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P R O C E E D I N G S

of the

SEVENTH BIENNIAL CONVENTION

of

SAN FRANCISCO

April 7 to April 11, 1947



FILE COPY
INTERNATIONAL LONGSHOREMEN'S & WAREHOUSEMEN'S UNION
AFFILIATED WITH THE CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS

ILWU PROCEEDINGS

supporters of the ILWU (CIO); and

WHEREAS these workers showed their unity and strength and solidarity during the recent sugar strike in the Territory;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the ILWU (CIO) go on record to make representation to the Department of the Interior, the U. S. Immigration authorities, and any other government agency involved, to obtain proper recognition of the entry of these workers into the Territory.

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED that these Filipino workers be given an opportunity to acquire a knowledge and better understanding of the structure of our union and its operation, and the manner in which they can become more disciplined and responsible union brothers toward the end that they may live happily and harmoniously in the various locals of which they are members and maintain and develop leadership among themselves and other national groups.

Brother Chairman, on behalf of the Committee I move for the adoption of the resolution.

PRESIDENT BRIDGES: Committee's report. Any discussion? (Question called for).

All those in favor of the Committee's report say "Aye." Are there any opposed? (No response). Carried and so ordered.

CHAIRMAN LUCAS: Resolution No. 51 on labor unity.

RESOLUTION ON LABOR UNITY

The policy of the Congress of Industrial Organization has always been one of seeking to achieve effective working unity between the two great national labor organizations of the United States—the CIO and the AFL.

The CIO, through its President, Philip Murray, and its National Exec-

utive Committee, recently called upon President William Green of the American Federation of Labor to join with the CIO in order that a common front be presented by labor, in the face of the present legislative attacks on the fundamental rights of American labor to organize, bargain collectively and strike.

Never was the need of a common front against labor's common enemies more urgent than now. The program for labor unity advanced by President Philip Murray, in view of this urgency, was and still is particularly timely.

RESOLVED: That we, the ILWU, now meeting in Convention, commend President Philip Murray for his timely and inspiring approach and leadership in this most urgent matter of national labor unity; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we pledge the support of our entire organization behind President Murray's effort to secure the maximum amount of labor unity between the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations for the purpose of defeating the present serious and hysterical attacks on labor's traditional rights.

On behalf of the Committee, Brother Chairman, I move for adoption.

PRESIDENT BRIDGES: The Committee's report. Any discussion? (No response). (Question called for.)

All those in favor of the report, say "Aye." Any opposed? (No response). Carried and so ordered.

CHAIRMAN LUCAS: Number 52, Anti-Discrimination.

RESOLUTION ON ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

WHEREAS: The International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union faces crucial de-

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cisions in the times ahead in which its leadership for the benefit of its members and for the salvation of the progressive labor movement of this country will be supremely tested by the June contract reopening and the grave economic crisis staring us in the face; and

WHEREAS: In this struggle, the ILWU must seek to build around itself every possible support so that the struggle of the ILWU becomes known as a struggle for all the people; and

WHEREAS: The Negro people standing foremost among the allies to whom the ILWU must look—because of their historic suffering, because of the increase of lynch violence; because of the mass disillusionment with major political parties; and the trend toward a worse form of fascism than even they have yet known, are in ferment against the same forces of reaction that our union will be fighting; and

WHEREAS: The mobilization of these millions behind the struggle of the ILWU will be a powerful factor in the outcome; and

WHEREAS: the ILWU by its historic stand against discrimination has won a position of respect and confidence in the hearts of all Negro people who know of its accomplishments; and

RALLY BEHIND PROGRAM

WHEREAS: To mobilize fully this support, it is necessary for the International and local unions to design programs whereby leading Negro trade unionists may be pulled together for the purpose of rallying the whole of their people behind the economic and political struggle of the ILWU;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: That the International and the local unions take steps necessary to bring together all of our leading Negro

members to work out a common program of publicity, organization, etc., to bring the record of the ILWU to every Negro community and mobilize the whole of it behind the ILWU;

IT IS FURTHER RESOLVED: That in our own self-interest we intensify our campaign against any and all forms of discrimination within our International and throughout the country; to further cement the relationship with the Negro people;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That the Convention go on record that our International Union give all aid and support to these organizations of the Negro people fighting for the liberation and freedom of the oppressed minority they represent;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED: That this program also be applied by our union with respect to other minority groups.

On behalf of the Committee I move for adoption.

DELEGATE SHERMAN: Speaking in favor of the resolution, fellow delegates, the poison of race hatred and discrimination has long been a problem for the labor movement, has continually divided and weakened the labor movement of this country. The ILWU has been in the forefront for many years in seeking to solve this problem, and to a large extent has succeeded. We can be proud of the record of the ILWU in this respect.

