



The ILWU's Resilience and the Enduring Importance of Unions in a Changing World

By Curt Cunningham

In an age of swift technological change, globalization, and evolving economic realities, the ILWU remains a steadfast symbol of resilience and adaptability. For nearly a century, our union has championed the rights of dockworkers, warehouse employees, and other laborers along the West Coast and beyond. As the world evolves, so too does the ILWU, navigating challenges like automation, trade fluctuations, and political pressures while remaining steadfast in its mission to secure fair wages, safe working conditions and dignity for its members. This article explores how the ILWU will continue to thrive in a changing world and underscores why unions remain as vital today as they were in the past.

A Legacy of Strength and Solidarity

Founded in 1937, the ILWU emerged from the crucible of the Great Depression, born out of the 1934 West Coast Waterfront Strike—a pivotal moment in American labor history. The strike, marked by intense conflict and the tragic loss of workers' lives, secured key victories, including union recognition and the establishment of the hiring hall system, which ensured equitable job distribution. This legacy of solidarity and militancy has defined the ILWU's identity, enabling it to weather economic upheavals, technological shifts, and political challenges over the decades. The ILWU's strength lies in its democratic structure and member-driven ethos. Unlike some unions that have struggled with bureaucratic inertia, the ILWU empowers its rank-and-file members to shape its direction. Regular caucuses, conventions, and local meetings ensure that the workers' voices are heard, fostering a sense of ownership and unity. This democratic foundation has allowed the ILWU to adapt to changing circumstances while staying true to its core principles of fairness, equity, and collective action.

Navigating the Challenges of Automation

One of the most significant challenges facing the ILWU today is automation in the maritime and logistics industries. Ports along the West Coast, such as Los Angeles, Long Beach, and Oakland, handle billions of dollars in cargo annually, making them critical nodes in global trade. However, the rise of automated cranes, self-driving trucks, and robotic sorting systems threatens traditional longshore jobs. Employers argue that automation boosts efficiency and reduces costs, but for workers, it raises the specter of job losses and eroded bargaining power. The ILWU has approached automation with a blend of pragmatism and resolve. Rather than outright rejecting technological advancements, the union has negotiated to ensure that its members share in the benefits of modernization. For example, during contract negotiations in the early 2000s, the ILWU secured agreements that allowed automation in exchange for protections like job retraining programs, early retirement options, and guarantees that new technology-related jobs would remain unionized. These agreements demonstrate the ILWU's ability to balance the realities of a changing industry with the need to protect its members' livelihoods. Looking forward, the ILWU is well-positioned to continue this approach. By investing in training programs that equip workers with skills for operating and maintaining automated systems, the union ensures that its members remain indispensable in modernized ports. Additionally, the ILWU's advocacy for "just transition" policies—ensuring that technological advancements do not come at the expense of workers—positions it as a leader in shaping the future of work. This proactive stance will help the ILWU thrive in an era where technology is reshaping industries at an unprecedented pace.

Adapting to Global Trade Dynamics

Globalization has transformed the maritime industry, with supply chains stretching across continents and

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Seattle ILWU Pension Club

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Website: ilwu19.com/cobwebs

Office Hours: Fridays from 10 am to 1 pm and also on stop work Thursdays from 2:30 to 4:30 pm.

President:	Mary Fuller
Vice President:	Joe Toro
Secretary Treasurer:	Kathleen Brown
Recording Secretary:	Sally Roach
Trustee:	Lanny McGrew
Trustee:	W. T. Lassiter
Trustee:	Sally Roach
Convention Delegate:	Joe Toro
PCPA Ex. Board:	Joe Toro
PSDC:	James Barnett
Historian:	Cyndi Kendall
Sick Committee:	W. T. Lassiter
Luncheon Committee:	Mary Fuller
Rusty Hook:	Curt Cunningham
Final Dispatch:	Molly Gorski

Club Meetings

Monthly meetings are held on the first Monday of the month at 11:00am, unless there is a holiday, then it will be held on the second Monday of the month.

Seattle Pensioner Club Forms

Membership Renewal: ilwu19.com/joinapp

Change of Address: ilwu19.com/address

The Rusty Hook Online

Online PDF Version: ilwu19.com/rustyhook

Content Submission: rustyhook@ilwu19.com

Subscriptions: ilwu19.com/address

ILWU-PMA Benefit Plan

Washington Area Director: Andrea Stevenson

Address: 21907 64th Ave West Suite 130
Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043

Website: ilwu19.com/benefit_plans

E-Mail: washingtonawd@benefitplans.org

Office: (206) 938-6720

Toll Free: (877) 938-6720

Fax: (206) 938-6726

Send your questions about the Benefit Plan to:
pension@ilwu.org

trade volumes surging. The ILWU operates in a highly competitive environment, where ports on the West Coast compete with those in Asia, Europe, and elsewhere. Shifts in trade policies, such as tariffs or trade agreements, can significantly impact cargo volumes and, by extension, ILWU jobs. The ILWU's ability to adapt to these dynamics is rooted in its strategic importance. West Coast ports handle approximately 50% of U.S. containerized imports, making the ILWU a linchpin in the national economy. This leverage allows the union to negotiate robust contracts that secure competitive wages and benefits, even as global pressures mount. For instance, during the 2022-2023 contract negotiations, the ILWU successfully secured wage increases and protections against automation-related job losses, demonstrating its ability to wield influence in a globalized economy. Moreover, the ILWU has expanded its scope beyond traditional longshore work to include warehouse workers, cold storage employees, and other logistics-related roles. This diversification strengthens the union's resilience by broadening its membership base and aligning it with the evolving logistics industry. By organizing workers across the supply chain, the ILWU ensures that it remains relevant in a world where e-commerce and just-in-time delivery are driving economic growth.

