

GOING ON STRIKE brings many problems and troubles—but we have a winner. Even though our strike is only two weeks old, we have our share of troubles. A matter of great importance to our striking membership in the longshore division is the medical and welfare benefits.

Many of our members took for granted medical benefits would be paid while the strike was on. The ILWU-PMA Welfare Agreement and the ILWU-PMA Welfare Fund Agreement are part of the Pacific Coast Longshore Agreement. During the contract negotiations, at Joint Coast Labor Relations Committee meetings, the union moved to have all monies currently in the fund used to pay Kaiser and the various insured plans until the funds run out, even if we went on strike.

The PMA has taken the position that these funds end with the expiration of the contract. The union trustees of the fund, Vice President Chester and Coast Committeemen Forrester and Ward, have convened a special meeting of the fund trustees and demanded that payments continue. Disagreement has been reached both on the trustee level and the labor relations committee level and the issue will go to arbitration before the Coast Arbitrator.

The fund has a balance as of May 31, 1971, of \$2,798,067.59—roughly between two or three months' benefit payments. Our position is that this money is the property of the striking "A" and "B" men of the longshore division. Our membership qualified for welfare benefits based upon hours earned for the year ending December 31, 1970.

The issue that will go to arbitration is, "Does the agreement require the payment of money to workers on strike?" We think it does. In this respect our welfare agreement is unique, in that provision for arbitration continues on after the termination of the agreement and the Coast Arbitrator can continue to rule on matters submitted to him by the parties even though the agreement has terminated.

If we win this arbitration, which will be decided in a few days, then the money remaining in the fund will be used to continue payment of medical and welfare benefits.

Should we lose the arbitration, the International Union acting on behalf of the longshore division will make arrangements to guarantee to Kaiser and the various insurance companies involved in the plans that payment will be made following the strike, and welfare benefits will continue.

In that case, after the strike settlement every member of the longshore division will contribute an agreed upon amount per hour out of the wage increase to defray the welfare costs. This money will be handled by payroll deduction if we get the cooperation of the PMA; if not, we will handle it ourselves through the local unions of the longshore division.

ANOTHER IMPORTANT problem for our strike is the problem of diverted ships. Our real economic power rests with our strength to keep vessels from loading or discharging in Pacific Coast ports of the United States. There is enough power in that strength to prevent the movement of vessels, except military, to win the strike. The economics of the profits in this industry is the quick turnaround time. Keep the ships at sea carrying cargo. That's where the employers make their money.

So, when a ship goes to Vancouver and sits for ten days at \$5,000 per day, waiting for a berth and then the cargo has to be drayed 2,000 miles at the vessel owner's expense, with the additional cost of double handling the cargo, he's not exactly making any money. Our membership is now handling diverted ships at Vancouver, B.C. This is by unanimous decision of the longshore caucus in April and reaffirmed by the entire Coast Negotiating Committee and the Coast Strike Strategy Committee.

We can, of course, if necessary review the situation and change our minds if it becomes necessary and ask our Canadian area of the ILWU to refuse to handle diverted vessels. I am sure that if we make such a request our Canadian brothers after a vote of the rank and file will support our request. But before we do so, let's listen to what a couple of B.C. employer spokesmen had to say recently.

According to Mr. Keith Dixon, General Manager of the Canadian Importers' Association, quoted in the Globe and Mail, Thursday, July

8, 1971: "The Port of Vancouver will be permanently damaged by the United States west coast dock strike. Diverted shipping from the four strike-bound ports will cause massive confusion in Vancouver. I don't see why we (Canadian shippers) should be forced to pay for difficulties in the United States." He doubted that new rules designed to protect Canadian cargo would do much good.

Mr. Dixon said, "When one has Canadian cargo stowed under cargo destined for American ports, all of it has to come out of the ship." He added, "This all could have been avoided if they refused to handle diverted cargo."

The same newspaper reports difficulties with lack of rail cars by the American railways, difficulties with a shortage of trucking equipment. The Canadian Importers' Association, referring to the Vancouver dock strike and the diversion of Vancouver vessels to Seattle in 1969 and 1970: "We found then it took us an average of six weeks down there to locate and forward Canadian cargo that we would have handled almost immediately in Vancouver. You can visualize the situation. Then, we had one port on strike and 24 open; now we have one open and 24 on strike."

Much has been said about the few ships working in Ensenada. We have had a long period of fraternal relations with our Mexican brothers, both at the International level and particularly with Local 13. But, how can anyone call upon workers who are not members of our union to strike in our support when we have not pulled out all our own troops?

By decision of the Coast Negotiating Committee, Hawaii is still working, parts of Alaska are still working, and B.C. is still working. Certainly before we worry about our Mexican brothers helping us we have to get all of our US members in the battle and out on strike.

Another problem we have is that of perishables and ship stores. We want to work the ship stores. We don't want to chase the crews off those ships. Let them stay on and get paid as long as they can. Should it be necessary we will have the support of all of the American maritime unions, and seagoing unions to shut down the ships. I am sure that support is there.

Another ticklish problem is that of perishables. The letter of the Coast Strategy Committee means to discharge the perishables on vessels which departed prior to the strike date, and there is no need letting this stuff rot on the docks. Getting rid of these perishables doesn't in any way weaken our strike. However, full authority for implementing that policy rests in the areas and locals.

We have all sorts of calls from people getting real up-tight about a little bit of dock work here and there authorized in the areas. Remember, it's hanging the hook that counts. Read the letter to the locals on Exceptions carefully before anyone gets up-tight about a dock warehouse somewhere. The power of the union lies in its ability to prevent ships from moving with cargo in and out of Pacific Coast ports. As long as that power is exercised we have a tight strike.

We have a good tight strike, and we know for sure that should we need it we will have the full support of the entire AFL-CIO and the labor movement everywhere.

I know we have some plenty tough demands, but I am also sure we have a winner!

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