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Local 853 – organizing and building a stronger union



Happy Holidays
*from the staff & officers
of Local 853*

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CONNECTIONS

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Winter, 2003

First contract for Norton employees

Local 853 is pleased to welcome 45 new members from Norton Manufacturing, a Hayward-based manufacturer of plastic pails. Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise credits Local 853 Organizer Jesse Casqueiro, who not only organized the unit, but also negotiated the first contract.

This was the second time that the workers came to Local 853 to seek representation. During the first election, the employer ran the traditional “give us another chance” campaign and the workers bought into it. Just over a year later, the “another chance” meant layoffs out of seniority, no callbacks, use of agency employees while regular workers were laid off, and many other changes.

The workers had enough and in November, 2002, the group voted overwhelmingly for representation by Local 853. After the election, the company filed objections and refused to bargain. After months of waiting, the union notified the company that they planned to inform the company’s customers about Norton’s unwillingness to bargain in good faith. That tactic worked, and the company agreed to bargain.

After several more months, the union and Norton finally reached an agreement. The workers ratified their contract in October and became Local 853 members.

“Jesse did a great job in keeping the people together during the company’s delaying tactics. He figured out ways to undermine the company’s position and get them to bargain. He got the people a good contract.” Aloise said.

The contract provides for almost a year of retroactivity in wage increases, improvements in job bidding, job protection, and recall language. The contract also included future wage increases and dealt with caps on future increases to health and welfare premiums.



Members learn about the State of the Union before collecting their raffle prizes.

Local 853 pays tribute to its membership

Members of Local 853 packed the house on Saturday morning, November 1, to participate in the ninth annual Membership Appreciation Day sponsored by the union.

“It’s a day for us to appreciate one another, to appreciate the diversity of this union, and to appreciate the contributions we all make. We all work hard to make this union work,” said Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise in his “State of the Union” speech.

An added feature to the morning’s festivities was the screening of the IBT’s 100th Anniversary video—an inspiring tribute to the union’s challenges and accomplishments over the last century.

Among the many retired 853ers on hand were former officers Al Costa, Ray Blasquez, Jr., Pete Gemma, Ernie Souza, Mike Killean and Ike Peterson. Guests from other local unions included Ron Paredes, Local 78, Claudia Settle, Local 896, Sam Rosas and Alberto Barrero, Local 439.

In a brief survey of some of the bad news confronting unions in general, and

Local 853 in particular, Aloise focused on the continued rapid increase in health care costs and the successful recall of Governor Gray Davis. “It’s our job to focus on the real problem, and that is we’ve got to get George Bush out of office in 2004,” said Aloise.

He zeroed in on the Bush-sponsored appropriation of \$87 billion for “reconstructing” Iraq, noting that this amount of money would cover the budget deficits of all 50 states, three years of unemployment insurance, and more than three years of Medicare coverage for everyone in the country.

But that was enough politics, and the meeting turned quickly to the key agenda item, the raffle. Prizes this year included 32” TVs, VCR/DVD combination players, CD players, leather and blue satin Local 853 jackets, Local 853 sweatshirts and T-shirts, and gift certificates to the John Vella Raider Store.

Even if they didn’t win a raffle prize, all members who attended were winners. Everybody left the union hall with a Local 853 embroidered leather duffle bag.



Channeling our frustration into positive change

As we close out 2003, we have a lot to be thankful for—family, friends, and the security that comes with decent jobs, benefits, and a good strong union. I'm personally thankful for the support that the members of this union have provided over the last year—your participation and attendance, and your willingness to fight for good contracts has made Local 853 a model throughout the nation.

But looking back at the year, the word that comes to mind is "*frustration*." It's a reaction to being unable to control things that affect all of us, from the increase in health care, housing and other costs, to our inability to find peace and justice in a deeply troubled world, to end the terrible slaughter that greets us every day in the morning paper.

Pessimistic? Perhaps. But I'm just being honest about what I think many of us feel.

