



QUEENSLAND BRANCH NEWS

NEWSLETTER of the QLD Branch of the MARITIME UNION of AUSTRALIA

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San Francisco Labor Fest – Patrick Update - Maintenance Conference 2016

San Francisco Labor Fest

I HAD THE honour of attending the annual, month long Labor Fest gathering in San Francisco over the 14 - 18 of July 2016. I went as a representative of the MUA.

The Labor Fest gathering in San Francisco is a wonderful bringing together of various leftist groups and individuals, labor unions, artists and all people who believe in a society based on the primacy of human need being the driving force of our society rather than capitalist greed.

After arriving in San Francisco around 1400 I met up with a wonderful comrade, Ray Familathe, Vice President of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU). Ray is also Vice Chair of the ITF Dockers Section.

It was really terrific to hook up with Ray. In 1998 during the Patrick's lock out, Ray and I worked closely together on the Columbus Canada picket. Each morning during those April of 1998 days, at around 0230 each morning Ray, myself and sometimes the ILWU's Coast Committee would talk strategy and tactics of what to do when the Columbus Canada berthed in Long Beach.

Many MUA members would be unaware but I was invited by the ILWU to start the picket line of the Columbus Canada on behalf of the ILWU and MUA. This did not go over so well with a section of the national leadership at the time. In Ray's and the ILWU's inimitable style they began a community picket line and for the next 17 days the picket stood strong and the Columbus Canada and Chris Corrigan folded and became part of international trade union and working class folk lore and rightly so.

On Friday morning I met with Ray Familathe and 'Big Bob' McIlraith. We had wide ranging discussions on the work of the International Dockworkers Council, the ITF, automation and various other issues that are of great concern to our membership.

The ILWU has a unique role in the Labor movement of the west coast of the USA and a unique place in the Labor Movement of the USA and indeed the world. All elected Officials of the ILWU except for the International Officers can do no more than two terms in office and then

they must go back to the rank and file for at least one term. In a union with industry employment and union control of the hiring system the ILWU is a very powerful weapon to fight careerists and bureaucracy.



Noted Labor Author, Harry Schwartz and Rank and File Electrician, Cindy Weivoda - fighting the good fight for all of us

On Friday night I was one of the keynote speakers at a film night on the 'Braceros' a type of hellishly exploitative guest labour programme which was inflicted upon Mexican Farm Labourers by US Agribusiness and corrupt sections of the Mexican government of the time in the 1950's until it was abandoned in the early 1960's. The Queensland Branch will hold a screening of the 55 minute documentary in the near future. The other speakers on the night were two wonderful Mexican trade union activists. A leader of the Electrical Workers in Mexico, Humberto Montes de Oca, presented an outstanding address on the battles against privatisation and the Mexican government's selling of the people's assets and how it has led to increased impoverishment of many workers and those that work the farms.

Mexican Teacher, Guadalupe Ibeth Luquin Montaño, is an Executive Member of Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación (CNTE) and spoke of the heroic struggle of her union which has been in a battle

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against the national government attempting to destroy educational standards and destroy the teacher's union as well. During this battle, literally for the hearts and minds of the future of Mexican children and their families, eight brave Mexican union teachers have been murdered on picket lines and hundreds have been arrested, jailed, and battered for believing in a fair education system for all Mexican children. Over the next couple of days, the story of the Mexican Teachers and their inspirational fight continued. The meeting finished at 2215.

On Saturday morning between 1000 to 1600 an important seminar on privatisation and its effect on working people was held at Local 34 of the ILWU. I was fortunate enough to be able to speak and ask questions on the topic in relation to Australia and in particular on the Queensland. Participants in the Conference were really impressed with what was achieved with the ETU and eventually the trade union movement and community campaign to defeat the Newman LNP government. In a world of so many frequent and rapid set backs for working people and privatisation of people's assets, any victory against it, such as what was achieved in the Not For Sale campaign, serves as an inspiration for workers everywhere.

The major impetus of this seminar was on privatisation of the schooling system. US academic, Frank Adamson Ph.D., outlined how Charter Schools were being used to deprive the public school system of precious resources. The charter school system in the US stems from George W Bush's so called 'No Child Left Behind' campaign. A campaign which is leaving millions of children from poorer backgrounds further and further behind.

A school teacher from Richmond, the poorest district in the Bay Area and where the massive Chevron refinery is, spoke about the struggles the district has in getting Chevron to pay even a tiny fraction of what it should towards its obligations to the education of children in that particular district.

It might be of some interest to the readers of this report that Chevron, before the Rockefeller Empire was broken up, was The Standard Oil Company of California. Deborah Rogers Ph.D. from the Initiative for Equality delivered an interesting contribution on the role Privatisation played in the acceleration of poverty gaps in Russia and the Czech Republic. With the wholesale selling off of the much of the State owned assets of the Soviet Union, dire poverty went from 4% of the population to a staggering 43% in 1994. A period of only three years. The Russian example was extreme and was brutal.

On Saturday afternoon and evening I went across the Bay to Oakland and spoke to students about the various battles we have in the labour movement in Australia. Sunday morning saw me cross the Bay once again at a meeting of rank and file transport and communication workers. The meeting took place near Jack London

Square. At this meeting there were longshore, tugboat, ferry boat and communication workers discussing the struggles they were in and they then asked me to give a comprehensive report on the battles we are involved with in the MUA.

