



CONNECTIONS

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Summer 2014

“We owe it to the unorganized to give them the power of a union”

Local 853 is focused on organizing

“Organizing is our future,” says Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise, who cut his teeth in the Teamsters as an organizer. “It’s not only important for the union to bring in new members, but we owe it to the unorganized. Everyone in the Bay Area, and across America, should have the power of a union in their corner.”

That’s why Local 853 has put so much emphasis on organizing. Here are a few of the recent campaigns, both completed and on-going.

Redwood Debris Box Service

By a vote of 9-6, the employees at Redwood Debris Box Service in Burlingame decided in July that they wanted to be represented by Teamsters Local 853. These workers drive containers for concrete and other construction debris to and from construction sites.

The Labor Board has certified the election results, and the union has begun the process of setting dates to bargain for a first contract. The new members met at Local 853’s union hall to hammer out the proposals and priorities they want to present to the employer.

“The employer did run an anti-union campaign,” says Organizer Rodney Smith. “But our guys stood fast. Of course, they are interested in getting a wage increase, but more, they are looking for respect, dignity and a voice at the workplace.”

Elgin Five Star Transportation

In September, about 35 people who work as drivers, driver aides, mechanics and maintenance personnel at Elgin Five Star Transportation, will vote to determine if they want to be represented by Local 853. Working out of two locations—San Francisco and San Rafael—these folks are responsible for transporting special needs and handicapped people.



Drivers from Redwood Debris Box Service met at Local 853’s hall on August 23 to set negotiating priorities.

“As always, the company is running an anti-union campaign,” says Smith. “We have meetings with our group on a regular basis. At the end of the day, we plan on being victorious.”

Loop Transportation

Google may have taken the heat, but several tech companies have shuttle busses taking their workers from San Francisco down to their campuses in Silicon Valley. For many, these busses have symbolized the further gentrification of San Francisco. For people with a Class B license, it’s a whole new source of employment.

It turns out, that several of those commuter and shuttle busses are contracted by Loop Transportation, based in South San Francisco. And, many of the drivers are starting to think that it’s time to unionize.

“This is an on-going campaign,” explains Smith. “A majority of the 64 drivers have signed cards signalling their desire to join the union, but we haven’t yet petitioned for the election. We want to meet with all of them personally before the company gets a chance to run an anti-union campaign.”

Smith says that he and a few others went to one of the sites to handbill the

employees back in February. “The next day, the company gave everyone a 75 cent raise, so we immediately lost a lot of support.” But, the company has since reneged on some of its promises and taken back some of the raise, so the employees are again interested in getting the union.”

MV Transportation

In November 2012, Local 853 organized the 165 drivers and bus aides at MV Transportation in San Francisco. A year and a half later, the 12 dispatchers, 6 reservationists, 4 road supervisors, 3 clerical payroll workers, and 3 fueler/custodians decided they also wanted to get into the union.

The dispatchers had the first election, and voted to join the union. “Rather than go through the whole process with each group, I talked the company into recognizing the rest, and they agreed,” says Business Agent Efren Alarcon.

The new group currently makes between \$12.66 and \$13.00/hour, and they hadn’t received a raise since November, 2011. Now, they’ll each get at least a 50-cent raise for the first six months. Negotiations for the original and the new unit will open up in November, 2014.



To stay strong, we need to bring in new members

By ROME ALOISE

It has been a busy summer for all of us at Local 853. It used to seem like the summer months would be quieter than the rest of year. After all, many of our members would be on vacation with their families, and perhaps more importantly, management would be gone on vacation and the problems would slow down for a couple of months. But, that isn't the case any longer. We are busy here with contracts, grievances, organizing and special projects all year-round, every day and month.

On the organizing front, our organizer Rodney Smith has been very busy this year. We have won a number of elections, and also have been able to get recognition from a number of companies.

Our business agents have joined in to assist as they know the importance of bringing new members into Local 853.

