



# CONNECTIONS

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## 93% of drivers vote to approve new ready mix contract

By **TERRY POST**

Steward at Bode Gravel and  
Bargaining committee member

On June 14, 2008, several hundred Bay Area ready mix Teamsters assembled at the John Muir Jr. High School in San Leandro to hear the details of a tentative agreement between Locals 287, 315 & 853 and CEMEX, Hanson, Central, Bode and Sugar City. When the counting of the ballots was over, the approval rate was a dramatic 93 per cent.

### \$9.20 over five years

Members overwhelmingly approved the agreement after anxiously listening to stewards and union officials who reviewed the negotiating process and outlined the specifics of the contract.

I wasn't surprised that the approval rate was so high. After all, the contract calls for \$9.20 over five years, which includes \$1.00 per year in wages and the rest going towards benefits. Not too bad considering the current shape of the economy (escalating cost of fuel, chaotic housing market, nation-wide loss of jobs, rising cost of health care, increased tuition and rising food prices).

### Aloise leads negotiating team

As in 2001, Local 853 Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise led a negotiating team consisting of business representatives from Locals 287, 315 and 853 along with shop stewards from every "barn" covered under the agreement. The team spent six days in negotiations, including one 13-hour day.



More than 200 ready-mix Teamsters from five companies and three union locals meet in San Leandro to vote their new contract. **Inset:** Terry Post and the bargaining committee on stage as Aloise presents the proposed contract

And, as in 2001, it was Aloise who presented and absorbed, argued and enticed, wrote and re-wrote until an agreement was reached. Rome's ability to shape a discussion, prove a point, apply facts to destroy myths, reach back into contract history and manage to keep just a couple of steps ahead of everybody else was uncanny.

But it wasn't all Rome. There was ample time and opportunity for each of the 16 stewards to have a say. The stewards provided information specific to their own barns. They commented on proposed contract language, challenged other stewards for divergent views and argued with union officials when workplace reality butted up against false assumptions, myths and theories.

It was a group effort, to be sure. It was a democratic process, for certain. Was it a success? The proof, as they say, is in the pudding.

### Employers stick together (for now)

Negotiating a contract that kept the employers together as a group was vitally important if we were to focus our attention on the upcoming battle with Graniterock. If we would have had to negotiate two, three or four separate contracts, our time, energy and resources would have been diverted from our ongoing "war" with Graniterock's CEO Bruce Woolpert.

### Great agreement

This is a great agreement. We realized significant annual wage increases, continued benefit payments and a five-year contract. In return, the employers got a little more flexibility and some relief from the State of California's burdensome meal break laws. All in all, we are in pretty good shape for the next few years.



President Hoffa (at right) joins Local 853 members and 3,000 union and community members to support port drivers at July 22 march and rally in Oakland for good jobs and clean air.

For up-do-date Teamster news,  
check your Local website:  
[www.teamsters853.org](http://www.teamsters853.org)  
TEAMSTERS



# Mergers make us bigger, stronger and richer

By ROME ALOISE

In the past six months, our Local has completed its largest merger ever with Local 78, integrated a new staff and office, organized hundreds of new members, and negotiated dozens of contracts. We also have some big battles looming with some major employers.

But the biggest and most important battle is yet to come, and that's the 2008 presidential election. This is perhaps the most important election since Franklin Roosevelt was elected, and signed the National Labor Relations Act.

If you work for a living, if you belong to a union, or have hopes of ever belonging to a union, this election will have a major impact on your current and future work life and your subsequent ability to retire securely and with dignity.

As the Democratic nominee, Barack Obama has committed to signing the "Employee Free Choice Act," which will revolutionize the labor movement, and have much the same effect that the National Labor Relations Act had in 1937.

Workers will be allowed to seek union representation without fear, intimidation, or harassment. More importantly, they will be guaranteed a first time contract, through arbitration, if one cannot be reached between the parties.

This is important not only for the newly unionized; it will have a major impact on existing union contracts. It will finally allow us to have a fair and equal shot at bringing your employer's competitors to the same levels of wages, hours and working conditions that you enjoy. This has the potential of ending the constant undermining of our contracts by non-union competition.

