



CONNECTIONS

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Local 853 leads the way in organizing

After a long, well-publicized campaign, the 84 shuttle drivers who bring workers from cities across the Bay Area to Facebook's Menlo Park campus voted by 43-28 in November to be represented by Teamsters Local 853. This election marks an important union inroad to the notoriously anti-union high-tech industry.

"The only way they will listen to us is with a union and a collective voice. I'm very relieved that we have that now," said Demaurae Hooston, a driver employed by Loop Transportation in South San Francisco. Loop is one of a number of operators that Silicon Valley companies contract with to provide transportation for their employees.

"We can't continue 16-hour days, having drivers sleeping in the cold in their cars while we wait five hours to be able to start our next shift. It's inhumane," said Cliff Doi, another driver. "With our union, we can find solutions to these problems."

"These tech companies need to step up and stop demanding the lowest bid contract. They need to all agree to pay



Local 853 members and drivers rally at Facebook HQ the day before the union election.

their contractors an amount that allows the union to negotiate for decent wages and benefits. Of all the industries in the world, the tech industry can afford to compensate those who help make them successful," Local 853 Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise told the *New York Times*. "We're ready to get to work at Loop to help these drivers better their lives and the conditions they face at work—to get them some justice."

The large shuttle buses that travel across the Bay Area have become a symbol of tech industry-charged gentrification. Rents near the shuttle stops have doubled and tripled since the shuttles have been on the road. Local 853's organizing staff was always sure to point out that one of the problems with split shifts is that drivers cannot afford to live near Facebook nor near their routes, so for about five hours each day, instead of being able to go home, they often sleep in their bus.

The long organizing campaign

The campaign at Loop began in February, when Local 853 Organizer Rodney Smith and a group of Local 853 members and staff went to a Facebook pickup site to handbill the drivers. "The next day, after learning of the union presence, the company gave everyone a 75 cent raise. We immediately lost a

lot of support," Smith says. "But, when the company reneged on some of its promises, the drivers decided to try again for union representation."

In September, the union presented authorization cards signed by a majority of the drivers, but the company wouldn't recognize the union based on that. So the union moved to hold a full-fledged NLRB election, scheduled for November 19.

As the date neared, Smith says that the company ran a vicious anti-union campaign. "They held captive audience meetings on a daily basis, and followed those meetings up with one-on-one meetings, where they would try to get the drivers to denounce the union. They kept asking the drivers for another chance, saying that they didn't know the conditions were so bad," Smith says. "But they're just playing out of the same old playbook. They had broken their promises once already. Our organizing committee didn't believe that they'd do the right thing now," Smith said the day before the election, confident that the drivers would vote for the union.

"Tonight the drivers at Facebook voted in favor of Union representation by Teamsters Local 853. They faced huge odds and constant harassment from high-priced union busters, but they stood strong."



Local 853 member Atha Brown at Facebook rally.

Continued on page 3

Members can take pride in another Local 853 “first”

By **ROME ALOISE**

Teamsters Local 853 has the largest and most diverse membership within Joint Council 7. We have, for many years, organized more, negotiated better contracts, and generally represented our members better than any other labor union. It has always been, and still remains our goal to represent workers better and more intently than any other organization.

This isn't always easy. It takes honesty, not politics. It takes financial responsibility to provide the leadership and resources we need to take on our enemies. And, most importantly, it takes a membership that recognizes that they need to move forward and never stand still. We are all the membership of Local 853, and we are all responsible for all the good things, and sometimes the not so good things that happen within our Local. To this end, we can again take pride in another major first in the labor movement.

Recently, our Local has been mentioned in press reports all over the world for our action to take on the Tech industry and represent workers who toil to make Facebook an extraordinarily rich company! Bus drivers, who transport Facebook designers, engineers and others to work at the Facebook campus from many cities in Northern California, called us to represent them and help them make their working lives better. We have read for the last couple of years about how these large buses create traffic problems and a sense of the

1% being serviced by the 99% in cities like San Francisco. Private buses, for private companies, using public infrastructure to benefit profit-making corporations is a huge point of controversy. All of this is starting to boil over and the outrage and sense of being “used” is starting to awaken the workers who make it possible for these large Tech companies to survive.

*“Local 853 stepped up
and took on the fight
that needed to be fought,
and we won!”*

The Facebook drivers had enough, they were tired of being away from their homes for as much as 16 hours a day while only being paid for eight. They were tired of having inadequate wages to support a family. And, they were tired of paying huge amounts of their meager income to provide their families with health care.

Teamsters Local 853 took on the fight for them and with them. An NLRB election was requested, and although the company employing the drivers used professional union-busters who threatened, coerced, and harassed the drivers, a large majority stuck together and voted in favor of representation by our Local.

