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Teamster Magazine

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MAKING HISTORY

President Clinton meets with Hoffa

"Tonight, the President stood up for America's families and for safety on America's highways."

-- James P. Hoffa

President William Jefferson Clinton became the first President in more than 50 years to address the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

As the featured speaker at the dinner honoring Teamsters General President James P. Hoffa, President Clinton pledged to keep unsafe Mexican trucks off U.S. roads. Under the NAFTA agreement, the U.S. border was set to open to unsafe Mexican truck traffic at the beginning of the year.

"I don't intend to allow the trucking rules to be changed until there are safety measures in place," Clinton said.

The event, hosted by the Labor Research Association, was attended by more than 1,200 people. Prior to the dinner, Hoffa and Clinton met privately. They discussed President Franklin D. Roosevelt's relationship with the Teamsters and issues affecting working families including NAFTA, the minimum wage, Social Security and healthcare.



"Tonight, the President stood up for America's families and for safety on America's highways," Hoffa said. "President Clinton's appearance here tonight and his decision to keep the border closed underscores how powerful Teamster voices are on Capitol Hill. We must continue to reach out to those who help working families."

The Last Meeting

Franklin D. Roosevelt formally opened his 1944 campaign for reelection at a national meeting of the Teamsters Union.

Roosevelt, the architect of the New Deal, was a personal friend of then Teamster President Daniel J. Tobin. Roosevelt's appearance at the Teamsters' event was the last by a sitting president until 1999.

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Message From The General President A Season of Celebration, A Season of Solidarity

In the spirit of the season and at the dawn of a new millennium, we should look back over our year -- and our century -- and reflect on what we have achieved. As Teamsters, we have contracts, pensions and good wages. We have embraced each other -- regardless of color or creed -- and built a community of workers.

Our good fortune didn't just happen by chance. It is a result of the efforts of those who came before us. My father and his peers were part of a labor movement that led thousands of Americans out of the depths of the depression and into the middle class. For this entire century, in each decade, Teamsters have been at the forefront of every battle to advance the cause of justice for working people.

We have come a long way, but the need to fight for working families is still great.

While the work that lies before us is monumental, it is not insurmountable. With less than 15 percent of the U.S. workforce in unions, the middle class is in danger. If we don't work to bring more people into our union family, our lives and livelihoods are in jeopardy.

As we face the turn of the century we must organize. We must welcome and encourage our non-union brothers and sisters to our table and work to improve their lives as well as our own.

Leading By Example

No one knows this better than the brave workers at Overnite. For five years, Overnite workers have tried to make their dream of representation a reality. They have endured a brutal, lawless campaign of terror, and management continues to deny them respect.

Over the course of the campaign, the Teamsters filed more than a thousand labor law complaints against the company.

Hundreds of the charges have been upheld. Recently a company manager made clear what we have known for years: In an affidavit, a manager stood up and detailed how Overnite targeted union supporters for discipline and firing. As a result, Overnite's workforce went on strike to enforce their demands for justice.

Building Better Lives Together

As we host our holiday dinners, exchange gifts and give thanks for what we have, we must remember the Overnite workers and the thousands like them. Our bounty brings with it an awesome responsibility.

We must help our brothers and sisters not as a seasonal example of our virtue, but as the very essence of our lives.

I am proud to lead the Teamsters into the next millennium. As we go forth, we will need unity, strength, creativity and compassion. This is the spirit of the season. It is the spirit of the Teamsters.

Fraternally,
James P. Hoffa



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UPS JOBS

Teamsters Win 2,000 Full-Time Jobs - First Installment on 10,000 Jobs Earned in 1997 Strike

When Teamsters General President James P. Hoffa took office, UPS had spent two years stalling on its commitment to create 10,000 full-time jobs.



"More than 180,000 Teamsters waged a major national strike to win these new jobs. To have UPS stall is an insult to their solidarity," Hoffa said. "My administration sent UPS management a very clear message. We expect UPS to meet their obligations under the 1997 agreement, and we will not tolerate company delays and numbers manipulation."



Under pressure from the new Hoffa administration, UPS will create 2,000 jobs as called for in the third year of the contract.

"This is long overdue," said Rich Jasinski, a 15-year Teamster with Local 384 in Pennsylvania.

The victory establishes the new, aggressive tone the Teamsters are setting with UPS.

A decision is expected this month by an arbitrator on the 2,000 jobs from the first year of the contract. And, the Hoffa administration has filed a national grievance for UPS' failure to create 2,000 new jobs in the second year.

"We fought very hard for this," said Rick Adams, a 19-year Local 384 member and part-time UPS employee. "We've been waiting for this for a long time. I work another job full-time and 40 to 50 hours a week at UPS. I'm ready to go full-time at UPS and work just one job."