Just as important as the ability to organize is the promise of legislation that will help us sustain your health coverage and pension plans. The Bush administration pushed through passage of the ironically misnamed "Pension Protection Act," which has worked to assure the veritable demise of single employer pension plans, and which will, if not changed, erode multi-employer pensions in the future.

A Democratic president and a democratic majority in both houses of congress should increase labor's access and input, and hopefully, make the necessary legislative changes that provide a strong foundation for our pension plans and health coverage.

Between now and this November, the officers and officials of Local 853 will be pushing you to register to vote, join DRIVE, and make sure that we all do our part in changing the future to benefit you, your families and the rest of the working people in our country!

## Battle at Graniterock

As of July 2, we are on strike against Graniterock. This company has refused to bring the members to the same level of income as our other ready-mix drivers in Local 853. In addition, the owner is attempting to force our members to cross picket lines at job sites.

This is a monumental struggle, pitting us against an employer who will spend millions to defeat the union. Local 853 is committed to doing what it takes to make sure that our membership is protected from these types of tyrants.

Our ready-mix members from all companies are joining this fight. They have pledged their physical support and their monetary support. **We need the rest of our members to join in!**

All of your employers will be watching this fight. They will either get the idea that they should also try to take us on, or figure out that it is not worth the damage, money and pain that a fight with our union will cause them. Make no mistake; this dispute affects us all.

## Benefits and Announcements

### Monthly Union Meetings

Local 853's membership meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the West Bay and East Bay (call 510-895-8853 to confirm location):

- 1700 Marina Blvd., San Leandro *or*
- 151 West 20th Avenue, San Mateo.

### Bakery Division Meeting

The Bakery Division Quarterly meeting will be held September 9, 5 p.m. at 492 C Street, Hayward.

### 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.

### SIP 401(k) Enrollment

Most Local 853 members are 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].



**DRIVE** Democrat, Republican, Independent Voter Education

Contribute to DRIVE—the Teamsters' political action committee. DRIVE enables the union to help elect political candidates who care about working people. Give \$1, \$2, \$5 or \$10 per week through a paycheck deduction. Ask your steward or business agent for a DRIVE form—and give generously.

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## Organizing wins

### MV Transportation

For years, the workers at the MV Transportation facility in San Leandro wanted union representation. While the paratransit company did all it could to fend off Local 78's organizing efforts, the company's corporate parent



negotiated a national contract in 2007 with the IBT that included card check recognition and neutrality. "This was a green light for us to go in and ask people if they wanted to sign union cards. Once we reached a majority, the company would have to recognize the union," explains Organizer Jesse Casquero.

"We went in and quickly got the magic number of cards signed among the 150 drivers, 11 mechanics, and about 30 employees who work in dispatch and residual units."

Business Agent Efrén Alarcon says that Local 853 "anticipates representing the employees under the terms of the national contract. We'll fine tune it to meet the needs of the San Leandro division, but we'll mainly focus on getting a good economic package for our new members." The first bargaining session, initially set for July, was rescheduled to August 7.

Alarcon added that the company is disputing the union status of the workers in residual units. "They thought only the drivers and mechanics would be joining the union. But nobody told our organizers or those workers who want union representation. If the company doesn't just recognize those workers, we may end up taking them through an election."



### Aramark Managed Systems at San Jose State

After hearing about Local 853 on Spanish radio station KLOK in San Jose, workers at Aramark Managed Systems who do the janitorial work at San

Jose State called for help to get union representation.

"Our organizers, Frank Harms and Stacy Lavelais, met with the workers and explained the organizing process. Together, they got cards signed, filed for and held a union election. On May 2, the 23 employees voted by a two to one margin to join the union," says Business Agent Lou Valleta. "These workers had some real horror stories, including sexual harassment. That's why they wanted a union."

Bargaining started in July and is being led by Local 853 Business Agent Ron Paredes.

