

A Steward's View of Negotiations

by TERRY POST, Steward — Bode Gravel Co.

The Teamsters Negotiating Committee, led by union officials from Locals 853, 287, 315 and 78, recently negotiated an historic Ready Mix agreement for Teamsters employed at Berkeley Ready mix, Bode Gravel, Central Concrete, Mission Valley, RMC and Sugar City.

The contract—possibly the best ready mix agreement in the nation—strengthened working conditions, provided for the largest wage increase in Bay Area Ready Mix history. And, for the first time, it put into effect a retirees' health and welfare plan.

Steward involvement is key

I believe that the decision to include stewards in the negotiations was the key factor that made these talks such an overwhelming success. And the inclusion of the stewards in the negotiations will continue to have an impact on the strength of our union and on the daily lives of our members in the Ready Mix industry.

A dozen stewards representing every company at the negotiating table were present at all eleven negotiating sessions, not merely to observe, but to actively participate. Every proposal offered by the committee was hashed out in detail by all of us. Likewise, each employer proposal had to go through the same process.

Much of the credit for the impact of the stewards on these negotiations must go to Committee Chair Pete Gemma. Many of the stewards were novices when it came to negotiating contracts. But Brother Gemma

With nearly 300 members in attendance on June 14, Local 853 ratified the Ready Mix Contract by a two-to-one margin. This four-year contract provides for significant wage increases, many language improvements, and retiree health and welfare for more than 800 Teamsters (Locals 78, 287, 315, and 853) at six companies. See full story on page 4.



Local 853's Ready mix contract ratification meeting was standing-room-only on June 13.

stewards in the negotiations, their union work will be both easier and more effective.

This process should also put to rest the skepticism some members had about the mergers of Locals 291 and 216 into Local 853. The knowledge, capability, patience and courage of Local 853's leadership on the Committee should be evidence enough of why the mergers are beneficial.

tapped into his many years of experience to provide the guidance around the negotiating process and insight into the history of Ready Mix contract talks.

The impact of the stewards' inclusion in the negotiations will certainly carry over into the workplace. From now on, every employer will know that the steward fully understands the contract and has the total support of the union. In short, by including

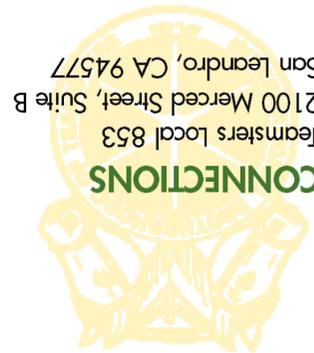
Our thanks go to Pete Gemma, Stu Helfer, Phil Tarantino and Rome Aloise for opening up the negotiating process to the membership. By example, Brother Aloise eradicated the negative image of sweetheart deals in smoke-filled rooms and, instead, showed the stewards what our negotiations are all about . . . facts, figures, history, strength, unity and, at times, a little bit of magic.

This agreement is testimony to union democracy at it's finest—not just in words, but in action. It is the product of a knowledgeable and courageous leadership that isn't afraid of rank and file involvement in union affairs.

This contract is also testimony to the dedication of the stewards who sat at the negotiating table. As a steward in this process, I am proud to be a member of Local 853 and the Teamsters.



Bode Gravel Shop Steward Terry Post participated in every bargaining session.



We're all affected by the energy crisis

By ROME ALOISE

Newspapers, radio and television are all reporting on the impending energy crisis in California. The prospect of rolling blackouts and higher electric bills is looming for our members and our employers.

Our employers complain that rising energy costs are impacting their bottom line, and we know they'll bring this issue to the bargaining table. But we also know that your PG&E bills have gone up as much as double over last year.

And we know that this crisis is not new to members of Local 853. Teamsters have suffered from the effects of high gas prices for a number of years. Many of our members who cannot afford houses or rents in the San Francisco Bay Area pay high gas prices to commute hundreds of miles each week to their jobs.

Our jobs are some of the highest paid and best benefited in the area, but working somewhere does not guarantee that you can live close by. Many of our members find that the advantages of a good union job are undermined by the cost of getting to it.

Many times in our contract proposal meetings our members voice frustration over the cost of getting to work or the

inability to afford a house close to where they work. We make seemingly ridiculous economic proposals that attempt to deal with the problem. But how ridiculous are they really?

Housing near work

Our employers are also concerned about hiring and keeping good employees and the expense of operating in the greater Bay Area. They realize that our members are hard working, skilled and very productive, so keeping them is a priority. Negotiating good contracts is part of the answer, but does not solve the problem.