Organizing is a difficult but very vital job in our Local. Many of you came into the Teamsters Union and benefited by being a represented worker. You know how hard it is to even vote for the union, given the employer's constant barrage of anti-union propaganda and illegal tactics. When you think of what it takes to get a union in your workplace, it is absolutely amazing that we can bring the advantages to workers at all.

The cards are stacked against workers. Plain and simple, the methods given to workers to seek representation are outdated, weighted towards the employer, and in

many cases, totally unworkable. However, it doesn't change the fact that for our Local to continue to be strong and viable and to be able to represent you the best way we can, we need to bring new members into our Local. This helps the new workers, and makes our local bigger and stronger.

"We have strong members who value their union and understand that unity produces strength. Our members take care of each other, and have each others' backs."

Many of our members have volunteered to assist in organizing new members. This is a large help to getting the job done. Our members, who in the same type of jobs as those we are trying to organize, can lend credibility to our cause when they take the time to tell non-union workers directly that they do the same job, but make better wages, have better benefits, and most importantly, have a say about what happens to them on the job! Often, our members are also protecting their own jobs by getting the competition organized and bringing their wages and benefits up to our contracts. This is important for job security.

If you are interested in being involved

in building your union, and protecting your job, give Rodney a call.

This subject matter also necessitates that I bring up the fact that many of our members have little appreciation of what the Union and their fellow members do for them. Local 853 is a very diverse union and we represent workers in many industries, who do many different jobs. Without exception, our contracts are some of the finest in the nation. Our construction contracts, including ready-mix, are without question, the best in the country. Gillig Corporation, the last bus builder left in the nation that builds the entire bus from the bottom up, is the highest paid and benefited manufacturing company in California. Our dairy and liquor contracts are second to none, and I could go on and on about the superior contracts in our Local.

Why are our contracts better? Because we have strong members who value their union and understand that unity produces strength. Our members take care of each other. In short, we have each other's backs!

This newsletter is going out just as Labor Day approaches. You'll probably see the media focus on how labor unions are shrinking. Rest assured that your local union, Local 853, is growing and getting stronger every day. Happy Labor Day! Support it proudly.

Announcements

WCT Pension Plan Q&A

On the second Wednesday of every month, a representative from the WCT Pension Trust Fund 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].

Check out Local 853's website

Go to www.teamsters853.org to see what the Local has been up to between newsletters. Also get business forms and other union resources.

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Postmaster: Send address changes to: Teamsters Local 853, 2100 Merced St., San Leandro, CA 94577

Members: Send address changes and comments to the above address or e-mail us at connections@teamsters853.org

Charge your union dues

In our continuing effort to make dues payments easier and more convenient, Local 853 is now offering monthly credit card payments for your dues. For more information on this program, please contact the Local Union office at 510-895-8853.

Monthly union meetings

Local 853's membership meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the union hall: 2100 Merced St., San Leandro, **Note:** Sisters in Solidarity (Local 853's Women's Committee) meets before the meeting, at 6:30, every other month.

Why did you want to join the Teamsters and are you happy with the vote?



Geraldo Velasquez
Redwood Debris Box Service
18 months

"We've got to have the same rights as all the other companies that do this same work. We need more pay and better insurance. That's what we deserve. Winning the union vote means that we aren't scared. They started giving me and another guy a hard time, but now they can't. We're all together now—even those who voted 'no.'"



Rodrigo Melendez
Redwood Debris Box Service
15 years

"I've been there a long time, and have been treated badly. My main concern was too much favoritism. I want to equal things out between the drivers. I was definitely happy when the union won. It feels good."



Jeff Boesswetter
Redwood Debris Box Service
15 years

"I voted for the Teamsters so the drivers would have more say-so in the company. There's been too much favoritism. We also need more money. It was great—even before we voted, I told the guys (and one gal) that we're a strong team and we have to stay strong."

853's Women's Committee helps local family center



On August 14, the Women's Committee brought over a supply of backpacks, donated by the Local, and school supplies donated by local office supply stores, for distribution to kids at Davis Street Family Resource Center.

You can help, too!

