

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – DECEMBER 2020

PANDEMIC UPDATE AND RTS STATUS

Since the last meeting, a second surge of coronavirus cases blasted across the nation with violence and speed. It was worse than predicted and according to the experts has not yet peaked. Even as the first vaccine arrived, another grim waypoint – 300,000 Americans dead – was left astern on the same day. Lockdowns resumed in many places. In California, on November 13th a travel advisory (with an exception for essential workers) was issued that endorsed a 14 day quarantine for all travelers from out of state. A week later the Governor issued a stay at home curfew order for the worst counties which included Alameda and Los Angeles and then San Francisco (again with exceptions for essential workers).

Hiring hall operations continue at a basic operational level, which includes dispatching, but all agents were authorized to take steps necessary to protect the Union and its members. Such actions may include those previously approved by the membership such as job call timing and procedures, as well as appropriate indoor/outdoor location adjustments, consistent with the Shipping Rules. Because local orders prohibit meetings of more than 12 people, the December SUP HQ meeting was regrettably cancelled. All the business of the Union will be revisited in the next regular meeting as was done for cancellations earlier in the year as per previous emergency action of the membership.

Matson: The membership will recall that on June 18th the SIU-Pacific District Unions met in a Joint Labor Relations Committee with Matson management to seek adjustment to our previously filed restriction-to-ship claim. The claim covered the period from April 5, 2020 through May 21, 2020, when Matson unfairly restricted our members from going ashore in California and Washington ports due to the state and local shelter-in-place orders, as they were known at that time. We contended then, as we do now, that we should have been able to go ashore in those ports, provided that we complied with the same restrictive guidelines required of the local general public. Matson argued against paying the claim under Section 18(c) of the General Rules because those ports were not “safe” due to the COVID-19 outbreak and because it was considered an “emergency.” Management continues to object to the claim and as of today the matter remains deadlocked and open. The Unions continue to review all options and have included in such work the different considerations unique to port of Honolulu.

Patriot: On November 23rd, on behalf of the Pacific District unlicensed personnel in the Patriot operated *Watson*-class ships and the SNLC *Pax*, I filed an omnibus grievance with management and requested a universal restriction-to-ship adjustment. The grievance was made under the general terms of the relevant Memorandum of Understandings and the applicable sections, including the provisions of Section 3 and 11. The claim and proposed settlement is meant to cover the entire period beginning with the “gangway up” order from Military Sealift Command (MSC) on or about March 20, 2020, and to remain in effect as long as all conditions are met. We reserved all rights to amend the grievance and adjust the claim, as appropriate. On December 8, 2020 I confirmed with Patriot’s Director of Labor Relations Margaret Reasoner the receipt of that grievance and claim. Reasoner said that such action was sufficient or would advise

otherwise and noted that the Military Sealift Command had also acknowledged receipt and pending response.

APL Marine Services: On November 30, the SIU Pacific District Unions tentatively agreed to an extension of the APL Marine Services restriction-to-ship settlement agreement through December 31. The daily restriction to ship stipend is now \$150 per day in port. Mr. Chairman, I recommend membership approval of the extension of the temporary month-to-month RTS settlement agreement.

MPF CONTRACT BID

Military Sealift Command (MSC) earlier this year released its Contract Solicitation N-32205-21-R-4117 for the operation and maintenance of the Maritime Prepositioning Force Vessels (MPF) covering the USNS *Bobo*, USNS *Button*, USNS *Lopez*, USNS *Lummas*, USNS *Stockham* and USNS *Williams*. Recently, Patriot notified the Union of its intention to bid on the contract. Their mission is to support the U.S. Marine Corps, and the government anticipates the prepositioning of at least three of the ships in the Indian Ocean and three others in the western Pacific. The crew complement of the unlicensed deck gang in Full Operating Status is 1 bosun, 5 AB's, and 3 Ordinary Seaman. The crew assignments and rotations, documentation, duties, and training requirements are expected to be the same as prior MSC contracts. In coordination with MFOW President Anthony Poplawski, my work on the configuration of a successful bid by the present due date of December 22nd (extended from December 2nd) continues. Will keep the membership informed on progress.

UFCW 5 NEGOTIATIONS

Working with rank-and-file members Maggie Federer, Efrain Aguilera, and Alfredo Delgado, Vice-President Matt Henning and I have contacted SUP members employed by UFCW 5 on all matters related to their employment including a new collective bargaining agreement to replace the one that expires on December 31, 2020. The outreach produced a number of proposals around term, percentage increase and many other items. Preliminary discussion with employer on a collaborative basis showed some progress but as of today's meeting no agreement had been reached. Will keep the membership informed.

TTD EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING

On November 17, along with the leaders of 33 other AFL-CIO transportation unions, I attended the regular meeting of the executive committee of the Transportation Trades Department online. Coming less than two weeks after the election, the Unions wasted no time in setting the Biden agenda in favor of workers in what may be the most pro-Union, pro-transportation administration in decades. Foremost among the tasks taken up was securing the immediate economic relief and workplace health and safety protections for frontline workers, partly through a second massive COVID stimulus bill.

