

# AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL



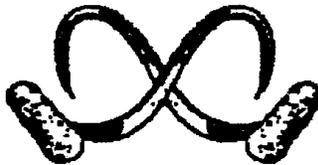
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## Meeting Dates

April	7
May	6
June	2
July	7

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## Southern Discomfort

By Dave Chaddock

It started in Meridian, Mississippi. All done on the sly. No advertising. Unmarked trucks. It was called the American Cable company then. And it was trying to avoid the town's insistence that it connect its cables to 90% of the population. But there was no money in that. So they started in a "demographically promising" block (No poor people!), made a mass mailing to all the homes in that sector, and then went door-to-door to sign up applicants for a monthly cable connection. The company grew block by block, and cherry-picked other ripe areas in Mississippi but growth was soon stymied because most people in Mississippi were too poor to afford the high prices they charged. So it was off to Philadelphia to get a fresh start and a new name: Comcast. By acquiring many smaller outfits, Comcast became one of the five biggest cable companies by 1966. The big five, including TCI and AT&T, controlled 66% of all cable subscribers. TCI was the biggest of all, holding 20% of the total all by itself. Then in 1999 AT&T bought out TCI. This set the stage for a hostile takeover of AT&T in December of 2001, by means of which Comcast became #1 by a large margin, with Time Warner trailing behind at about half the size. And now Comcast is proposing to gobble up Time Warner. No problem, it says. We don't directly compete in any market. But as Susan Crawford points out in her excellent book *Captive Audience*, that is just the problem. There is no competition, so Comcast

can charge whatever it wants. The "clustering" system ("You take Philadelphia, I'll take San Antonio") has been the dominant cable business model. And there is no regulation whatsoever, even though, as she argues forcefully, in this day and age, high-speed cable connections should be a right of everyone, just like clean water, electricity, telephone, and access to highways. She compares Comcast to Standard Oil, which even President Taft admitted to be "an octopus that held the trade in its tentacles, and the few actual independent concerns that kept alive were allowed to exist by sufferance to maintain the appearance of competition." Media reporter David Carr describes Comcast as "operating like a submarine, silently running beneath the waves and making its presence known only when it is too late for its targets" (NYT, 2-17).

Comcast is not only a cable distribution network but a content provider as well. Back in the fifties it was considered reasonable that content ownership should be kept separate from companies providing cable. If a company had a municipal monopoly over distribution, it was expected that it would act as a common carrier. But although legislation in 1992 did allow satellite companies to get access to cable programs, the complex tangle of associated rules did not stop monopolistic cable companies with clever lawyers from nullifying the content taboo. The Comcast strategy from the outset, writes Crawford, was "to be selling something that people

*Continued on page 2*

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can get only from you.” If it was not clear whether content was king or distribution was king, then you had to have a foothold in each. So Comcast acquired QVC, the home shopping channel. It acquired E! and the Golf channel. It took over local sports franchises in seven of the ten largest TV markets from coast to coast. Then came its acquisition of NBC. Now Comcast owned CNBC, MSNBC, USA, SYFY, and Bravo. And as Senator Al Franken warned: “When the same company that produces the programs runs the pipes that bring us those programs, we have a reason to be nervous” (Crawford, p. 87).

The Comcast stealth submarine has a lobbying profile second to none. When 97 Congress members supported its takeover of NBC, 91 of them had gotten campaign contributions from Comcast. Fifty-four groups writing letters to the FCC urging it to approve the NBC merger had all received money from Comcast (NYT, 2-21). Among the biggest corporate spenders on lobbying, Comcast contributed \$18 million in 2013 alone. It doesn't hurt that the head of the company, Brian Roberts, has golfed with Obama and hosted him at his residence on Martha's Vineyard (NYT, 2-17). Nor that its chief lobbyist also hosted Obama at a \$1.2 million fundraiser (NYT, 2-14). In its present effort to gain control of Time-Warner, Comcast is in the process of mounting a gigantic propaganda support campaign, which will enlist present and former members of Congress, state officials, and leaders of non-profit and minority-led groups. Within hours of its announcement that it was in pursuit of Time-Warner, Comcast received the enthusiastic support of the U.S.-Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, which called it a “win-win situation.” The Chamber did not mention that it has received at least

\$320,000 from Comcast (NYT, 2-21). In the end, when all of this lobbying makes its way to the FCC, Comcast has another key ally. For it seems that the current head of the FCC used to be the chief lobbyist for the cable industry! (NYT, 2-14).

