



# VOICE OF THE ILWU

HONOLULU HAWAII  
© 2010 ILWU  
LOCAL 142

Volume 50 • No. 3

The VOICE of the ILWU—Published by Local 142, International Longshore & Warehouse Union

May/June 2010

## 5 Five reasons to be active in political action

From the very beginning, the ILWU has always proclaimed that the union and every union member must be actively involved in the political life of the community. Political action had to be one of the primary activities of the union. Political action was just as important as negotiating contracts for better wages and benefits; and political action was just as necessary as organizing new workers into the union.

There are five reasons why the union and every ILWU member must be involved in political action.

### 1 Laws can be made that take away our rights.

When the ILWU began organizing in Hawaii, a handful of wealthy families owned the sugar and pineapple plantations and the largest companies. In-

dividuals from these families, their attorneys, or the managers and supervisors of their companies ran for elected office as Republicans. Workers were expected to vote for Republicans and could lose their jobs if they voiced any objections or supported Democrats. In this way, big business and their wealthy owners controlled the legislature and government. They used the government and passed laws to preserve their wealth and pre-

vent workers from organizing unions. They passed an Unlawful Assembly and Riot Act which was used to stop union meetings. Union leaders could be arrested for conspiracy and encouraging riots. It was illegal for workers to picket a business because it interfered with commerce and threatened profits of the business owner. The police, the national guard, and the courts were used to control workers. The University was primarily an agricultural school that trained graduates to work for the plantations.

When workers are not involved in political action, they risk losing their rights.

### 2 Laws can provide benefits and extend our rights.

At the same time the ILWU was organizing sugar and pineapple workers, the union worked

to elect candidates who were not connected to big business and supported a more just and democratic society. Most of these candidates identified with the Democratic Party.

In 1944, union supported candidates won 24 seats in the Territorial Legislature. In 1946, union political action elected 35 legislators and a majority in the

—continued on page 8

#### IMPORTANT INFORMATION CONCERNING YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME ACTIVE MEMBERS OF INTERNATIONAL LONGSHORE AND WAREHOUSE UNION, LOCAL 142, AFL-CIO, AND YOUR RIGHTS UNDER LAW

As a result of your current employment, you are eligible for membership in the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, Local 142, AFL-CIO. Union membership is a right and privilege to be proud of.

As an active member of ILWU Local 142 you have the right to participate in the affairs of the Union.

Your participation includes involvement in the formulation of proposals for contract negotiations, voting on proposed changes to your collective bargaining agreement, attending and participating in regular and special Union meetings, Union elections, and other affairs of the Union as provided in the ILWU Local 142 Constitution and Bylaws.

We believe that most people would want to become active members of the ILWU Local 142, and desire to fully participate in the affairs of their Union. Strong, active and informed members are essential to the strength of your Union. Your participation will benefit both you and your co-workers by helping the Union gain improved wages, benefits and working conditions.

The right, by law, to belong to the Union and to participate in its affairs is a very important right. Currently, by law, you also have the right to refrain from becoming an active member of the Union and you may elect to satisfy the requirements of a contractual union security provision by paying monthly dues and fees to the Union which reflect the representational expenditures of the ILWU Local 142. Please be advised: That 2% of funds were spent in our most recent accounting year (2009) for nonrepresentational activities (such as political activities, lobbying of issues not reasonably related to accomplish the union's representational duties); that nonmembers can object to having their union security payments spent on such activities; that those who object will be charged only for representational activities; and that if a nonmember objects, the Union will provide detailed information concerning the breakdown between representational and nonrepresentational expenditures. Any objections by a nonmember shall be filed within 30 days and sent to ILWU Local 142 at 451 Atkinson Drive, Honolulu, Hawaii 96814.

Please be advised that nonmember status constitutes a full waiver of the rights and benefits of ILWU Local 142 membership. More specifically, this means you would not be allowed to vote on contract modifications or new contracts; would be ineligible to hold Union office or participate in Union elections; and all other rights, privileges and benefits established for and provided for ILWU Local 142 members by its Constitution and Bylaws.

We are confident that after considering your options, you will conclude that the right to participate in the decision making process of your Union is of vital importance to you, your family, and your co-workers, and you will complete and transmit your application for membership in ILWU Local 142. Thank you.

## Register to Vote

*Register to vote anytime before August 19 for the Primary Election or October 4 for the General Election. If you are already registered, you can request an absentee ballot after July 20 and do your voting by mail. It's easy and there is no need to drive to your polling site or wait in line.*

ADDRESS LABEL

The next ILWU Local 142 Executive Board (LEB) meeting is scheduled for June 25, 2010, in Honolulu at the ILWU building at 451 Atkinson Drive. The meeting starts at 9:00 A.M. ILWU members are welcome to attend as observers.

# Union workers earn higher pay and better benefits

## Union members earn higher wages

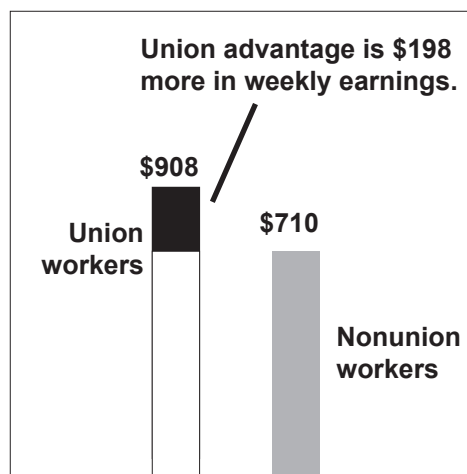
In 2009, among full-time wage and salary workers, union members earned a median weekly wage of \$908, while workers who were not represented by unions earned only \$710 a week.