The Enduring Relevance of Unions

The ILWU's ability to thrive in a changing world underscores a broader truth: unions are as important today as they were in the past. While some argue that unions are relics of an industrial era, the realities of modern work—marked by wage stagnation, precarious employment, and corporate consolidation—demonstrate their continued necessity. Unions like the ILWU provide a critical counterbalance to corporate power. In an age of multinational corporations and gig economy platforms, workers face employers with unprecedented resources and influence. Without collective bargaining, individual workers are often powerless to negotiate fair wages, benefits, or working conditions. The ILWU's track record of securing livable wages, comprehensive healthcare, and robust pensions for its members illustrates the tangible benefits of unionization. These gains not only improve workers' lives but also set standards that ripple across industries, benefiting non-unionized workers as well. Unions also play a vital role in addressing systemic inequities. The ILWU has a long history of advocating for racial and gender justice, from supporting the civil rights movement to promoting diversity within its ranks. Today, as workplaces grapple with issues like wage gaps and discriminatory practices, unions

essential for amplifying marginalized voices and ensuring equitable treatment. The ILWU's commitment to inclusivity strengthens its unity and broadens its appeal, attracting new members in an increasingly diverse workforce.

Building Community and Solidarity

Beyond economics, unions foster a sense of community and solidarity that is increasingly rare in modern society. The ILWU's hiring hall system, for example, creates a shared space where workers build relationships, exchange ideas, and support one another. This sense of camaraderie is a powerful antidote to the alienation often experienced in today's fragmented, gig-driven economy. The ILWU also engages in broader social and political activism, reinforcing its relevance. From opposing apartheid in South Africa to supporting environmental justice initiatives, the ILWU has consistently aligned itself with progressive causes. This activism resonates with younger workers, who prioritize social responsibility and collective action. By connecting workplace struggles to larger societal issues, the ILWU ensures that its mission remains relevant to new generations.

The Role of Technology in Union Organizing

Technology, while a challenge in the form of automation, also presents opportunities for unions to strengthen their organizing efforts. The ILWU has embraced digital tools to enhance communication, mobilize members, and reach new workers. Social media platforms, for instance, allow the union to share its victories, educate the public about labor issues, and counter anti-union narratives. Online organizing has proven particularly effective in reaching younger workers and those in non-traditional roles, such as warehouse employees in e-commerce facilities. Moreover, data analytics and artificial intelligence can help unions like the ILWU strategize more effectively. By analyzing industry trends, workforce demographics, and employer practices, the union can tailor its campaigns to address specific challenges. For example, data-driven insights can identify which ports are most vulnerable to automation or where organizing efforts are likely to yield the greatest impact. By leveraging technology, the ILWU can stay ahead of industry shifts and maintain its influence.

Challenges and Opportunities Ahead

While the ILWU is well-equipped to thrive, it faces challenges that require vigilance and adaptability. Anti-union sentiment, fueled by corporate lobbying and political rhetoric, remains a persistent threat. Right-to-work laws, which weaken unions by allowing workers to opt out of dues while still benefiting from collective

bargaining, pose a risk to the ILWU's financial stability. To counter this, the union must continue to demonstrate its value to members through tangible wins and robust organizing. Another challenge is the gig economy, which has eroded traditional employment models. While our members primarily work in stable, unionized roles, the broader trend toward gig work could undermine labor standards across industries. The ILWU can play a leadership role in advocating for policies that extend protections to gig workers, such as minimum wage guarantees and benefits portability, thereby reinforcing the relevance of unions in a gig-driven world.

The ILWU's Path Forward

To continue thriving, the ILWU must build on its strengths while embracing innovation. Expanding its membership to include emerging sectors, such as renewable energy logistics and e-commerce warehousing, will ensure its long-term relevance. Strengthening alliances with other unions, both domestically and internationally, will amplify its influence in a globalized economy. For example, collaborating with unions in Asia and Europe can create a united front against multinational corporations seeking to exploit workers. Education and leadership development are also critical. By investing in programs that train young workers to become union leaders, the ILWU can ensure a steady pipeline of talent to carry its mission forward. Mentorship initiatives that pair experienced members with newcomers can foster continuity and preserve the union's militant spirit. Finally, the ILWU must continue to tell its story. Public perception of unions is often shaped by misinformation, and the ILWU's history of fighting for workers' rights, racial justice, and community welfare is a powerful narrative. By amplifying this story through media, community outreach, and partnerships, the union can build public support and attract new members.

Conclusion

The ILWU's ability to thrive in a changing world is a testament to its resilience, adaptability, and unwavering commitment to its members. As automation, globalization, and societal shifts reshape the labor landscape, the ILWU remains a vital force, securing economic justice and dignity for workers. Its success underscores a broader truth: unions are as essential today as they were in the past. By providing a collective voice, fostering solidarity, and advocating for fairness, unions like the ILWU ensure that workers are not left behind in an ever-evolving world. As long as there are workers, there will be a need for unions—and the ILWU is poised to lead the way for generations to come.

From President's Desk

September, 2025

Hopefully you all had a wonderful summer. Hate to be the bearer of bad news, but the rain is coming! Snow birds get ready to head South.