Now Crawford argues that what the U.S. deserves right now is nothing less than 1,000 Mbps connections, “speeds hundreds of times faster than most Americans have today.” Glass fiber-optical strands operate at the speed of light. But our “backward-looking infrastructure,” she points out, is a “bottleneck” that is obviously unable to cope with the “data deluge” that the computer industry is about to unleash upon us. To reach this goal would take a bit of dough. Corning estimates that the cost of bringing it to every home would be somewhere in the range of \$50 to \$90 billion. That might seem like a lot but it is a close approximation of what the U.S. spent in 2010 for the purpose of researching the development of new weapons! And 80% of that cost would be for labor (Crawford, 267). And don't we need to create new jobs? Wouldn't it be wonderful to bring world news from all sources at lightning speed into every home, the better to convince Americans that we really didn't need all those outlandish new weapons, and that it would be better to have world peace instead?

What stands in the way? Well, the de facto arbiter of cable, Comcast, does not want to invest in new infrastructure, because this would use up too much of its profits. Wall Street, as Crawford points out, “frowns on major capital expenditures” by one of its dependable cash cows. It wants to invest in companies that “have large amounts of free cash and pay handsome dividends” (Crawford, 186). They really like Comcast. It plows over 30% of its free cash flow into dividends and buybacks (that increase the value of the remaining stock). Yes, even as its expenses go down due to economies of scale and the ease with which it can add more bandwidth to a pipe that is already in place, Comcast continues to charge more and more for its services (Crawford, 66).

And what is the end result? Americans pay more and more for a service that is only second-rate. Many other countries have “a watchdog to ensure that all their citizens are connected at cheap rates to the fastest possible open-access ramps.” Over half of South Korea is “already connected to fiber lines that allow for blazing-fast uploads and downloads” (Crawford, 10). The plan is that every single home in South Korea will soon have a



gigabit per second of high-speed fiber access (Crawford, 262).

There is one place in the deep south that got sick and tired of putting up with cable monopoly. That was Lafayette, Louisiana. It simply decided to install its own faster, more reliable and cheaper fiber-optic service, which would be connected to every home. It ran into a lot of resistance. Local telephone and cable companies were up in arms. Bell South forced Lafayette to hold a referendum, but 62% of the people in Lafayette were fully in favor of getting the promised up-to-date fiber-optics. After that, the town had to endure five different lawsuits, which were finally brought to an end when the Louisiana supreme court decided that Lafayette was perfectly within its rights to acquire its own fiber-optic system. And although there was an initial installation cost, since 2007 Lafayette has saved \$5.7 million (Crawford, 254-5).

Just what did Lafayette think it was anyhow? In North Carolina, Time-Warner lobbyists got the legislature to pass a so-called “level playing field” measure forbidding any city in the state to get its own municipal high-speed internet access network. And eighteen other states have also passed laws that make it either very difficult or impossible to obtain such a network (Crawford, 256).