This is a union advantage of 27.9 percent in higher wages for union members. If you take out ILWU union dues, union members still earned 24.7 percent higher pay than nonunion workers.

This is the average wage for all industries and occupations in the United States. The union advantage may be higher or lower depending on your industry and occupation. However, union members always earn higher wages than nonunion workers. The only exceptions are managers and a few professionals such as architects and scientists.

Higher wages is only one of many benefits and advantages of having a union. Unionized workers have much better retirement and health care plans. Unionized workers have a contract which protects their rights on the job such as seniority, job security, a set work schedule, and more. Unionized workers have the power to negotiate with management to improve their conditions.

Don't believe it when your boss says you'll be better off without a union. You would lose much more than wages.



New York is the most highly unionized state, with 25.2 percent of their workers belonging to unions. Hawaii holds second place where union members make up 23.5 percent of the workforce. Alaska ranks third with 22.3 percent of their workers in unions, and Washington State is number four where union members are 20.2 percent of the workforce.

For the United States as a whole, the percentage of union members in 2009 is 12.3 percent. This is a small decline from 12.4 percent in 2008, mostly because of the loss of jobs during this recession.

Data on union membership and earnings are collected and published by the US Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. You can find more information about union membership at <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/union2.toc.htm>

## Better benefits can add \$13,600 plus for unionized workers

Higher wages are nice, but unionized workers receive more and better benefits than nonunion workers. Benefits such as retirement plans, medical care, sick leave, vacations, holidays, and overtime pay can add up to a union advantage of over \$13,600 a year more in total compensation for union workers.

Union workers receive medical and retirement benefits worth 2.6 times more than those provided to nonunion workers. This is a difference of \$8,923 a year more for union workers. Nonunion workers usually have minimum medical coverage and little or no retirement benefits.

Union workers receive 1.5 times more vacation days, more holidays, more sick leave days, and more overtime and premium pay. This adds up to \$2,700 more each year for union workers.

The cost of union and nonunion benefits shown here are for private employers of six industries--manufacturing; trade, transportation, and utilities; retail trade; transportation and warehousing; education and health services; health care and social services.

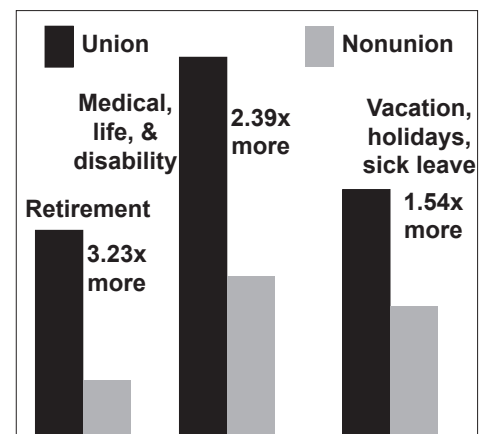
The average value of benefits received by union workers in the above industries was \$28,870 a year, while

nonunion workers received benefits worth \$15,246. The union advantage in benefits was \$13,624 a year for 2080 hours of work.

When you add wages and benefits, unionized workers in the industries listed above earned a total compensation package that was 155 percent higher than nonunion workers. This is \$29,936 more a year for 2080 hours of work.

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics collects the cost of benefits for all industries in its National Compensation Survey. However, the survey only shows union and nonunion comparisons for the industries listed above. As a result, the data is slightly different from the BLS data on union membership.

See <http://www.bls.gov/eci/> for more on the National Compensation Survey.



The union advantage in benefits is 189 percent higher than nonunion.

# What is "At Will" employment?

In the United States, almost all workers who do not have an employment contract are "at will" employees.

An "at will" worker may be fired by their employer at any time and for any or no reason. This means a boss could wake up one morning and decide to fire the first employee he sees that day. This may be unfair, but it is perfectly legal under U.S. law.

The law only prohibits firing an employee where there is proof of illegal discrimination, such as race, sex, age, color, religion, disability, marital status, and sexual orientation. This list has grown longer as laws are passed to add other groups.

Unionized workers are protected by their union contracts, which require an employer to have good cause to fire them. Some executives and talented individuals such as actors, athletes, coaches, etc. may negotiate

individual employment contracts. They can still be fired but the employer is usually required to pay a penalty.

Government employees have some protection where public policies and citizen outrage may limit what government managers can do.

All other workers in private business, about 95 million or 75 percent of the American workforce, are hired and fired "at will."

### Origins of "At Will"

The idea of "at will" first appeared in 1877 when Horace C. Wood wrote in *Master and Servant* that "a general or indefinite hiring is ... a hiring at will" and can be ended at will by either party without liability.

Before the United States won its independence, it was a British colony. Many of our legal principles are based on British Common Law, where the law follows established

customs or past practice. Under Common Law, a general hiring was for a term of one year, where the employer was obligated to employ a worker for one year and the worker was obligated to work for one year.

"At will" was a very different practice, where workers could quit at any time and employers could fire workers at any time.

American employers liked the power and control "at will employment" gave them over workers. Within a few years, "at will" employment spread throughout the United States.

In 1884, Mr. Payne opened a store that competed with the store owned by the Western & Atlantic Railroad Company. The railroad threatened to fire any employee who shopped at Mr. Payne's store.

