



CONNECTIONS

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Local 853 battles VWR on many fronts

VWR must have thought they could sneak out of Brisbane in the dark of night, dump the union, set up shop non-union in Visalia and collect huge tax breaks without anyone noticing. Well, they were wrong. Local 853 has represented about 150 members at VWR for more than 50 years. Since the company, now owned by Chicago-based private equity firm Madison-Dearborn Partners, announced they were skipping town, the Local has fought them every step of the way.

On May 9, Congresswoman Jackie Speier (D-San Francisco/San Mateo) and State Treasurer Bill Lockyer held a hearing about the VWR situation with a specific focus on state and federal tax policies that may be subsidizing the piracy of jobs and economic activity from one area of the state to another.

Speier told a crowded room full of anxious Teamsters that she would do everything in her power to keep the medical supply company from leaving Brisbane and taking jobs with it.

"This misdirected tax policy subsidizes the loss of good jobs in Brisbane and offers an incentive to hire employees at likely lower wages in Visalia," Speier said. "We need to find ways to protect local jobs."

The ramifications of the VWR move impact more than the workers; the city of Brisbane will be crippled by the loss of about 50 percent of its sales tax revenue, City Manager Clay Holstein said, estimating that the lost revenue would reduce Brisbane's police force by 67 percent and its fire department by 88 percent.

Panel members for the State-Federal hearing included Speier, State Treasurer Bill Lockyer, Assemblymember Jerry Hill, staff from the office of Senator Leland Yee, Clarke Conway from the Brisbane City Council, a representative from the Brisbane Chamber of Commerce, and Shelly Kessler from the San Mateo Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO.

Panelists explored different state tax policies — especially the Enterprise Zone program — as well as the reimbursement agreement where the City of Visalia agreed to give VWR millions in property-

related improvements. They also discussed the considerable amount of state pension fund investments that Madison Dearborn has enjoyed.

In his remarks, Lockyer said he was reviewing whether the employee retirement system CalPERS should continue to invest in Madison Dearborn. "This is an example of state law run amok," Speier said. "It is a job-destroying law. It is a taxpayer ripoff that is robbing one community in order to enrich another in the same state."

Assemblyman Jerry Hill, D-San Mateo, is currently crafting legislation to close what he calls a "loophole" in state law to prevent cities from luring companies away from others.

Fifteen Local 853 members who work at VWR braved retaliation and came to the hearing to shed light on the situation. And, Joint Council 7 mobilized Locals 70, 350, 386, 624, 665, 853, 856, 948, and 2785 to pack the room.



Hearing testimony was Cong. Jackie Speier (3rd from left) and Assm. Jerry Hill, (5th from left)



Local 853 members Carlo Ricci, Donald Dugawi and John Thomas testified before the committee.

So far, none of VWR's local employees have been offered the opportunity to relocate to Visalia, said John Thomas, an employee at VWR for more than 15 years. "They don't want to take union employees," he said. "We helped build this company to success."

"My tax money is going to get rid of my job," complained Carlo Ricci,

who has worked at the facility for 15 years. "They're pirating jobs from one part of the state to another, and my tax dollars are paying for it," he said.

Local 853 has worked on numerous strategies to keep VWR in Brisbane and to ensure that if the company does leave, that the members have severance and transfer rights. "Unfortunately, we tried mediation, but that got us nowhere," says Business Rep Bob Strelow. "It's very disappointing. We're now prepared to ramp up the campaign to educate VWR's customers about what a bad player this company is. It looks like a strike is inevitable. This is the most disingenuous company and labor relations operations I've ever worked with."

Watch this newsletter for calls to action about how you can help your brothers and sisters at VWR.

A tribute to John Becker, Local 853 VP and past-President

By ROME ALOISE

When one of our officers retires it is always a bittersweet time for me. On one hand, I am happy that the person is able to retire in good health, with a good pension. On the other hand, I am sorry that our local loses the value of the experience and abilities that only come with time and commitment to the job.