I am sorry to state, however, that in certain sections of our union this poison still happens to exist and still remains to be rooted out.

DISSENSION REPORTED

I have just been informed by wire from our local in Los Angeles that an alarming situation developed in one of the plants covered by contract with our union. We have a small chemical warehouse down there employing about 19 people. It has

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been in the union about a year and a half. Most of the people of this plant are unreconstructed rebels who apparently are part of the Southern Democratic bloc and they go right down the line with this bloc. These people are all whites, and from time to time we have heard expressions from them that they would not work with any Negro workers.

A while back during a shortage of labor the employer expressed a desire to hire Negroes from the union hiring hall, and we started to hear murmurs of dissension and objection from the people on the job. The other day it came to a head. The employer called the union; the union dispatched a young Negro to the job. The men on the job refused to work with him.

The union called a meeting and attempted to solve the problem and convince the people that the Negro worker had the same rights and that these men on the job must work together for the common good.

It came to a head. All 19 members of the union walked off the job and quit, objecting against employment of this young Negro.

The union immediately dispatched replacements from the hiring hall. I am happy to say that those men are working today in place of those white brothers who refused to work alongside this young Negro.

PROPOSES HOUSECLEANING

As far as this delegation is concerned, those people who walked off the job might as well walk out of the union, and when we get back these people will be cited before the Executive Board and made to answer for their actions. And if we can't convince these people that they have made a mistake and are willing to abide by the principles of the ILWU, I think these people don't belong in the ILWU and we might as well start cleaning house.

The adoption of this resolution is a step in that direction but it must be implement-

ed by the action of all the delegates. And I think it is time that we really carried out this resolution by cleaning house where cleaning house is necessary. (Loud applause.)

DELEGATE KRAMER: Speaking on the resolution: In the United States the main fighters against the shipowners and the trusts and the monopolies in America are the American working people. The American working people are split up into many different nationalities and races and religions. We have the Negro, the Jewish worker, the Chinese worker, the Japanese worker, the Filipino worker, Slav worker and all the various races and religions that make up America.

TRY TO SPLIT WORKERS

If the monopolists and the shipowners can keep us split, can find out methods of splitting the workers; if they can find various methods of keeping us split and fighting each other and segregating us, it is to their advantage and they can keep our wages down and our conditions bad. But it is because of the things and because of the special discrimination against the Negro people in America that the Negro people are made to suffer in every single phase of life. For instance, on the question of housing they are discriminated against and segregated.

In their education we know that in the South the Negro pupils get one-half of the money that is appropriated for white pupils. And that means that it is actually a denial of education to the Negro people in the South. In the North the Negro students have a quota system for the universities and colleges, or in many cases they are segregated in schools.

We know that they are discriminated against politically. We have the poll tax, the white primaries, and the Ku Klux Klan to go after those people if they dare to vote. We know what the social discrimination is against these people. We have all had contact with that in the theaters, the

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restaurants and other places where we have gone.

Wherever discrimination is greatest, wages are the lowest. All you have to do is to look at the wages in the South. Compare them with the wages in the North. All you have to do is to look at the Negro fireman who works on the railroad in the South. He makes less money than the white fireman. And also because of this reservoir of cheap labor the railroads are able to keep the pay of both Negro and white firemen at a low level—one of the lowest of any industries in the United States.

USE NEGROES AS STRIKEBREAKERS

In addition to that, where they can keep Negroes in a position of providing cheaper labor, they feel that they can use them as strikebreakers, as has been done in the past.

We know we have a wonderful record here in the ILWU. I am especially proud of our record in Local 6 and the record of Local 10 and the other locals in the Bay Area. However, I think that we should be aware of special problems that the Negro people in our industry have and we should take special effort to help solve these problems.

We know a famous American once said that "White brothers will never be free as long as the Negro worker is in slavery." And that means that the white worker will never receive the maximum wages and conditions as long as the Negro worker in America is kept at the state of slavery in which we have them in the United States.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, and delegates, I urge adoption of this resolution unanimously. (Loud applause).

DELEGATE CLARK: I would like to suggest to the Chair that unless you have contrary opinions in these resolutions, the pro speakers be eliminated.

DON'T WANT SUCH PEOPLE

PRESIDENT BRIDGES: I can't do that. I am sorry, brother. That would be a vio-

lation of our Constitution and rules, and the rules of order and everything else. The delegates will get their chance to speak pro and con.

Proceed brother, except I am going to hold everybody to the limit on this or any other resolution, including the officers.

DELEGATE PIERRE: Brother Chairman and brother and sister delegates. After reading the telegram that was sent here to our president of Local 26, Brother Lou Sherman, I just can't for the life of me figure out how it is possible why we should and could have such people in our local and in our organization who refuse to work with negroes.