At the last meeting we voted to move the Annual Luncheon to June on the second Tuesday of the month. I have secured the date of June 9, 2026, Tuesday, at the Alki Masonic Lodge. Put it on your calendar!

I want to thank everyone who has paid their dues this year. We have increased our membership to 195 members. Lots of donations also, thank you all again.

If you didn't make it to the Bloody Thursday Picnic, too bad. You missed a good one. Lots of food, lots of people, good time was had by all. Next year will be even better. I will work with the Picnic committee to come up with a better plan for the shuttle for the Pensioners. This year it was hard to find.

The Pensioner's office at Local 19 will now be opened on stop work night, the 2nd Thursday of the month, from 2:30 pm to 5:30 pm. We are also in the office on Fridays from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm and on our meeting days, first Monday of the month (usually) from 9:30 am to when ever meeting is over. We are now serving lunch after the meeting. Come and see what surprise we have for lunch and see everyone at the meeting.

In solidarity,
Mary Fuller

ILWU Seattle Pensioners' Summer 2025 Membership Meetings Report

In Memoriam:

On June 7, 2025, a memorial for NICHOLAS BUCKLES was held at the Everett Golf and Country Club. NICK served as the Washington Area Welfare Director from 1996 to 2014, a unique role where both the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) and the ILWU entrusted him with leadership. For over 50 years, NICK tirelessly served our members in Washington, retiring in August 2014. Even in retirement, he remained dedicated as the Secretary/Treasurer of the Everett Pensioners Club until his passing. NICK'S legacy spans half a century of service to the ILWU, earning him deep respect from workers, union officials, and the broader industry. His commitment to the well-being of members and their families leaves a lasting impact, and he will be remembered as an icon of care and dedication.

People say that nothing is impossible, but I do nothing every day.

A. A. Milne

The Pensioners Club also sent a condolence card to CARL WOECK following the passing of his wife, BEV. Her service was held on June 14, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. at the new Tacoma Cemetery.

Communications

- Copies of JOE'S Delegate Report are available upon request.

- The Harry Bridges Labor Center sent its first notice for their annual Awards Banquet, scheduled for November 2025.

- STEVE NOE is seeking photos from the Pensioners Luncheon, especially of the musical performances. If you have any, please contact him. He also suggested hiring a photographer for future luncheons.

President's Report

MARY announced changes to the Pensioners Room hours, now open from 2:00–4:30 p.m. on stop work meeting nights each month. This change also supports the History Committee and allows the store to remain open. Due to the proximity of Bloody Thursday, members unanimously voted to skip the July Pensioners' meeting. Lunch will now be provided for members after each meeting.

Following discussion, a motion passed to reschedule the annual Pensioners Luncheon to the second Tuesday in June to avoid conflicting with the Foremen's Banquet.

Delegate Report

JOE reported that the recent Caucus discussed holding the PCPA Convention biennially instead of annually, with further talks planned for this year's convention. The Foremen's Dinner may also shift to an every-other-year schedule. The PCPA Executive Board will discuss the convention changes at this year's convention in September.

Guest Speaker

Local 19 President Mark Elverston provided updates on the Port of Seattle and Local 19 activities. He noted that the Northwest Shipping Alliance (NWSA) meetings are live streamed and that all Pensioners are encouraged to attend any NWSA meeting.

Looking Ahead

The Pensioners Club remains committed to fostering community, preserving our history, and supporting our members. Stay tuned for updates on upcoming events, including the November Awards Banquet and the rescheduled June 2026 Luncheon.

8 Habits for a Happy Retirement

By Curt Cunningham

Retirement marks a new chapter, offering freedom to live life on your terms. Here are eight items you can use to cultivate a happy retirement.

1. Embrace Continuous Learning. Keep your mind sharp by engaging in lifelong learning. Take up a new hobby like painting, learn a language, or explore online courses on topics that intrigue you. Staying curious stimulates cognitive health and adds excitement to your days.

2. Prioritize Physical Fitness. Regular exercise is key to maintaining energy and health. Aim for 30 minutes of activity at least 3 times a week. Walking, yoga, or swimming are great options. Physical fitness boosts mood, reduces health risks, and keeps you active for years to come.

3. Nurture Relationships. Strong social connections are vital for emotional well-being. Schedule regular catch-ups with family and friends, join clubs, or volunteer in your community. Building and maintaining relationships combats loneliness and fosters a sense of belonging.

4. Engage in New Activities. Combat boredom by trying something new. Whether it's gardening, photography, or playing an instrument, exploring fresh activities sparks joy and keeps retirement dynamic. Step out of your comfort zone to discover new passions.

5. Practice Financial Discipline. A stress-free retirement requires smart financial habits. Create a budget, monitor spending, and consult a financial advisor to ensure your savings last. Financial security allows you to focus on enjoying life without worry.

6. Cultivate a Positive Mindset. Stay optimistic by practicing gratitude daily. Journal about things you're thankful for or reflect on positive moments. A positive outlook helps you navigate challenges and enhances overall happiness.

7. Give Back to the Community. Volunteering or mentoring others provides purpose and connection. Whether it's tutoring kids or helping at a local charity, giving back fosters a sense of accomplishment and strengthens community ties.

8. Maintain a Routine. Structure your days with a flexible routine. Include time for exercise, hobbies, and relaxation. A balanced schedule prevents aimlessness and helps you stay productive while enjoying the freedom of retirement you worked hard for.

By integrating these habits, you can create a retirement filled with purpose, health, and joy. Start small, stay consistent, and embrace your retirement as an opportunity to thrive.