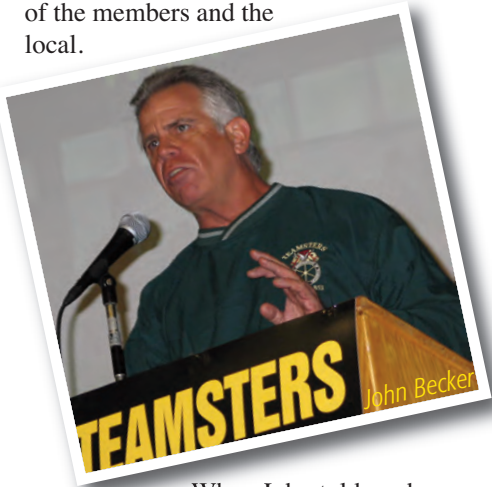
John Becker, who has held the offices of Vice President and President of Local 853, announced his retirement effective July 1. Frankly, the announcement shocked me, as John is still relatively young. Of course, I know that he has been an official for 30-plus years, but I didn't expect him to retire so early.

John originally started working as a business agent for Local 860, after working at Macy's and serving as a Shop Steward. I can still remember when John first starting working for the local. He was full of enthusiasm, piss and vinegar.

John progressed and eventually lead Local 860 as its Principal Officer and Secretary-Treasurer. As many companies started to move out of the West Bay to the East Bay or out of California altogether, John knew that Local 860 could not be as effective as a stand-alone local as it should be. In a totally unselfish gesture, which characterized his entire career, John did what was right for his members and merged into Local 853. He traded his own Principal Officer status for an increased ability to provide strong representation to the membership.

Since that time, John has played a crucial role in developing and growing Local 853 to become one of the premier local unions in the Teamsters Union.

In 2008, John unselfishly stepped down as President to open the way for our merger with Local 78, which again proved that bigger is better. John understood that by stepping back to the position of Vice President, he was taking on a less-advantageous title. But, he sacrificed for the good of the members and the local.



When John told me he was retiring, he said that he knew it was time to go because he was less satisfied with the work and with what he could accomplish. Again, John exhibited his integrity and incredible values by deciding to leave rather than to languish out his term of office. The job of representing our members is a tough, grueling, and mostly thankless job, except for the personal satisfaction one gets from knowing that we fight

for workers' rights and make workers' lives better. It takes a special type of person to do this job and John is that very special type of person.

Although I am losing a partner and a confidante, upon whom I could always depend, I am happy that John is retiring at a time in his life that will enable him to enjoy the fruits of his labor and to spend time with his wife and family. I wish him good fortune, health and happiness. I encourage those of you who have had the good fortune to be represented by John as your business agent to thank him. In the next few weeks John will be working with the agents who will be assigned to his houses.

Fighting run-away employers

We are still in a struggle with two employers who are attempting to undermine our members' rights. Loomis has used a technicality in the law that deals only with guards to walk away from their contractual obligations. VWR is attempting to run away to Visalia without giving our members the opportunity to follow their jobs.

We cannot let our employers get away with these types of union busting schemes. We want every other employer to know what it will cost them to try. We will support our members until we win these fights.



Announcements

WCT Pension Plan Q&A

On the second Wednesday of every month, a representative from the WCT Pension Administrator 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].

Check out Local 853's website

Go to www.teamsters853.org to see the local has been up to between newsletters; also get business forms and other union resources.

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Members: Send address changes and comments to the above address or e-mail us at connections@teamsters853.org

Charge your union dues

In our continuing effort to make dues payments easier and more convenient, Local 853 is now offering monthly credit card payments for your dues. For more information on this program, please contact the local union office at 510-895-8853.

Monthly union meetings

Local 853's membership meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in San Leandro, (except for October, when it is held in San Mateo):

- 2100 Merced St., San Leandro, or
- 151 W. 20th Avenue, San Mateo, CA.

Teamsters turn out strong for L.A. march to “stop the war on workers”



Local 853 members boarded a bus in San Leandro at 2:30 a.m. on March 26 so that they could be part of the march on Los Angeles to “stop the war on workers.” In the largest workers’ rights march outside of the midwest, they joined more than 30,000 union members and allies from across California to tell the nation, “We will not be bullied by out-of-control governors and legislatures in Wisconsin, Indiana, Michigan, Florida or Maine. We will stand together to fight for collective bargaining rights and better-paying jobs.”

