

# Turn the ILWU into a Fighting Force!

From keeping its members on the job without a contract for over a year to not raising even a peep in protest against the U.S.-backed genocide of the Palestinians, the leadership of the ILWU has put loyalty to the bosses and their government above the interests of the working class. Last year, Emily Turnbull was elected to the executive board of ILWU Local 10 on a program to make the union a fighting force for longshoremen and all workers. Over the past year, she has sought to put that program into action—fighting against the tier divisions that are ripping the ILWU apart, opposing the local leadership’s support for phony “friend

of labor” Democratic Party politicians and pushing to mobilize the ILWU against the Israeli genocide in Gaza.

This year, Turnbull is running for president of Local 10 to further the struggle to strengthen the union. She is pledging to take immediate actions to that end upon being elected. These will lay the basis for the union to fight against the escalating attacks by a ruling class desperate to save its sinking economy and world domination. It’s time to reject the union bureaucracy’s demobilization of union struggle. Vote for Emily Turnbull!

*(We reproduce her campaign flyer on page 2)*

## End Tier Segregation in the ILWU!

# Equal Pay, Benefits and Union Rights for All Longshoremen!

The “Committee to End Tier Segregation in the ILWU” in the union’s Bay Area Local 10 has taken up the fight to end the division of the workforce into A, B and casual workers. For decades, these divisions have been eroding the ILWU’s collective strength and its members’ consciousness, as the different tiers are pitted against one another in a dog-eat-dog struggle to get, or stay, ahead. The casuals struggle to get any work at all—at lower wages, no benefits and no union membership. If they pick up enough hours, which often takes years, they can advance to B-man status, largely working the most back-

breaking jobs at less pay and still no union membership. If B-men put in enough time, they can become A-men, often working around the clock and destroying their bodies driving the heavy equipment to make up for the time they were on the bottom rungs of the tier ladder.

The Committee to End Tier Segregation is fighting for full medical benefits, equal pay for equal work and full union membership for *all* longshore workers. At Local 10’s May meeting, members voted to send a resolution in line with this perspective to the ILWU Longshore Caucus. Put

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*Emily Turnbull campaign flyer*

**Vote**



# Emily Turnbull

## #9973

### for Local 10 President



The recent strike by ILA longshore workers showed both the power we have and how the union leadership stands in the way of using it. Harold Daggett might look good compared to Willie Adams, who swore off a strike at Biden's request and then saddled us with far less than we could have gotten. But Daggett simply took a different route to the same end—calling off the ILA strike without having resolved most key issues and then thanking Biden for this outcome.

The U.S.-dominated liberal world order is crumbling around us, and working people desperately need to fight for their interests. To prepare for the battles ahead, we need to begin strengthening our union **now**. These are the immediate steps I will take if elected Local 10 president:

- Get the Local 10 website up and running. Produce a weekly Local 10 bulletin to inform and educate the membership on the issues facing the union.
- Hire a sound engineer to improve the acoustics/sound system in the hall.
- Amend the constitution to end all fines and other punishments for failure to attend or to get a quorum at union meetings.
- Ensure that Local 10 takes control of safety by making the Stewards Council a real, representative body of stewards elected by the dispatch boards, terminal mechanics, steady men, Bs and Casuals.
- Fight to get Local 10 to take the measures necessary to bring Bs and Casuals in as full members of the union.
- Form a committee to organize non-union workers at the ports, including port truckers.
- Demand that the PMA put in a bid to reserve the Howard Terminal for an auxiliary dispatch hall in Oakland to save members who live in the East Bay the wear and tear of the SF commute.

**Of course, I will continue to fight for the program I was elected on when I ran for executive board last year.**

The ILWU should:

- **Not** have signed the contract and fought for better.
- **Oppose** tiers—bring Bs and Casuals into full union membership and steady men back to the hall—and fight for a shorter workweek with no loss in pay.
- **Fight** for Black Liberation.
- **Oppose** U.S. military operations, whether involving Ukraine, Israel or China.
- **Oppose** the Democrats and the Republicans.
- **Build** a workers party that aims to put working people in charge of the U.S. from top to bottom.

## Committee to End Tier Segregation in the ILWU

### Our Mission:

- To strengthen the ILWU and protect our health and safety, we fight for full medical benefits and equal pay for equal work for all longshoremen.
- To end the divisions that pull the union apart, we need to bring the B's and Casuals into full union membership and registration.
- To create more jobs and strengthen union control of hiring, we fight for shorter work shifts, abolishing the steady man category, and big hourly pay increases so that no one takes a pay cut.
- To make sure everyone has access to skilled work, we call for an expansion of PMA-paid, union-controlled training—including for mechanics—with access to training and skill boards by seniority.



Committee to End Tier Segregation

## Tiers...

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forward by local executive board member and Committee founder Emily Turnbull, it demanded that all casuals get the same pay as A-men for the same work, with full contractual medical coverage as well as an intensive two-week training and safety program paid for by the PMA bosses and controlled by the union. This wouldn't end the casuals tier, but it would significantly improve their conditions. The Longshore Caucus did not take up this resolution but referred it to a Caucus meeting for the 2028 round of contract negotiations.