Mr. Payne sued, but the Tennessee Supreme Court ruled in favor of the railroad. The Court ruled that: "All

may dismiss their employees at will, be they many or few, for good cause, for no cause or even for cause morally wrong, without being thereby guilty of legal wrong."

This practice of "at will" employment remains the law in nearly every state in the U.S. today.

### Workers rights protected

Most of the world rejected the idea of "at will" employment. Canada, England, and Europe have laws that protect workers rights and set minimum requirements for wages, working hours, paid leave, and other terms of employment. Where workers don't have a union contract, many countries require employers to have individual contracts with each worker which cannot be less than the rights and benefits required by law.



## Changed your address? Let us know!

ILWU members receive the union's newspaper and many important notices through the mail. The US Post Office will only forward mail for 60 days, so send us a card to let us know you moved. We need your name, old address, and new address. Send the card to: Mailroom, ILWU, 451 Atkinson Drive, Honolulu HI 96814

## Union workers have power to bargain

"Give a family a fish and they can eat for one day. Teach a family to fish and they can feed themselves everyday."

Give workers a bonus and they will have a little more money to spend until the bonus is gone. Give workers collective bargaining through a union, and the workers will have the power to negotiate a wage increase every year.

The VOICE of the ILWU (ISSN 0505-8791) is published monthly except April and a combined June/July issue for \$2 per year by Hawaii International Longshoremen's & Warehousemen's Union, 451 Atkinson Drive, Honolulu, Hawaii 96814. Periodicals postage paid at the post office of Honolulu, Hawaii.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to VOICE of the ILWU, c/o ILWU Local 142, 451 Atkinson Drive, Honolulu, HI 96814. Editorial Board: Isaac Fiesta Jr., Donna Domingo and Guy K. Fujimura.

Editor: Mel Chang

# Organization for mutual benefit

**A very important benefit of union membership goes far beyond your job. You are now a member of a workers' organization—dedicated to defend your interests as a worker and to promote the general welfare of you and your family.**

This is spelled out in the ILWU Declaration of Principles:

*We, the men and women working under the jurisdiction of ILWU Local 142 Hawaii, in order to build and maintain a strong local organization and provide for the defense of our common interests, promote the general welfare of our members, their families and other wage earners in the community, and uphold the rights and dignity of our labor and its organized expression, have determined that we shall be guided by the following principles . . .*

One of the most important way the union defends our interests is through Union Political Action. The legal system is extremely important to working people. Laws can be passed to give additional rights and protection to workers or, just as easily, take away workers' rights and protections.

In our country, the U.S. Congress and our State Legislature have the

power to make new laws and change old laws. Every year in Hawaii, our State Legislature considers thousands of bills that propose changes in our laws—some of these proposals benefit workers and some take away rights and benefits.

For this reason, the ILWU and other unions must be actively involved in the legislative process, monitoring all of the bills, stopping legislation that would hurt working families, and urging legislators to pass legislation that benefit workers.

The success or failure of union political action depends on numbers—it takes a majority of legislators to pass a piece of legislation.

This is why the ILWU and other unions endorse certain candidates over others during the elections.

In every election, the ILWU Political Action Committee interviews dozens of candidates and questions them on issues important to workers. Union members are then urged to vote for only those candidates who will work to help working families.

## Dignity, job rights, self respect are priceless benefits of unionism

**High wages and good benefits wouldn't mean much if your boss can hire his niece to take your place and cut your schedule to one-hour a day.**

You would be unhappy if your boss gave everyone a rest break except you, refused to give you a promotion, or threatened to fire you for any reason. Such treatment is unfair, but without a union, workers are powerless to stand up to management.

When workers are organized into a union, they have the collective power to act as a group and negotiate an employment contract with their employer. The contract is legally binding and enforceable. The contract defines your wages, benefits, and rights such as seniority.

Most workers organize unions because of bad working conditions and poor treatment by management and not for higher wages and benefits. When workers are organized into unions, they gain the power to change their working conditions and demand respect and fair treatment from management.

With a union, workers have job security and can not be fired, transferred, or demoted at the whim of their bosses.

In the United States, workers are hired "at will." This means employers can fire a worker for any or no reason. You work at the employer's will.

U.S. and Hawaii law only protects a worker from being fired for an illegal reason—such as discrimination by race, sex, age, religion, sexual orientation, ancestry, disability, marital status, or arrest and court record.

However, unionized workers have a written contract which protects them from being unfairly fired or mistreated on the job.

With a union, workers gain the power to meet with management on equal terms and bargain collectively to improve their wages and benefits.

Union workers no longer have to go to their boss as individuals and beg for an increase in wages.

With a union, workers have a voice on the job because management is required to negotiate with them on any changes in the terms and conditions of employment. Where workers have no union, management can take away benefits and change conditions on the job at any time without advance notice.

