Hawaii and even our unions in the BC area."

All major issues in negotiations were still on the table. The negotiating committee also demanded that all wage increases and other economic issues be made retroactive to the date of the end of the Phase One wage freeze, November 14, 1971.

In its letter to all locals, the committee added that the total reserve of the welfare fund contains enough to cover welfare payments for about two weeks.

However, the committee said it would conduct negotiations directly with carriers to continue welfare coverage and guarantee full reimbursement by deductions from the strike settlement.

Here is a review of events as The Dispatcher went to press:

The Coast Negotiating Committee returned from a three-day meeting with officers of the International Longshoremen's Association in New York, January 5-7.

They met in San Francisco, January 9 and endorsed a short report to all locals, including information on their recommendation that the strike be continued unless an agreement with PMA is reached.

The contract had been extended to January 17 before the whole committee flew to New York.

Negotiations were resumed on

January 10, aimed at driving through to an agreement by January 17. In attendance was J. Curtis Counts, director of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service.

SEA-LAND ISSUE

In the report to the locals and in his column, Bridges noted that the primary purpose of the meetings with the ILA was to ask the ILA not to work Sea-Land ships on the East Coast if the ILWU resumed its strike on January 17.

Bridges wrote in his column (see page two), "Their answer was a flat 'No' and that if they tried in New Jersey to move against Sea-Land to support our strike they would have to shut down the whole port."

While the ILA said they would honor any ILWU picket lines, even a single picket, "they insisted that such action would only amount to a grandstand play" and that legal actions would swiftly take place.

However, the joint meetings did bring one firm resolve: Both the ILA and ILWU agreed "that both coasts would be shut down if the government Pay Board didn't approve settlements negotiated by either union."

Concerning a merger between ILA and ILWU, Bridges reported that ILA president Gleason was "not interested in bargaining with ILWU to join ILA. His proposal was to have ILWU rejoin ILA as a completely autonomous West Coast and Hawaiian District, as we were in 1934."

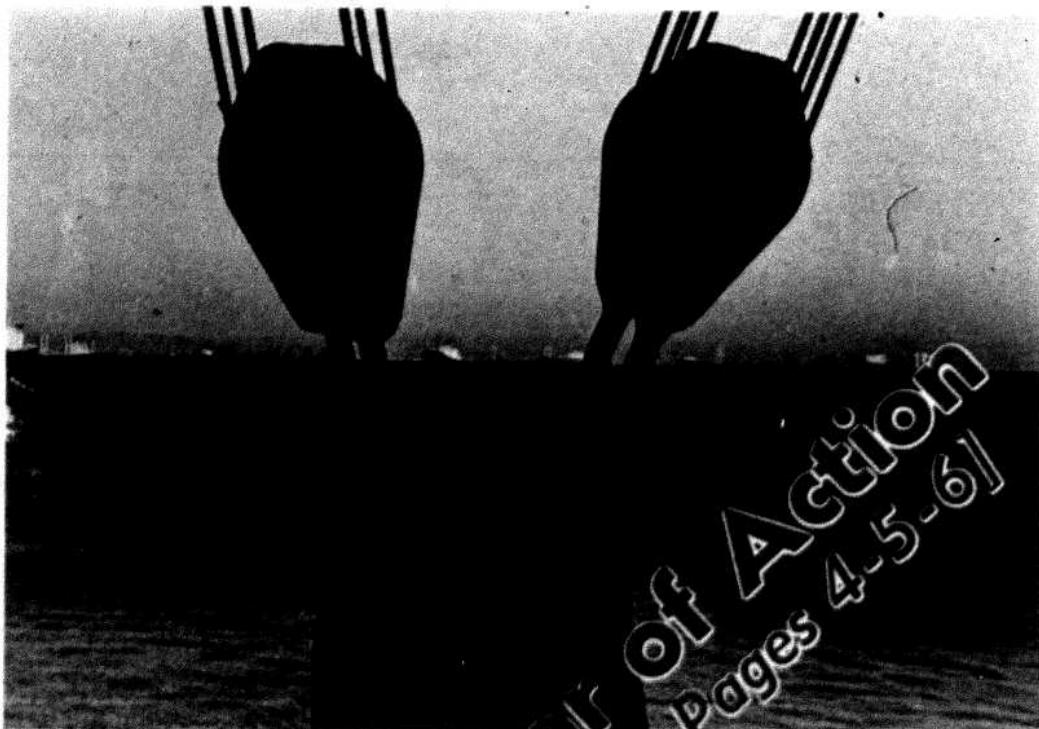
TENTATIVE AGREEMENT

These discussions were held on Wednesday. By Thursday night the ILA had reached a tentative agreement for a contract in the North Atlantic ports.

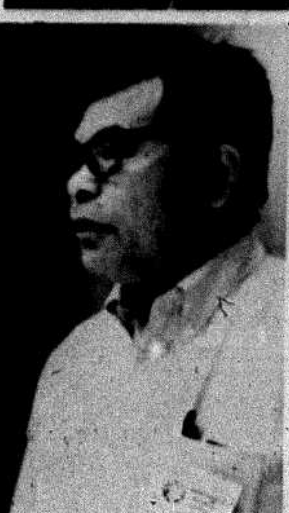
However, when the ILWU committee left on Friday, it was no more than a tentative agreement, with South Atlantic and Gulf ports still to be settled.

(A full report on the ILA settlement should be ready for inclusion in the next issue of The Dispatcher.)

In concluding his column, Bridges said that even though we have talked with the ILA and are now talking to the Teamsters, we are not "seeking mergers in order to be saved. Far from it. We are still plenty strong, and tough, standing by ourselves, although we recognize that we need—and must have—support of other unions."



ILWU
ON
STRIKE



1971 - A Year of Action
See Year End Review, pages 4-5-6-7