The fat cats are running scared. For decades the South has rested secure behind its “right-to-work” moat. But now demands for unions are rising left and right. At a Volkswagen plant in Chattanooga, a majority of the workers signed cards backing the formation of a union. Grover Norquist went into panic mode. He sent a trusted envoy from Washington to straighten things out. Thirteen misleading billboards and lying politician statements later (claiming contrary to fact that if the workers voted for a union they would not get a new production line) the Norquist “Americans for Tax reform” managed to squeak out a victory, as the workers at Volkswagen voted 712 to 626 against forming a union. But the truth is, Norquist is in retreat, fighting defensively. In Canton, Mississippi, a Nissan auto plant is also faced with workers demanding a union. Managers have threatened to close the plant if they are faced with a union. But the seven million members of the General Workers Union in Brazil are pledging to picket dozens of Nissan dealerships in support of the workers in Canton. The president of the Brazilian union, Ricardo Patah, promises: “We’re not going to stop until they have a union inside the plant in Mississippi” (NYT, 10-7-13).

In October, 2013, Kellogg in Memphis locked out its workers and denied them health coverage in an attempt to force them to agree to new conditions

allowing a new tier of employees who would earn \$6 an hour less and receive drastically reduced health benefits. It seems, as the Memphis Commercial Appeal noted on October 22, that the company had “fallen short of making the profits expected by shareholders.” They thought it wouldn’t take long to get the workers to give in. But they underestimated the endurance of these workers, who are still holding out. On February 27th the Congressional Black Caucus urged Kellogg to back down. And two city council members and a County Commissioner announced that they were ready to join the picket lines. On February 16, WREG in Memphis opened itself for online comments about the lockout, but after only three responses, (all of them complaining about Kellogg, for such things as making people work 16 hours without a break, and not telling them whether they would have the weekend off until Thursday), the station abruptly announced that the comment line was closed.

Last April, in Raleigh, North Carolina, weekly protests began taking place every Monday at the State House, and a rally last month drew a crowd of over 80,000. And now, last Tuesday in Atlanta, shortly after the opening of a session of the state senate, four people in the gallery stood up, unfurling a banner, and shouting “Expand Medicare now!” Georgia so far has refused to accept federal funds for enlarged medicare coverage. No sooner were the four protesters handcuffed and hustled off to jail when another group “repeated the action, then another.” As the session was disrupted for the fifth time, state senator Thom Goolsby referred to the protesters as “fecal matter.” But it was not over. After lunch Reverend Raphael G. Warnock of the Ebenezer Baptist Church led eleven protesters to the governor’s office, where they blocked the entrance until they too were arrested. “We have people dying every day just because they don’t have access to health care,” explained protester Shayna Adelman, before she was also carted off to jail (NYT, 3-19).

Well, it’s a small beginning, and the odds are stacked against it, but the New South is rising. As Tim Franzen, a leading organizer in Georgia, expresses it: “This train has left the station.” Watch out, fat cats! The “fecal matter” is starting to hit the fan!

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A moment of silence for my old buddy Frank Capiello, a staunch union man and a true friend who actually valued my silly jokes. He will be sorely missed.

## Contract Caucus 2014

By Ian Kennedy

The Caucus convened on the 24th of February and lasted two weeks. In attendance were 89 active delegates, 30 pensioners, plus non delegate active and retired members. With delegations from Alaska (3,) Canada (3,) and Hawaii (36.)

Paddy Crumlin, General Secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) and President of the International Transport Federation, (ITF) was the major speaker of the morning. He reminded us that this was his third contract caucus and he expects us to again negotiate a favorable contract. He pointed out the employers were going to use automation to bust the Union, (ILWU.) and that it should be a major topic in our negotiations. He reminded us that Patrick's Terminals went semi-automated two weeks after their contract was signed and had withheld this information from the MUA.

Also speaking was the President of the Dockers' Union in Barcelona, Spain, and (I believe,) President of the IDC. It was very difficult to understand his interpreter, so the only thing I can relay to you is that they are working six hour shifts, four shifts a day.

On Wednesday, the 26th, Sharon James, Secretary of the ITF Maritime Division spoke. She pointed out that the world will be watching our negotiations, and that if needed, the ITF will organize and assist in our defense.