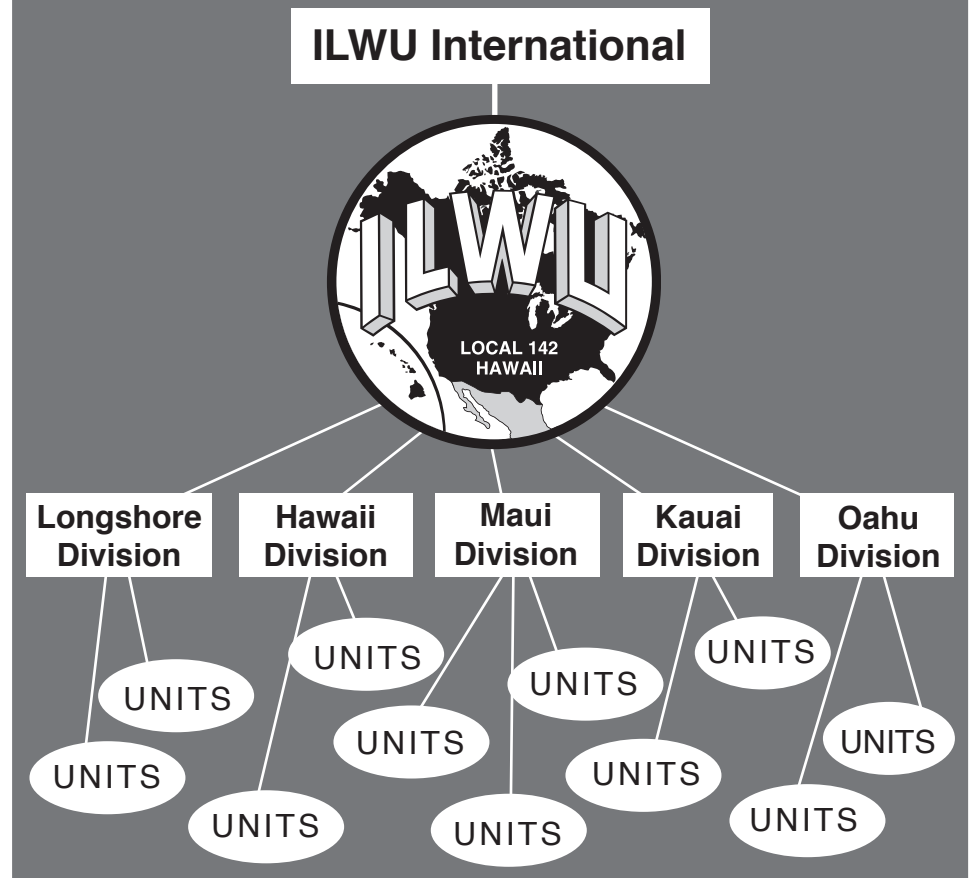
Unions give workers dignity, respect, and a voice on the job. Many workers consider these to be the most valuable benefit of having a union.

## Structure of the ILWU

The International ILWU is made up of 60 locals in California, Oregon, Washington, Hawaii, and Alaska. It's headquarters is in San Francisco, California.

ILWU Local 142 is located in Hawaii and operates with a statewide Local office, four island Divisions and the Hawaii Longshore Division. Each Division is made up of the units in that Division and the Longshore Division is made up of all longshore units in Hawaii.

Members in each unit have their own organization, elect officers, handle grievances, and can call on their business agents for assistance.



## You have rights on the job

**As a union member, you have rights on the job. With the ILWU you have the combined strength and experience of the union on your side.**

You have the right to have a union steward or business agent help you with any problem on the job. You have the right to ask for a union representative if the company calls you into a meeting which may lead to disciplinary action.

You put yourself at a disadvantage when you try to settle a problem by yourself, or when you fail to let your union know of problems you and your fellow workers have.

If you have a question or problem, the first thing you should do is talk to your on-the-job union steward.

Your company is called a "unit" within the ILWU structure. Each unit has its own elected officers and union stewards, who serve as volunteers.

They receive no special treatment or privileges from the company or from the union, but they are ready to help you and your fellow workers.

## Get involved in your union!

Know your rights. Read and understand your rights and benefits under the union contract and the ILWU Constitution and Bylaws. You can get copies of the Constitution or contract from your union representative.

Take an active part in shaping your working life. Get to know your union stewards and get involved with union activities. The union is only as strong as its members.

Come to union meetings. You'll

learn about your rights as a worker. It's an education that will make you a better person and your employment at your company more rewarding. Your participation in the union is always welcome and you will be glad you got involved. Meeting notices are posted on the union bulletin board, along with other important announcements.

Make it a practice to regularly read the notices on your union bulletin board.

## What makes the ILWU special?

# “An injury to one is an injury to all”

“An injury to one is an injury to all”—this slogan is used at many ILWU activities. This means we stand together as workers.

As a member of the ILWU, you belong to an organization with a long and proud history in Hawaii, the West Coast, and Canada. The ILWU is respected and admired within the labor movement in the US and around the world. Community and political leaders appreciate how the ILWU improved the lives of the entire community. Employers respect the ILWU as a strong, yet reasonable union.

Historians credit the ILWU with organizing a powerful, industry-wide, interracial union which made it possible for Hawaii to become a modern democracy with the highest standard of living of any Pacific island.

- The ILWU is respected for its internal democracy. The members run the union. There has never been top-down leadership where the union is controlled by a few powerful individual officers. All top officers are elected by direct vote of the membership.

- The ILWU is known for honesty and integrity. There has never been a taint of corruption of any ILWU leader. ILWU members have the power to remove any officer who misuses their position. The wages of ILWU officers are set by members who meet in Convention every three years. The Convention approves the union’s budget and programs. Members serve as trustees and watch every expense the officers make. ILWU dues are among the lowest of any union and ILWU officers earn far less than the officers or other unions.

- The ILWU is respected for its commitment to civil rights and racial equality. The ILWU was the first union to successfully organize workers of all races into a union. Hawaii’s employers divided workers by race and the only way the ILWU could succeed was by fighting against discrimination of any kind. When the employers tried to use the government and the courts to break the

union, the ILWU survived by fighting to protect the Constitutional and civil rights of working people.

