



# Going from 'the union' to 'my union'

By ROME ALOISE

Over the years, many union members have switched from speaking about "their union" to the more negative and distant "the union." This simple change in how many of us refer to our union signifies an important shift in how unions are perceived—both by our members and by the general public.

From my discussions with members who work in every industry represented by Local 853, I have learned that most of you have confidence in your union. You know that if you have a problem, you can reach your business agent or me, and get an answer to your question or get action on your issue.

I believe our members know that their contracts are among the nation's best in every industry and sector where they work, and that their health benefits and pension plans are stable and work for them and their families.

## Take ownership of your union

I want the members of Local 853 to feel they are part of their own organization. I want the members to take pride in Local 853's accomplishments. I want our members to feel they have a say in what happens to them on their jobs, and a say in how their union operates. Most importantly, I want our membership to take ownership of their union.

This can only happen if our members, YOU, start to make a few small changes.

Talk to your fellow members about

"their," "our," or "my" union. Be quick to point out some of the things you have that your non-union competitor doesn't have. These include a contract and a grievance procedure, overtime pay, sick leave, vacations, health care benefits worth as much as \$6 per hour and a free or inexpensive prescription drug plan.

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I hope you'll appreciate and talk about the fact that when you retire you will have a monthly pension for the rest of your life, and perhaps the rest of your spouse's life. Appreciate and talk about the fact that you probably also have the benefit of a 401(k) plan to supplement your pension.

Most importantly, talk to your fellow members and to workers who need a union, about supporting your union and organizing to gain the advantages your union provides.

## Recognizing the limits

On the other hand, your union cannot accomplish every goal, solve every prob-

lem, or overturn every disciplinary action or discharge.

As a union member, you can help protect your job by making sure your employer stays competitive against non-union companies. As a union member, you are responsible for providing your employer with a good day's work for a good day's pay.

Understand how important it is to take responsibility for your actions. Police yourself and try to help your fellow union members act responsibly. Many of the bad rules and restrictive language in our contracts are instituted as a result of a few people abusing a good thing.

Let one of your New Year's resolutions be to make "the" union, "my" union. Give back to your union by helping your shop steward, by defending your union against derogatory attacks, by attending union meetings and participating in union functions and by showing pride that you belong to the one organization in this country that exists solely for you.

I wish you and yours happy, healthy, and safe holidays. Remember, the reason you are getting paid while you are off on these holidays is because of YOUR UNION!



## Teamsters Local 853

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**Members:** Send address changes and comments to the above address or e-mail us: [connections@teamsters853.org](mailto:connections@teamsters853.org)

Debra Chaplan, Editor

## Benefits & Announcements

### WCT Pension Plan Q&A

On the second Wednesday of every month, a representative from the Western Conference of Teamsters Pension Administrator's office comes to Local 853's San Leandro office to answer your pension questions. Call 510-895-8853 or 800-400-1250 for an appointment.

### SIP 401(k) Enrollment

Most Local 853 members are 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 the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the West Bay and East Bay:

- 1700 Marina Blvd., San Leandro, or
  - Laborers' Union Hall, 300-7th Avenue San Mateo
- Call 510-895-8853 to confirm location.

## **Record crowd of members recommit to union and vote**

The seventh annual Local 853 Membership Appreciation Day brought another record crowd to the union hall on November 5. More than 400 members got an opportunity to get a final revving up before the special election; they heard the "State of the Union" by Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise, and a lucky—and fairly large—group collected a huge bounty of raffle prizes.

Special guests included IBT Vice-President Chuck Mack, who shared stories about visiting with Teamsters across Northern California to talk about the Special Election. "If we succeed in defeating Props 74-77, we'll have kicked Arnold's butt, and he'll have to stand down from his anti-union agenda," Mack said.

Stewart Boxer, from the workers' compensation law firm of Boxer and Gerson reminded members about the role the governor played in wrecking the workers' comp system. "Just another reason to be sure to vote down Arnold's half-baked initiatives," Boxer added.

