

## ANGELA'S CHILDREN: HOW THE COMUNIST LEGACY TURNED AGAINST ITSELF IN ILWU LOCAL 6

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**Resumen:** The building of certain American unions by the Congress of Industrial Organizations in the 1930s depended on support and personnel supplied by the Communist Party (CP). Among those was the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and several of its major local unions. Warehouse Union Local 6, a Northern California local embracing many kinds of workers –as many as 18,000 in its heyday- was one of the CP's major achievements in the 1940s and Communists influenced local union policies for years. In the 1970s a new generation of CP members and other leftists entered the union with the intent of regaining influence and power. In an alliance with a group of Mexican nationalists, the CP's "Rank and File Coalition" bid for power and in so doing embraced and supported an unprecedented wave of internal violence which led to several killings, ultimately leaving the union weakened and divided. This paper, written by a close observer with additional research, examines the events and personalities which –in the name of the workers- almost destroyed a workers' organization.

**Palabras Clave:** California, communism, ILWU, union, violence, work.

On May 27, 1981, dozens of General Executive Board members of Warehouse Union Local 6 of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union gathered at the union's San Francisco office at 255 Ninth Street for their monthly meeting. Standing in front of the south-of-Market building drinking cans of beer were three Freitas brothers, Al, Sam and Philip. All were members of the union; Al was a close ally of East Bay Business Agent Roberto Flotte and had a history of union tough-guy activity going back to

Teamster efforts to intimidate Salinas Valley farm workers in the early 1970s.

A few minutes before 7 o'clock a car found street parking and five Latino men, all Executive Board members, emerged, walking in a group towards the union hall. The Freitas brothers attacked the five. Philip Freitas knocked Lino Corral over a parked motorcycle. Lino Corral pulled a pistol from his pocket and fired three times, hitting Philip Freitas in the face and groin. The thirty-eight-year-old Freitas fell dead, his blood spreading in a widening dark puddle on the sidewalk in front of the union headquarters<sup>1</sup>.

This is the story of how and why a local union was impacted by the legacy of Communist Party activity in, ironically, an organization originally founded and led by Communists. The author, a red diaper baby and twice briefly a member of the CP in the late 1950s and early 1960s, was present during these tumultuous times as a business agent, and later president, of Local 6. A lot of my own experience informs this article, but it is not intended as a memoir.

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), led for many years by Harry Bridges, had numerous members of the Communist Party (CP) among its officers and staff. As one of the founding unions of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) in 1937, the ILWU-CP nexus was established when CIO leaders John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers and Sidney Hillman from the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers met with CP leaders and cut a deal; the CP would support the CIO and provide much-needed union organizers, and the CIO leaders would soften their anti-communism in their respective

unions<sup>2</sup>. Organizing of Warehouse Union Local 6 began in the sheds across San Francisco's Embarcadero and soon spread to warehouses and factories throughout the Bay Area. What was termed "the march inland" grew the union to some 19,000 members by 1945<sup>3</sup>.

Some leftist union organizers drifted away from the CP; others left when the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act's anti-communist clause forced a choice between their union or their party<sup>4</sup>. Even after Taft-Hartley, the Party sent its emissaries to carry the party line to sympathetic sections of the labor movement, including the ILWU<sup>5</sup>. As the years wore on the CP's role in the affairs of Warehouse Union Local 6, the largest mainland local of the ILWU, with division offices in San Francisco, Oakland, Crockett, Stockton, San Jose, and, later, Salinas, diminished. By the 1960s Party members were relegated to an aging caucus which met to discuss ways to influence the union's direction<sup>6</sup>. The union, far reduced in membership from its post-war peak, continued to take political positions generally favored by the CP, including opposition to the escalating war in Vietnam and strong support for the civil rights movement. Eventually an open CP member, Joseph Figueirdo, was elected as Business Agent in the San Francisco division.