- The ILWU is known for its active involvement in political action that has improved the life of the whole community and not just its own members. The ILWU has worked to fund rural hospitals, increase funding for public schools, improve roads, protect the environment, provide social services for the needy, and increase the minimum wage. ILWU members live on every island and work in every industry. Lifting the standards for the whole community also brings up the standards of ILWU members.

- The ILWU is respected for its progressive view that workers of the world share a common interest and unions should work for world peace. The ILWU has its roots in the longshore industry which is based on global trade. ILWU members understand the need for international solidarity. Only employers profit from war, while workers are the soldiers who fight and die in war. The ILWU took a lead in opposing the wars in Vietnam and Iraq.

- The ILWU is known for its militancy and ability to fight for its membership but is ready to work cooperatively with reasonable employers for the long-term survival of an industry. The ILWU has negotiated some of the best contracts of any union. However, ILWU members have also agreed to defer wages and benefits to help employers get through tough economic times.

- The ILWU is respected for upholding union principles and labor solidarity. The ILWU has always worked to unify the labor movement and has good working relations with all unions. The ILWU has always organized the unorganized to bring the benefit of unionism to all workers. The ILWU has such a diverse membership because it organized in every industry where workers wanted and needed to be unionized.

The ILWU was founded as a progressive, democratic, rank-and-file union. These principles are embedded in our union’s culture and traditions and guide our daily activities. These principles are written into the Constitution and Bylaws of our union.

## Rights and responsibilities of members

Every ILWU member should be taught to see a steward or unit officer first about problems or concerns on the job. They should be advised never to try to settle their problems with management by themselves.

There are four reasons for this: 1) the member will not have the strength of the union behind them; 2) the member may make a deal with management that could hurt other members or even be a violation of the contract; 3) the member is not trained to handle the grievance properly and may miss time limits and make other mistakes; and 4) it weakens the union because management knows that workers who bypass the union are not strong union members and will use these workers to divide the union.

Members should be advised to “work first and grieve later.” This means a member should obey their supervisor’s order and do the work, even if they believe it is a violation of the contract or unfair treatment. They could politely inform their supervisor that they will be seeing their union steward about the matter.

There are only three exceptions to “work first and grieve later”—if the job is dangerously unsafe, illegal, or immoral. You should protest to the boss and offer to do something else. You still risk being disciplined for

insubordination, but if the job was really unsafe, illegal, or immoral, the discipline will probably not be upheld.

Members should be educated that they have the right to ask for a union representative when management calls them into a meeting or asks them questions which could lead to disciplinary action. This includes a telephone call from the boss. This is called Weingarten Rights. Once the member asks for a union representative, the company should stop the discussion, and the member should not answer any more questions. The company can call any steward available—the member cannot insist on a particular unit officer or business agent. When a union steward arrives, the member should consult with the steward first, but the company can continue the questioning.

The union contract isn’t enforced by the steward alone or by the business agent. The individual member is just as responsible as anyone else for seeing that the contract is enforced. In fact, unless members know their rights under the contract, the officers and stewards cannot possibly

do their job.

Specifically each member should:

1. Know the terms of the contract so that they can recognize violations by the employer and help other workers learn about the contract.
2. Call all violations of the contract to the attention of the steward.
3. Assist the steward in every way to find all the facts about a given violation or grievance.
4. Go with the steward or business agent, if asked, to see the supervisor. In these meetings, the individual member should follow the tactics agreed upon in advance, let the steward or business agent do most of the talking, and be prepared to support them with the facts when called upon.

5. Recognize that sometimes their grievance is not a good one and that the steward is correct in refusing to handle it. It may not be a good grievance because the member doesn’t understand the contract. If the steward fails to convince the member that his grievance is a poor one, the member has the right to speak to the unit officers or business agent.
6. Attend union meetings and volunteer for union political action. Read the union bulletin board, The Voice of the ILWU, and help make and carry out union policy.
7. See to it that the members who work beside them are good union members too; that they are members in good standing; that they attend union meetings, and do their part in building the union.

## Need a copy of your contract? Contact your Business Agent.

Hilo: (808) 935-3727 • Honokaa: (808) 775-0443

Kona: (808) 329-2070

Lihue: (808) 245-3374

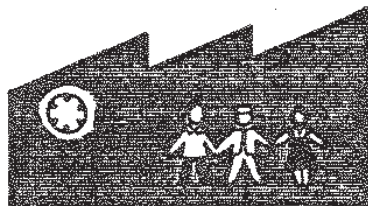
Wailuku: (808) 244-9191

Honolulu: (808) 949-4161

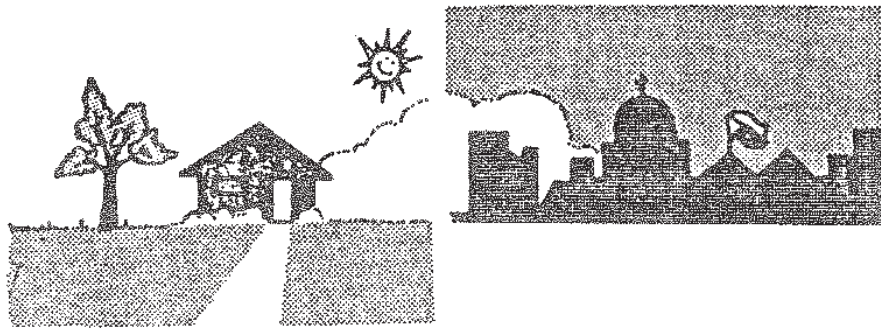
# What is a Union

These two pages of the VOICE reprints parts of a booklet made for hotel workers union in the Philippines by the International Union of Food and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF). The principles expressed in the booklet are identical to those of the ILWU. This tells us that workers and unions have the same goals no matter what country they live in.

