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“ILA Leadership Goes Back on Promise of Open Negotiations; Time for Member Action!”

Master Contract Bargaining Update #4 • August 10, 2009

ILA President Richie Hughes and ILA General Vice-President Benny Holland have been negotiating with the United States Maritime Alliance without the member elected Wage Scale Committee. The backroom meetings took place even though Hughes had promised a different kind of negotiations to wage scale delegates and had formally canceled negotiations last March.

USMX TO ILA: MAKE ILA MEMBERS PAY FOR THEIR OWN CONTRACT

Houston members heard rumors for weeks that the ILA and the USMX had been meeting behind closed doors. It even came up at a meeting of South Atlantic and Gulf Coast locals. Then Alan Robb, SAGCD Representative, told Local 28 that a deal was done and would be voted on in September.

While details remain unconfirmed, the alleged deal ILA leaders wanted would have taken away our 2009 wage increase, would not have dealt with technology or jurisdiction, and would have cut funding for benefits in exchange for lifting the container royalty cap.

WHOA, NOT SO FAST!

It appears that management had a different idea; the USMX wanted even deeper cuts, not much different than their proposal to the wage scale delegates back in February (see LWC Master Contract Bargaining Update #3 at www.lwcjustice.com). Now it appears that negotiations are off again because of management's outrageous cuts.

The ILA leadership seems bent on lifting the container royalty cap to solve the ILA's financial problems, regardless of the overall impact of the contract on members or the union. With container volume, tonnage, and hours down from 2008 levels, removing the container royalty cap will not bring the ILA significantly more revenue. In most ports, the container checks will not see an increase in the immediate future as a result of the tonnage decrease. Furthermore, many more workers won't make enough hours to qualify.

While ILA members have long suspected that Hughes and some top officers would try to sell out the long-term interest of the union, this is a new low. After cutting a deal to retire August 1 to save the ILA money, four top officers have refused to go. These officers refused to retire when they found out that their special retirement fund, paid out of the union treasury, was canceled.

EDUCATE AND MOBILIZE

A different ILA is possible if we act. Negotiations may go down to the wire. Between now and the contract expiration we must deepen our understanding of the industry and mobilize our members.

What you can do:

- Join the LWC information network by contacting the LWC (see below).
- Volunteer to give out and gather information.
- Volunteer to coordinate contract-mobilizing activities in your area.

Need more copies to distribute to your fellow ILA members? Contact the LWC at 718-865-8782 or info@lwcjustice.com.