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Final Dispatch

PENSIONERS

Roman R. Javillonar 19
David A. Williams 19
Michael A. Angelo 52
Ronald S. MacLennan 19
William D. Crawford 52
Joel E. Woeck 98

SPOUSES

Debra A. Kilcup 52
Sharon L. Gjerset 52
Geraldine Smith 98

Retirees

James C. Sanders 52
John L. Black 98
Steven C. Cerna 19
Frank Santos Jr. 19
Gary A. Schaner 19
Russell A. Shepherd 19

Perry A. Keeley 19
John G. Griffin 19
Rodney Liverman 19
Cary A. Head 19
Cornelius C. Culcleasure 19

Sick Committee

Be sure to get plenty of exercise and take care of your health. We want you to be healthy and enjoy your retirement. You have worked hard to earn it.

If you are in need of some socializing please come to one of the meetings. We'd love to see you.

If any of our Brothers and Sisters would like a call or visit instead; please give me a call at (206) 938-3207 cell; (206) 605-8479. W. T. LASSITER.

Got an Alcohol or Drug problem?

The ILWU has a way for you to seek help.

ILWU/PMA Drug and Alcohol Program

The program is available to all actives, retirees and their families. If you need help or someone to talk to,

Call; DONNIE SCHWENDEMAN our
Washington Area ADRP Representative
3600 Port of Tacoma Road Suite 503

Tacoma, WA 98104

Phone; (253) 922-8913 - Fax: (253) 922-8956

E-Mail: dschwendeman@benefitplans.org

Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action

psara.org

Working across generations for social justice, economic security, dignity, and a healthy planet for all of us.

Check out their newsletter;

The Retiree Advocate

psara.org/newsletter

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

From Our Welfare & Benefits Director

Andrea Stevenson

Important Plan Information to keep updated with the Benefit Plans Office (BPO) in SF:

1. Home address: keep your address and phone numbers current.
2. Beneficiary designation: keep current (This death benefit is for active and retired members only.) If you are a surviving spouse or surviving dependent, this is not an action item you need to do.
3. Marital status.
4. Dependent status.
5. Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) Direct Deposit for your pension checks .
6. New Medicare B Premiums - This is done every year when you get your Social Security statements for the coming new year. The mailings go out on or around Thanksgiving, or thereafter, up until February the following year. You must turn in proof of your annual Medicare B premium to the San Francisco Benefit Plans Office.
7. Power of Attorney (POA) Very important to have on file at the BPO
8. Other Insurance Verification Form (OIC)

Additional Benefit Information:

1. Dental Implants - This is a separate benefit through the ILWU-PMA Welfare plan Group#6339, Call the ILWU-PMA Benefit Plans @ (888) 372- 4598 for more details or questions.
2. Delta Dental Group Number: Adult Plan, 01713 and Children up to age 19 Plan 00001.
3. Hearing Aids - eligible every 3 years. 100% of the expenses incurred up to \$4,000.00 per ear or \$8,000 for both ears. You can purchase hearing aids wherever you want. There is no requirement to stay in a specific network. Call the ILWU-PMA Benefit Plans office @ (888) 372- 4598 for details.
4. Vision Services Plan (VSP) - Contact Information: 1-800-877-7195 or www.vsp.com
5. OptumRx - This is our Prescription Drug Program: 1-800-797-9791
6. Shingles and other injectables are now covered under the OptumRx Benefit Prescription. Flu and Pneumococcal shots are covered by Medicare B.
7. ILWU-PMA Benefit Plans Website: www.benefitplans.org (This is where you can access information, download forms etc.)
8. First Choice Health Network (FCHN) This is the Preferred Provider Organization. Customer Service M-F; 1-800-231-6935; 8-5pm.

Tax Information:

1. 1099-R Pension Plan Payments will come from Benefit Plans Office.

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2. 1095-B If Medicare is your primary coverage, it will come directly from the Government
3. Kaiser members will get their 1095-B form from Kaiser.

Incapacitated Dependent Child Survivor

Incapacitated Dependent Child Survivor of a Surviving Spouse: Effective July 1, 2022, surviving spouses receiving a survivor pension & Incapacitated Dependent Child survivor. It is recommended a Special Needs Trust should be set up if applicable.

Misc. Reminders:

1. Reminder that Medicare A & B is your primary medical insurance, and the ILWU-PMA medical coverage will be secondary.
2. Please be aware of scams and frauds. If you spot a scam, report it at: [FTC.gov/complaint](https://www.ftc.gov/complaint) or call 1-877-382-4357
3. Medicare & You Booklet. This gets sent out every year from Medicare.
4. Social Worker or Patient Advocate to help navigate through your benefits.
5. National Do Not Call registry number: 1-888-382-1222
6. San Francisco ILWU-PMA Benefit Plans Office phone number: 1-888-372-4598; Fax# 1-415-749-1400

Please be sure you open ALL mail regarding your ILWU-PMA Benefit Plans.

This includes correspondence pertaining to medical, dental, vision, prescription plan and pension. If something does not make sense or your bill does not look like it was paid correctly (i.e.: remaining balances unpaid or no payments at all) please contact WA Area Director, Andrea Stevenson. Do not hesitate to call (206) 938-6720 (office), (206) 938-6726 (Fax) or email WashingtonAWD@benefitplans.org. Please always include your longshore registration number and a telephone number, anywhere on your paperwork, so I can contact you.