In the mid-1970s the Communist Party received an infusion of new members with new energy, often fueled by the Black Power movement. In Los Angeles a "Che-Lumumba Club," named for dead revolutionary heroes Ernesto "Che" Guevara and Patrice Lumumba, was established by the Party, working closely with the Black Panther Party and the Black Student Alliance<sup>7</sup>. Leaders in the Che-Lumumba Club included the CP's militant new star Angela Davis, Franklin Alexander, Victoria Mercado, Rodney Barnette, and "Taboo," James Ellis Johnson<sup>8</sup>. While Davis was acquitted of charges linking her to the failed but deadly attempt to free "Soledad Brother" George Jackson from a Marin County courthouse, members of the Che-Lumumba Club of the Communist Party were no strangers to guns<sup>9</sup>. The romance of revolution inspired new converts to the communist cause, and the cause saw the working class as the instrument of revolution. The working class, in the Leninist canon, needed the Communist Party to lead it.

Angela Davis's trial brought members of the Che-Lumumba Club to the San Francisco Bay Area, and somewhere along the line a decision was made to infiltrate Warehouse Union Local

6, long a haven for persecuted Reds of the McCarthy Era who couldn't find other employment, including the author's father. Taking advantage of the union's open hiring hall policy and sympathy to left causes, the young Communists, joined by local red diaper babies, sat quietly in the hall waiting for a job, assisted by the Party's lone union official, Joe Figueiredo. In short order Alexander, Mercado, Barnette and Johnson, along with other CP members and sympathizers, were working in warehouses and factories under contract with Local 6. Alexander's wife, Kendra, emerged as one of the CP's top leaders in Northern California. The CP was not the only organization seeking to lead the working class of Local 6 to socialist revolution. At one point in the mid-1970s Marxist-Leninist groups with active caucuses in the union included the Progressive Labor Party, the Revolutionary Communist Party, the October League, the Militant Caucus of the Trotskyist Spartacist League, the Rebel Worker Caucus of the League for Revolutionary Socialism, Line of March, and *Venceremos!*, advocates of immediate armed revolution<sup>10</sup>. While most of these grouplets were oppositional and sought mainly to discomfit the union leadership, the CP sought to build a broad-based alliance that could, and would, vie for leadership of the organization.

In the face of declining union activity among the general membership, Party activists quickly established themselves as union stewards and became vocal at union meetings. They sought alliances that would give them credibility, offering support especially to African Americans and Latinos who sought elective office in the union. Their general lack of experience in the labor movement, however, made for sometimes misguided appeals which found Joe Figueiredo more than once apologizing for them to other union officials. His often-repeated excuse was, "They don't understand, they're from the community, they don't understand"<sup>11</sup>. Figueiredo was silent, however, when Alexander or Mercado launched into drunken tirades against the officialdom at union meetings.

A Party-sponsored "Rank and File Action Conference" in Oakland in December, 1970, following a national conference, set the stage for the direction the Party activists would follow.<sup>12</sup> Local 6 CP members organized a Rank and File Coalition with other leftists, including those who were often ideological opponents of the CP, like

the Democratic Socialists of America, who had also joined the ILWU to lead the working class. They convinced René McClain, son of Local 6 President and later ILWU International Secretary-Treasurer Curtis McClain, to chair the group. CP- allied candidates ran for and were elected to seats on the local's General Executive Board. They were active in the 1976 Northern California warehouse industry strike, a number of them arrested alongside the author sitting down in front of non-union trucks at Folger's Coffee in South San Francisco after storming the building to physically stop supervisors from operating the plant.

The union had long maintained a left-of-center tradition based on an alliance between progressive whites and African Americans, who, years before, had formed a Black Caucus in the local to make sure their issues were addressed. That tradition, which informed most of the local's full- time officials, came under increased pressure from growing numbers of Mexican Americans coming into the union, especially in the East Bay division. Black union members often saw Latinos as a threat to the positions they had worked so hard to attain, and tensions sometimes led to confrontational political situations. The local leadership, for instance, refused appeals to translate the local's constitution and master contract into Spanish. That made ambitious Spanish-speaking critics like Roberto Flotte a hero among the union's Latinos.<sup>13</sup> In the East Bay division of the union, Mexican-born leadership emerged and vied for union office. Joe Villegas was elected Dispatcher, a powerful union position since he was in charge of sending people to work. In the mid-1970s the executive officers and other officials in opposition to Villegas won passage of an amendment to the local constitution abolishing the office of Dispatcher, a back-door approach to reducing Villegas's power and, some believed, corruption. Business agents would rotate in the hiring halls, thus providing checks on impropriety and machine-building. Villegas was elected Business Agent, as expected, but was later recalled and convicted by a rank and file Trial Committee after ordering Local 6 members through another union's picket line.