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Teamsters Say No to WTO Members Descend on Emerald City to Protest World Trade Organization

As this issue of the Teamster went to press, thousands of Teamsters from around North America were gathering in Seattle, Wash. at the World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial meetings. The Teamsters and other unionists were on hand to continue the fight for workers' rights and against the erosion of wages fostered by free trade.

"Trade is essential for our nation. But trade must be fair. We cannot allow corporations to put concern for copyrights over the safety and security of working people," said Jon Rabine, International Vice-President and Joint Council 28 President. "We are here to make it known that working people must have a voice at the table on the local, state, national and international level."

Created in 1995, the WTO is a powerful global trade agency authorized to enforce trade rules. The WTO can potentially override member countries laws and enforce its decisions on citizens.

Recently the WTO proved how much power it wields when the state of Massachusetts passed a law prohibiting the sale of goods from countries that use forced labor. By passing the law, Massachusetts' citizens thought they were helping further the cause of worker rights. But the WTO considered this law an "economic sanction" and a violation of its rules. It filed charges against the United States. If Massachusetts is found guilty under the WTO rules, the state will have to pay fines for enforcing its own laws.

"The Teamsters will never allow an un-elected body of corporate managers to subvert the democratic process," Hoffa said. "We need to let the WTO know that working people will be heard in Seattle and in the trade treaties that follow."

A full-report of Teamster activities will appear in the next Teamster issue.

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Seeking the Truth Anti-Corruption Survey Team Begins Efforts

In 1989, the Teamsters consent decree with the government was established to remove organized crime influence from the union. Ten years later, the Teamsters are going to find out how well it has worked.

As part of the new anti-corruption effort, General President James P. Hoffa appointed James Kossler, former head of the FBI's organized crime division in New York, to conduct a union-wide survey. A critical part of the program led by former assistant U.S. attorney Ed Stier, Kossler's work will determine if any vestiges of organized crime influence remain within the union.

"We will be conducting interviews with current and past leaders and current members to determine any changes that have occurred in the past 10 years and what direction the union is heading," Kossler said. "Our research will lay the groundwork for the future success of President Hoffa's anti-corruption efforts."

Kossler has assembled an all-star team of labor racketeering professionals to conduct the

survey. The data will be reviewed by independent analysts from the academic and law enforcement communities.

"We're going in as well-trained professionals who understand local unions," Kossler said. "We will be respectful of the members and the leadership and pay attention to their concerns. We're there to find out the truth."

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Striking Back Overnite Teamsters Strike to Protest Firm's Unfair Labor Practices

As the Teamster magazine goes press, thousands of Teamsters employed by the Overnite Transportation Company struck the country's largest nonunion trucking company.

Members of Teamsters Local 667 in Memphis, Tenn. went out on strike after learning of the company's secret plan to break labor laws by targeting union employees. Union supporters were targeted for harsh discipline and firings. In a blockbuster development, a former Overnite boss turned against the company by revealing its union-busting blueprint to federal investigators.

Strike Hurts Overnite

During the first week of the strike, Overnite closed five barns as more than 2,000 workers joined the picket lines. The company has even reported that its freight volume has plunged 25 percent.

"The Teamsters sought to avoid this strike," said Phil Young, Teamsters Freight Division Director. "But Overnite has brought it upon itself. This strike is the bitter fruit of Overnite's unrepentant and unrelenting violation of its workers' federally-protected rights."

Workers at more than 126 Overnite terminals went on strike to protest the company's unlawful and unfair labor practices which include: unlawful withholding of pay raises, harassment, intimidation, surveillance, firings and bad faith bargaining.

Teamster members across the United States helped the striking Overnite workers by joining picket lines at many of the company's 160 terminals. Staff from the AFL-CIO and many other unions have lent critical help in the strike effort.

Despite having to pay out tens of millions of dollars for its violations and legal fees, Overnite continues to disregard federal labor laws.

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Beating the Heat 475 Alabama Workers Find Relief with the Teamsters



When Pittsburgh Plate Glass tried to turn up the heat and keep Teamsters Local 402 out of their Huntsville, Ala. plant, organizers cooled the company down and jazzed the workers up.

Local 402 organizers spent the shift changes outside the plant handing out bottles of water to the workers who needed relief. Armed with ice cold bottles of drinking water labeled with "Vote Teamsters" stickers, organizers sent the message that the union was the solution to the front-office's heat.

"When the workers finish their shifts they want to cool off," said Michael Kendricks, Secretary-Treasurer of Teamster Local 402. "And sipping on a bottle of ice cold, Teamster water makes a lasting impression."