This created massive amounts of inter-

national press, as it is the union movement's first inroad to

the Tech industry. We believe that it will result in more activity at all of the other Tech companies who utilize buses.

Again, Local 853 stepped up and took on the fight that needed to be fought, and we won!

This is a result of our Local being exactly what a union is supposed to be: workers who pool their resources to help themselves and other workers who need help to improve their workplace and improve their livelihoods for themselves and their families. It makes me proud to be a member of Teamsters Local 853.

We are completing another incredibly busy year. Our Local has negotiated more than 30 contracts this year, organized a number of new companies into our union, bringing new members and new work possibilities, and we have joined the fight to improve the legislation protecting all workers. All in all, a very good year!

I am not sure what the next year holds with a Republican-dominated Congress, however, at least we have preserved our friendly state legislators here in California.

In closing I would like to wish every one of our members and your families Happy Holidays and a happy and prosperous New Year.



Announcements

WCT Pension Plan Q&A

On the second Wednesday of every month, a representative from the WCT Pension Trust Fund 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 what the Local has been up to between newsletters. Also get business forms and other union resources.

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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. at the union hall: 2100 Merced St., San Leandro, **Note:** Sisters in Solidarity (Local 853's Women's Committee) meets at 6:30 every other month.

Facebook shuttle drivers vote for union

Continued from page 1

Aloise posted on Facebook. “Now the dot com companies have to stand up and make sure that these drivers get a decent standard of living that will allow them to take care of their families. After all, these drivers protect a valuable cargo; the people that make these companies billions of dollars. For that, they deserve a piece of the pie!”

Local 853 hopes that the election by Facebook shuttle drivers is the first in a series of firsts. While Facebook contracts with Loop Transportation, Compass Transportation, with locations in San Jose and South San Francisco is the contractor of choice for EBay, Genentech, Microsoft, Amtrak, and Apple. Compass employs about 120 drivers. Organizer Rodney Smith reports that 85 have already signed authorization cards. “We’ll demand that the company recognizes the union on the basis of card check neutrality, though we know that they’ll probably say no. After the Loop election, however, it’s a different environment today. We’ll go through an election with the NLRB, if need be, and I’m sure the Compass drivers will stick to their guns and vote for the union,” Smith says with confidence.

High-tech companies bear responsibility

Facebook might have thought that if they outsourced their peripheral workforce to different employers, they would bear no responsibility for the poor working conditions that these workers must contend with. It’s not just drivers who are working in substandard conditions; it’s also janitorial staff, cooks and waitstaff, and others who work on high-tech campuses, but work for outside contractors.

As reporter Suzanne Lucas wrote in the business journal *Inc.*, “Let this be a lesson to you when you outsource functions. Even if that temp sitting in the neighboring cube receives her paycheck from someone else, and even if outsourcing makes all the sense in the world, you need to treat your outsourced employees like humans. You need to take how the outsourcer treats employees into consideration when you are signing the contract. Remember, while your goal is to get the most possible service for the lowest possible price, the outsourcer’s goal is to provide the least possible service



The day before the union election, Teamsters and community supporters rallied at Facebook headquarters. They attempted to deliver the above petition with 5,000 signatures to CEO Mark Zuckerberg, but he refused to accept it.

for the highest price. Before you sign that contract, make sure the provisions for how the employees will be treated reflect your company values as well. Otherwise, when those employees get angry with their treatment, it may just be your company that gets the bad press.”

“These drivers are part of the invisible work force that makes Silicon Valley run,” said Derecka Mehrens, Executive Director of Working Partnerships USA, a community group that participated in the rally. “They are members of our communities who work hard every day, but live in poverty, and the business model of tech companies like Facebook counts on that. Tech companies write the checks to subcontractors who hire these drivers and the thousands of other service workers who

make these tech giants able to function. They need to set the standards, too, and say ‘no’ to poverty jobs.”

Getting a contract

Aloise and Local 853 staff have met with the CEO of Loop Transportation. “Even though they weren’t happy with the result of the vote, talks for a contract are moving forward rapidly,” says Smith. “Facebook wants a contract in place by the end of this year. I think they’re tired of the bad publicity. A lot of communication is going on between the company and the union.”

On December 18, the Local will meet with the Facebook drivers to develop contract proposals. “Once this is settled, we’ll push forward with the other shuttle companies.”



Centerplate concessions employees at Levi Stadium get union

About 200 novelty vendors, program vendors, and novelty warehousemen at Centerplate Company, which runs the concessions at the new Levi’s Stadium in San Jose, will now be represented by Local 853. “We reached a recognition agreement after a majority of employees signed cards stating that they wanted a union,” says Business Agent John Arnolfo. The company agreed to recognize the union on September 16.