In 1978 Roberto Flotte, an early ally of Villegas who later helped bring him down, ran for Business Agent appealing for support from Spanish- speaking members and was elected. The Communist Party's caucus did not support

him as a group, but individual members did<sup>14</sup>. Flotte's first term in office was marked by confrontations with employers which, in the eyes of the top leadership, were unnecessary. In one case a six month strike at the Pfizer Company was called by Flotte without a vote of the affected membership. When Local 6 President Keith Eickman insisted on a membership vote, Flotte and his supporters shouted him down at an East Bay membership meeting.<sup>15</sup> Flotte saw Eickman's objections as challenging his leadership and a misguided effort to stop the strike. Flotte engaged in sabotage during the strike and his militance brought the plant's rank and file leadership into the growing Coalition<sup>16</sup>.

There were also vague rumors of illegal outside activities and more specific allegations of selling night longshore jobs in the union's hiring hall.<sup>17</sup> Flotte, it was claimed, acted like a *patrón* in a Mexican government union, overseeing the members rather than serving them. Supporters later denied that the casual longshore jobs were sold, but acknowledged that they were handed out as "patronage"<sup>18</sup>.

When the 1980 elections came around, Flotte expanded his alliance to include Jim Ryder and José Corral, along with incumbent BA Joe Lindsay. Corral, also a former Villegas ally, was a friend and supporter of Flotte although his family came from Mexico's Durango state, often at odds with Mexicans from Jalisco, Flotte's home.<sup>19</sup> Ryder was a young independent leftist who had a PhD in anthropology, spoke fluent Spanish, and had gone to work as a janitor in an East Bay union shop hoping to find a base for solidarity work with displaced and repressed Chileans following the overthrow of the Allende government. He was welcomed by the union's leftists after local leadership opposed his election as Chief Steward where he worked<sup>20</sup>. Flotte and Ryder were elected, and José Corral lost. Open CP activist Joe Lindsay was also elected as part of the CP-backed slate.<sup>21</sup> The Rank and File Coalition was coming into its own, and Flotte's powerful base sometimes reset the CP's agenda; Flotte avoided the point position and never chaired Coalition meetings, but was the acknowledged power<sup>22</sup>.

Corral and his Durango allies accused Flotte of favoring Ryder over his countryman, complaining widely that Flotte needed someone to do his job for him and "the professor," as the energetic Ryder was sometimes called behind

his back, was willing and able<sup>23</sup>. Flotte had traveled to Cuba with Ryder and admired the revolution, making him a solid progressive in Ryder's eyes, someone who understood the need to unite a multiracial, multiethnic membership. According to supporters, Flotte was also willing to challenge gambling and other illegal activities in the union hiring hall allegedly run by Corral and his Durango crowd, although the union's president had no knowledge of this. Static from the Durango members caused Flotte to seek help from Al Freitas, a union tough initially allied with former president Curtis McClain, who would serve as Flotte's bodyguard<sup>24</sup>. Flotte's tires were slashed, Corral was beaten in the East Bay union hall, Al Freitas was threatened, and Ryder and Lindsay's tires were slashed; threats of escalating violence hung in the air. The May 27 General Executive Board meeting was to be presented with formal charges of hiring hall favoritism and illegal procedures brought by the Corral group against Flotte which could have, potentially, removed him from union office<sup>25</sup>. That General Executive Board meeting was interrupted by gunfire and Philip Freitas, present merely to back his brothers, was dead. The charges against Flotte were never presented. Lino Corral, José's brother, was arrested and eventually acquitted on the basis of self-defense. Ryder and Lindsay say they had no knowledge of Flotte's recruitment of the Freitas brothers and would have argued with him if they had known.<sup>26</sup> While Flotte was in control of the Rank and File Coalition, he would often take action on his own, without consulting his black and white allies.

