

Time to Tone Up the Muscles



AN IMPORTANT NEW YEAR begins—and for about 16,000 members of the ILWU, who work the ships, piers and dock areas this will become known as “Longshore Year—1971.”

During the past year the longest caucus in ILWU history came up with a heavy set of demands emphasizing the great changes taking place in the lives of working people.

Mechanization has been accelerating as never before and workers everywhere are facing the specter of unemployment even though productivity is continuously on the rise. So the caucus demanded a guarantee of work or pay. It's called job security and it's something working people everywhere are starting to believe they have coming as a fundamental right in our rich society.

There are many other demands—hefty wage hikes, a \$500 per month pension, many fringe improvements and much, much more. One of the reasons for the early caucus was to prepare for all eventualities—including a strike.

WE KNOW THAT if we must take strike action we may be facing serious threats from the Nixon Administration. The political climate in Washington has grown increasingly unfriendly. There are signs that the Nixon Administration—with plenty of encouragement from reactionary, anti-labor Southern Democrats—will be trying to get anti-strike legislation, particularly in the transportation industry.

They may also try to force through compulsory arbitration. At a time such as this, when the burden of inflation, unemployment and excess taxation places the heaviest burden on the working class, compulsory arbitration could become a form of serfdom.

If it takes a strike to win what our longshore division members feel they need; and if it can't be won across the bargaining table—then a strike it will be. There is no doubt about the temper of that long longshore caucus.

At this printing of *The Dispatcher* negotiations are still broken off. They will stay that way until developments, in the opinion

of the negotiating committee, warrant further bargaining. Naturally, any negotiating committee that represents workers wants and hopes to settle successfully across the bargaining table.

BUT IF THAT becomes impossible, then the longshore caucus left no doubt it is prepared to strike. Strikes these days are not puny affairs. ILWU hotel workers were on the bricks eleven weeks; the auto workers at GM for eight weeks; GE strikers for fourteen weeks.

One can well imagine if it took our hotel workers eleven weeks to win some quite simple demands, that anything as complex as the vast program of changes the longshoremen demand, could bring about a far longer strike once it starts. Four or five months may not be out of the question if our past experience means anything.

Building up muscle means not only cementing unity within the longshore division, but calling on all sections of the ILWU for full backing and support.

More than that, it means getting the support of the entire labor movement. This unity and support is something we've had before and we know it's still there when we need it. The time may not be far off as we move into “Longshore Year-1971.”

The DISPATCHER

Published by the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union

SIDNEY ROGER, EDITOR
Information Director

Published semi-monthly by the International Longshoremen's & Warehousemen's Union at 150 Golden Gate Ave., San Francisco, Calif. 94102. Phone: 775-0533. Second-Class Postage paid at San Francisco, Calif. and additional mailing place. Subscriptions \$2.50 per year.

HARRY BRIDGES President	LOUIS GOLDBLATT Secretary-Treasurer
Vice President	JACK HALL Vice President
Assistant to the President	Director of Organization
WILLIAM CHESTER	BARRY SILVERMAN Research Director

(Deadline for next issue: January 15)