A pensioner visited the doctor for a routine checkup. During the exam, he boasted about his fitness. "You must be getting plenty of exercise," the doctor noted. "Oh yeah," the pensioner replied. "Yesterday, I trekked over rough terrain, climbed rocks, pushed through dense woods, waded by a lake, and trudged through tall grass and thorny bushes. Even slogged through sand." The doctor, impressed, said, "You're quite the outdoorsman!" The pensioner grinned and said, "Nah, doc, I'm just a lousy golfer."

Tales Tossed up by the Tide: The Desperate Dance of the Docks

The Adventures of Steve Adore

After reading about the London waterfront in the early 20th century it began to haunt my imagination—a raw, untamed world where men battled hunger, fate, and each other for a chance to survive. The port's roots can be traced back to the Romans, who established the first wharves near the site of today's London Bridge. The stories I'd read pulsed with life, danger, and desperation, and I knew my next adventure lay there.

With a thrill coursing through me, I set my time dial to June 7, 1906, and felt the familiar lurch as the world dissolved around me. I materialized near the waterfront in the early morning, the night was fading like a dying ember, its pale, ghostly light giving way to a dawn that seemed to hold its breath. The air was thick with the briny tang of the Thames, laced with coal smoke and the faint, sour stench of despair. The quaysides loomed ahead, a sprawling labyrinth where great ships, their holds brimming with the world's treasures, anchored a brutal game of survival. As I stepped toward the docks it felt like a no-man's-land, a frontier where a single misstep could mean a knife in the dark or a body lost to the river's cold embrace. Men stood idle along the cobbled paths, their eyes hollow with hunger, their faces etched with the kind of desperation that clawed at the soul. This was no mere workplace; it was a battlefield, where survival hung on the whim of a foreman's call or the flicker of a stevedore's glance. The distant dome of St. Paul's cathedral rose behind me, its cross piercing the reddening sky—a fleeting symbol of hope in a city that seemed to have turned its back on these men. My shoes echoed on the cobblestones, a lonely cry in the eerie silence, as if the docks themselves whispered warnings of betrayal and loss.

As I continued east I could no longer see the cross. It was still very dark, and the breath of the river Thames came up cold and clammy from narrow openings and I found myself on High Street in St. George's, which was a narrow artery pulsing with menace. This road was once known as the Ratcliffe Highway and was one of the three ways into downtown London. This stretch of road was one of the most notorious streets in East London in the 19th century and with the East End being the poorest area of the city it was the center of much vice, criminality and suffering.

In the past this road had roared with life—sailors flush with coin caroused with women in red Morocco boots, their heels hammering the floors of gaudy, tinsel-decked saloons. The air had thrummed with laughter, curses, and the clink of glasses, but now, in 1906, the

street was a graveyard of dreams. An oppressive silence hung heavy, broken only by the occasional creak of a shutter or the distant bark of a dog. I could almost hear the ghosts of those wild nights, their echoes snuffed out by the weight of poverty. On one side of the road, vast storehouses loomed like silent sentinels, their massive doors groaning open as if granting passage to the underworld. On the other, cramped tenements leaned together, their sagging roofs and peeling paint whispering secrets of misery. I imagined the ragged men who'd soon shuffle from those hovels to toil in the warehouses, their lives tethered to the docks' cruel rhythm. A canal slithered beneath a small bridge, its oily water oozing through slimy gates, reflecting the dawn's blood-red glow. The blank, towering walls around me felt like a prison, and I sensed the tragedy of the docks drawing closer—a storm of human desperation about to break. Suddenly, figures emerged from the shadows, flitting from doorways like specters. I peered into a cranny and saw men slumped against walls, their fitful sleep a testament to lives stripped bare. These were longshoremen, I later learned, whose beds had been sold to fend off starvation. Their gaunt faces told stories of nights spent in alleys, of children crying for bread, of wives too weak to rise from their cots.

The masts of ships now stood stark against the sky, their silhouettes like skeletal fingers clawing at the heavens. I followed a narrow street lined with Chinese merchants, their shops already stirring with the clatter of crates and the murmur of voices. Their eyes were wary, as if guarding secrets of their own—perhaps deals struck in the dark, or goods smuggled past prying eyes. At the street's end, I found the docks—a sprawling arena where hope and despair clashed in a daily ritual of survival.

The shape-up had not yet begun. Over here it was known as the "call-on" which I later found was used as late as the 1960's. Others called it "standing on the stones."

The men were gathering, their faces taut with anticipation. They trudged from streets lined with miserable hovels, each step heavy with the weight of poverty. At a dilapidated pub, its sign faded and swinging in the damp breeze, a knot of stevedores in sailor caps and blue jackets stood like kings of the docks. Their presence was commanding, their eyes sharp with authority. These were the gatekeepers of work, men who held the power of life and death—or at least, a day's wages—in their hands. I watched, heart pounding, as they surveyed the crowd, their gazes cold and calculating.

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AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

Then I saw them—the “royals” and the “scurf.” The royals, favored by the stevedores, stood a little straighter, their eyes locked on their overlords with hawk-like intensity. They knew their livelihoods depended on a nod, a glance, a whispered name. Across the road, the scurf huddled—hundreds of men with worn clothes and weathered souls, their chances of work as thin as the morning mist. Their faces were a gallery of despair: some old and stooped, others young but already broken by the docks’ relentless grind. I watched as a stevedore beckoned to a dozen royals, his finger cutting through the air like a blade. They marched through the dock gates, which stood mockingly wide, while the scurf remained, their eyes burning with envy as “regulars” with lunch bundles swung past, their red handkerchiefs dangling like taunts. Factory workers, running late, shoved through the crowd, their careless jostling met only with the scurf’s silent resentment—a restless shifting born of envy for those whose work was certain. The air grew electric as the call time approached. The scurf pressed against a long barrier, where a single sentry box stood like a judge’s podium. Once, six such boxes had dotted the docks, but decay had claimed the rest, leaving only scars on the ground—a grim monument to the docks’ decline. The waterfront, I was told, was crumbling under high dock fees.