The IBT 853 Women's Committee is collecting travel supplies from hotels for the Davis Street Family Resource Center, a San Leandro non-profit that offers comprehensive resources to low income residents. If you go to hotels, bring home those little bottles of shampoo, conditioner and lotion. Homeless families will appreciate this more than you know. There's a barrel drop off at the union hall in San Leandro.

For more info: janjohnson@teamsters853.org

Republicans attack prevailing wage, skilled workers

The never-ending attack on working families by Republican politicians has gathered new steam recently, with a block of 10 Republican U.S. Senators from the South and Midwest introducing new legislation to repeal the Davis-Bacon Act, the 1931 law requiring that wages paid on federal public works projects are at levels prevailing in the locality of the project for similar crafts and skills on comparable construction work.

The repeal measure would have the direct effect of cutting construction workers' pay. What makes this effort particularly interesting is that the Republican authors are being unusually blunt about their motives, flatly admitting that their goal is to push out highly-skilled union workers and replace them with lower paid, unskilled workers.

In an opinion column in the conservative magazine National Review, Senator Lamar Alexander, R-Tennessee, actually wrote: **"If employers know they must pay a predetermined wage, there is no incentive for them to hire inexperienced workers over experienced,**

unionized workers." He further emphasized that Davis-Bacon "robs unskilled workers of a fair shot at getting hired," and in a statement, called the decent wages earned by skilled union workers a "handout." Co-author Mike Lee, R-Utah, was quoted in another article saying **Davis-Bacon "removes the incentive for federal contractors to hire unskilled, nonunionized workers."**

It can't be much clearer than that; the race to the bottom – lowering workers' skills, wages and standard of living, and sacrificing the quality of public works construction – is their only priority. Fortunately, as long as Democrats have a majority in the Senate, together with a small but solid group of Republicans who still support American workers, and with President Obama in office, this repeal attempt has no realistic chance of advancing. But it clearly illustrates the nightmarish future most Republicans have in mind for working families should they ever regain the White House and control of both houses of Congress.

By State Building & Construction Trades Council

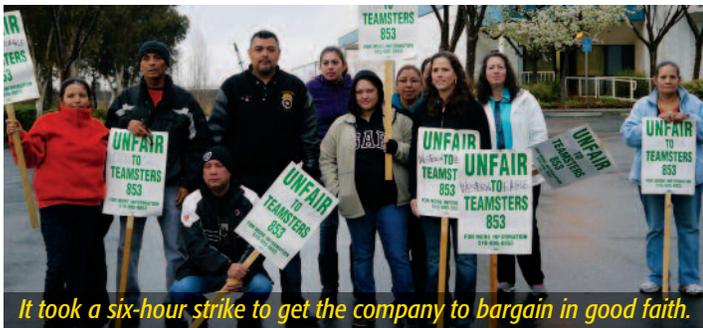
Health care for new Teamsters at Western Eagle packaging

Teamsters at Western Eagle Packaging Products in Livermore have voted overwhelmingly, 37-3, to ratify a strong first contract, guaranteeing health care benefits and job security, among other gains. The 58 new members of Teamsters Local 853 produce the foam packaging that protects electronics and other products when shipped in the mail.

“We’re very pleased to have negotiated an impressive first agreement for our members. They’ll now have health care for the first time and job protections that they never had before,” said Secretary-Treasurer Rome Aloise.

In addition to medical benefits, the members will now have bereavement leave for the first time, as well as additional paid holidays, overtime, and timely notification of requests to work overtime, and progressive disciplinary language.

The Western Eagle workers voted to join Teamsters Local 853 in the fall of 2013. During their organizing campaign, the workers, many of whom are immigrants, faced intimidation from management. The local filed several unfair labor practice charges during the campaign,



It took a six-hour strike to get the company to bargain in good faith.



Now that they have a contract, these Western Eagle employees are now officially Teamsters.

including one over the firing of Jose Lopez, a Western Eagle employee.

“I always supported joining the union and was vocal about it. When we came to a vote, that’s when they let me go. They said they didn’t have work for me,” Lopez said.

During the several months Lopez was out of work, he never gave up on his strong beliefs and support for forming a union at Western Eagle. In January 2014, he joined his co-workers in standing out in the rain one early morning, on strike outside the facility.