### **State of the Union**

Then it was Aloise's turn to discuss the state of the union. "Our membership has grown in the last year," Aloise began as he talked about the Reliable Trucking battle. "30 years ago, this industry was all union. But in losing union status, the employees found their benefits were getting worse, not better over the years." The company pursued one unfair labor practice after another during the organizing drive, threatening workers on one hand and bribing them on the other. "In the end, we still won, and we're moving forward."

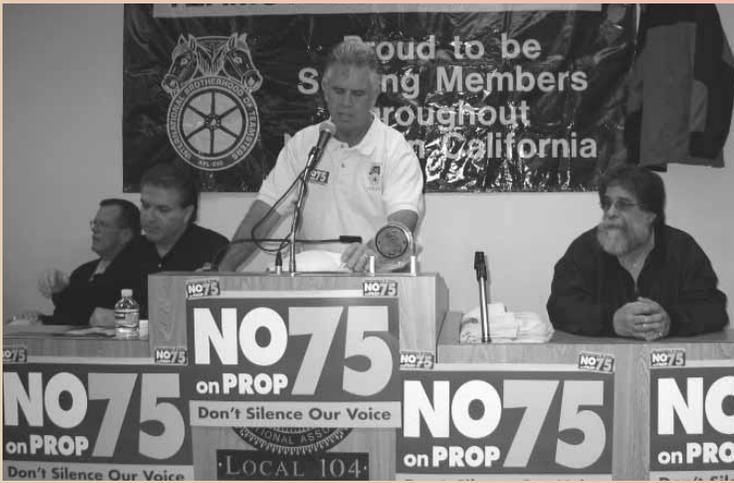
The local only had one strike in 2005 and that was at Pacific Ready Mix. "When the company stopped paying our members their wages and benefits, they had to go out."

Local 853 has purchased the building next to the union hall. "Owning two buildings gives us a good investment for our members and for our future. We'll set up video conferencing and may have next year's Membership Appreciation Day in both halls!"

"All in all, Aloise concluded, "we continue to move and shake and be active."

### **Recommitting to our union**

The main theme of Aloise's comments was about the future of "our" union. Aloise took the group back to the time when unions were first organized and their members gave their all because "they had nothing to lose." When union solidarity enabled them to get the raises and benefits they couldn't get on their own, members displayed



**Top:** President John Becker calls the meeting to order. Seated L-R: IBT Vice President Chuck Mack; Local 853 Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise and Vice President Phil Tarantino.

**Center:** Three drivers from Reliable Trucking, Jaime Guido, Darren Fedorff and Manual Ambriz, who are fighting for union recognition;

**Bottom:** Rome Aloise gives 'state of the union' address.



*ation Day Meeting: November 5, 2005*

# are challenged to e in Special Election

their union loyalty proudly, and they passed down that commitment to the next generation. Older members mentored new members, teaching them about how the union works, how to be involved, and ensured that they understood what the union did for them.

As years passed, however, the generations coming of age in the 1960's and 70's were more anti-authoritarian and individualistic. Union members became the middle and upper-middle class, and, with more to lose, they became more conservative. This is when members began to think of their union as "the union" instead of "my union." Members stopped attending union meetings and starting resenting that they had to pay union dues.

The goal of Local 853 is again to be thought of as "Our Union." Aloise suggested that those present talk with their fellow union members at work about their union. "When someone new comes to your shop, welcome them to the company and to your union. Remind them about what your union does to ensure they have decent wages and benefits and rights on the job. Your pride in your union will keep us strong," Aloise suggested.

## The great raffle give-away

Capping off the meeting was the raffle prize give-away. The grand prize was a 32-inch television. Major prize winners could then choose from an assortment of DVD players, smaller TVs, digital cameras and other electronic items. Remaining winners could pick union hats, t-shirts, jackets and more. "We give stuff away so people will feel close to their union and give us some positive advertising," Aloise added.

Those who attended the meeting also got vouchers for gore-tex jackets embroidered with the union logo on the outside and on the removable lining. Due to a shipping delay, the jackets weren't available at the November meeting.

