

A Call For Action!

National Labor Conference Against Taft-Hartley & Union-Busting

December 7, 2002, in San Francisco

Dear Brothers & Sisters,

We invite you and your union to participate with us in a national labor conference on Saturday, December 7, 2002 in San Francisco.

The use of the Taft-Hartley Act by the Bush administration against the International Longshore and Warehouse Union is a shot across the bow for organized labor. Following an 11-day lockout initiated by the Pacific Maritime Association, the government is now acting as an enforcer for these union-busters. The Bush crew admits it was having private meetings with some of the biggest "union-free" corporations in America to plan strategy on how to defeat the ILWU.

But the ILWU is not the only target. According to the Wall Street Journal (October 11, 2002), the Bush administration is considering the possibility of invoking Taft-Hartley against the United Auto Workers union when their contracts expire next year. The same is true for many other unions as well. They will seek to justify this because of their war plans in Iraq.

AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka lambasted the administration's use of Taft-Hartley: ***"If all employers know the administration will rush in with Taft-Hartley to give them what they want," Trumka stated, "they'll plot and scheme together, they'll figure out what to do, and then the [collective-bargaining] process will be gutted. The employers won't come and bargain in good faith because there is no incentive to."***

When Taft-Hartley was first passed in 1947, Phillip Murray of the CIO, called it ***"a Slave Labor Act."*** This was no exaggeration. **Jim Spinosa, president of the ILWU**, has pointed out that, ***"We fully expect PMA to use all the anti-union provisions of the Taft-Hartley injunction. ... Taft-Hartley gives them 80 days of free shots at the union, and we expect the employers will be dragging us to court daily, trying to bankrupt the union and throw our leaders in jail."***

The Bush cabal is now intent on busting the ILWU, just as Reagan did with the PATCO union in 1981. Bush is already seeking to eliminate union rights for 170,000 federal workers with his union-busting "Homeland Security" Department, forcing major wage and contract concessions on tens of thousands of airline workers, including binding "baseball arbitrations." He is intent on taking away every right and condition won by labor during the last 50 years.

Bush also intends to use his drive toward war to justify outlawing strike action. The proposed Maritime Security Act and other such repressive measures are aimed at weakening and destroying organized labor. When the war starts in Iraq, he may seek to militarize the docks to break the ILWU. He has now thrown down the gauntlet to all of organized labor.

The QUESTION is what will organized labor and the communities do to answer this challenge?

Only with your help and that of your union can we avoid being sitting ducks as the Bush administration plans to break our unions. At our conference, we plan to discuss and lay out a fight-back strategy that includes education, media strategies and action to defend the ILWU and other unions that come under attack. This will include the fight against union-busting (not only with the Taft-Hartley in maritime but other transportation industries), privatization, contracting-out and the struggle to organize the millions of unorganized workers.

We need to prepare now to go on the offensive. We cannot allow the ILWU to be picked off and then for Bush to go after the next union. We plan to have workshops on Taft-Hartley, the Maritime Security Act, Developing A Labor Media Campaign, Organizing the Unorganized and Immigrant Workers, and how to develop a strategy to take on these robber barons. We need to be ready now for action when the Taft-Hartley injunction against the longshore workers expires. We also need to learn the lessons of the successful fight for the Charleston 5 in South Carolina, and build on this not only nationally but internationally.

You and your union can play an important part in this effort. Please endorse this conference and send delegates. Also a financial contribution to make this conference a success is absolutely critical.

We are also planning to have a Northern California Transportation Workers Solidarity Rally on the evening of December 7 and hope you can attend this as well. The rally will be held at Mission High School in San Francisco.

Please let us know if you can endorse this conference and how many delegates will be attending. We are asking for a registration of \$25 a delegate. Also please let contact us if you are interested in getting regular information on the battle against Taft-Hartley and union-busting and if you want to be on our email list.

In Solidarity,

ILWU Local 10

MEBA

GCIU Local 4

Port Workers Solidarity Committee

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