



We level the playing field by organizing

By Rome Aloise

Our front page article about the contract settlement with Right Away Redy Mix provides most of the details of this successful organizing campaign. However, I want to comment on a few of the unseen advantages of this accomplishment for the members of Local 853.

When we merged the two construction locals (Locals 216 & 291) into Local 853, we promised to protect and support these new members. One of our promises was to begin an intense organizing campaign within the construction industry. The former construction locals were small and did not have the resources to organize.

Since other construction industry Teamster members are small groups in other locals, very little, if any, organizing of non-union ready mix or construction companies has been attempted. This meant employers who were signatory to contracts with the Teamster locals were always trying to throw the competitive advantage of the non-union companies into the negotiations to keep our demands down. By actively going after the non-union competitors, we eliminate this pressure.

Unions have an obligation to attempt to level out the competitive playing field. As I promised, we are now doing this for the construction members, as we have always done for the rest of our membership.

The Right Away victory shows that we can, over a period of time, work to take

away the non-union companies' advantages over our unionized employers.

I would like to thank everyone who worked so hard on this campaign—especially the members who volunteered their time to talk positively about our Local to the Right Away workers' and who volunteered to participate in a strike if one was necessary. This was truly a team effort. Working together, we can't be stopped!

WCT Pension

A surprising number of our members have voted to put upcoming raises right into the Western Conference of Teamsters Pension Fund, thereby increasing their overall contribution rate. This means our information campaign to let you know about the 35% increase for the years of 2000, 2001, and 2002 has worked.

If you are going to increase the contribution rate in your contracts, now is the time to do it. Contact your Business Agent if you want to discuss how to move wages or future increases to your pension.

Political Action

You will notice that Local 853 is moving forward with a big voter registration campaign for our membership. I have appointed Jesse Casqueiro to be the Local's Political Action Coordinator. You will see him soon, along with your Business agent, asking you to be sure that you are a registered voter and secondly to

contribute to DRIVE, the Teamsters Political Action Fund. DRIVE stands for Democrat, Republican, Independent Voter Education, and is the fund that the International Union uses for campaign contributions and political action. Legislation and access to politicians are vitally important to working people. This is the only collective voice working people have.

DRIVE is the biggest political action fund in the labor movement. With these funds behind us, our members have a powerful voice in the House and Senate of the United States, and we can make sure that our local government leaders know that we must be listened to.

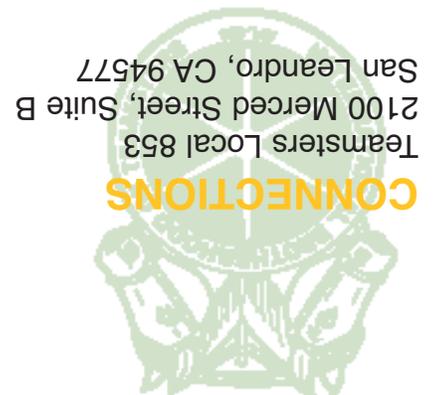
For those of you who have DRIVE deduction language in your contracts, contribute just \$1.00 per week. It is one of the best investments that you can make.

Shop Steward Seminar

This year's Shop Steward Seminar will focus on Political Action. We hope to have General President Hoffa at our function, along with a number of important politicians. If you are a Shop Steward, or one of our shop coordinators, keep the weekend of September 16th open.

Local 853 – organizing and building a stronger union

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Contract victory at Right Away

First new ready mix contract in 25 years

After nearly 16 months of tough negotiations, the new Local 853 members at Right Away Redy Mix overwhelmingly ratified their first-time contract in May.

“This is a significant victory for all our members working in the Ready Mix Industry,” said Construction Division Director Pete Gemma. “As far as I know, this is the first major non-union ready mix company brought under contract in 25 years.”

Organizing target

When Locals 291 and 216 merged into Local 853, Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise promised to utilize the combined resources of the locals to organize within the Construction and Ready Mix industries. The Local immediately targeted Right Away Redy Mix, one of Northern California’s largest non-union ready mix companies. “We started with the biggest, so that the others would fall in line,” said Gemma.

In assessing current benefits at Right Away, Aloise suggested that the Western



New Right Away members learn about Teamster benefits at first Health and Welfare meeting since contract was signed

Conference of Teamsters Pension Plan, which provides up to ten years of past pension credit for non-union work, might be the key to a successful campaign. The employees at Right Away—many of whom had been with the company for 15 to 20 years—agreed.

