

Jaws 3: Seafarers Union Tries Again To Swallow Smaller Affiliates

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Another chapter is being written in the Seafarer's International Union's war against its own affiliates. The Seafarers is made up of 21 autonomous affiliated unions. It is controlled by the largest affiliate, the Seafarers International Union-Atlantic, Gulf, Lakes & Inland Waters District (SIU-AGLIWD).

Over the last four or five years, the SIU-AGLIWD has stolen the jobs and work jurisdictions of many other SIU affiliates, including the Inlandboatmen's Union of the Pacific (IBU), the Marine Firemen's Union (MFW), and the Sailors Union of the Pacific (SUP).

A year ago, the Inlandboatmen's Union beat back a raiding attempt. After stealing IBU jobs by signing sweetheart contracts with tugboat operators, the Seafarers proposed an outright merger. When the IBU said no, the Seafarers formed a competing "Inland Boatmen's Union." The legitimate IBU disaffiliated from the SIU, beat back the raiding attempt, and later affiliated with the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union.

The Marine Staff Officers union also disaffiliated from the Seafarers because of this type of piracy.

Now the Seafarers union has turned its attention to the Marine Firemen's Union and the Sailors Union of the Pacific. The Seafarers, which has taken hundreds of jobs from the SUP and MFW, is now proposing merger to these two organizations, which have been autonomous for nearly 100 years.

The SIU's proposal to the SUP and the MFW is like stealing the bread off a person's table, burning his house down, and then inviting him to move into the home of the SIU-AGLIWD. The only thing that the membership of the Sailors Union of the Pacific and the Marine Firemen's Union would get out of the merger would be the limited access to some jobs, many of which belonged to them before they were taken by the SIU-AGLIWD.

What the SIU-AGLIWD and what the officers of the SUP would gain are quite another story. The SIU-AGLIWD would absorb the treasuries of the SUP (\$10 million) and the MFW (\$4 million).

The officers of both the SUP and the MFW would have their terms of office extended to December 31, 1984. This is an extension of nearly three years for

the MFW officers and nearly two years for the SUP officers. In addition, officers of the SUP and MFW would be eligible for the lucrative SIU officers' pension plan. This special plan provides that each official can retire at age 55 and receive a pension equal to 80% of his average salary for his five highest years. The benefits of the SIU officers pension plan are far in excess of what the rank and file members are eligible for.

An article in the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* indicated that not everyone was happy about the proposed merger. Don Liddle, president of the IBU

stated, "I'd hate to see the great history of the Sailors and the Firemen's unions come to an end. I hope the memberships of these two unions consider all the alternatives."

Liddle told *Labor Notes* that last June he had offered an affiliation to the SUP and the MFW. The only two preconditions were: 1) that the MFW and SUP disaffiliate from the Seafarers, and 2) that the affiliation be approved by the membership of each of the three unions. Liddle said, "The offer is always available to the membership of the SUP and the MFW. Our home is their home."

'Tax Revolt' Appeals To Michigan Auto Workers

Militants in the United Auto Workers union have been discouraged by the lack of membership response to the devastating layoffs, plant closings, and wage cutting perpetrated by the auto companies. Rank and file auto workers, in the absence of a strategy from their leadership for fighting back, have not organized themselves to protest. Plant after plant has been shut down - and the workers went quietly.

But some Michigan auto workers have been mad enough to go to meetings and put themselves on the line for one issue - taxes.

An estimated 5,000 workers have changed their W-4 forms to limit or eliminate the amount of federal tax withholding from the paychecks. The "tax revolt" is centered in the General Motors company towns of Pontiac and Flint. A "tax kit" of five cassette tapes has been sold to some 700 people, with membership costing \$65.

Leaders of the groups behind the protest make grandiose claims of how many people are participating - up to ten million nationwide. The coalition includes such groups as the Pontiac-based We The People American Citizens Tribunal, the Committee for the Restoration of the Constitution in New York, and Your Heritage Protection Association in California.

The groups make constitutional arguments for not paying taxes: that the 5th Amendment privilege against self-incrimination includes not filling out tax forms; that the dollar is not legal tender because it is not gold-backed; or that the 16th Amendment establishing the income tax was not properly ratified because Ohio was not a state at the

time.

Irwin A. Schiff, a Connecticut insurance agent and author of *The Biggest Con: How the Government is Fleecing You*, told a Detroit reporter, "What broke out in Pontiac will, eventually, break the government's back.... In fact, we predict [the income tax collection] will not last after April of 1983.... The IRS has had it."

The leaders of the tax protest movement push more than saving money. Among other positions held by We The People are opposition to the Panama Canal treaty, abortion, foreign aid, and the draft, and for a stronger defense.

UAW Buick Local 599 in Flint let the tax protesters use its union hall for a meeting, at the request of a member, as is the local's practice. Local 599 has been in the forefront of such movements in the UAW as "30 and Out," COLA for retirees, and recently, opposition to reopening the GM contract.

President Al Chrisner told *Labor Notes* that the union had taken a neutral stand on what members should do about taxes. He said that at the meeting held at the hall, one of the speakers had advocated buying guns, and another "had something to do with the commodities market - he was buying gold and silver out of a room at the Holiday Inn."

Chrisner discovered later that the backgrounds of protest organizers included membership in the Ku Klux Klan and Nazis. The hall would not be used for such a purpose again, he said.

General Motors, world's largest manufacturing corporation, owed no federal taxes for 1980.