The purpose of trade unions isn't just to fight for their membership at contract time. It is to organize the workforce to fight collectively for its interests *all* of the time. Contrary to the ILWU leadership's line that union membership is a "privilege" that has to be earned by climbing up the tier ladder, membership in the union is a *necessity* if longshore workers are going to mobilize their combined power as one fist against the bosses.

The Committee to End Tier Segregation has stepped forward to begin that fight *now*. It scored its first victory at the June Local 10 meeting, when union members voted overwhelmingly against the local leadership's attempt to institute a new "A minus" tier that would have restricted the jobs available to A-men with less than five years' seniority. Founded by a small group of A-men, the

Committee put itself on the map by taking a stand. Turnbull told *Workers Vanguard* that a number of A-men came over to the Committee's table at the meeting to sign on to its mission statement (see above), and others have since signed on.

The whole tier setup is designed to make B-men and especially casuals think that the only way they can get ahead is to keep their heads down. Many fear that the union won't back them if they fight to improve their conditions, and for good reason. In 2017, longshore workers—many of whom had been casuals for a decade or more—protested outside the ILWU Local 13 union hall in Wilmington to demand more work and benefits. The local leadership turned its back on them, issuing a statement of their commitment "to fill all labor needed for the movement of cargo in the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach." That commitment is to provide a cheap labor pool of casuals, who only get to work when the PMA needs them.

There are thousands of casual workers at the L.A./Long Beach port, where it can take 15-20 years to work up to B status. Some hope to collect enough hours to make it into the ILWU, eventually. For others, picking up some work at the port as a casual is a side gig to earn some extra money. Still others look to get in as skilled mechanics, becoming steady men who are hired directly by the shipping companies in order to bypass and subvert the union hiring hall. The L.A./Long Beach port is the largest in the U.S. Bringing casuals there into the union is especially crucial to strengthening the ILWU as a whole. The Committee to

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# Tiers...

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End Tier Segregation is looking to spread its fight to the union's locals up and down the West Coast.

At the Oakland port, where fewer jobs are available, there are now 1,000 casuals, more than there has ever been. These workers are barely getting one shift a month, having to work other jobs just to survive. Many want to push the union forward as their very futures depend on making it as A-men. But they often see little way to do so other than getting in the good graces of the union leadership.

The Local 10 leadership blames the membership for weakening the union, arguing that most A-men put getting more work and money for themselves above the union's interests. This finds an echo among casuals, who see A-men work double or sometimes even triple shifts while they get no work. But the mentality of getting yours while you still can is itself the product of the tier divisions, which the ILWU leadership helped set up and works together with the PMA to enforce. With conditions at the ports becoming worse, and fearing that increasing automation will eliminate their jobs, many A-men see little other answer than to make a quick buck while work is still available.

Contrary to what many casuals might believe, it's not



Thomas R. Cordova/Daily Breeze

**September 2017: Casuals protest outside ILWU hall in Wilmington (Los Angeles) for more pay, work. Union leadership enforces tier system, which pits sections of workforce against one another, undermines union.**

that the A's don't care about anyone but themselves. Many of the casuals and B's are the sons and daughters of the A-men, who desperately want to see their family members get full-time work with good wages and benefits. At the same time, many A's see no way out of the current setup, short of bringing down their own work hours, pay and benefits to level the playing field for all longshore workers. This consciousness is fed by the union leadership, which ties the fate of the workers to the profits of the PMA.

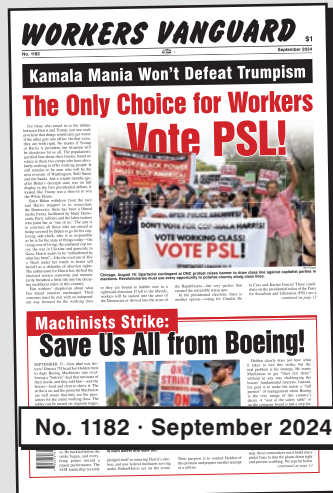
The Committee to End Tier Segregation is fighting to bring *all* longshore workers up, not A-men down. This includes preserving seniority rights in access to job boards and training. Crucially, the Committee is fighting for shorter work shifts to spread the available work among all hands, with a big wage increase so that no one takes a pay cut. That is the only way for longshore workers to get the benefit of labor-saving automation, limit the wear and tear on their bodies and get more time for their lives and their families, while improving their standard of living.

Abolishing the tier divisions will take a major coastwide showdown with the PMA, and behind it, the government whose sinking economy depends on keeping the supply chain up and running. This is not going to happen under a leadership that limits the union's demands to what is acceptable to the PMA. Instead of fighting for what the workers need, the ILWU bureaucracy operates more as labor contractors for the shipping bosses, supplying them with workers who can be brought in when needed and discarded when not.

The very leadership that enforces the tier divisions, beginning with the exclusion of casuals and B-men from union membership, appeals to the casuals that the way to become union members is to follow the path it has set. The Committee to End Tier Segregation is acting to change this equation and seeking to unite A's, B's and casuals in struggle to abolish the tier divisions. It has made this fight a real issue in Local 10, crucially winning the support of some A-men. The situation is ripe for B's and casuals to join the effort to rally greater numbers of longshore workers behind the Committee. This is a crucial first step to strengthening the union, bringing *all* longshore workers *up* and preparing them for the struggles to come. ■

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