Local 6 President Keith Eickman drafted a two page, legal size letter to the membership explaining that the killing grew out of ill feelings following the union elections and was a dispute between pro- and anti-Flotte groups. All the full-time officers signed the letter<sup>27</sup>. The CP's two business agents, Joe Figueiredo in the West Bay and Joe Lindsay in the East Bay, disassociated themselves from it the next day, along with Jim Ryder. It was not the first time CP-affiliated officials had changed their position overnight in response to Party dictates<sup>28</sup>.

With the Corral group subdued after the killing, Flotte consolidated his power in the union, assuming leadership of the Rank and File Coalition and relegating the Communist founders to a subordinate role. With the support of Business Agents Ryder and Lindsay the East Bay, which had grown to be the largest division

of the 8000-member local, became a center challenging the San Francisco-based leadership. Often positions adopted at the union's General Executive Board were opposed and rejected at Oakland membership meetings, but usually stood because of support from the other divisions. Oakland union meetings were long and contentious, placing increasing pressure on the executive officers from San Francisco<sup>29</sup>.

Local 6 President Keith Eickman decided to retire at the end of his term in 1982, and the author was the top leadership's choice to succeed him. While some believed that Roberto Flotte would challenge that choice with the support of the Communist Party, Flotte instead urged Ryder or Lindsay to run. He would rather return to having an elected Dispatcher to run the hiring hall and be the power broker behind the executive officers<sup>30</sup>.

On April 1, 1982, just before the Local 6 annual convention, Roberto Flotte was shot in the head outside the Oakland union hall by two assailants, described as Latinos by union steward Joe Ecker, who was wounded. Flotte died on April 13. The local offered a \$10,000 reward and issued a statement decrying the violence as "attacks on the entire union," and calling on the membership to "close ranks in order to make it clear to these people that they will not permit their union to be destroyed or weakened by violence."<sup>31</sup> This time all of the full-time officers supported the statement. Ryder, despite moving around to stay elusive and safe, received phone calls warning that he was next<sup>32</sup>.

The murder of Roberto Flotte has never been solved. Some members of the Party's Rank and File Coalition openly pointed fingers at one or another incumbent officer or at the Corral group. One Coalition member fueled leftist paranoia by claiming that he or she overheard union leaders in San Francisco laughing over the killing, predicting the end of the Coalition with its leadership, Flotte, gone<sup>33</sup>. The CP lionized Flotte in a full page May Day tribute in its newspaper. The tribute was signed by virtually all of the Rank and File Coalition's active members, with over 100 names<sup>34</sup>.

Business Agent Joe Lindsay carried the banner for the opposition in the union's November, 1982, election, carrying the East Bay but losing in the overall vote. In the previous election Franklin Alexander ran for West Bay Business

Agent and lost. Joe Lindsay was later returned to office in the East Bay, and Ryder had no trouble being reelected. The left in the union had at least one point of unity, opposition to the author's presidency; when Joe Figuereido died soon after retiring, the Rank and File Coalition had long and sharp debates about whether the president of the union, the author, should be asked to speak at his union-sponsored memorial<sup>35</sup>.

The union was again stunned by violence when 31-year-old CP and Local 6 activist Victoria Mercado, an expected Coalition candidate for business agent in the November elections, was shot and killed on May 23, 1982, by a deranged Vietnam veteran, Eugene Delgado, during car purchase negotiations. Her roommate, Patricia Manning, was seriously wounded. While there was no apparent link to union activity or violence, the Communist Party's newspaper spoke of her death as being under "mysterious circumstances"<sup>36</sup>. Mercado had been hopeful of being elected West Bay Division business agent in the next election, and had suggested an alliance with the author in support of that bid.<sup>37</sup> Angela Davis and Franklin and Kendra Alexander spoke at Mercado's memorial, along with Local 6 President Keith Eickman.<sup>38</sup> A month later the CP said in print what its supporters had been saying in the union, suggesting "organized hits" and "a conspiracy... to destroy a progressive trend in Local 6 by killing off the leaders of the union representing that trend." An independent and professional investigation was called for.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, the left raised \$5,000 for such an investigation by a private investigator with no conclusive results. For nine months trusted comrades with hidden guns sat in the union hiring hall to protect Lindsay and Ryder<sup>40</sup>.