Election Not Easy

The company, however, had different ideas. They hired an antiunion consultant who waged a furious campaign. Our Local responded in kind, and utilized many creative organizing techniques to win the support of the Right Away workers.

Local 853 members Ed Whalen (Berkeley Ready Mix) and Joaquin De Anda (Lonestar) attended meetings with the Right Away drivers to explain the value of union representation.

Consultants from the University of California’s Labor Institute evaluated the company’s promises and the union’s statements about Teamster benefits. The University’s confirmation of Local 853’s statements and positions proved to be a turning point in the campaign.

Local 853 won the National Labor

Relations Board election by a nearly two-to-one margin in November 1998. But this was only the beginning.

In an attempt to delay the inevitable, the company filed objections to the election with the NLRB. Local 853 succeeded in getting these objections dismissed and obtaining certification of representation from the Labor Board.

“This was an incredible campaign,” said Local 853 organizer Bo Morgan. “The workers really stuck together, the union’s leadership developed a comprehensive strategy and we ran the antiunion consultant into the ground. It was a pleasure to be a part of!”

Only the Beginning

Once the election was certified, the Right Away workers submitted contract proposals, elected a bargaining committee and demanded that talks begin.

Then the trouble really started. For almost six months the company would only agree to meet once every two weeks and for only three hours at a time.

Local 853 pressured the company by generating letters and calls from local



Vicente Magana & Jorge Colon at the Right Away facility in Oakland

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

This issue of **CONNECTIONS** is dedicated to organizing — building our union by gaining new members.

We’re proud to report on several major organizing successes, and even more, getting first contracts.

Also, see page 3 for important announcements about your pension and benefits.

Right Away workers get first contract



New Right Away stewards Jim McAvoy and Bill Arnold all give the thumbs up to Teamsters Local 853

politicians to encourage the management to negotiate in good faith.

Finally, after almost nine months of difficult bargaining, the Right Away workers voted unanimously to strike if the company didn't begin to make legitimate progress.

This show of solidarity led to a tentative agreement on almost all language areas. But then money became a sticking point. The company did not want to agree to the most important proposal of all, implementation of the Teamsters Health and Welfare and Pension Plans.

After many more frustrating months, Local 853 concluded that a strike was inevitable.

Planning to strike

The Local created a strike contingency plan that included "ambulatory pickets" and notifying Right Away's customers that Teamster pickets would show up on every

Teamsters Local 853

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job if the company attempted to operate during the strike.

Announcement of our campaign in mid-April prompted the company to make a new comprehensive offer. But, the workers rejected this offer overwhelmingly and again showed their willingness to strike over their demand for a decent contract.

Federal Mediator Jerry Allen called the company and the union into one last meeting on May 4. A strike was set for the next morning if the company did not put forth a reasonable offer.

After nearly eight hours of hard bargaining, the Union negotiating committee got an offer that they could unanimously recommend to the workers. The contract vote was taken on a Friday night immediately after work, and was overwhelmingly ratified by the new Local 853 members on May 5.

Teamwork at its best!

"The final contract includes all of the basic demands that the Right Away workers wanted. We got the WCT Pension plan, past service credits, the Teamsters Health Plan with no copayments, improved vacation and decent wage increases. This is good language for any contract, not just a first one," said Aloise.

"Our Local set a goal, our organizers worked hard, our members supported us through the negotiations, Pete Gemma and Stu Helfer brought their expertise in the industry to the table, and we won. Teamwork at its best!" Aloise continued.

"This contract will put employers who pay good union wages and benefits on notice that Local 853 will protect them from unfair competition with a strong organizing program. This is exactly why we thought Local 853 was the best place for our construction members," stated Gemma.

Local 853 organizers will now be telling all the other non-union ready mix workers about the victory at Right Away. If you know any workers who wish to gain the advantages of union representation, have them call Bo Morgan or Jesse Casqueiro at 510-895-8853.



Quick action saves life

The lunch break on January 6 at VWR Scientific in Brisbane was a little different. When Local 853 member Mauricio Domenech (L) started to choke and could not breathe, warehouse associate and fellow member Nick Miranda (R) performed a Heimlich maneuver on him to clear his airway of the trapped food. Nick's quick action staved off an extremely serious situation.