This frustration often gets expressed in strange ways. I think the recent recall of Gov. Davis and election of Arnold Schwarzenegger is pretty typical. We can't do anything about high energy prices, housing costs and health care costs. So we throw the bums out, and bring in some new bums!

I realize people are looking for hope, for someone, or something to turn things around and bring back a feeling of satisfaction and contentment. But change for

change's sake is not necessarily the right prescription. Often times—and I suspect this time in California—we are going to find that this change will result in further *frustration*. I think we are going to spend a lot of time in the next few years fighting to preserve decent workers compensation

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not necessarily the right prescription.*

insurance, unemployment pay, health and safety and other hard-won worker rights.

Leading the way to action

I believe that our union is the best way to channel the *frustration* we all feel into positive action. And I think that Local 853 is ideally situated to lead the way. We're strong in many industries. We've got good contracts and a strong base of members who will do what's necessary to defend them.

What does this mean specifically? I believe it means that we must keep our union strong—and that means organizing. Local 853 is one of the fastest-growing Teamster locals in the country because we've spent the time and the money on organizing.

And that starts with the members—keep

talking Union wherever you go.

Keep giving us leads and putting

our staff in touch with people you know who need union representation.

It also means that we must work three times as hard in the coming year to elect a President who is not the puppet of big business and the corporate giants. A President who will be concerned about unaffordable health care and will work to change the system. A President who cares about

the millions of non-union workers who are reaching retirement age without adequate pensions, or who have had their pension funds ripped off by the current President's friends and their lying accountants.

To this end, you will find that we all need to be relentless in making sure that all members of Local 853 are registered to vote, and making sure that they vote when the time comes.

Obviously, your participation and the channeling of your *frustration* into these endeavors is absolutely necessary for us to be successful. That goes back to putting the U back in union. As members of Local 853, we have shown our ability and desire to do what we need to do for ourselves, for our colleagues on the job, and for our families. I am confident we can do it again in 2004.

In closing, on behalf of the officers, executive board and staff of Local 853, I want to wish you and your family a safe and happy holiday season. We have all worked hard for those we love and cherish. Make sure to take the time to enjoy them during this time of the year.

Announcements

WCT Pension Plan Q&A

On the second Wednesday of every month, a representative from the Western Conference of Teamsters Pension Administrator comes to Local 853's San Leandro office to answer your pension questions. Call 510-895-8853 or 800-400-1250 for an appointment.

Monthly Meetings

Local 853's membership meetings are held the Second Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. Meetings alternate between the West Bay and East Bay halls:

- 1700 Marina Blvd., San Leandro, or
- 703 B Street, San Mateo

Call 510-895-8853 to confirm the location.

SIP 401(k) Enrollment

In addition to your traditional pension plan, most Local 853 members have the advantage of also being 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].

Local 853 is number one...

...in fundraising for the MS Society of Northern California. Local 853 Office Manager Janine Vanier captained the TeamMSTers team to raise \$68,533.78 in the 2003 MS Walk. Watch for how you can support the MS Walk in 2004!

Teamsters Local 853

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connections@teamsters853.org

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Debra Chaplan, Editor

Local 853 Membership Appreciation Day – November 1, 2003



1: Rome Aloise gives "State of the Union" address with President John Becker and Vice President Phil Tarantino looking on.



2: Member Dave Godsoe, Berkeley Farms, with his daughter.



3: TV winners Omar Marroquin, Bode Gravel; Moses Uvalles, Gillig; and Doug Radnich, Pacific Cement.

4: Recording Secretary Antonio Christian spins the raffle tickets for Aloise to pick the winners.

5: Member Frank Soares, Central Concrete, collects his Local 853 leather duffle.

6: Recording Secretary Christian guards the prizes.

7: Retirees Joe Powers, Vince Aloise, and Bob Paterson.

8. Looking for donuts and seats in the packed union hall.

9. A future Teamster!