Front-line workers are putting their lives on the line to help get the country through the crisis. So a COVID relief bill is the first task, something that labor has demanded for front-line

workers since at least mid-summer. Every day that goes by without it puts more working families at risk either from losing their jobs and health care or from the virus itself. As of today's meeting, Congress continues to debate a new stimulus bill and the outcome before adjournment for the holidays is anything but certain.

But the list for transportation labor is long and for the U.S. Merchant Marine the demands are familiar. We expect a general affirmation of merchant mariners, a critical part of the U.S. economic and national security. We expect a safe and healthy workplace both during and beyond the pandemic. We demand full compliance with U.S.-flag shipping requirements under cargo preference, full support for the Jones Act, full support and funding for the Maritime Security Program, for the new Tanker Security Program for maritime protection in trade deals. And we expect the Biden administration to show us the regulatory support we need on misclassification of workers, fair drug testing, union recognition, among other things.

The committee then met with the Chairman of the House Committee on Transportation, Rep. Peter Defazio, (D-OR) for an extended discussion on the practical path forward to meet the goals of labor in the near term and the new year. More than a wish list, with solid support of Chairman DeFazio and the unified voice of transportation labor reaching to the upper echelons of a Biden Administration, these goals are achievable. The members of the executive committee resolved to work to that end.

BIDEN TRANSITION TEAM

In late November, along with other maritime labor and industry representatives, I attended two meetings by online video with members of the Biden transition team. Maritime officials stressed the topics discussed earlier in this report. MMP member and former deputy Maritime Administrator Mike Rodriguez is a member of the Biden team and has a central role in coordinating maritime policy. He knows exactly what the maritime industry needs and is closely allied with labor. It is a refreshing change to not only have our voices heard in the executive branch but to have the opportunity to shape policy. We look forward to working with the new administration. (For more on the transition please see this month's *West Coast Sailors*.)

HOLIDAYS

SUP hiring halls will be closed this month on the following contract holidays

Christmas Day – Friday, December 25, 2020

New Year's Day – Friday, January 1, 2021

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – Monday, January 18, 2021

SUP hiring halls in San Francisco, Wilmington and Seattle will also be closed in observance of the following ILWU holidays on the West Coast, which are therefore recognized SUP holidays aboard APLMS and Matson vessels in Pacific Coast ports:

Christmas Eve - Thursday, December 24

New Year's Eve - Thursday, December 31. The Honolulu hall will close at noon on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve.

Jack Hall Day - Jack Hall Day (January 2) is an ILWU Local 142 holiday in Hawaii and will be observed by the Honolulu hall on Monday, January 4, 2021.

2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

AFL-CIO President Rich Trumka called it “A year of anger and sorrow and civil unrest. A year of unfathomable loss.” A staggering loss of life, in fact, a monumental marker of tragedy. Add to that a fundamental and ongoing inability of the U.S. government to protect the public health, a catastrophic loss of jobs and economic security, and worse: a loss of trust in the truth of official information and the ditching of a shared political reality. And add to that the closing of borders, the cancellation of all international travel and persistent travel delays and risk. And add to that imperative demands of imprecise testing, and quarantines and isolation, and clearances and restrictions and confinement, and seemingly endless disruption of normal day-to-day operations. More than misfortune, it was the trouble that comes with a slow-moving disaster. Yet all year long SUP members rose to meet what could be the challenge of our lifetimes: maintaining safe, reliable, and professional Union operations in the teeth of a ferocious pandemic.

We don't work from home, don't shelter in place. When the storm came we went down to the sea in ships, we went to work as qualified and credentialed merchant mariners and according to our rules of fairness and seniority and as safely as we knew how. Obstacles never encountered and never even considered became our daily regimen, demanding answers and workarounds that conformed to our high standards: no givebacks in contracts, no weakness in grievances handling, no concessions in negotiations, and can-do performance in dispatching, training, and seamanship.

Not perfect but self-righting, despite the risk we held the line on domestic and foreign runs, inland and offshore, in commercial and government contracts, in the Union halls and in the workplace. Despite the hazards, the SUP Welfare Plan and our other plans went right on paying out benefits and delivering service. Pandemic driven financial peril we sidestepped with a focus on basic operations, minimum staff, and everywhere cutting costs. In an historic election we helped elect candidates friendly to labor. We did not ignore our obligation to recognize the magnificent contributions of our predecessors – such as by celebration of the role of U.S. Merchant Marine on D-Day on the beaches of Normandy seventy-six years ago, and the 100th birthday of the Jones Act, a true legislative success story. Along the way we handled hurricanes, massive no-notice activations, won extensions of our existing government contracts, bid on new work, and negotiated with five employers seven new collective bargaining agreements that improved the lives of members, both active and retired.

In the inescapable and still-raging storm we held the line. Trumka is right not to diminish the unfathomable loss, but we are neither defeated nor demoralized. And despite the darkness of the hour let sailors at sea and ashore receive our best wishes for a happy holiday season and better days ahead.

- *Dave Connolly*