General President James Hoffa kicked off a Teamster gathering that preceded the downtown LA march. “We’re here today to

tell Wall Street, (Wisconsin Gov.) Scott Walker, (Florida Gov.) Rick Scott, (Ohio Gov.) John Kasich and every other corporate-backed political puppet that workers in this country didn’t cause our economic woes and we sure as hell aren’t going to take the blame for them,” Hoffa told the group of about 15,000 cheering Teamsters.

What’s the war about?

The first, and nastiest battle was launched in Wisconsin. Here, Governor Scott Walker and his Republican legislature passed \$140 million in tax give-aways to corporations and the wealthy. Then they declared that there was a \$137 million deficit that required solving through a “Budget Repair Bill.” That bill included two key components: first, cutting public workers’ wages and pension contributions, and second, ending the rights of public sector unions (except for firefighters and police) to collectively bargain on all but cost-of-living wage increases.

Over a five week period, the 14 Democratic Senators left the state to deny the Senate a quorum to vote on the bill and tens of thousands of Wisconsin workers took over the state Capitol building.

Unfortunately, the Republicans did a work-around; they removed the budget parts of the bill and were able to vote just on gutting union rights.

Similar fights were also launched by Republicans in Ohio, Florida, Alaska, Indiana, Maine and Michigan. Ohio’s legislature passed a bill that enacts sweeping changes to the state’s existing collective-bargaining law, allowing only “wages, hours, and terms and conditions” to be subject to collective bar-



gaining, while health care benefits, pensions, and other issues would not be.

They may have won the battle in Wisconsin and Ohio, but they have not won the war that they launched against workers who seek to join together in a union.

Wisconsin-style attacks on workers’ rights come to California

In Orange County, Costa Mesa City Councilman Jim Righeimer is using the budget as an excuse to go after public sector workers’ jobs, pensions and unions. His plan is to fire half of the City’s workers and outsource their jobs to private companies.

And in San Jose, Mayor Chuck Reed is pushing a “fiscal emergency” measure that would gut workers’ collective bargaining and sharply reduce retirement security. San Jose unions have come to the table to negotiate concessions with the mayor to help ease the city’s fiscal crisis, but the mayor has refused.

“These attacks aren’t about jobs or pensions. They’re about politicians trying to eliminate our basic right to have a union,” says California Labor Federation Secretary-Treasurer Art Pulaski. “If the anti-worker forces succeed in stripping collective bargaining away in Costa Mesa and San Jose, you can be sure it won’t be long until they come to your town.”



Long-time Local 853 Trustees Furtado and Belunza retiring



Mike Furtado



Jeff Belunza

“It’s been an honor and a privilege to represent you for more than 30 years,” said Mike Furtado at the June union meeting, upon announcing his retirement from Berkeley Farms and the Teamsters. Mike had been elected trustee at Local 302 and, after the merger, has been an elected trustee for four terms in Local 853. “It’s a tough world out there—but it’s much better with these guys working for you.”

Trustee Jeff Belunza, who worked at Gillig for 30 years and served as Chief Shop Steward, is also retiring in July. Jeff has also served as a Trustee of Local 853 for many years and now serves as an advisory member of the Executive Board. Jeff served on 6 negotiations, pushing to get the best deal available for the members in an industry where Gillig is the only remaining American bus builder.

“I’ve known both of these guys for about as long as I’ve been a Teamster,” says Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise. “They always stood up for what is right. I’m pleased that they can retire with a decent pension, because they certainly deserve it. We’ll miss their leadership, but we wish them both a great and healthy retirement.”



Megan Mullarkey, daughter of Steve Mullarkey who works at Bode Gravel, received a donation of \$200 from Local 853 for her school event.



Juan Perez, a Teamster since 1978, has worked for Andreini Brothers for the last 13 years. Here, he’s seen towing a decommissioned Nike Hercules Missile to the Dream Machine show in Half Moon Bay in May. As Business Agent Stu Helfer says, “If you want it transferred safely, call a Teamster!”



A group of Gillig employees, after ratifying their new contract in January.



Vice President John Becker gives Business Rep Bob Strela the “Steve Zucker” award for having sold the most raffle tickets for the annual TAP fundraiser.

Why do you attend union meetings?



Reginald Beasley
Oakland Airport

“So I can hear what’s going on and try to get involved when I can. It’s rough out there. The union is the only avenue that working families have to fight for better wages and benefits and a voice in the workplace.”