“We represented the workers in these same classifications at Candlestick as well as at AT&T Park. Even though it’s a whole new cast of employees in San Jose, we have had a long relationship with the company,” Arnolfo adds. “We will be entering negotiations in January,” Arnolfo adds.



Local 853's 2014 Membership

By TERRY POST

The 2014 Membership Appreciation Meeting marked the 18th straight year Local 853 Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise and the rest of the Local's staff have assembled the membership to offer their thanks for another year of support, hard work and loyalty. As always, it was a fantastic success.

"I love this meeting," said one member, "it recharges me."

For those of you who may not know about the annual gathering (or have never heard of union officials honoring their members), Local 853 holds the Membership Appreciation Meeting on the first Saturday of November at San Leandro's John Muir Junior High School gymnasium. Like an annual migration, bleary-eyed members began showing up long before festivities



Raffle winners pick out their prizes.



Winners of the big televisions.



Members check in to the meeting.



Another house full with Local 853 members.



Fruit or donuts? Thanks to the Fruit Guys for the

Membership Appreciation Celebration

began to meet with co-workers, rekindle friendships with old friends and consume gallons of coffee and copious amounts of donuts (maple, chocolate, sprinkled and glazed donuts, coffee and some slightly embellished tales are as much Teamster traditions as our blue satin jackets).

This year, an alternative to this rather unhealthy diet was offered with lots of fresh fruit, compliments of The Fruit Guys. As anticipated, the popularity of apples, bananas and oranges fell a little short of the donuts being inhaled at an adjacent table.

Everybody who registered for this year's gathering received a newly-designed long sleeve shirt which was guaranteed to get the attention of co-workers and employers when they flooded the workplace the following Monday. Commenting on the

popularity of the shirts (and, possibly, the donuts), one staff member who wished to remain anonymous said, "the 2X's were the first to go."

With the new shirt in hand, many members took advantage of a free flu shot, compliments of Local 853 and administered—professionally and painlessly—by Kaiser Hospital workers. "It's amazing," commented a member waiting in line for his shot, "how a little needle can humble a big, tough Teamster."

Of course, for many of the attendees, the sugary donuts, idle chit-chat and painless flu shots were merely distractions from the highly anticipated raffle that always highlights the morning's activities. Members who registered were eligible to win jackets, shirts, coffee makers, computer accessories, cameras and, of course, large screen TV's. This year's raffle was hampered slightly by new record keeping procedures that creat-

ed a log jam up front as harried staff were required to record every gift and who won it. Nevertheless, the raffle was, as always, a huge success.

For many of the 800 attendees, the most important part of the Membership Appreciation Meeting was Local 853 Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise's "State of the Union" message. This year Rome spoke in a matter-of-fact way about the Local's impressive growth over the past year, the need to join DRIVE (the Teamster political action committee) and the importance of voting in the November mid-term election. Rome concluded his remarks with a heartfelt comment about the membership. "You are my family," Rome told the members as he gazed out over the packed house.

The members rose to their feet in a thunderous standing ovation. They got it.



Members give the union a standing ovation.



choice.



Nurses from Kaiser gave hundreds of flu shots before the meeting started.



Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise directs the action.

Teamster honored for work with women in trades

On September 19, Tradeswomen, Inc., a 35-year old Oakland-based non-profit organization, honored one of Teamsters Local 853's own at its annual dinner. Debra Chaplan, the Director of Special Programs for the State Building and Construction Trades Council of California, and also the editor of this newsletter and the Joint Council 7 newspaper, received accolades for her work to support women in the building trades.

"The dinner was a blast," said Local 853 Business Representative Stacy Alvelais. "Although there were several honorees that night, Debra Chaplan stole the show, getting a standing ovation from her Teamster sisters along with all the tradeswomen from different local unions in attendance.

Debra has been in this position for 16 years. She has worked closely with Tradeswomen Inc. to build an annual conference for women in the building trades. She has served on the board of Tradeswomen, has held office as treasurer and then vice-president, and also serves on the National Building Trades Department's Committee on the Women in the Trades.

"We are proud to have Debra as our member and proud of all her achievements in the building trades, as well as all she does to empower women," said Jan Johnson, office staff at Local 853.

Here's to you, Debra. We look forward to working with you for years to come!



Teamster Debra Chaplan is honored at Tradeswomen, Inc. dinner in Oakland.



Celebrating a morning of toy and food sorting. Top row is kids from the local high school. Bottom row is SIS members Jan Johbson, Pam Gaskill and Lynn Door.