## The great Local 853 membership appreciation prize give-away



*This year, the grand prize was a 32-inch TV. Members also took home DVD players, smaller TVs, miscellaneous items and great union gear (see top photo). Bottom left is Pam Talavera from Rock Transport, winner of the grand prize. Bottom right is Business Agent Bo Morgan helping a member select his prize.*

## Why is it important to support your union—and what do you do to show your support?



*Rick Stevenson  
Andrini Brothers*

*We need to support our union for the unity. It gets us job security. I go to meetings and stay informed so I know what's going on.*



*Rick Talley  
Berkeley Farms*

*We want to keep our benefits and our union backs us up. I pay my union dues, and need to start coming to more meetings.*



*Annie Mori, Retired, Local 856  
Evelyn Clitherow, Genesis*

*(Annie) My brothers fought Hitler in WWII so we don't need another dictator like Arnold. We have to support our unions.  
(Evelyn) We need our union for the benefits. We can't find better benefits.*



*Damon Defer  
Fair & Swanson*

*Our union enables us to continue to live a good life. I grew up with 853 and hope to retire at 55. I go to union meetings and give money to DRIVE.*



*LuLu-Ra Ankmahene  
Federated*

*We need our union to keep our benefits, to keep a strong pension, and job security. I vote and am active in all of our meetings.*

**Ask the members:**  
**Why and how do you support your union?**



*Tom Ingebretsen*  
*SF Chronicle*

Unions are the future for the working guy. If no one supports our union, there is no future. I could be informed on political issues and lead by example.



*Bant Singh*  
*Gillig*

Our union is important to keep our jobs. We can come to meetings and listen to their ideas.



*Francisco Munoz*  
*Spicers Paper*

Our union is here to better all of us in life. It's a good thing to support the union and our fellow workers. What I do is vote.



*Calvin Chan*  
*MacMurray Pacific*

They're our bargaining agent to make sure we have high wages and good benefits. I'd do whatever they asked us to do.



*Luis Oroasco*  
*Costco*

Our union has helped me a lot. They help us at work, they protect us. And we have a pension because of the union. I'll do anything to support my union.



*Nyles Ryan*  
*Cemex*

If we don't have our union, our standard of living will go down and we'll lose the middle class. I vote and will talk to others about voting.

## Local 853 supports a Teamster family of Katrina survivors

When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast on August 29, millions of people from New Orleans to rural Mississippi lost their homes, their jobs, and everything they held dear. In response to the devastation, people from across America and the world donated billions of dollars and an array of supplies.

The response from Teamsters has been impressive. As of November 1, the Teamsters Disaster Relief Fund received \$823,720. Teamsters mobilized volunteers, transported supplies, and assisted with relocation and rebuilding efforts in the affected areas.

Local 853 decided to focus its donation and provide significant help to one Teamster family in need. The IBT's Community Services Department identified the family—that of Dina Benoit of Gulfport, Mississippi.

Dina Benoit has worked for UPS for almost 13 years, and has been a member of Teamsters Local 891 from day one. While Dina's home suffered some storm damage, hers was in bet-



*Dina Benoit and her twin brother Danin share Hostess cupcakes for their birthday celebration.*

ter condition than most. Fortunately, nobody in her family lost their lives.

At one point, Dina took in 32 relatives. She purchased several generators and then got extension cords to share power with her neighbors.

After three months, Dina reports that she's down to housing only ten relatives. "We are not where we all want to be," she says, "but we are not where we used to be."

Local 853 has "adopted" Dina Benoit and her family, and is donating \$2,500 per month for an unspecified period of time.

If you would like to make an additional contribution, please send your check to Teamsters Local 853 to: 2100 Merced Street, Suite B, San Leandro, CA 94577. (Make check payable to Teamsters Local 853—put Dina Benoit fund on the memo line.)

Dina ended her letter to Local 853 with a P.S.—"The one thing that Katrina has taught me: it's not what you have, it's who you have."

## Union files unfair labor practices charges against Reliable Trucking

Even after Local 853 won the August 31 election to represent 120 drivers at Reliable Trucking, the company challenged the results. The union fought back by filing unfair labor practice charges against the company. In November, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) agreed with the union and issued multiple complaints against Reliable Trucking for illegal actions during the pre-election period.