This and other creative organizing tactics paid off in the first union victory at the Huntsville facility in nearly 35 years. The workers, who make aircraft windows and windshields, voted overwhelmingly to become Teamsters.

The Right Message

Building on the theme, "Let's All Pull Together!" organizers showed the workers they didn't have to put up with company harassment and threats. Using a combination of volunteer Teamster organizers, meetings with a Teamster attorney, regular handbilling, and hard work by the organizing committee, workers were convinced they could make a difference.

"It was the right time to take the company on," said Demetra "DeDe" Morrow, a member of the plant organizing committee.

"People were worried about job security because the company had started

subcontracting and outsourcing work."

When PPG management learned about the workers' 20 to 25-member organizing committee, the company rolled out its anti-union program. Mandatory anti-union meetings and mailings to employees' homes were just a few of the scare tactics the company threw at the workers. The company even had security guards follow certain pro-union workers to the bathroom to make sure that they didn't speak to other workers.

"We felt that if we told the truth and recruited some others to point out management's lies we stood a good chance of winning," said Elbert Drake, an organizing committee member.

"We pulled out all the stops to win this campaign," said Kendricks. "We had some UPS Teamsters come out to the plant to help us handbill the workers. The UPS Teamsters were living proof to the workers that you could take on the company and win."

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Connecticut Ambulance Workers Dial 559

What would you do if your job was saving people's lives, but you were treated by management as if your and your family's lives didn't matter?

More than 100 Aetna Ambulance paramedics, emergency medical technicians and medical transport drivers have the answer: join Teamsters Local 559.

"We were really upset at the way management was treating us," said Billy Knox, a member of the organizing committee. "We wanted somebody that would have the strength to back us up if we took on the company."

Knox was joined by an overwhelming majority of his coworkers as they voted by a 2-1 margin for representation by the Hartford, Connecticut-based local.

A primary issue was the company's erratic and unfair wage system. Also, the workers were concerned with the company's failure to provide them with the most up-to-date safety equipment.

"Quality safety equipment is not only good for the workers, it's good for public safety too," said John Barletta, a member of the organizing and negotiating committees.

"Before the campaign the owner met with them and all of the workers aired their concerns. But the owner didn't even bother to make a promise and then break it. He just said, 'See ya later,'" said Bob Randall, a Local 559 organizer. "Now the workers have a forum to bring their concerns forward and get something done."

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Chicago Social Workers Dial 743

As social workers, Chicago's Lutheran Social Service employees must lift spirits every day. Unfortunately, back at the office they didn't find any support.

So this group of 50 social workers organized themselves and joined Teamsters Local 743.

"They decided to go with the Teamsters after hearing about our good track record representing degreed professionals," said Cassandra Davis, Local 743 Director of Organizing. "The workers had a list of problems they wanted help solving, ranging from work rules and wages to seniority and job security."

Concerned that management denied them a voice in decision-making at the agency, a five-member organizing committee hand-billed workers, held meetings, and carried out house visits in support of the union.

Despite a vigorous anti-union campaign that labeled the Teamsters as an "unwanted third party," the workers voted for representation by more than a 3-1 margin.

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Taking Kids from School to Work Teamsters Win Major Grant To Help Students Develop Skills For The 21st Century

Dick Foley is motivated to educate. "Who knows work better than us?" asked Foley, Local 170 Secretary-Treasurer in Worcester, Mass.



"But if we don't start working with kids and educating them about what it is to be a working person, the union's going to be dead in its tracks."

That's the reason Foley and Local 170 members immersed themselves in the School-To-Work program (STW).

School-to-Work brings working people together with students for classroom instruction about the working world. Some STW programs also bring students out of the classroom and into the workplace.

Over the last two years, Local 170 built a team of 18 members who serve as "local education coordinators." These stewards, dockworkers, UPS drivers and other members visit area high schools. They field questions and teach students about work and the union.

"School-to-Work gave me exposure to the latest technology and business equipment such as the computer, the internet and email," said Sophal Ny, a student at South High Community School. "I now have knowledge of things that most fifteen-year-olds do not have."

"Working with the union gave me an opportunity to learn responsibility for others, self confidence and self respect. The Teamsters union really cares for others," said Jacquelyn Comer, a student involved in the program last year.

More Opportunities

Teamster involvement in the national STW program will increase as the result of a one-year School-to-Work federal grant awarded to the International and two other labor unions. The Teamsters received \$370,726 to develop a "Skills for Tomorrow Toolkit" to help locals develop relationships with employers and schools.

"This grant gives us tremendous capacity in terms of helping young people connect to the world of work," said Mary Hardiman, Teamsters Director of Education. "We're very excited about the potential this grant affords our union and the young people who will lead this country in the next century."