SIS helps the community for the holidays (and year-round)

As the holiday season is upon us, Sisters in Solidarity (SIS)—Local 853's women's committee—has been very active. Several members went to the Davis Street Family Resource Center on Saturday, December 6, and spent four hours sorting toys for the upcoming Christmas toy give-away. "The work was very well organized, and we were able to put together bags of toys by age and gender," says Committee Chair Pam Gaskill. "The bags were labeled and carted off to a place where parents will be able to pick them up and wrap them for Christmas. Each child will get three larger toys, three stocking-stuffers, a book, a game, and a stuffed animal!"

Gaskill says that the SIS members met and sorted toys with some great teenage girls from a local high school club. After all the toys were sorted, the

crew went to the warehouse and put together boxes for the food give-away.

SIS then worked with Local 853's Executive Board to make a donation of \$3,000 to purchase and donate food to both the Davis Street Family Resource Center in San Leandro and Eastmont Garden of Hope in Oakland. After doing some research, the committee decided to present a \$1,500 check to Davis Street so they can purchase their own food at a reduced rate in time for the Christmas food box distribution. Recognizing that families in need tend to be in need year-round, and not just at the holiday season, SIS will plan a big shopping trip for Eastmont Garden of Hope in January.

If you're interested in getting involved with SIS to help these neighborhood agencies, contact Pam Gaskill at pkgjoy@gmail.com

All Local 853 women are invited to join SIS!

If you're a Local 853 woman and would like to get more involved with Sisters in Solidarity (SIS), contact Committee Chair Pam Gaskill at pkgjoy@gmail.com. The group meets every other month, just before the membership meetings. They occasionally have speakers, but mostly the group works to think of ways to stay active with the Local and with the community.

Contract talks

Landing contract with Nestles takes four years

After an almost four-year battle, in September, the 23 drivers and salespeople who work for Nestles in San Leandro and San Ramon finally ratified a new five-year contract. “The agreement includes improvements and guarantees for all of our members in terms of annual earnings, pension increases, and health and welfare increases,” reports Local 853 President Bob Strelow. “It also includes a legal settlement for enhanced severance, voluntary opt-out for employees who want to leave early and a significant sum of money.”

“After trying to get the members to take some serious concessions, it’s clear that Nestles just wanted to bust the union,” Strelow says. “But the members all stayed and fought it out. We held them off from implementing their final contract until the court and legal action could come to a head.” The Local filed a series of legal charges charging that the employer had violated laws regarding lunch and rest breaks.

“In all the years that I’ve been doing this job, I’ve never seen a group hang so closely and so together. Historically, it’s hard to get members to stay strong during a prolonged fight like this. But this group was above and beyond,” Strelow says, and adds that Local 853 is the only organized group left within Nestles still holding a union contract.

Strelow wanted to be sure to recognize the combined efforts of the IBT Dairy Division, headed by Rome Aloise, Joint Council 7 and Costa Kerestenzis and Teague Paterson from the law firm of Beeson, Tayer and Bodine, who handled the court case.



Fred Ramirez



Steve Muti



Dave Glafke



Barry Rosenberg

Pictured above are Nestle employees who came into Local 853’s office to sign the settlement agreement.

Work on first contracts progresses

Organizing and winning the union election is just the first step in a long, and all-too difficult process. Once the members have fought to win their election, and the NLRB has certified it, then, some say, the hardest work begins. That’s the nuts and bolts of being in a union, and getting a collective bargaining agreement, signed and sealed by the union and the employer and ratified by the members.

Currently, after successful union campaigns at the following companies, business agents are negotiating first contracts.

Stu Helfer is in negotiations with RDS (Redwood Debris Box) in Burlingame.

Adolph Felix is heading up the talks with Eldon’s Five Star in San Francisco and San Rafael and First Student in Oakland. The First Student employees held their first proposal meeting in December.

Facebook is anxious to have the organizing drive behind them, so they are pushing for Loop Transportation to settle the first contract quickly. Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise is confident that the drivers will have a good contract by the end of 2014.

Changing the face of high-tech



On December 9, Teamsters joined with Jesse Jackson and his Rainbow PUSH organization at a meeting at Intel’s Santa Clara headquarters. Together, Teamsters and Rainbow PUSH are looking to change the face of the technology sector. The meeting pulled together representatives from Google, Intel, Pandora, and Cisco to discuss the delayed inclusion of minorities in the tech world. From left: Joint Council 7 Political Coordinator Doug Bloch; Jesse Jackson, and Local 853 Organizer Rodney Smith.

Local 853 joins with fast food workers



On December 4, Local 853 joined Oakland fast food strikers marching from the Fruitvale BART station to demand \$15/hour.



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Local 853 – organizing and building a stronger union

Happy Holidays
from the officers & staff of
Local 853



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