For our purpose, we may consider the trade union as a continuing, permanent, militant, and democratic organization created and run by the workers to protect themselves at their work...



... to improve the conditions of their work through collective bargaining ...



... to seek to better the conditions of their lives and to provide a means of expression for the worker's views on problems of society.

Yes, that is why workers thought of organizing their own unions. The forming of unions is inevitable wherever there are two groups of people with different interests. The employer's interest is to get the most from labor at the lowest cost ...



... while the workers are interested in decent returns for their labor or services rendered.

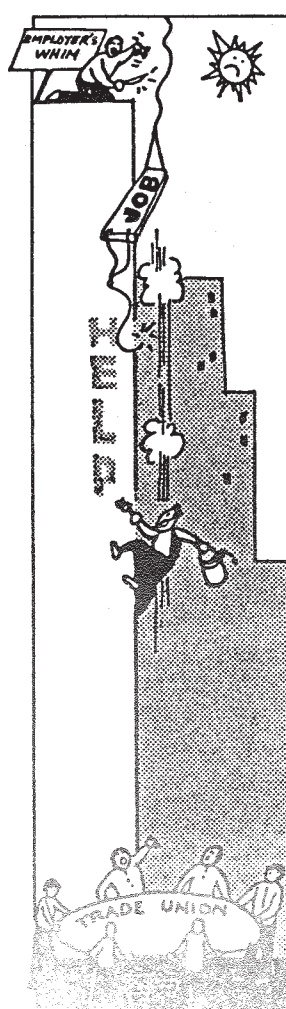
Because of this basic opposition or conflict in interests, workers have realized from experience that they need to combine together to meet employers on their common demands. For this purpose, the natural instrument of the workers is the trade union.



Workers have learned that if they act alone they cannot achieve anything in terms of protecting themselves from the harmful acts of employers (such as arbitrary dismissal) or in securing better working conditions or in seeking the passage of laws protecting workers.

A worker soon finds himself utterly powerless and at the employer's mercy. The prospect of termination from work hangs over him perpetually.

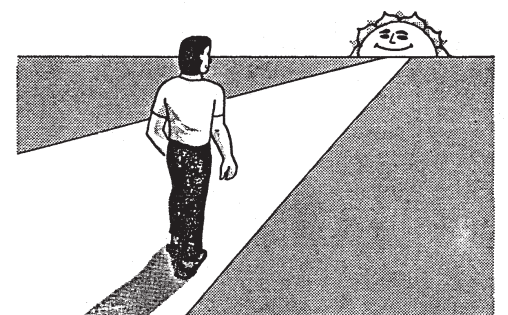
A worker's situation is one of complete dependence on his wage or salary, which means his job. But the job can be given or taken away at the whim of the employer. The worker, therefore, becomes completely dependent on the employer's goodwill. This means, the worker is not a free man. He has to serve his employer or he will starve.



But in unity, a worker is no longer powerless. Through a strong union, a worker can meet the employer as an equal. He can recover his dignity as a worker who, after all, is a person who exchanges his labor for an honest living.

He no longer feels very weak, utterly dependent on his employer's goodwill. Furthermore, he regains some control over his life and its conditions. No longer will he just have to accept what the employer dishes out, he can oppose him, propose ideas, demand decent terms of work, and negotiate with the employer over these.

He can now affect the kind of life he leads.



# How negotiations work in the ILWU

Contract negotiations is a good example of ILWU democracy in action. Unit members meet to propose changes to their union contract and elect members to their negotiating committee. The union negotiating committee should include members from different departments and job classifications. While committee members may come from different departments or jobs, they should work for a contract that is best for the entire membership.

The union committee then meets with management, who may also have proposals to change the contract. In these meetings, one side will explain their proposals and the other side may accept, reject, or make counter proposals. As these meetings continue, both sides gain a better understanding of each other, problems are solved, and agreements are reached on many issues.

When the union committee and management feel they have bargained over all the important issues and have an acceptable contract, the union will hold membership meetings to explain the details of the settlement and take a vote. ILWU policy requires membership approval of any settlement reached by their negotiating committee on a new contract.

**4** This process of meeting and discussion over proposals by each side can take weeks or months. During this process, the original proposals have changed as both sides must compromise to reach an agreement. For example, the union may ask for a 6% wage increase, the company may counter with a 2% increase, and the final agreement may be a 4% increase.



Young Brothers Ltd. ILWU members from Hawaii, Maui, Lanai, Kauai and Oahu (right) meet with management representatives and Tim Ho of the Hawaii Employers Council.

**5** In tough economic times, some employers may demand wage and benefit cuts in negotiations. The union may propose a joint union-management committee to find other ways to cut costs or require management to have a financial plan for recovery. The union may agree to temporary reductions but will require management to show proof of their financial condition. The union negotiating committee must keep their members united and informed during negotiations.

**1** ILWU members prepare for contract negotiations at least six months before the contract expires. They hold membership or department meetings to propose changes to their union contract. These proposals address problem areas, try to obtain long standing goals such as job security, or seek improvements in wages and benefits. The unit will organize members to support the union.



The officers and stewards of Unit 4405 - Foodland Oahu hold a monthly day-long Unit Executive Board meeting in preparation for contract negotiations, which are schedule to start this fall.