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FITTING TRIBUTE

James R. Hoffa Inducted into Labor's Hall of Fame

When the Labor's International Hall of Fame inducted James R. Hoffa into its ranks, Teamsters General President James P. Hoffa was there to give tribute to his father.

"Unions have been at the frontline of every battle for human dignity and social justice that has been waged this century," said Hoffa at the induction dinner in Detroit, Mich. "It is for this reason that we come together this evening to honor my father."

James R. Hoffa, who led the Teamsters from 1957-1967, was inducted into the Labor Hall of Fame along with Mary Kennedy O'Sullivan and Emil Rieve.

O'Sullivan was the American Federation of Labor's first female organizer, and Rieve was a past president of the American Federation of Hosiery Workers.

Hoffa's crowning achievement, the 1964 National Master Freight Agreement, ranks as one of the greatest accomplishments in U.S. labor history. He was a tireless organizer and advocate for working families.

"Perhaps the greatest organizer of them all was Jimmy Hoffa, the man who built the IBT into the largest and most powerful union in the history of our country," said John Sweeney, AFL-CIO President and keynote speaker. "Jimmy Hoffa was a dedicated trade unionist who cared fiercely for the workers he represented and fiercely for his family, and we honor his memory."

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"Teamsters Don't Abstain"

Hoffa Urges Patience in Presidential Endorsement at AFL-CIO Convention

Teamster Jerry Vincent doesn't want to be told how to vote. He makes his own assessments, weighs them and then casts his vote.

"In the South we always say, 'Don't wrap that pig. Weigh it,'" Vincent told reporters at the recent AFL-CIO Convention in Los Angeles. "And



we'd like to have any endorsement weighed before it's wrapped."

Despite pressure from other unions to abstain, Vincent and the of the Teamster delegation voted against an early presidential endorsement.

"We disagree not necessarily with the candidate, but with the process," said James P. Hoffa, Teamsters General President from the floor of the convention.

"I understand the need to lead, but I also understand the need to listen. Now is the time to listen."

The Teamsters stood with the United Auto Workers in opposition to the early presidential endorsement. Although the AFL-CIO endorsed the Vice President, the Teamsters let it be known that an endorsement is earned, and that ultimately the rank-and-file members must be heard.

For several months, the union has been polling members and leaders about the election. The results have showed overwhelmingly that Teamster members want more information about the candidates and their positions on critical issues like the NAFTA provision to open the U.S.-Mexico border to unsafe Mexican trucks, expansion of the World Trade Organization, and healthcare for working families.

"Our members have made it clear that they don't want to be told how to vote. We should allow the local union officers and members to learn more about the candidates and their positions on issues important to working families.

In addition to presidential issues, Gore praised the striking Overnite workers. Also AFL-CIO delegates expressed their solidarity with Local 890 workers at Basic Vegetable. These workers have been out on the picket lines for four months.



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Rolling Sharecroppers Teamsters Help Owner-Operators at Port of Seattle and Tacoma

After working a 54-hour workweek and barely making expenses, Yebarek Tesfay feels like a "tenant" trucker. "We've become sharecroppers on wheels," said Tesfay, a Seattle-based driver who hauls containers between ships, warehouses and railroad yards.

Tesfay and other drivers working the ports must maintain their own vehicles and work at the whim of the companies that control the shipping and cargo industry.

A University of Washington study found that the average driver takes home only \$8.50 an hour after expenses, which is below the \$13.12 required for a single parent to raise one child. Also, cargo rates are so low that many drivers must choose between paying for truck maintenance or health insurance for their families.

That's why Washington state port drivers, with the support of Teamsters Local 174 and the community, have been rallying outside the port gates to bring attention to the driver's plight. Currently, more than half of the area's 1,000 independent owner-operator truckers have joined the Teamsters.

Looking North

These port drivers are looking to the success that happened 150 miles to the north. Last September, Teamster Local 31 members in Vancouver, British Columbia successfully forced the Port of Vancouver and its shipping companies to agree to a deal that includes hourly wages and an appointment system to eliminate backlogs.

Still, there are many obstacles in the U.S. truckers' way. U.S. law currently prohibits "independent- operators" from having union contracts. But the independent truckers argue that they aren't independent at all.

They maintain they are essentially full-time employees to a cartel of wealthy shipping companies.

Speak Your Mind, Face Retaliation

Driver Bob Ehrler, a leader in the campaign, was fired by his company for speaking out about the situation. However, when other drivers blocked the company's pier with their trucks in support of Ehrler, the company changed its mind and rehired him.

"The company fired me because I stood up for what I believe in, a union for all container haulers in the Ports of Tacoma and Seattle," said Ehrler. "What they did not understand is that when they attacked one of us, they attack us all."



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