“Management was surprised this was happening in the middle of the parking lot at 4 a.m. The president wanted to speak with me inside, but I told them I wasn’t going to go

into a warm office when our members are standing outside in the rain. We stand together,” said business agent Ray Torres. “The strike lasted six hours before management agreed to stop the intimidation of our members that caused us to walk out.”

After Local 853 filed ULP charges over Lopez’s termination, the company brought Lopez back. He was hired on as a full-time truck driver and got a raise in his new position.

Lopez and his co-workers are excited to now have a contract that allows them to do a good job, while protecting them.

“Every day I wear my Teamster colors—my Teamster jacket or shirt,” Lopez said. “I’m proud to be a Teamster.”

Torres wanted especially to thank the organizing committee at Western Eagle for their courage, and Business Agent Dan Varela for all his help and advice.

The children of two Local 853 members win Teamster scholarships

Local 853’s 2014 Joint Council 7 Harry Pollard Scholarship recipient is Courtney Van Vliet, a recent graduate from Ripon Christian High School. Courtney’s father, James Van Vliet, has been a member of Local 853 since 2011, and works in the ready-mix industry. Courtney will attend Kaplan College for two years. Upon graduation, she will begin her career as a dental hygienist.

Get ready for the 2015 scholarship. Watch your Joint Council 7 newspaper for the announcement (usually in the May/June/July edition). The application, including a two-page essay about the labor movement, is usually due by June 30.

And if you ever think it’s not worth it to apply for Teamster scholarships, you might want to talk to Juan Soto, a Teamster who works at Central Concrete in Hayward. His son Austin just won a \$10,000 James R. Hoffa scholarship through the IBT. That will prove mighty helpful as Austin’s tuition comes due at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo.

Local 853 congratulates Courtney and Austin for doing the hard work to earn their scholarships. “We offer both of them best wishes for college,” said Local 853 Vice President Bo Morgan. “But be sure to remember where that scholarship money came from!”



James and Courtney Van Vliet collect the check from Vice President Bo Morgan (R).

Closing the circle at Coke and Pepsi

The 12 salespeople at Pepsi's Sunnyvale facility are now members of Teamsters Local 853 and they have their first contract. "I'm proud to say that they ratified it unanimously," says Business Agent Jesse Casqueiro. "We welcome the salespeople into the Local and the Teamsters."

And, nearby at Coca Cola's San Jose facility, 35 warehouse loaders are now members of Local 853. "These folks were members of Local 856," Casqueiro adds. Now, as of April 1, we represent everybody at the facility." This group includes drivers, merchandisers, and warehousemen.

New First Transit contract brings largest wage increases

In March, the 130 paratransit drivers who transport the elderly and disabled at First Transit in Alameda County, ratified a new four-year contract. In it, they got the largest wage increases in the history of this agreement—ranging from 25-40% over the four year period.

"It took organizing the workers at MV Transportation to get this deal," says Local 853 Business Agent Adolph Felix. "By organizing First Transit's competition and successfully raising those workers' wages, we finally had some leverage."

Getting the attention of Sysco workers



Local 853 members and staff leaflet Sysco's Fremont yard as part of the August 21 National Day of Action around US Foods, to tell the workers that being a Teamster is the only way to go.

Say 'no' to Sugar tax in SF & Berkeley

If you live in San Francisco or Berkeley, watch out for the Sugar Tax that will be on the ballot in both cities this November. The tax is 2¢ per ounce in San Francisco and 1¢ per ounce in Berkeley and will be charged not only on soda, but also on hundreds of drinks including juices, sports drinks, certain teas, and more.

The San Francisco tax requires a two-thirds vote, because the money is designated to special programs. The Berkeley tax only needs 50% plus one, because the money is going into the general fund

Both of these taxes are JOB KILLERS! Many of these products are produced, warehoused, delivered and merchandised by Teamsters.

We urge you to vote NO on the sugar taxes!