**2** Unit members meet to approve the final set of proposals and elect a committee of their fellow workers who will meet with management to negotiate a new contract. The committee is usually composed of Unit Officers and members who should represent the interest of all groups within the membership. This insures unity and solidarity among all groups within the Unit.

**3** An ILWU full-time officer will serve as the spokesperson for the unit's negotiating committee. At the first meeting with management, the union explains their proposals, and management may also introduce proposals. Each side will meet separately to discuss the proposals. They then meet together to accept, reject, modify, or drop the proposals.

**6** ILWU policy requires the final agreement must be approved by the members affected. The union will hold membership meetings to explain the agreement and take a vote. If a majority of members approve the agreement, then that becomes their new union contract. If the majority votes against the agreement, then the union may ask members if they are willing to strike or support other economic action to get a better agreement. The union will then go back into negotiations with management.



Unit 4412 - Servco Pacific Inc. ILWU members vote by secret ballot on their tentative agreement after an explanation by the negotiating committee and full discussion of the terms of the contract.

## Contract negotiations: An ongoing process

Union members should think of negotiations as a continuing process that doesn't end when a new contract is approved. Members need to read and understand their contract, so they know their rights. Unit officers and shop stewards must be alert to make sure management follows the terms of the contract and members get the full benefits they are entitled to receive.

When a contract is in place, a step-by-step process called the Grievance Procedure is used to handle disputes and violations of the contract. When members feel the company has violated their rights or if there are problems on the job, they should talk to their union steward or unit officers. The union will work on the members behalf to settle the problem with management.

7 After a settlement is approved, a new contract is prepared by the union or employer. The union committee will meet to make sure every word of the new contract is correct. The contract is signed by an ILWU Titled Officer and the employer. Copies of the contract are printed and given to all members.

8 Members should read their contract and know their rights and benefits. Members should always see their unit officers or shop steward if they have questions about the contract or a problem on the job. Unit officers and stewards are trained to enforce the union contract, solve problems with management, and involve members in the union.

## Your union contract—the result of years of struggle

Your union contract is a written agreement with your employer. It defines your wages, benefits, conditions of employment, and rights. It is enforceable through a grievance procedure and ultimately in a court of law.

The union contract is like a constitution governing union-management relations. Like the constitution it sets forth your rights on the job. The contract is the symbol of the past victories of the workers in getting their rights recognized. It is the result of the struggles over many years in which the workers got the employers to recognize their union, to bargain with the union, and to put the agreement down in writing.

### Sacrifices were made

In the course of these struggles many workers made great sacrifices. Some of them lost their jobs and were deported. Many went on strike and endured tough times in order that we might enjoy the benefits of the union contract today. Because of them we don't have to face these hardships. It is our duty to fight to preserve and improve the union contract. We owe it to ourselves and we owe it to our fellow workers who have pioneered the way for us.

But we can't obtain our rights under the contract, no matter how good it is, unless we know what those rights are. A lawyer must know something of the law before going to court. You must know your con-

tract and how it is applied at your workplace before you can successfully handle grievances. In too many cases, stewards learn the provisions of the contract from management, and they learn it too late—after the grievance has been lost.

In explaining the contract to members you may find that some parts of the contract are weak. We should explain clearly that these parts are weak because they were the best the union could get at the time. But if we all stick together and make the union stronger, we can improve the contract in the next negotiations. Instead of fighting among ourselves and blaming the union for weak sections of the contract, we should realize that the boss, not the union, is responsible for our grievances, and that we must work together to make the union stronger if we want to get a better contract.

We should pick out the best parts of our contract and get every benefit out of them. If we do this we learn what improvements are needed in the next negotiations. We educate our membership to the benefits which come from united action and strengthen our union.

Most union contracts are renegotiated every three years, although

9 Every ILWU unit has a business agent assigned to service that unit. The business agent regularly visits each unit to assist unit officers and stewards. Business agents should take unit officers and stewards with them whenever they meet with management. The business agent should help units recruit stewards from every department.

10 The union is strongest when every member is involved. This is the foundation of ILWU rank-and-file unionism.



The Mauna Kea Beach Hotel negotiating committee decided to join the ILWU Hotel Health and Welfare Trust Fund, potentially saving hundreds of dollars for ILWU members at Unit 1505. (L-r) Unit Chair Nick Lopez, Secretary-Treasurer Swanee Rillanos, Steward Kathleen Ishizu, Business Agents George Martin and Corinna Salmo, Division Director Richard Baker Jr., Business Agents Elmer Gorospe and Greg Gauthier.

**Health & Welfare - HMA Office - 866-377-3977**  
**Akamai Line - 866-331-5913 • Kaiser - 800-966-5955**  
**Catalyst RX - 888-869-4600**

some contracts run for only one year and others run for as long as six years. How long the contract runs is up to you and your negotiating committee. The ILWU is a democratic union and members are involved in every step of the negotiation process.

Before the old contract expires, the union members at your company will be asked for their input and ideas on what to change in the contract. This is usually done at a membership meeting, called by the officers of your Unit. This is one good reason why you should attend union meetings—it's your chance to improve your union contract.

Your unit will also select a committee to represent them in negotiations with management. This committee is usually composed of your elected unit officers, but many units will expand the committee to make sure different parts of your unit are represented.

A hotel unit, for example, might select a committee with members from different departments such as housekeeping, food and beverage, maintenance, and front desk.

The Local or Division office will assign a full-time business agent or

officer to work with your negotiating committee as your spokesperson.

During negotiations, unit members may be asked to support their committee by wearing union buttons, attending rallies, and mobilizing in other activities.