The foreman, a brisk man with a predator’s gait and eyes that missed nothing, burst from a doorway and claimed his place on the sentry box. The crowd surged, a sea of desperation, and I noticed the gray hair of those closest to the foreman. The oldest men held the lowest numbers—a cruel twist, as youth meant higher numbers and no hope in these lean times. Beside me was a gaunt looking man, his face carved with lines of hunger, flashed his ticket at me and muttered, “No use, I’m 360.” His voice was a knife, cutting through the tension. He pointed to the rotting stumps of the other sentry boxes, his gesture heavy with resignation. “Used to be six,” he said. “Now it’s one. Tells you all you need to know.” His words hung in the air, a grim prophecy of the docks’ slow death. Suddenly the foreman stopped calling numbers, and cried out “Twelve more!” He needed twelve more than he had thought he needed. So mathematics and order were thrown aside, and the men took to scrambling. Some clawed and cursed, tearing at clothes, kicking, climbing over each other in a frenzied scrum. A burly man elbowed his neighbor, sending him sprawling; another climbed onto a rival’s back, only to be thrown off with a curse. The air filled with shouts and the sickening thud of fists on flesh. The foreman’s ribs creaked under the crush as he plucked twelve men,

handing them brass tokens of salvation. In a heartbeat, it was over. Three hundred men stood defeated, their dreams trampled in the dust. The strongest weren’t chosen this time; only the luckiest—or most ruthless—survived the melee.

I then followed the unchosen to a nearby pub, its air thick with the reek of stale beer and despair. Over pints they could barely afford, they spoke of the brutal work—lugging sugar in the stifling, foul holds of “chandler shops,” the name I was told was given to a ship which carried such things as wheat, cane and sugar. Down in the hold of these ships the sugar was hot and had a rancid smell.

The cargo’s weight would crush the spirit as much as the body. They told me that a slow hand earned the foreman’s curses, while the hook with its iron tip glinting with menace would swing wildly about with rage. One man, his hands scarred and trembling, told me about his partner who’d been crushed by a falling crate, his screams lost in the hold’s darkness. These men, some living on two pints a day, spoke of families starving in the Limehouse, their voices raw with grief. The Limehouse as it was called was a bustling industrial area of London, known for its docks and shipbuilding, as well as its lime kilns that gave the area its name. This is where most of the longshoremen lived and where barren houses stood open, their doorways framing quiet children who’d learned hunger’s silence too young. A girl, no older than ten, sat listlessly on a stoop, her eyes dull as she clutched a rag doll. I longed to step inside, to see how families survived on a half-day’s work a week, but an invisible wall of pride held me back. These were people who bore their suffering in silence, their dignity a fragile shield against the world’s cruelty.

They blamed the government’s “light dues”, which were raised when the dock companies merged, driving ships to other ports. “They’ll never return,” one growled, his fist slamming the table, his eyes blazing

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Waiting to be picked

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

with a mix of fury and defeat.

I later found out that the “light dues” were fees charged to ships for the use of light buoys and beacons along the river Thames. These dues were a financial burden on shipowners and, when increased in 1906, led to reduced shipping activity as the cost of using the port became prohibitive for some, impacting work on the docks. The issue stemmed from private individuals initially taking responsibility for the lighting and recouping their expenses through these dues.

Leaving the pub and stepping back into the street, the men’s stories echoed in my mind. As I wandered back to the dock gate where I had witnessed the shape up unfold, I stumbled upon a scene that stopped me cold. A scurf, his face gaunt and wild, lunged at a regular passing through the gate, shouting of stolen work and broken promises. “You took my place, you bastard!” he roared, his voice cracking with rage. The regular, a burly man with a lunch bundle swinging, shoved him back, and the two grappled in the dust, fists flying as the crowd parted. Some cheered, their voices a raw chorus of frustration; others shouted warnings, fearing the dock police would descend with their truncheons. Blood flecked the cobblestones before the scurf was pulled away, his eyes burning with a hatred born of hunger. The regular dusted himself off and strode through the gates, unscathed but shaken.

The docks weren’t just a place of labor; they were a crucible where every man was a rival, every job a life-line. I then saw the dockers’ parson, a wiry man with a face lined by years of witnessing misery. His hands wrung together as he spoke, his voice trembling. “Not in twenty years have I seen such wholesale misery.” He then said that he figured there were about “fifty thousand souls—longshoremen, their wives and children—starving because the ships don’t come.” I pressed him, asking how the lack of ships could wreak such havoc. He explained that the docks’ decline had rippled through the Limehouse, Poplar, and beyond, leaving entire communities teetering on the edge. “It’s not just the men,” he said. “It’s the children who don’t eat, the wives who sew by candlelight to earn a penny, the families who sleep on bare floors because their furniture’s been sold.” His words hit like a blow.