Affordable energy prices, and most importantly, affordable housing needs to be developed. Unless our members can live relatively close to where they work, we can't reach our goal of providing a good wage and good benefits, while giving our members quality time to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

Many of our members work for eight or ten hours and then face a two-hour drive home. This situation is not just bad for the member, it's also a disadvantage for the employer. Workers who are tired or

stressed-out cannot be as smart and productive as those who are relaxed and fresh.

I believe one answer may be getting the union involved in providing affordable housing close to where our members work.

I have been contacted by developers willing to work with unions, employers, and local politicians on creating affordable housing for union members. This involves purchasing land, building houses using union labor, attaining financing from sources that are worker-friendly, and creating a method for providing a fair and consistent means of offering the available housing to union members.

I will pursue the "Affordable Housing for Union Members" concept. I truly believe that your union should be more than where you pay your dues.

IBT Convention

By the time your get this newsletter, your Local 853 delegates will probably be at the IBT Convention. Our next issue will provide a more detailed report of the areas that are addressed at the Convention.

TeaMSters walk for MS

Janine Vanier, Local 853's office manager, kept a secret for 14 years. Her secret was Multiple Sclerosis, a disabling disease that causes poor balance and makes walking difficult, among other symptoms. But when Vanier decided that to open up about her MS, she found that the union was there for her.

Last year she formed the TeaMSters to participate in the MS Walkathon. Union staff, officers and assorted friends walked together and raised \$7,800, taking home the Best Rookie Team award for Northern California.

With 25 people on this year's TeaMSters team, they more than doubled

the fundraising effort. "We raised over \$17,000, and checks are still coming in," Vanier reports. "This ranks our team as one of Northern California's top three."

On April 21-22, the Northern California Chapter of the MS Society sponsored nine separate walks with more than 2,500 total participants. The TeaMSters participated in the Alameda 5K walk at Crown Beach.

"Participation from the Local was fantastic," Vanier said. "The Mobile Command Center was there, and the staff really turned out. I recruited the office people from Local 78 to join the 853 walkers—Pete Gemma, Bo Morgan, Phil Tarantino, Jesse Casquero, John Becker, Jan Johnson, Lydia Pinedo and Eve Miller. Everybody got in the spirit of the day."



The 2001 TeaMSters



TeaMSters member Janine Vanier

Voice of the members What will you do for your summer vacation?



Cisco Lastra RMC

"Lots of camping, lots of drinking and lots of work. I'll spend time with the family and kids up at Berryessa."



Doug Radonich Central—South SF

"If we strike, I'll stand picket duty and work on my house. If not, it's business as usual—60 hours of fun a week."



Lee Warren RMC—SF

"Taking computer classes."



Mike Mullady Central—South SF

"Nothing. This is the one year I'm not doing anything, but work around the house, finishing small projects."

Announcements

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**.

National convention begins

On Monday, June 25, 2001, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters will hold its 26th National Convention in Las Vegas. Your elected delegates are: Rome Aloise, John Becker, Jr., Pete, Gemma, Antonio Christian, Phil Tarantino, Harvey Gomes and Mike Furtado. Bob Strello and Dan Harrington are the alternates.

The elected delegates will be nominating International officers, amending the constitution, and deciding on the policies that will govern our union for the next five years.

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

Call 510-895-8853 to confirm the location.

Teamsters Local 853

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Voice of the members

What will you do for your summer vacation?



Steve Davis
Mission Valley

"If we go on strike, I'll hold a sign. If not, I'll go fishing at Lake Don Pedro and spend time with my kids."



Skip Martin
RMC

"Anything fun. Water skiing, riding my new Harley, working as little as possible, hiding out from Pete."



Vanessa Sanchez
Central—South SF

"Riding my 1974 Harley Shovelhead. We'll go to Ventura Beach and Reno. It's the best!"



Mike Dillenburg
Central — Hayward

"What summer vacation? We work. If I do anything, it'll be visiting friends in Utah."

On the road with Local 853

Local 853's Mobile Command Center is a rolling billboard that offers all the services a member could need when on a picket line: a clean bathroom, a mini-kitchen with several coffee makers, and a strong PA system.

And for the past six months, the MCC has been on the road — at demonstrations, picket lines, fundraisers and job fairs. Here are a few pictures of the MCC in action!



(see story page 6)



Stop Rolling Blackmail

The first of several planned California actions to **Stop Rolling Blackmail** rocked Oakland June 6, when hundreds of Alameda County union members rallied at the Federal Building to demand price controls, then marched on Duke Energy to deliver a people's notice of eminent domain.

The Mobile Command Center met demonstrators at the Federal Building, accompanied the marchers with horn blaring, and made an appearance at the Duke Power Plant.

Tradeswomen Then & Again

When more than 500 high school students came to the Rosie the Riveter Memorial in Richmond, CA to learn about the first tradeswomen and to learn about opportunities in the Building Trades today, Local 853 was there.