PRESIDENT BRIDGES: Speak on the resolution, brother, you are not speaking on any particular case. Speak on the resolution. I let the other brother go. It was wrong. I can't let it go any more. Now, speak on the resolution.

DELEGATE PIERRE: I am in favor of the resolution in its entirety, particularly because the Negro people as a whole need this organization and what it does to stamp out discrimination. The ILWU does stand for no discrimination, and for that reason I believe that a program as outlined in this resolution should be definitely worked out and given strict attention to the negro problem in discrimination and in all lines.

I say this particularly because at this time, with the movement that is coming about now, we need a great and important and concrete program that will help us work out the problem of discrimination against the Negro race. I hope that the delegates here will vote unanimously for this resolution. (Loud applause).

SAW NEGROES STRIKEBREAKING

DELEGATE CAYTON: I would like to give you some of the thinking that went into this resolution.

The first paragraph where it says the ILWU is facing a struggle in June that is

well known to us. I happen to come from Seattle, Washington. I was born and raised in that town. My Dad was the second Negro to establish a home in the city of Seattle, Washington, before the great fire. I went to the Second Baptist Church as a little boy in 1921 and I saw that whole Negro community mobilized—that whole Negro community mobilized. I heard the speeches of Lieutenant Rosston, a former Army lieutenant, and as a little kid I remember the tirades of those people—a movement of those people into actually a frame of mind of war—and then smashing of that 1921 strike with Negro workers in Seattle—and they had been discriminated against on the waterfront prior to that time—leading and smashing that fight. I know it was those who went and scabbed and rode the ships and who broke the strike in Seattle who were the heroes of that Negro community in Seattle. And I saw that happen. I saw that as a little boy. It left an indelible impression on my mind.

I know that in 1936 and 1937 in the Seattle Tennis Club on 23rd and Cherry Street they organized 'Finks' from the Negro community and armed them with guns and knives, and they caught some of them over in Bainbridge Island. I was among the guys that helped catch them.

REAL UNDERSTANDING EXISTS

But when we are facing a strike situation the allies and lessons of the past have to be remembered, and I think that the negro people have learned a great deal since those days. There is a real understanding among the Negro people today that labor is its ally and that they cannot succeed without labor, and labor also knows that they must have allies around them. That is why we won in 1934 when we spread the strike to a general strike and pulled in our allies. We won in '36 and '37, because with publicity we convinced the majority of the people up and down this coast and hundreds of thousands throughout the country that our cause was correct. That's

why we won in '36 and '37. It was Lundberg who always wanted the big picket lines, but it was through Bridges' program, publicity up town, that we won the thing.

Now I want to tell you just briefly about the tremendous spirit that is moving through the Negro people today. We are getting ready for a fight, and the trade union movement is getting ready for a fight. But believe you me! thirteen million Negro people today are in motion as they have never been in motion since Reconstruction. They are not taking one step back, come hell or high water! And that goes for the Deep South where they voted in Bilbo's own garage, where they defied the authorities, where the Negro veterans are the very spearhead of the fight for democracy there.

This great, tremendous support can be brought to the side of the labor movement as an equal partner in equal dignity, fighting against a common enemy. And that's what the resolution says.

FREE UNION FROM PREJUDICE

We have got to be able to cement that support by actually making our International Union free from the scourge of any type of prejudice, but, more than that, our International Union a real fighter for negro rights.

Now let's see how it comes down to home. We are sitting here with our International Union 25 percent larger than it was at the last convention—the Honolulu delegation. And it is because of the record in ILWU on this question that the Honolulu workers were so willing to accept the leadership of ILWU. Could a phoney AFL union go to Honolulu and do the job that the ILWU did? You're darned right it couldn't have done! The Honolulu workers knew the record that has been made by the ILWU against race discrimination.

So we can say that our policy on race discrimination is not just something that we are doing out of the goodness of our hearts. We strengthened ourselves by 25

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percent through it, and that was a tremendous factor in the whole organizing drive.

And a word to the Honolulu delegates: the discrimination and the problems of the Hawaiian Islands will never be corrected—will never be corrected—until the stench of that slave market that comes out of Mississippi and Georgia and Alabama is crushed. That is where the stink is coming from, and it is blowing clear across the seas to Honolulu. The struggle in America and in that black belt to clean up that stink is also deep in the heart of your struggle against any form of discrimination in the Islands.

EDUCATE OUR OWN PEOPLE

DELEGATE CURRIER: Mr. Chairman, brothers and sister delegates. I don't think any of us sitting in this hall today realizes the seriousness and the importance of this thing. I don't think we do. We sit back; we listen. "Well, let them take care of their own. They'll get by."