After defeating the author in a 1988 contest for an International Executive Board seat, Ryder had the full backing of the CP's Coalition, which counted as supporters nearly half of the union's business agents, as a challenger in the 1988 presidential election. Ryder was elected without opposition, however, when the author chose to not seek reelection after three terms in order to try and stabilize his personal life.

Joe Lindsay resigned during his term of office to go to work for the California Nurses Association. After winning his second term as president, Ryder resigned to follow him. Franklin Alexander, despondent over the death of his wife, CP California District Executive

Secretary Kendra Alexander, in a house fire, committed suicide. James Ellis Johnson, "Taboo," went on a CP-sponsored trip to the German Democratic Republic and decided communists were as racist as capitalists; he left the Party and the union and joined the US Army. Rodney Barnette left Local 6 to work on the staff of a Service Employees International Union local. Angela Davis continued to teach at Bay Area universities.

With the deaths and defections, aggravated by plant closures and no new replacement jobs, the Communist-led caucus in ILWU Local 6 faded, and other supporters soon left for other, often less proletarian, pastures. Some took teaching jobs or went to work for other unions; one comrade went to Harvard and became a lawyer. Their legacy, however, remained. Roberto Flotte was a martyr whose name was kept alive among the Mexico-born members of the union.

In 1995 Roberto Flotte, Jr., son of the slain union leader, was elected Business Agent in the East Bay, and in 1998 became President, bringing with him a hand-picked Secretary-Treasurer, Hector Valdivia, and marking the end of the black-white coalition that had led the union for so many years. Flotte appointed his brother Alfredo an organizer, and the union had some initial organizing successes among Latino workers. Those victories turned bitter when the newly organized shops moved away or closed. The Flottes seemed only interested in organizing or representing Mexican workers.<sup>41</sup> The African American office manager was summarily fired, along with the white bookkeeper, both women. The bookkeeper was reinstated much later with back pay by an arbitrator, and the office manager reached a financial settlement with the officers.<sup>42</sup> The local continued to shrink, and to spend money lavishly, falling behind in their per capita dues payments to the International by some \$300,000 and failing to honor the quarterly audits required by the union's constitution. There were allegations of a \$40,000 slush fund created from the dues paid by temporary workers. Friends and relatives were put on the union payroll.<sup>43</sup> The West Bay division had only one full-time Business Agent, Fred Pecker, a Flotte adversary. Despite the strength of what was being termed "the Flotte machine," Pecker was elected to the ILWU's International Executive Board in 2000, defeating Roberto Flotte, Jr.<sup>44</sup> Flotte, angered by his loss and the loss of an appeal of the election results, decided to consolidate his hold on the union by

charging Fred Pecker, Office and Technical Division Business Agent Jill Duke, and South Bay Business Agent Rhina Ratliffe, the local's sole remaining African American official, with "malfeasance," suspending them from office. At a regularly scheduled union meeting in San Francisco, Valdivia and East Bay Business Agent John Lopes arrived with police to cancel the meeting. A court order was obtained barring Pecker from the union hall<sup>45</sup>.