One of the major topics of the caucus was Technology and its ramifications. During the Tech. Committee Report, a film on the "Middle Harbor Redevelopment Project" was shown. Brothers and Sisters, it was scary. The cranes were double hammerheads, that could handle two forties or four twenties. They do fifty picks an hour, that's 100 to 200 moves per hour. The facility will use Automated Guided Vehicles, (AGV) that will work all cranes. The AGV's will operate with batteries, and when the batteries need recharging, the AGV will go to a Battery Robotic charging warehouse that will remove the battery and replace it with a charged one, all with Robotics. Tra-Pac is also doing an automated terminal and has kept everything very secret about it. They have not followed the contract and informed the Union of what they are doing and what the manning will be. As one of our Brothers put it, "You (we) need to start doing our jobs."

These automated terminals will need to make about 3.3 million moves per year to make a profit. That

means they will have to leach work from other terminals and other ports, reducing the man hours respectively. If these two terminals in LA work as expected, what is that going to do to San Francisco/Oakland, Portland, Tacoma and Seattle? And how about Canada and Mexico?

Shipping Companies have been consolidating as the ships have been getting larger. Presently there are ships on the drawing board that will handle 22,000 TEUs. The cranes will be taller and have greater reach, about a 22 box reach. The Leo Maersk will need to make 6000 moves in 24 hours. The larger ships will require faster movement of cargo, both in/out the gate and on/off the ship. What does that mean to us? Terminal operators want to do away with lost time, i.e. no breaks, no lunch etc.

Locals submitted almost 300 resolutions, of which a good percentage were money issues, as well as local issues that couldn't be settled at the area LRC's. Of the 300, about half were filed, withdrawn or failed. A good percentage of them were pertaining to Area Port Supplements that couldn't be settled locally.

There are two resolutions that are of importance to Pensioners, submitted by the PCPA. Both are on pensions; the first was to permit a retiree to marry and after one year the survivor will get the pension. The second, consolidates the five pension rates into three, bringing the bottom two up to the 2002 rate. The Coast Committee Report calls for an increase for pensioners and stand firm on health care.

The Coast Committee recommends beefing up our D.C. lobbying team by sending them one member from the Legislative Committee, on a rotating basis, through contract negotiations.

The Coast Committee is also recommending that we limit this contract to two years. This should put off dealing with any taxation on our Health Care at this time.

An item of note, the February issue of the Dispatcher, in its article on the Caucus, third column under 'In memory,' they mention the killing of Victor Manuel Crespo Puerto, who's son, Victor Crespo is Executive Secretary of SGTU, the major dockers union in Honduras. The SGTU is in a battle with ICTSI over the privatization of the Honduran docks and the destruction of the Union. Victor spoke at the Caucus, then traveled up to Portland and picketed the ICTSI facility for the afternoon. Upon returning to Honduras, he found there was a warrant out for his arrest for his actions in Portland.

# Final Dispatch

## Pensioners

Gerald Wilkerson 19  
Ray Noble 19  
Ron Stickler 19  
Hans Lerbrek 19  
Laurence C. Coblentz 19  
Victor Sabbatini 19  
Frank Cappiello Sr. 52  
Chester 'Red' Samples 19  
Greg Ventoza 98  
Victor K Von Scheele 19

## Survivors

Norma Lee Briney 98

## **PCPA Executive Board Meeting, San Francisco, CA**

February 22, 2014

The PCPA Executive Board met in San Francisco Sunday February 22, 2014, the day before the Longshore Division Caucus convened. Representatives from all the Pensioners' Clubs on the west coast attended, except for Canada.

President Rich Austin reported on his activities since the previous E-board meeting. He has been very busy. He participated in the ILWU Longshore History and Traditions Workshop and attended the Benefits Committee meeting, both in San Francisco. He has been active in the NW Washington Central Labor Council, and in Democratic Party activities. He also has a weekly radio program called "We Do the Work".

