



# CONNECTIONS

## Hoffa helps honor Local 853 stewards, preaches continued political activity

International President Jim Hoffa visited Local 853 one Saturday morning in September to honor union stewards, to report on the state of the International union, and to make the case for continued political action.

He emphasized unity. "We're moving beyond the divisions that have affected this union for so long. We're getting our house back in order.

"Teamsters are having a rebirth, and we have to use that new strength in the political area to protect ourselves and to advance the cause of all working people in this country," Hoffa stressed.

He praised efforts by Local 853 and other Joint Council 7 affiliates to bring politics down to the shop floor and encourage involvement of the membership. "You've



*Flanked by Chuck Mack and Rome Aloise, President Hoffa urges political action at every work site*

started a process that will be repeated throughout the Teamsters union."

Hoffa also discussed the overall Teamster political strategy. "By delaying our presidential endorsement we made a statement," he said. "Al Gore promised to talk to the Defense Department about not using Overnite. And we've discussed the consent degree. So we got the most we could out of the endorsement."

*[Editor's note: This issue of Connections goes to press before the final determination of the presidential election.]*

Hoffa noted that all of labor was active in these elections. In total, unions made more than 1.2 million phone calls, sent 2.5

million pieces of mail, and distributed over 600,000 flyers at worksites.

### Honoring our own

Politics wasn't the only issue on the stewards' agenda. This event was also a time to honor the Local's stewards for their hard work on behalf of the membership.

Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise presented the Steward of the Year plaque to Zettie Pereira. Zettie helped organize the Len Martin Corp. (now Federated Distribution), and served as chief steward for 13 years.

Aloise also presented plaques to several retiring stewards including Dave Godman, Rahly Esquivel—a 40 year steward, Bill Baker who was at Kilsby Roberts for 38 years, and Robert Casey, who worked at the Army Base for 21 years.



*Zettie Pereira receives her Steward of the Year plaque from Rome Aloise.*



**Happy Holidays and  
best wishes for a  
prosperous new year**

**From the officers and staff  
of Teamsters Local 853**

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# Secretary-Treasurer's Report

## Expectations, Reality and What is Meaningful



By Rome Aloise

This first year of the new millennium has seen many victories that members of Local 853 can celebrate and be thankful for. These victories include a few great contracts, many good contracts, and several important grievance wins.

With nearly 6,000 members, our union is bigger and stronger than ever before. This is in part thanks to the good economy. But it's also because our investment in organizing is starting to pay off.

This year our staff negotiated two to five contracts each month for a total of 42. As members at those companies, you had decisions to make about how to split your increases between pension, health and welfare, and wages. In most contracts, we were able to negotiate enough money to spread around. But I want you to know how that was possible.

### Telling it like it is

Our increasing strength is also a product of how we operate as a union. Local 853 has a long-standing reputation of honest, *tell-it-like-it-is* representation. Employers know that when we say something, we mean it. Our goal is to prepare our members by telling them *everything* to expect. While this is not necessarily what they want to hear, we give members the information they need to make informed, intelligent decisions.

At times some members mistake this *tell-it-like-it-is* representation as a lack of

support or enthusiasm by the Local's leadership. However, the members who have participated on bargaining committees and who have watched our Local operate, know better!

By giving all of the pros and cons of members' proposals, by discussing the issues openly and honestly, the membership gains insight into the obstacles we confront in negotiations.

### Always be armed

I insist that our Business Agents are fully armed—with research—when they enter negotiations. They know the company's financials, what's happening in the industry, and most importantly, what's important to the membership.

For example, in our most recent Berkeley Farms negotiations, we were dealing with a giant national company, Dean Foods, rather than the regional, privately owned company of the past. Before we got to the bargaining table, we discussed the company's tactics with local unions around the country; we researched the company's projections and we looked for their vulnerabilities. Having this knowledge gave us a distinct advantage at the bargaining table.

A large dose of militancy doesn't hurt either! We prepared for a strike and informed the company that we'd strike if we had to.

Beyond picket plans, our preparation

also involves looking at the big picture. As a union, we are part of a larger community. Local 853 is deeply involved in community organizations and political action not only because it's the right thing to do, but because it strengthens our hand. It comes down to one word—power. If we're there for others, they'll be there for us.

While the Berkeley Farms contract didn't meet everyone's goals, the bargaining committee is convinced that we squeezed everything the company would give.

Fortunately, we got a settlement that the members overwhelmingly ratified before anyone lost a minute of pay.