Kroger Action Days

Members who showed up at the Ralph's store in Dublin had it easier than most of those who picketed at Ralph's and Krogers stores around the country on April 8-9. The MCC joined Kroger Action Days and supplied picketers with donuts, coffee and shelter from the cold and wet day.

The Mobile Command Center served as "Volunteer Central" for the 50-plus volunteers from the California Department of Industrial Relations, the State Building Trades Council, Tradeswomen, Inc., and several other government and non-profit groups.



"I never made so many pots of coffee at one time for so many women," said Bo Morgan. "This event really turned the tables."

Pictured above is surveyor Juanita Douglas and two of the original Rosie the Riveters, with Bo Morgan and Jesse Casquero in the rear.

Racking up great contracts



Signing in at the Ready Mix meeting.

Size matters!

The Ready Mix negotiations took a different and distinctive form from day one when the employers notified the Teamsters Building Materials Committee that they were ending the multi-employer bargaining unit and negotiating as individual companies.

Rather than accept this employer strategy, the Teamsters committee, chaired by Local 853 Vice President and Construction Division Director Pete Gemma, encouraged the employers to sit at the same table. The implied threat was that Local 853, along with the other Teamster Locals (78, 287 and 315), would take action against any employer who was not at the table.

The strategy resulted in the best-ever Ready Mix contract for approximately 800 Teamsters employed at six companies: Berkeley Ready mix, Bode Gravel, Central Concrete, Mission Valley, RMC and Sugar City.

The four-year contract calls for hourly wage increases with SUP dues of \$6.00, a Retirement Security Plan—retroactive to December 2000, and language changes that make all shifts outside of the 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. shifts paid at the overtime rate and guaranteed for 8 hours. It also assigns rentals and out of area work by seniority and improves paid lunch coverage.

"With the size and strength of our members in Local 853, the inclusion of stewards in the negotiating process and the expertise that Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise brought to the table, we were able to get the best contract ever!" noted Division Chairman Pete Gemma. "The merger of former Locals 216 and 291 into Local 853 proved to be the difference. Size does matter!"

130 Dreyers members get 'best contract ever'

The ice cream makers and warehouse employees at Dreyers' John Thomason Operational Center in Union City have a new four-year contract. "This is the best contract I have ever seen since I've been represented by Local 853," said Steward and Bargaining Committee Member Fred Ramirez.

Elected bargaining committee members Rich Luis, Fred Ramirez and Larry Casquero were assisted by Business Agent Bob Strello in securing an excellent agreement that covers 130 Local 853 members.



From L to R: Larry Casquero, Jaime ???, Rich Luis, Steve Ruelas, Fred Ramirez and Ralph Smeester (seated) negotiated the Dreyers' contract.

No easy task

Getting a contract proposal that the committee felt it could recommend to the members was not easy. It took 16 bargaining sessions and rejecting a first settlement offer.

The bargaining committee continued to meet with Dreyer's after the Local called a strike deadline and they eventually hammered out a much improved second offer. This offer was subsequently ratified by more than 75% of the members on May 15.



Members at Dreyers are happy with their new contract

"This would have been the first strike in the union's 35-year history with Dreyers," explained Strello. "I'm really proud of the members for sticking together, showing they were serious about their proposals and holding strong to achieve a fair contract."

The four-year agreement calls for the highest hourly wage rate increases in the history of the contract. In addition to several language improvements, the agreement provides for increases in pension benefits and the company will pick up the full cost for health and welfare benefits by the final year of the agreement.

No takeaways at Costco

The West Coast Costco bargaining committee succeeded in hammering out a good agreement that the members ratified with an 84% margin in February. This agreement covers more than 8,000 members in 39 locations from Locals 78, 150, 166, 542, 572, 853 and 986.

When negotiations began last September, the committee had an additional hurdle: the East Coast Teamsters had been unable to secure a decent contract since theirs had expired in February, 2000.

A Shop Steward from every Costco warehouse and delivery location in the west participated in negotiating committee meetings in San Diego. Local 853's Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise was the spokesperson for the Union Committee.

After nine meetings, it appeared that Costco was not going to budge on several important issues. But the committee persevered. They finally got an offer they could recommend which included many improvements, and most importantly, no takeaways.

Many thanks to the Local 853 team for their hard work: President John Becker, Recording-Secretary Antonio Christian, Trustee Julie Molina (also Shop Steward for South San Francisco), and Shop Stewards Lisa Davis, Julio Merino, Clarence Rainey and Cesar Martinez.

Since then, through the efforts of Aloise, the East Coast Teamsters have finally settled their Costco contract as well.