Vice-President George Cobbs, representing San Francisco, reported his club has been busy educating active members on ILWU history. They invited locals 10, 34, and 91 to their executive board meeting in February, where they had a good round table discussion. In addition they hosted 2 Christmas parties, one for the International and Benefits Plan, and one for their own Pensioners' Club.

John Munson, Recording Secretary, reported the good news that President Obama had dropped the chained CPI from the upcoming budget. He is very frustrated in the attempt to get a breakbulk terminal at Cherry Point. He feels the ecology activists have made it almost impossible to get any new terminals built. The natural gas producers are funding a huge percentage of the anti-coal campaign. He noted an organization called Just Transition is focusing on justice for workers in the transition to green technology. It is a coalition of labor and environmental groups. They are on the web at Just Transitions.

Greg Mitre, Treasurer reported that there

are a total of 1640 PCPA members, coast wide. The total balance as of 9-1-2013 was \$30,583.91. As of 1-13-2014 the total was \$27,726.07. This did not include the per capita paid by several clubs at the meeting, including ours.

Jerry Garretson, representing Southern California, reported that Local 13 has a new dispatch hall, paid for by the PMA, which is 18,000 square feet, and will employ the newest technology. It was built to green environmental standards, and has parking for 800 cars. Local 13 has 6,389 active members and local 63 has 1120 members. At this point there is plenty of work, but that may change. There are 2 fully automated terminals slated to come on line; Trapac is scheduled to open soon, and LBTC is scheduled for 2015. This is expected to eventually result in a huge decrease in work. In addition, since an automated terminal requires large volumes to be profitable, automated ports may poach business from other ports.

Mike Mullen, representing Northern California small ports, reported there is no work at this time, but there may be a log or chip ship later. Active members are traveling to Stockton, or collecting PGP. There is not much happening with the pensioners.

Steve Hanson, representing Portland and the Columbia River, reported that grain negotiations are stalled. The issue of plugging and unplugging refers by longshore workers was won in arbitration, but has not been implemented, ICTSI, the company involved, is a Philippine Company that has been involved in the killing of union members in Honduras. Because supercargoes are no longer required on grain ships, Local 40 supercargoes have lost 30-40% of their work. Otherwise Local 40 work is good dayside, but slow nightside.

Brent Maynard, representing Longview, reported that work is fairly good there, now that they are working EGT. They have 130 members in their Pensioners' Club, which is quite active and had a wonderful Christmas luncheon.

Mike Jagielski, representing Tacoma and Puget Sound small ports, reported Aberdeen has plenty of work, and may charter a pensioners' club. Olympia also has plenty of work. The Tacoma Pensioners' Club has increased its membership from 70 to 88 members. They ran a huge Toys for Christmas drive. He also reported the ILWU will have its own space in the Tacoma Maritime Museum to design their own ILWU history exhibit. They plan on recreating the old dispatch hall. In addition, they secured the bell from an old ship that was being scrapped, to be part of the

exhibit. Tacoma has plenty of work at this time.

Michele Drayton, representing Seattle, reported that work is down in Seattle for both local 19 and 52, especially on nights and weekends. Grain negotiations continue to be stalled, and everyone is waiting for cruise season to start. The tunnel ("big Bertha") project is completely stalled for 6-12 months. The sports stadium in SODO is on hold because Seattle didn't get a team, but Chris Hanson is not giving up. The Seattle Pensioners' Club has been very active in the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies, and the Labor Archives, both at the U of W. The Seattle Pensioners' Club has donated \$4,500 to the archives since 2008, and individual members have donated \$35,500. At the Labor Center Awards Banquet in November, \$71,000 was given out in grants and scholarships.

#### New Business

M/S/C to contribute \$1500 to the Canadian Pensioners' Club to help them with the cost for the 2014 PCPA convention to be held in Vancouver next September. They do not get money from the Longshore Division as the other clubs do.

M/S/C to donate \$1000 to the Harry Bridges Project, to enable Ian Ruskin to perform his play *Lord of the Docks* at both the English and Scottish House of Commons. This is a chance to spread the ILWU story globally.