It was now late in the afternoon and the dock gates, was still lined with men, unfed for days, who waited for that slim chance of being hired. The open gates through which sleek horses pulled the world’s riches—silks from the East, spices from the Indies, treasures that would never touch their hands drove past these desperate men. As I watched, a young man, barely twenty, broke from the line and ran toward a cart, snatching a loaf of bread from a vendor’s load. The vendor’s shout drew a crowd, and the dock

police were on him in moments, their clubs raised. The boy’s cries echoed as he was dragged away, his stolen prize tumbling into the dust. The crowd muttered, some in sympathy, others in fear, but none dared intervene. I lingered at the docks until the evening arrived, the sky now bruised purple, the air heavy with the day’s unspent hopes. A stevedore, his face weathered but kind, caught my eye and offered a grim nod. “You see it now, don’t you?” he said. “This place chews men up and spits ‘em out. Always has.”

He then told me that the call-on generated much anger among the dockers. Before the great strike of ‘89 we were driven into a shed, iron-barred from end to end, outside of which the foreman walked up and down with the air of a dealer in a cattle market, picking and choosing from a crowd of men, who, in their eagerness to obtain employment, trampled each other under foot, and like beasts they fought each other for the chances of a day’s work.” He then talked of a time when the docks thrummed with life, when ships lined the quays and work was plentiful. Now, he said, it was a shadow of itself, a place where men fought like dogs for scraps. “And still we come,” he added, his voice low. “Because what else is there?” As I prepared to leave back to my time, the docks seemed to pulse with a life of their own—a restless, hungry energy that refused to die. The men, the gates, the ships, the very stones beneath my feet told a story of struggle, betrayal, and fleeting triumphs. I knew I’d carry their tales with me, tales tossed up by the tide, each one a spark in the dark, burning with the raw, unyielding spirit of the waterfront.

In 1909 the Port of London Authority was established in an attempt to modernize and manage the docks. While this created new opportunities, trade volumes never returned to the heights that had once made London the world’s largest port.

The decline accelerated in the 1960s with the advent of container shipping. Container vessels required deep-water facilities, which the Thames could not accommodate, leading traffic to shift to ports such as Tilbury and Liverpool. As a result, one by one the London wharves began to close for good, and dockside communities that had depended on maritime employment for generations faced widespread job losses. By the mid-1980s, most of the docks lay derelict, marking the end of London’s role as a major center of maritime trade.

I believe that if life gives you lemons, you should make lemonade... And try to find somebody whose life has given them vodka, and have a party.

Ron White

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

More Bull on the Seattle Waterfront

From Joe Toro's *Believe or Not*
May 1988

Speaking of bulls* you should've seen the poor guy loaded out of Shed 5, the new USDA-approved quarantine facility at Pier 20.

Picture this: in the pen waiting to be loaded, were about 1,100 heifers and one very lucky bull. He strutted around the pen like he'd won the lottery.

But when it came time to board the cattle ship bound for Indonesia, the party was over. That bull was so worn out he couldn't even moo. We had to carry him up the ramp like a drunk leaving the bar at closing time.

One of the ranch hands just shrugged and said, "Tired doesn't mean unhappy."

And we all agreed.

In another memorable incident that unfolded on the cattle ship, brightening our day, was an amusing moment involving Stogie, the seasoned Seattle Steve superintendent. He was positioned on the deck just below the loading ramp, overseeing operations. As the cows trudged across the ramp, one suddenly released a steaming, impressively healthy cow pie, which landed squarely on Stogie's neck and shoulders. The unexpected splatter nearly caused him to choke on his cigar. Attempting to maintain his composure, he acted as if nothing was amiss, but our uproarious laughter from above proved too much. Red-faced, Stogie retreated from the scene. Later, with a wry grin, he shrugged it off, remarking that it wasn't a big deal—he'd been sh*t on plenty of times before.



Harold Hokanson watching cows being loaded on the Murray Express at Pier 20 in 1988.
Manuel Ventoza photo

Correspondence

From JOE THOMPSON, \$30.00 for 2025 dues and \$70.00 donation. And, yes JOE, we still have a few members that are life time members. But we do appreciate the money! Thank you so much JOE.

From LARRY BUSSANICH, \$60.00 for 2025 & 2026 dues and \$100.00 donation.

Thank you so much LARRY.

From PHIL & PAULA ACOSTA, \$60.00 for 2025 dues for each of them and \$40.00 donation.

Thanks so much PAULA & PHIL.

From MARC LEACH, \$60.00 for 2024 & 2025 dues. Thank you, MARC.

From MARIO OBLAK, \$30.00 for 2025 dues and \$70.00 donation. Retirement is busy. How did you ever have time to work?

Thank you so much MARIO.

From MIKE BAKER, \$60.00 for 2025 & 2026 dues. Thank you, MIKE.

From DAVE STAPLETON, \$30.00 for 2025 dues and \$270.00 donation.

Thank you, thank you so much DAVE.

From STEVE RAMELS & JACKIE SZIKSZOY, \$60.00 for 2025 dues for each of them and \$40.00 donation. Thank you JACKIE & STEVE.

From JIM PICINICH, \$180.00 for dues from 2020 to 2025 and \$120.00 donation. Thank you for catching up on your past dues JIM. It helps.

From AL MEEDS, \$60.00 for 2025 & 2026 dues and \$140.00 donation. Thanks so much AL.

From RICKY BUSSANICH, \$30.00 for 2025 dues. Thanks RICKY.

From TONY MORENO, \$30.00 for 2025 dues. Thank you, TONY.

From MITCHELL BLONDIN, \$30.00 for 2025 dues and \$70.00 donation in memory of BROTHER ED CAMACHO. Thank you so much MITCHELL.