Company actions designed to discourage support for the union included: offering employees a \$500 bounty to bring in mail ballot for the company to fill out, threatening to close,

and holding illegal meetings. An Administrative Law Judge will preside over a hearing on these issues in January.

"The actions by and on behalf of Reliable have been among the worst I have seen in an NLRB election campaign," said Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise. "These drivers have been used and abused, and we will continue to fight for them."

In addition to the legal fight, the union is currently preparing a campaign at Reliable's sister companies, Alamillio Steel and Conco, and may visit sites where Reliable trucks make their deliveries.



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*Local 853 – organizing and building a stronger union*

# *Happy Holidays*

*from the staff & officers of Local 853*



*Wishing you and your family  
a safe, healthy and prosperous 2006*

**Local 853 Executive Board**

- Rome Aloise — Secretary-Treasurer
- John C. Becker, Sr. — President
- Phil Tarantino — Vice President
- Antonio Christian — Recording Secretary
- Mike Furtado — Trustee
- Julie Molina — Trustee
- Jeff Belunza — Trustee

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- Kim Drinkward
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- Eve Miller
- Lydia Pinedo

**Organizer**

- Jesse Casqueiro



# CONNECTIONS

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## Ask the members:

*How important is it for you to support your union?*

*What can you do to show your support?*



**Victor Seaward Gillig**

The unions are pretty strong but only as strong as the people in them. I go to union events.



**Tony Faafiti  
Crystal Dairy**

Everybody has to stick together to keep the union strong. If we make a decision, we have to stick by it.



**James Fisher  
Right Away Redi Mix**

I'm just learning how important unions are. The benefits are much better than what I got working non-union.



**Claudia Mangin  
Western Unified Grocers**

The union backs you up when you need them. I wish I'd gotten in a long time ago because I'd have a good retirement now.

## Local 853 members help beat back the Terminator's attack

Public employees, Teamsters, and all of California's working people won a tremendous victory on November 8, sending all four of Arnold Schwarzenegger's anti-worker propositions down to a crushing defeat.

This wasn't an easy victory. When Governor Schwarzenegger and his corporate allies first launched their attack on public workers and their unions, early polls showed support for the anti-worker propositions. Proposition 75, the initiative designed to restrict union involvement in the political arena and the heart of Schwarzenegger's attack on working families, at one time enjoyed a 55-23 percent edge with voters. However, by election day, Schwarzenegger's cornerstone lost 53 percent to 47 percent.

Achieving that turn-around took thousands of union members across the state putting in days and nights of phone banking, precinct walking, rally organizing, mailings and meetings.

### Voters get the message

Fortunately, voters were not fooled by the Special Election. They rejected Arnold Schwarzenegger's power grab, and they rejected his bullying antics and his politics of blame.

California union members passed out more than 2 million workplace leaflets and made more than 2 million phone calls to mobilize union family voters against the corporate-backed attacks. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that the campaign against working families was "financed chiefly by

business interests, including real estate developers, technology executives, auto dealers, agribusiness and Wal-Mart heirs."

Ultimately, California's working people didn't buy the notion that silencing unions and giving the governor new sweeping powers would really solve the problems facing California.

### No rest yet

As sweet as this victory is for union members, it is essentially a holding action. If you listened to the governor on Election Night, you know that he offered no apology for the ordeal he put our state through. He had no apology for the trash talking he did about firefighters, teachers and nurses. And he has done nothing to suggest he is backing away from his plan to gut the retirement system or continue bleeding money from local governments.

"This fight is far from over. While more members of our Local registered to vote and participated in DRIVE than ever before, that's just a start," says Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise. "The governor's long-term agenda is to break union power. Next, he wants to take away public employees' defined benefit pension plans and then make California a right-to-work state."

Teamsters and a strong majority of California voters sent the Terminator a message loud and clear: "Your special election was a waste of time, money and effort. Terminate your right-wing agenda and get back to the business of governing the state instead of posing for photo ops on the campaign trail."

*The governor's long-term agenda was to break union power. We beat him this time, but the fight continues.*