**Photos—Top:** MV bargaining committee members John Hogue and Martin Reid.

**Above:** Aramark bargaining committee members Pascual Hernandez, Gregoria Estrada and Juan Manuel Velasquez.

**At right:** Organizer Pilar Barton joins workers from White Cap as they celebrate the union election they worked hard to win

### White Cap Construction Supply

The 65 drivers, warehouse and counter sales workers at White Cap Construction Supply in San Francisco have the union representation that many of them had wanted for 10 years.

A White Cap worker approached the Teamsters just after Christmas and said that he and his co-workers wanted to organize. Joint Council 7 Organizing staffer Pilar Barton met with a small group to explain what was involved in a campaign. They decided to move ahead and began by identifying leaders, building the committee, and training the workers about the anti-union tactics they could expect to see from their employer.

Most of the workers come from Nicaragua and El Salvador, two countries which have very different histories with unions. In



Nicaragua, laborers and factory workers were encouraged to unionize, so these workers were accustomed to strong unions and a powerful labor movement. On the other hand, in El Salvador, union organizing can sometimes be punished with death. These workers understood that the bosses would stop at nothing to break the power of worker unity. In both cases, the workers never waived.

"These workers have remained closer than brothers," explains Barton. "The solidarity that developed amongst these men has continued to keep them going, to keep supporting one another, and to do so with class, sophistication, intellect and heart."

Once they collected union election cards from a majority of the employees, the workers put on "union yes" pins and went to their bosses to demand an election. "The bosses went crazy and tossed us out," says Barton. "Then they hired three union busters who proceeded to conduct anti-union meetings and to talk down the union as they worked alongside the workers. One worker was hit by a manager and another had a box thrown at him."

While the union had initially petitioned to represent only 42 of the workers, the company asked for 65 workers to be part of the unit. The Labor Board went along with the company. "This meant we were trying to organize a new group of employees with whom we had little contact—including three who don't even work at the San Francisco facility and have no interaction with those who do."

Even after all of the employer's shenanigans, on Friday June 20, the employees at White Cap voted by 31-29 to join Teamsters Local 853. The union challenged the votes from the three employees who work at a different facility, and on July 22, the Labor Board ruled that those votes should be tossed out. "The employer was trying to pull a fast one, but even the Labor Board saw through it. These workers wanted union representation and they did what it took to get it."

"We welcome these new members to the Teamster family. They fought hard to get union representation and clearly they know what it's worth. We look forward to bargaining on their behalf," said Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise.



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## *Local 853 – organizing and building a stronger union*



*On July 4, Teamsters who work for Graniterock in Redwood City went to the Pops and Rocks concert at the company's Aromas quarry to make the community aware of how the company reduced wages, benefits and work guarantees for the drivers.*

### **First full ready-mix strike in 24 years: Why we're taking on Graniterock**

“We’re out there to protect the industry, and keep the playing field level for our current signatory contractors,” Business Agent Bo Morgan explains when asked why the union has initiated its first full-blown ready-mix strike in 24 years. “This company refused to negotiate in good faith for two years, reduced our members’ wages, benefits and work guarantees, and ultimately withdrew recognition of the union. That means they can undercut the competition. That’s not fair for any of our members who work in the ready-mix industry.”

On July 2, the union initiated its picketing program, clearly letting millionaire owner Bruce Woolpert know that the time had come for him to sign a union contract that included fair wages and treatment.

Local 853 is calling on its 400 ready-mix drivers (and all Local members) to join in the picketing—either at the Redwood

City facility or at sites where Graniterock delivers product. “We have at least 20 picketers a day out on the line,” says Morgan. “We’re having an impact on their customer support, but, as I regularly remind our members, this is a marathon not a sprint.”

The strike is sanctioned and supported by Teamsters Joint Council 7, as well as the Alameda, Santa Clara, San Mateo and San Francisco Building and Construction Trades Councils and Central Labor Councils.

Morgan wanted to give special recognition to Shop Stewards Doug Radonich and Terry Post and retired Vice President Phil Tarantino. “They’re volunteering tremendous hours to ensure that the picket line is always staffed.”

The picketers striking Graniterock need your help and support. Contact Phil Tarantino or Bo Morgan at the Local 853 office: 510-895-8853.