In the coming year we'll be negotiating more than 30 contracts at small, mid-size and large companies including Ready Mix and Gillig Corporation. Our goals, as always, are to maximize the positives in the negotiations, and to make sure the members fully understand the issues and realities that we confront.

We are prepared to fight if need be, but hope that our preparations and our ability to negotiate do the job for us.

### Happy holidays

I wish you and your family a great holiday season, and of course, a prosperous New Year!

Voice  
of the  
members

As a union  
member,  
what are you  
thankful for?



Andre Moore  
California Glass

*"I'm thankful for the benefits ... I have a 9-year old who just got a pair of glasses—at no cost. That's important."*



Mark Perry  
Berkeley Farms

*"For me, it's the medical plan—and retirement. They wanted to take away our medical, and we said No."*



Roger Gonzalez  
MSAS

*"It's a brotherhood. We have to stick together & help each other. We're newly organized and are getting our 401K started."*

# membership appreciation

December 2, 2000

“This may be the last time we can hold our Membership Appreciation Day in our hall,” said Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise as he surveyed the standing-only crowd. “Number five will have to be in a larger space.”

More than 300 members of Local 853 spent a few hours at the union hall on Saturday morning, December 2, having continental breakfast, listening to Aloise’s state of the union speech, and waiting to see if they were one of the lucky members who won a TV set, portable audio unit, tool kit, union jacket or other choice appliance.

Roger Gonazels, from one of the Local’s most recently organized shops, MSAS, won the grand prize—a 32” TV and DVD player.



Winners of the TVs collect their prizes

Aloise covered organizing, negotiating contracts, and the Local’s excellent financial condition. And he talked about power—which the union derives from a committed and active membership base along with an experienced core of officers and business representatives.

Everyone left with a complimentary Local 853 sweatshirt and bumper sticker to wear with pride.



Clockwise from above: Business Agents Bob Strello and Stu Helfer are ready to distribute the door prizes; Local 853 President John Becker brings the meeting to order; Members display their new Teamster sweatshirts; Retired Vice President Pat Sanchez explains why she’s proud of the Teamsters and Local 853; Some of the 300 people who attended the Membership Appreciation Day event.



## Announcements

### Extra Check for Year 2001

In his capacity as Trustee on the Western Conference of Teamsters Pension Trust, Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise announced that the Trustees have approved the payment of the Extra Check for all retirees who retired prior to January 1, 1985. The check will be \$1,100 for retired participants and \$550 for their eligible survivors. The target date for mailing the checks is January 8, 2001. Retirees who have questions concerning the Extra Check distribution should call Prudential Customer Service Office at their toll free number: 800-336-3387.

"As a trustee, I am very aware of how important this check is to our older retirees," said Aloise. "I am gratified that the Trust's excellent financial condition has made these extra payments possible."

### WCT Pension Plan Q&A

On the second Wednesday of every month, representatives from the Western Conference of Teamsters Pension Administrator come to Local 853's San Leandro offices. If you want to know what your pension benefit will be upon retirement, need to fill out retirement papers, or are just curious about your contribution record, this is the place to be. The counselor will bring your records. You must make an appointment first by calling **510-895-8853** or **800-400-1250**.

### SIP 401(k) Enrollment

In addition to your traditional pension plan, most Local 853 members have the advantage of also being eligible for the SIP 401(k) Plan. If you are not yet enrolled, or wish to increase your pre-tax deferred amounts—check with your business agent, your company's HR department, or call 1-800-4-PRETAX [1-800-477-3829].

### Monthly Meetings

Local 853's membership meetings are held the Second Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. They alternate between the west bay and east bay halls:

- 1700 Marina Blvd., San Leandro, or
- 1103 Airport Blvd., South San Francisco

## Teamsters Local 853

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More than 200 members who work at Berkeley Farms ratify their contract.

## Berkeley Farms contract sets record

Five years ago when Local 853 negotiated to build the newest and largest dairy in the western United States, many members thought that the union had given away too much.

Union officers, on the other hand, maintained that it was important to get a foot in the door. "If they don't build it, 90% of our members are out of work," said Rome Aloise at the time.

"Once it's built, we'll be in the drivers seat.



*No chad on these ballots!*

This prediction came true in October when Local 853 negotiated the record-setting contract. "I have been in the industry for over 28 years, and this is the best contract I have ever seen," said Shop Steward and bargaining committee member Pat Potter at the ratification meeting.