Diana Coughlin
MV Transportation

“Just to be informed and find out what’s going on locally with the union. Also, to get to know the people in the union. I’m trying to be involved and know about our rights as union members.”

Teamsters take Loomis case to Sweden

After nearly 40 years of having Loomis AB (and its predecessor companies) under contract, the company decided to walk away from its contractual relationship with Teamsters Local 853 and five other California locals. How could they do that?



Almost 30 years ago, the National Labor Relations Board determined that armored truck drivers were guards, and that, as such, they could not be represented by a union that represented other workers. Since that decision came down, however, the Teamsters continued to represent the drivers at Loomis. That is, until last year, when the company unilaterally decided that it no longer recognized the union.

The Teamsters fought back at the National Labor Relations Board, who initially ruled against the union. However, NLRB Chair Wilma Liebman wrote the dissenting opinion, contending that once a company has recognized a union, which Loomis clearly did for 58 years, they can't walk away. "Her opinion lends credence to our position. The Board should be coming out with a decision soon," says Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise.

Don't violate international law

In the meantime, Aloise took the case to Loomis' executives at the company's annual shareholder meeting in Sweden.

"It is an inherent human right for workers to be able to collectively organize and choose their union representation," Aloise told the shareholders. "By violating this right, Loomis is in violation of internationally-recognized labor standards."

Aloise described to Loomis shareholders the abuses Loomis employees in America are facing. "Armored truck guard is one of the most dangerous jobs in America," Aloise said. "Yet Loomis refuses to provide gun training and bulletproof vests, and reduced the armored truck teams from three to two people. On top of that, Loomis stopped pensions for its California workers and now makes them pay up to \$1,000 per month for health care."

The important outstanding question that Aloise left them with is, Loomis would never dare treat their Swedish employees this way. So why are they abusing their U.S. workers?

Loomis' Chairman Alf Göransson has pledged, as the CEO of Securitas, to obey the OECD Code of Conduct for multinational corporations, and has a worldwide agreement with the UNI Global Union to respect workers' rights.

Aloise said that if Loomis continues to violate its workers' rights, the Teamsters will be left with no choice but to file a formal OECD complaint and to leverage the Teamsters' relationships with some of Loomis's largest customers.

Loomis Armored US, Inc. provides armored transport, ATM, cash processing, and outsourced vault services to banks, financial institutions, commercial and retail businesses, hospitality companies, sports facilities, governments, schools, pharmacies and health care businesses.

Why do you attend union meetings?



Pam Gaskill
Rock Transport

"I love our union. I love everybody here. I love being part of this. I've found something that fits who I am. Coming to meetings is the way to find out what the union is doing, and start contributing."



Ramon Castillo
Berkeley Farms

"To be informed. It's an obligation for every Teamster to be here."



John Warren
Reliance Metals

"I'm a shop steward. I keep up with what's going on with the union. It's our future—for our families, for our benefits."



Edward Rosario
Berkeley Farms

"I don't want to miss this. If I didn't come, my guys at the shop would kill me!"



Ron Goldman
Central Concrete

"To stay abreast of what's going on. To keep wages, benefits and our jobs secure. And to keep us together. We can't lose what we've got—we'll never get it again."



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Local 853 – organizing and building a stronger union

Teamsters 853 Women's Committee launched

On May 14, Local 853's women's committee was officially launched with a breakfast at Dick's Restaurant in San Leandro. Members who work at Costco, First Transit, VWR, Rock Transport, the State Building Trades Council and at Local 853 attended the inaugural meeting and agreed that the committee's goals should include addressing women members' problems and concerns on the job; providing education and resources to understand how the union works so as to be more effective players; and focusing on organizing to build the union and political action.

At the first meeting, spearheaded by Pam Gaskill from Rock Transport, the group agreed to plan two events: A community service day in July and an educational forum in September. Committee members debated several types of service events and causes, and will inform the full list as soon as a plan is set.

"Some of us work in positions where



Teamster women gather for first committee meeting

there are few other women on the job. It's so important to have the opportunity to connect with other union women," says committee founder Pam Gaskill. "But more than that, this is our union—and it's up to us to get involved."

Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise

stopped by to wish the founding group well and to encourage them to focus on union building.

If you'd like more information about how to join the Teamsters Local 853 Women's Committee, contact Pam at pgkjoy@gmail.com.