Now that's solidarity!



Another back pay win

Glenn Murray (C) worked at Biomed/INR for five years. When he decided to stand up and lead an organizing campaign, he got fired. What Glenn's boss didn't realize was that Glenn had the power of Local 853 behind him to take his case to arbitration.

"Thanks to Local 853's tenacity we were able to hold the company responsible for their actions and I received a \$5,000 settlement," Glenn said. "I'm proud to be a member of this Local."



Teamster women unite!

On May 19-21, Local 853 members Lisa Davis (L) and Janine Vanier (R) attended the first Teamsters Women's Conference in Las Vegas. The event is dedicated to building the influence and presence of women within the union. Also attending for the Local are Veronica Carver and Julie Molina.

Organizing Report

The organizing department has won five representation elections at three companies in the last six months.

We are proud to welcome aboard **Recycled Fibers** at their two locations. The members voted by an 80% margin to join Local 853 in November, 1999. Negotiations for a first contract are under way.

Our most recent victory came on May 12, when 92% of the drivers at **News Group West** in San Leandro voted to become Teamsters. These drivers deliver periodicals to grocery stores and airports. This is a strong group and we're proud to have them aboard.

We also organized the techs at two more **Montgomery Wards** locations, with 95% voting pro-union. These techs go out to customers' homes to fix washers, dryers and televisions.

The word is really getting around about Local 853's willingness and tenacity when it comes to protecting current and future members.

Organizers Bo Morgan and Jesse Casquero thank all of the members who have called in with organizing leads. If you have any information that might be useful in the local's organizing endeavors, please call Bo or Jesse at 510-895-8853.



Left to Right: Organizer Bo Morgan, Recycled Fibers' workers Armando Villegas, Jose Maciel, Genaro Quezada receiving their overtime checks, and organizer Jesse Casquero.

It's payback time

The workers at Recycled Fibers, in Newark, voted for union representation last November in spite of a vicious anti-union campaign by their employer. These predominantly Spanish-speaking employees stood up to the boss and did what they believed was right for themselves and their families.

The company did not take YES for an answer and took overtime away from three yard employees who supported the union. Organizers Bo Morgan and Jesse Casquero filed charges against the company for changing the terms and conditions of employment without bargaining with the Union, and for retaliating against

the employees for their union activities.

The NLRB was ready to issue a complaint and go to trial against the company. But the company finally got smart. They settled with Local 853, giving the workers \$10,000 in back pay and agreeing to negotiate a contract with the union.

"We know we have an obligation to protect the workers who come to us," said organizer Jesse Casquero. "This was a classic case of a company trying to take advantage of their employees. But they found out that Local 853 will protect our future members all through the process of getting a first contract."

Announcements

Local 853 joins the WWW

For those of you hooked to the web, now you can find your union. Local 853's new web site www.teamsters853.org will be officially launched on Memorial Day. Look to the site for updates on your pension plan, new organizing victories, and information about your rights on the job.

Register to vote

Don't let other people speak for you. If you aren't registered to vote, then you won't have a say on the important issues facing your family, and you as a union member and a worker.

The deadline to register for the 2000 elections is October 9, but you don't have to wait until the last minute. Talk to your Business Agent or call Jesse Casquero at Local 853 to get the forms.

Keep up with your 401(k)

Check out the web site for the SIP 401(k) plan: <http://www.retirement.ssr.com/sip> Here you can learn about the plan, the administrators, get answers to Frequently Asked Questions, and find out the status of your personal

account. For more information call Ray Brown at 1-800-445-8238 or Suzy Bragg at 1-800-445-8416.

WCT Pension Plan Q&A

On the second Wednesday of every month, representatives from the Western Conference of Teamsters Pension Administrator come to Local 853's San Leandro offices. If you want to know what your pension amounts will be upon retirement, need to fill out retirement papers, or are just curious about your contribution record, this is the place to be. The counselor will bring your records. You must make an appointment first by calling **510-895-8853** or **800-400-1250**.

Bay Cities Credit Union

Local 853 is affiliated with the Bay Cities Credit Union. If you do not have access to a Credit Union, contact your Business Agent to discuss the possibility of bringing one into your place of employment. Bay Cities handles payroll deductions, savings and checking accounts, loans, CDs, and many other functions. Call them at 510-881-8866.