### Rocky start to negotiations

Things didn't look so rosy after the first few negotiation sessions with Dean Foods, which is Berkeley Farms' parent company. The company proposed replacing the union's health and welfare and 401(k) plans with the Dean Foods corporate plan. This offer would have meant inferior benefits and large monthly co-pays out of the members' pockets, setting the stage for a showdown.

In August, the members voted by a 98% margin to strike if the company didn't improve the package. The committee developed strike contingency plans and started making picket assignments.

Local 853's bargaining commit-

tee set a strike date for October 1, following the September 30 contract vote date. The company and the union bargaining committee met for 26 hours straight just prior

to the vote. At the last moment, the company made a proposal that the union bargaining committee could unanimously recommend. More than 200 members voted to ratify the contract.

"It was touch and go for a long time.

We really thought we were going to have to walk out in order to keep our health plan," said Business Agent Bob Strelow.

### Everything good about contract

The economic benefits include severance and health and welfare continuation for senior employees who wish to leave early, health and welfare increases and \$3.25 in wage increases. The four-year contract includes significant language improvements including seniority, job bidding, and job protection.

"I'm retiring in a short time, but there is everything good about this contract," said long-time bargaining committee member Gene Hodges. "I was proud to recommend it."

"This contract will set the pattern for the rest of the dairy industry," said Aloise. "It wouldn't have been possible without such a dedicated bargaining committee. They weren't afraid to stand up for what they wanted and also to face reality."

# Young's Market salespeople now have best liquor contract in nation; Southern is next

The Statewide Teamster Liquor Committee completed negotiations on the Young's Market Company re-opener for salesperson commission rates. The affected salespersons now earn the highest rates in the nation.

Originally Young's Market and Southern Wine and Spirits negotiated all of their contracts at the same time. Two years ago, however, the companies decided to split and negotiate separately on the salesperson contracts.

## Divide and conquer

This split worked to the union's benefit as the Locals decided a divide and conquer strategy was in order.

Young's agreed to a re-opener in June of this year in order to compete with the higher base rate at Southern Wine & Spirits. With the companies split, the unions were able to negotiate an increase in the commission rates for both spirits and wines, with a total

overall increase of 6.1%. Additional contract language improvements were negotiated to ensure that the company will not abuse sales meetings.

## Late Breaking News

### No move for Bode Gravel

As we go to press, we have learned that the Bode Gravel Plant will remain at its present San Francisco location for another two years.

This good news came after months of intense negotiations between the company and the owner of the land, Cattelius Corporation. San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown got involved and helped broker the outcome at Local 853's request.

## Prepared to strike

"Fortunately, Young's understood the need to make changes in the commission rates and the language," said Local 853 Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise, who chaired the statewide committee. "I suspect this became clear when more than 90% of the salespersons voted to strike if changes were not made!"

Aloise went on to say, "the differences between the two companies cannot go on past the next agreement. Southern will have to come to the same type of commission rate or else the salespersons must be prepared to strike for their demands, as the Young's people were."

The agreement with Young's Market Company makes Local 853's salespersons the highest total compensated—base, commissions, pension, and health and welfare—of any such salespersons in the country.

## Voice of the members

## As a union member, what are you thankful for?



**Emil Tallerico**  
VWR Scientific

*"I'm thankful for the benefits ... the good wages ... and a chance to come to a meeting like today's."*



**Peggy Kindle**  
Federated Logistics

*"I'm thankful for my job security and for having good people like Rome to represent us and do the best for us."*



**Justin Pebelier**  
Pacific Steel

*"This is my first meeting. I'm thankful to see the turnout, and glad to have the chance to be in a union."*



**Joan Neill & Lisa**  
National Starch

*"I'm thankful for my job. Having the union keeps the company from running over you."*

# Mobile unit brings Local 853 to the people



Local 853's Mobile Command Center (MCC) is making a splash—and getting the kind of attention the Local wants for it. Originally a 38-foot motorhome, the big green MCC was modified to serve as an on-site organizing office. It's set up to include a phone, fax, computer, copy machine and stacks of organizing leaflets.

"The MCC is a great organizing tool," says Construction Division Director Pete Gemma. "To organize, you need a presence at the job site. With the MCC, we make a strong first impression, and it's helped us to win two elections already."

During the Summit/Safeway strike, Local 853 used the MCC as a lunch wagon for the picketers at many Safeway stores around the Bay Area.



*Top: Organizing at Westside Building Materials. Bottom Left: Trustee Harvey Gomes brings President Jim Hoffa to see the MCC. Bottom Right: A lunch wagon for Safeway picketers.*



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