Major back pay settlement for SF drivers

In the course of negotiating a strong new three-year agreement with the City of San Francisco, the 180-200 Teamster construction truck drivers achieved a very important grievance settlement. For many years, these drivers have been fighting for the right of "as needed" and "temp" drivers to move from Step 1 to Step 2 once they've worked 1,360 hours. By changing to the next step, their pay would increase by 10%. Currently, all too many drivers are considered temps for years, and get paid \$4/hour less than their "permanent" counterparts who are doing the same work.

"We estimate that 43 employees will be splitting at least \$257,000," says Local 853 Business Agent Dan Harrington. "We agreed that the City would pay 70% of the gross amount of back pay owed, which came to \$367,000. That number will continue to increase every hour until the Board of Supervisors signs and seals the deal."

"The most important thing," Harrington adds, "is that we secured language in the contract that moves the 'as needed' and 'temp' drivers up to Step 2 and full pay after they've worked 1,360 hours, whether or not they are called permanent employees. We've sought this language for many contracts and finally got it."

The grievance was filed in September, 2012 and was resolved in June, 2014. "It was a long battle that ultimately ended in arbitration," Harrington says. "But the final result was well worth the effort."

In addition to the settlement, the contract calls for raises of between 8.5% and 9.5% over three years and, for the first time, stipulates that the City must take responsibility for tickets, such as, if the City requires a driver to take out an oversized load and the driver gets a ticket, the City must pay.

AC Transit orders more buses from Gillig

Since Teamsters got involved and helped elect our candidates to the AC Transit board, that agency dropped the Belgian company they were buying buses from and have ordered 187 Gillig buses! One of the Board members we elected is Mark Williams, son of a retired Local 853 member! This one order will keep our 500 members at Gillig working for a significant amount of time.

Construction Teamsters busy with pipeline work

The 2010 gas pipeline explosion in San Bruno was nothing less than a complete disaster. It killed eight people and wreaked untold property damage in the small suburban community.

However, there is a silver lining. Local 853's construction workers have been working non-stop to replace and test gas pipelines in every city throughout the Bay Area. "Over the next five years, millions of miles of pipeline will need to be tested and replaced," says Business Agent Stu Helfer. "We're back to the 2008 level of construction work at Local 853."

Helfer adds that the members overwhelmingly ratified a new three-year National Pipeline Agreement. "The wages are very similar to what's in our AGC agreement, and that's a good thing."



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Local 853 – organizing and building a stronger union

Upcoming events

MS Muckfest

Saturday, October 11
Solano County Fairgrounds
Contact Stacy at
savelao@teamsters853.org

Local 853 Member Appreciation Day

Saturday, November 1
9:00 a.m.
John Muir Middle School
1444 Williams St, San Leandro
Hear the latest news about the local
and win prizes. Always a good time!

Election Day

Tuesday, November 4
Be sure to vote, if you haven't already
cast your absentee ballot

MS Shootout

Thursday, November 6
Quail Point Hunt Club*
29625 County Road 14, Zamora
(*Note: New Location)
Contact: Mark Gagliardi: 925-698-0719

As another Labor Day passes...

It can be frustrating for those of us in the labor movement to see Labor Day portrayed as just the final chance to take a long weekend trip before a balmy summer fades into a crisp fall. That's why it's up to us to keep the legacy alive and thriving through the work we do every day.

Labor Day is not just about what workers fought so hard to attain in the past, it's about what we're doing right now to stay strong in this new and unique shifting economy. It's easy to get discouraged, but it's important to remember that the great American middle class was not something that just happened. It was built brick-by-brick, with the hard work of our parents and

grandparents and the unions that represented them. It was they who created the 40-hour work week, paid vacations and wages that were once the envy of the world. Getting back to that isn't easy, but at least we have a blueprint.

Working people of California need to stand together to bring back the American Dream. We need to stand together at the polls this fall to ensure the flood of corporate cash in this year's election does not drown out our voices. We need to stand together on the job to stop CEOs from taking the whole pie and leaving workers to fight over the crumbs. And we need to stand together in the streets to fight for justice for everyone. Together, we always win.