Respectively reported,  
Michele Drayton  
Seattle PCPA Executive Board

### Conversations With Harry

By Ian Kennedy

As I was in San Francisco for the Caucus, I figured I'd save a trip and try to meet up with Harry. I was in luck after a couple of tries. The third time I walked into the Bar to find him sitting alone with his whiskey and milk. I sat down across from him, he raised his whiskey glass and asked "You want to join me?" "No," I reply, "I'm good with beer tonight, I've had too many late nights this week." Harry shrugs and with a smile, sips his drink. I waved to Sue and let her know we were ready for a pitcher.

Sue returned with a pitcher and her usual three glasses. "So, you decided to stay. I guess it wasn't to see me these last couple of days." She smiles as she set everything down, then rushing off to tend to other customers. Harry pours me a glass of beer and

asks, "How are things going at the Caucus?" I sigh, drain half my beer, "The Vice President had a slide presentation on automated terminals. When it was a Union Terminal, it had two workers, and in non-union terminals, they had plenty of workers. In both cases the workers sit in front of a computer screen." I finish my beer and Harry refills my glass. "As automation expands, the Longshore Division will shrink until we're down to fifty or a hundred members. And that won't sustain our pensions, let alone give us the power we now have over the docks." I've finished another glass and again refill it.

"Do the Officers have any recommendations on how to counter this?" Harry asks. "No, not at this time." I respond, "They probably figure there is plenty of time to deal with that. Right now we have to determine the manning and who does which jobs, are they Clerks work, or Longshore work?"

Sue sits down and pours herself a beer. "How come I always get the beer and not the whiskey?" she asks, with a twinkle in her eye. Harry laughs as he finishes the last of his milk, fills his beer glass, and asks, "How close are they to putting in such terminals?"

"LA/Long Beach has two terminals under construction, with one coming on line sometime next month, and the other, not long after. Tra-Pac will be fully automated and The Middle Harbor terminal will have one half automated. Tra-Pac hasn't talked to the Union at all about what they are doing, and the Middle Harbor group has let the Union know and see what is going on but, nothing on manning." I'd managed to consume another glass of beer and started to refill my glass before continuing. "I can't even begin to guess what it's costing to build such a terminal, but can't see other ports automating any terminals for some time. But, to break even each terminal is going to have to move one million TEUs per year. That means they must rob work, not only from the other terminals in the area, but from up and down the Coast. They will go after any and all discretionary cargo."

"It's important, the Union maintains its power or the employer will destroy it." Harry adds. "The Union has got to start thinking about a new march inland. We can't sit back with our head in the sand." He pours himself a glass of beer, topping up Sue's and my glasses. He continues, "We let the 'less the shippers loads' get away from us. We need to recapture that work, and all M&R up and down the coast. Force the Employers to return the IT work, all the planning, ship, dock and rail." He hasn't been this vocal in some time,

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I'm thinking. "And there is still those Barge lines that we need to move." I interject.

Harry continues, "Were out of the AFL-CIO now, a good move if you ask me, so we don't have to worry about stepping on toes." He pauses, drinks some beer, thinking. "We need to get our people onto Port Commissions, and City Councils would be a help." He sits up straight, gulps down the rest of his beer, "I've got to go." I interrupt him, "I've another week in town, will you be in sometime next week?" He shrugs into his topcoat, Can't say, take care of the bill, will ya." and out the door he goes.

I look at Sue, "I guess I'm stuck with the bill again." Sue smiles, "You can finish your beer first. And by the way, don't forget to tip the help." She smiles, drains her glass and heads to the bar to get the tab.

### Correspondence

From **WARREN NARVESON**, \$28.00 FOR 2014 DUES. Thank you **WARREN**.

From **BUFORD SCHACHERE**, \$28.00 for 2014 dues. Thanks **BUFORD**.

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