From BOB TAYLOR, \$60.00 for 2025 & 2026 dues. Congratulations on your wedding to SALLY.

Thank you so much BOB and SALLY take care of him!

From SCOTT ENQUIST, \$30.00 for 2025 dues and \$70.00 donation. Thank you, SCOTT and life is good. Pickleball and KONA!

From JIM JEFFRIES, \$30.00 for 2025 dues.

Thanks JIM.

"The secret of staying young is to live honestly, eat slowly, and lie about your age."

—Lucille Ball

RUSTY HOOK / Fall 2025

Correspondence

From AL ROBBINS, \$90.00 for 2023, 2024, & 2025 dues. Thank you so much AL for catching up on your dues. We appreciate it.

From GIL CASIAS, \$30.00 for 2025 dues and \$30.00 donation. Thanks GIL.

From JOHN BEE, \$30.00 for 2025 dues and \$10.00 donation. Thanks JOHN.

From BILL LASSITER, \$30.00 for 2025 dues. Thanks BILL.

From BRICE LENZ, \$60.00 for 2024 & 2025 dues. Thanks BRICE.

From SALLY ROACH, \$30.00 for 2025 dues. Thanks SALLY.

From STEVE NOE, \$60.00 for 2025 & 2026 dues and \$60.00 donation. Thank you so much STEVE.

From WILLARD MORRISON, \$30.00 for 2025 dues and \$5.00 donation. Thank you, WILLARD.

From LARRY SAMPLES, \$60.00 for 2026 & 2027 dues and \$140 donation.

Thank you, LARRY, and you are all paid up.

From DON BRADY, \$30.00 for 2025 dues and \$70.00 donation. Thank you so much DON.

From CHRIS LINCOLN, \$30.00 for 2025 dues and \$70.00 donation. Thank you CHRIS.

From JOHN YESBERGER, \$30.00 for 2025 dues. Thank you, JOHN.

From RON MARSHEL, \$30.00 for 2025 dues. Thanks RON.

From ROD PEELER, \$30.00 for 2025 dues.

Thanks ROD.

From DAVID VIGIL, JR., \$30.00 for 2025 dues. Thanks DAVE.

From CURT & LEONA CUNNINGHAM, \$60.00 for each of their 2025 dues. Thank you so much CURT & LEONA. And CURT, thank you from everyone for all the work you do for the Rusty Hook.

From BONNIE ECKERT-McHENRY, \$30.00 for 2025 dues. Thanks BONNIE.

From MICHELE DRAYTON & IAN KENNEDY, \$60.00 for each of their 2025 dues.

Thank you, MICHELE & IAN.

From TERESA NEUFANG, \$60.00 for 2024 & 2025 dues and \$40.00 donation.

Thank you so much TERESA.

From CAROLYN GROSS, \$30.00 for 2025 dues. Thank you, CAROLYN.

From JEFF SHOSTAD, \$30.00 for 2025 dues and \$45.00 donation. Thank you so much JEFF.

From BOB RINALDI, \$30.00 for 2025 dues and \$10.00 donation. Thanks BOB.

From JOHN LEWICKI, \$30.00 for 2025 dues and \$20.00 donation. Thank you, JOHN.

From HERMANN MADSEN, \$30.00 for 2025 dues. Thanks HERMANN.

From PETE GARDINER, \$60.00 for 2025 & 2026 dues and \$40.00 donation.

Thanks PETE. Love your door!

From CARL CHRISTENSON, \$60.00 for 2025 & 2026 dues. Thanks CARL.

From TERRY OHNSAGER, \$30.00 for 2025 dues. Thanks TERRY.

From BILL CRAWFORD, \$30.00 for 2025 dues and \$10.00 donation. Thank so much BILL.

From RON KENNEY, \$60.00 for 2024 & 2025 dues and \$70.00 donation. Thank you, thank you RON.

From ROBERT GILMORE, \$60.00 for 2025 & 2026 dues and \$60.00 donation.

Thank you so much BOBBY.

From RICH ULRICH, \$30.00 for 2025 dues. Thanks RICH.

From MEL SALLAS, \$30.00 for 2025 dues.

Thanks MEL.

From RICHARD DAVIDSON-JENKINS, \$60.00 for 2025 & 2026 dues. Thank you, RICHARD.

From KIM ROSS, \$30.00 for 2025 dues and \$20.00 donation. Thanks KIM.

From RAY & CHERYL REINHARDT, \$180.00 for both of their dues for 2025, 2026, & 2027, and \$120.00 donation.

Thank you so much CHERYL & RAY and it is good to hear you both are doing well.



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Pier 18 in the 1980's — Manuel Ventoza photo

The Man In The Glass

Peter "Dale" Winbrow Sr

When you get what you want in your
struggle for self
And the world makes you king for a day,
Just go to the mirror and look at yourself
And see what that man has to say.
For it isn't your father or mother or wife
Whose judgment upon you must pass.
The fellow whose verdict counts
most in your life,
Is the one staring back from the glass.
You may be like Jack Homer and
chisel a plum
And think you're a wonderful guy.
But the man in the glass says you're
only a bum
If you can't look him straight in the eye.
He's the fellow to please-never mind
all the rest,
For he's with you clear to the end.
And you've passed your most dangerous,
difficult test
If the man in the glass is your friend.
You may fool the whole world
down the pathway of years
And get pats on the back as you pass.
But your final reward will be
heartache and tears
If you've cheated the man in the glass.