When your committee thinks a fair settlement with management has been reached, they must get your vote of approval before the new contract can be finalized. This happens at a membership meeting where your committee will report on the settlement and where your unit members can vote to accept or reject the settlement.

This is another part of ILWU democracy which requires membership approval for all contract settlements. In rare cases, management may refuse to agree to a fair settlement and your committee may ask you to authorize a strike. Again, ILWU democracy requires membership approval for a strike.

Your union contract is a very important document. You should read the contract and be familiar with its terms. You can get a copy of your contract from your unit officers or Division Office.

# Rank-and-File Unionism

## Five reasons for political action—continued from page 1

lower house. Those elected included a number of union members who were encouraged to run for office. The Democratic majority in the legislature repealed many of the anti-labor laws and passed a law that gave agricultural workers the right to unionize. In 1954, Democrats won 55 of 76 elections, giving them a majority in the house and senate.

The plantations ran their own clinics and housing, but the population was growing and the plantations were mechanizing and cutting their workforce. The Democrats and unions shared many of the same political goals—they believed government had to change to provide the services needed by the ordinary working people of Hawaii. They built public schools, community colleges, and expanded the education programs of the University of Hawaii. They built public hospitals to take the place of the private plantation clinics. They built parks, public housing, and started programs for the elderly. They changed the tax system to equalize the burden where people with higher incomes paid higher taxes.

The Democrats, with the support of the labor movement, passed laws to give public workers the right to collective bargaining, increase the minimum wage, provide unemployment insurance, improve Workers Compensation for injured workers, require job safety, protect the environment, manage economic development, and preserve agricultural land and water resources.

Union members must be involved in political action to protect these hard-won gains and rights.

### 3 Our government has grown to serve many of the needs of working families.

Many working families are misled to believe government is bad, politicians are crooks, and taxes are too high. These ideas come from negative and deceptive propaganda put out by groups who oppose many of the goals of working families.

In reality, working people receive a lot from government. We depend on government to run our schools, take care of the health and welfare of the community, provide for public safety and emergencies, and maintain our highways, harbors, and airports. These government functions account for 85 percent of the state's expenses.

Workers depend on government to safeguard and promote the long-



ILWU officers sign-wave for Colleen Hanabusa during the Special Election. The ILWU endorsed Colleen Hanabusa as the best candidate to represent Hawaii in the U.S. House of Representatives. The ILWU will work hard to elect Hanabusa and all union candidates in the Primary Election in September and in the General Election in November. (L-r) Secretary-Treasurer Guy Fujimura, Vice President Donna Domingo, President Isaac Fiesta Jr., Hawaii Longshore Division Director Nate Lum, Hawaii Longshore Division Executive Secretary Lynette Mau, and International Vice President Hawaii Wesley Furtado. Joining them were Oahu Division full-time officers, Hawaii Office Workers Union (HOWU) members, and ILWU staff (not pictured).

term well-being of the community. This is why government regulates businesses to protect the public from contaminated and harmful products, prohibit price-fixing and deceptive business practices, require job safety, and prevent mistreatment of workers. Government regulation could have prevented the financial crisis caused by the reckless conduct of mortgage companies and banks.

Republicans oppose this expanded role of government. They want to cut public services which serve the needs of working families and they want to eliminate taxes and regulation of business. Republicans try to turn the public against government by using loaded, negative words such as "big" government, "corrupt" politicians, tax "burden", "waste", and "bureaucracy". These loaded words are repeated by the media, and many voters are misled about the essential role and function of government.

Union members must educate their co-workers to support their union's political action program and maintain needed government services to working families.

### 4 The political process, like negotiations, requires making laws acceptable to the majority.

Even if every union member and their family voted for labor supported candidates, there would not be enough votes to pass good labor laws. Union members must also volunteer to help endorsed candidates win

their elections in other districts.

Hawaii's labor movement has never had a strong majority of support in the legislature. Unions have to work together with like-minded groups and legislators to gain enough support to make laws. Sometimes compromises have to be made. While the final laws are not everything labor wants, real gains are made which lays the foundation for future improvements.

There are many districts where most of the voters are not union members. Some of these legislators vote to support labor programs because they come from a working class background and believe in the same principles. In other cases, the union must work hard to educate and persuade legislators on the issues important to workers.

The union will endorse and support candidates based on their record of working with the union on labor issues. Most of the endorsed candidates are on Oahu, and many more ILWU members on Oahu are needed to help elect legislators in other districts.

Union members are needed to go house-to-house, talk to voters, make phone calls, and wave signs.

Union members increase their union's bargaining power to pass good laws by helping union endorsed candidates in other districts.

### 5 Union political action continues all year long.

Many people think their vote does not count for much and political ac-

tion ends after the election. This is true when people act as individuals. When union members get involved and support their union's political action program, this focuses and multiplies their power as working people.

The union works throughout the year to promote programs that benefit working families at all levels of government. The union watches bills that are proposed by the State Legislature, County Councils, and US Congress.

The union works to build support for good bills and defeat bad bills. This involves educating legislators on the issues and gaining their support. It involves having union members testify at public hearings or organizing members to phone and write letters to their elected representatives. It involves working together with other unions, churches, and community organizations to pass good bills.

Every ILWU unit should have a political action committee to educate members and recruit volunteers to help elect union endorsed candidates.

### Register to Vote

Register to vote anytime before August 19 for the Primary Election or October 4 for the General Election.

If you are already registered, you can request an absentee ballot after July 20 and do your voting by mail. It's easy and there is no need to drive to your *polling site or wait in line*.