These workers asked a great deal of questions and we both learnt a great deal from the exchange. From 1800 to 2200 I was involved speaking and talking to many guests at a bay river cruise put on by the Labor Fest organising group. Both Jack Heyman (retired longshoreman from the famous San Francisco Local 10 and socialist) and Steve Zeltser, the organiser of Labor Fest, did an outstanding job on introducing speakers and Jack provided a very deep analysis of the history of the port from a working class position. The legendary Harry Bridges granddaughter, who is a renowned actor and singer held the cruise spell bound with stories of her granddad.



This is a photo I took of two homeless souls, bedded down for the night, outside a McDonald's in the financial district of San Francisco, which is some of the most expensive real estate in the world.

I think it sums up the huge divide in American Society. I think Billy Brag in one of his songs in the 80's put it best when he wrote "a nation with their freezers full are dancing in the streets, while outside another nation is sleeping in the streets."

There is a huge Tech Boom going on in San Francisco, Google, Facebook and others are hiring in the thousands, however there is no place in Google or Facebook for these two people doing it so tough.

On Monday I headed out to the airport but before that I went to Steve Zeltser's home where we discussed the vital need for working people everywhere to utilise technology. Steve also conducted a comprehensive interview with me which has been placed on the Branch website and Facebook. Steve and his wife kindly gave me a lift to the airport where the long trip home began.

All in all, it was a great experience. Strong ties between rank and file workers and some union leaders has been further cemented. We have started an embryonic Transport and Communication group whose aim is to get the message across where ever workers are fighting for freedom and a better deal. We now must build on this quickly and effectively. Always remember fellow workers, that it's up to us to collate the news of

our battles. Steve Zeltser is attempting to set up an international type TV channel where news of workers struggles will be streamed. I'd like to thank those who made this possible, it was hard work but so very rewarding.

Thoughts on San Francisco...

HERE ARE A FEW thoughts I gathered about San Francisco in the brief time I was there in between meetings...

- ✚ It's an undeniably beautiful city. The harbour is like Sydney - an important part of life.
- ✚ The harbour unlike Sydney is still a working harbour. On the Oakland side are refineries and massive portainer terminals.
- ✚ It's a very expensive city, both in food and real estate. I bought a coffee at Starbucks and it was more expensive than Brisbane.
- ✚ The bay area is going through a tech boom. There are numerous 'jobs for hire signs.'
- ✚ The tech boom and the 'hipster' movement seem to go hand in hand. Parts of Oakland, once a student and working class place, are now over run with 'hipsters.' This means massive increase in housing costs, microbreweries, pulled pork on the menu, and young men with beards.
- ✚ San Francisco is still a 'progressive' town. The ILWU is still a hugely respected Union and its leadership role in progressive ideals is still really admired.
- ✚ The US labor movement is still a fighting organisation. It was great to walk past building sites being built by Union labour and very proud of it.
- ✚ American Unions are light years ahead of Australian Unions in the supply of labour and the training of its members.
- ✚ The wealth gap is much more obvious in San Francisco than any major Australian City. Homeless people are numerous, the stories of people without healthcare is heart breaking.

To put it simply if you are a working class person in the USA and you are not covered by a Union contract your working life is going to be a hard ride.

Patrick Terminal Brisbane

PART B OF the 2016 Patrick EBA is 95% complete with a further four days of part A discussions commencing Tuesday 26 July 2016 in Sydney with our delegates and I joining the rest of the National Negotiations Team in an effort to bring us closer to an EBA outcome. This is a critical Agreement with a lot at stake for our members and the Union given the current industrial and political climate.

The botched attempt by Patrick for an arbitrated outcome and the aggressive media campaign has played a significant role in the latest delays along with the federal election campaign.

Members are encouraged to remain patient as we cannot settle until the critical concerns that have been front and centre to this EBA campaign are mitigated.

There will be round the clock meetings after the next round of discussions to put everyone in the loop as to the progress and developments made.

Jason Miners – Deputy Branch Secretary

Maintenance Conference July 2016

OUR DELEGATION OF six rank and file and one organiser travelled to Adelaide for the 3rd National Maintenance Conference. We represented all the terminals in Brisbane with Bill Ross and Greg Bool (DP World), Shaun Bolton and Brett Stokes (Ativo), Robert Harris (Hutchison) and Steve Wildman (Kalmar). Damian McGarry was the Organiser. At the Conference there were Delegates and Officials from terminals in every State as well as six ILWU (USA) guests and 2 MUNZ (New Zealand) guests. Warren Smith, Bernie Farrelly and Michael Cross from National Office were in attendance. After the Welcome to Country performed by Jack, the day was spent identifying the issues and concerns being faced in each terminal, for example: job security, safety concerns, training and automation.

We also had reports from the international guests which enabled us an insight as to how they are dealing with automation and other issues. As a matter of interest, the ILWU has over 700 mechanics just in the Los Angeles Branch. After identifying the areas, we need to improve, we explored ways to achieve desirable outcomes and from this we decided to form a National Maintenance Committee which will operate through the National Office. We then proceeded to elect two Delegates from each State and formed the Committee.

It was also decided to start publishing a quarterly maintenance newsletter. The first issue will have a more detailed report on the Conference.

Overall it was a very informative and successful Conference and has set a path forward for the maintenance division of our Union.

On behalf of the Brisbane delegates I would like to thank our Branch and National Officials for the opportunity for the rank and file to attend the Conference.

Shaun Bolton – MUA Member and Delegate

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