I am speaking in behalf of this resolution.

It states in there that we should get some of the Negro leaders, the influential and the important leaders, together to get them to work out something in conjunction with our activities, and so on.

I don't think we need to get the Negro leaders. I think we need to get our own leaders organized. And, further, I think we need to get our own people organized and we need to educate our own. Never mind the Negroes. They have seen it; they know right down the line.

There is reference in the resolution to these minority groups. Certainly if you put all the so-called minority groups together, what sort of a majority would you have? What kind of power would you have there?

Through education in this country this can be accomplished—through education not only of the Negro people. They don't need the education. They know what is going on. It is our people; if you must,

the white people. They are the ones who need the education. They are the ones who are bucking things like this. And it is, of course, big business. From what you read in the papers that big business puts in there, our people get the wrong idea. They don't know that they need the protection of the Negro people and these other minority groups, because together we can really be a majority and a very strong force.

IS WORLD WIDE PROBLEM

This isn't a problem in the United States. This is a world wide problem, because I think all of us feel that every country in the world today looks to the United States as some sort of an example, a great thing. Well, I think if we look into the picture we begin to realize that we are not so great, because we have failed. We failed for a hundred years. We haven't given half our citizens the rights that you and I take for granted. In some sections of the country it is a little different, but still they are not given the consideration that you expect as citizens. In the schools they are denied attendance—not "denied." It is not that "You can't come here." It is just that "It would be better for you and all concerned if you go to another school."

I think through PAC we can root those people out who talk that sort of thing. "To have unity in the school you can't have a lot of different colored people. You have to be all the same."

We haven't begun to consider how important these people are, and I think right now through this resolution we can make a big thing out of it. And we should.

Thank you. (Loud applause).

DELEGATE HENDERSON: Labor and the negro people are inseparable.

Mr. Chairman, I move the previous question. (Motion duly seconded).

WANT TO WORK WITH ILWU

CHAIRMAN LUCAS: Mr. Chairman, I think I would like to say just a word or two

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on this resolution, because in drafting the resolution an attempt was made not merely to call for anti-discrimination but to put into the resolution something that will be a real contribution to the ILWU in all of its struggles if the real meaning of the resolution is taken.

We know a great deal of civic, church and other community organizations among the Negro people are just waiting for an opportunity to work with the type of organization that the ILWU happens to be—one that has built a record on anti-discrimination, on equality to all minority groups. And this resolution merely means that this should be called to the attention of all of our leading people throughout the entire International Union. During any of our struggles in any of our communities, I feel that if we would only take the time, take the proper approach, to go to the leading people, particularly among the Negro people, who are very anxious to do anything they can to ally themselves with those groups which are striving for freedom for all people, this union will be able to get a great deal of support that they would not otherwise be able to get.

JOIN ILWU WITH COMMUNITY

I think that we have dealt with the question of anti-discrimination more or less in an abstract way in the past, but we feel that this is a concrete way of demonstrating not only to our white brothers but to our Negro brothers, to all of the minority brothers, that here is an opportunity to really integrate our union into the community affairs and draw the community as a whole into the life of our organization. I think that this is really a part of our PAC work.

Brother Chairman, this completes the work of the Resolutions Committee.

PRESIDENT BRIDGES: You have heard the Committee's report on the resolution. All those in favor say "Aye." Are there any opposed? (No response). Car-

ried and so ordered. It is unanimous.

At this time I should like to hold up the proceedings of the Convention for a moment because we want to hear an expression from one of the representatives from Mexico. He will address the Convention and Brother Armenta will come up here to translate his remarks into English.

I should like to ask Brother Calderon, representing the National Syndicate of Sugar Workers of Mexico, to address the Convention at this time.

GREETINGS FROM NATIONAL SYNDICATE OF SUGAR WORKERS OF MEXICO.

Alfonso G. Calderon

MR. CALDERON (through Delegate Armenta, Interpreter): The Sugar Workers of Mexico greet the Convention of the ILWU at this time (applause). The Mexican workers within the sugar industry of Mexico hope that this Convention will bring some solution to the problems of the workers of Mexico, not only of the workers of the United States, but the workers throughout the world (applause). The Mexican workers have the same problems as workers throughout the world and especially of the United States. The Mexican workers hope that with this program the workers of the world will be liberated from slavery as in the past (applause).

I came here to the Sugar conference, but I am glad to be amongst the most revolutionary group within the CIO (laughter and applause). Conferences and conventions are held in Mexico just like they are held here and throughout the world within the trade unions in order to come to a complete solution of the post war era.

In order to bring the last World War to victory it was necessary to have the support of workers throughout the world who strive for democracy. Cooperation was possible only because the trade unions of the world believed that fascism should be beaten down (applause).