The Flotte leadership canceled virtually all meetings over the next year and concerned members responded with unofficial meetings and even a mock election. Motions at the few meetings actually held to reinstate the suspended officials and even recall petitions obligating the local to hold new elections were ignored. Members pleaded with International President James Spinosa, elected in July, 2000 with the Flotte machine's strong support, to intervene. Spinosa set up a Trial Committee which met for months; in March, 2001, Local 6 members picketed the ILWU headquarters to protest the continuing impasse and, they believed, the ILWU president's less-than-covert support for Flotte<sup>46</sup>. Roberto Flotte himself disappeared from public view and in December, 2000, Valdivia announced that the local president had suffered a stroke, rumored to be cocaine-related, which incapacitated him. The Trial Committee made its report to the International Executive Board and the IEB, in June, 2001, ordered two of the three business agents reinstated. Local 6 Secretary-Treasurer Hector Valdivia refused, the International obtained a court order, and Valdivia again refused and was hit with a contempt of court citation. Finally, in September, the IEB voted to reinstate the three officials, with back pay, and to suspend Flotte, Valdivia, and Lopes from holding union office for one year. Elections were held under the direction of the International union and on November 29, 2001, Fred Pecker and his allies won a clean sweep with some 70 percent of the vote, with Pecker elected Secretary- Treasurer, running against Alfredo Flotte, and North Bay Business Agent Ricardo Sierras, a Mexican American, elected President<sup>47</sup>.

Despite the clear and clean victory, International President James Spinosa took time out from 2002 coast-wide longshore negotiations to send union lawyers to court in an effort to overturn the Local 6 election. Spinosa's gambit was to try and disqualify both Fred Pecker and Roberto Flotte, who was physically unable to do the job

in any event, leaving Hector Valdivia and Alfredo Flotte to hold onto the beleaguered union. The judge dismissed their complaint, as did the local office of the U.S. Department of Labor<sup>48</sup>.

A once-important and powerful local union is now severely divided, weakened by the ineptitude and financial misdealing of their recent leadership, and at odds with their International. A union which had once been led by the Communist left, a union which pioneered women's and minority rights on the job, which survived years of government attacks on its leadership, which remained a haven for those whose politics had gotten them on one or another blacklist –that union faces an uncertain future. While the Local 6 membership ultimately took back control of their organization, the local was left deeply in debt with a shrinking membership of around 3,000 as employers moved away or closed down, agents or victims of globalization and all-too-happy to get away from the internal battles of the union.

It is sadly ironic that ILWU Local 6, one of the Communist Party's most successful creations in the organizing of the CIO, fell victim to a later generation of Communists whose revolutionary zeal combined with unprincipled opportunism in their bid to take over the local. In their mad dash to lead the working class, they sowed seeds that almost destroyed the one instrument that those workers have to defend themselves against employer arrogance and greed.

The legacy of Angela's children points out the fatal flaw of communist ideology, of Marxism-Leninism. Appointing themselves leaders/saviors of the working class, communist cadre are not accountable to anything except their party, and any and all means are justified in their bid to advance The Revolution. When that ruthless lack of accountability is combined with state power the logical results are what happened in the Soviet Union, and, on a smaller but no less telling scale, in ILWU Local 6.

#### NOTAS

<sup>1</sup> Lannon, Albert Vetere, *Fight or Be Slaves, the History of the Oakland-East Bay Labor Movement*. Lanham, MD, University Press of America, 2000, 181-82. The author was then a Business Agent for ILWU Local 6 and was inside the building at the time of the killing. See also Schermerhorn, James

and Maatz, Larry, "Fatal Shooting at Union Hall", *San Francisco Examiner*, May 28, 1981, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA), PolBuro Minutes, February 7, 1936. Russian Center for the Preservation and Study of Documents of Recent History, Moscow, Russia (Russian Archives): Fond 515, Opis 1, File 3974. CPUSA, "Confidential Memorandum on the Most Important Issues Facing the CPUSA", March 20, 1937, Russian Archives, Fond 515, Opis 1, File 4065. Hathaway, Clarence, "Report to Comintern Secretariat Meeting", September 15, 1936, Russian Archives, Fond 495, Opis 14, File 16.

<sup>3</sup> Schwartz, Harvey, *The March Inland: Origins of the ILWU Warehouse Division 1934-1938*. San Francisco, International Longshore and Warehouse Union, 2000, 171.

<sup>4</sup> Goldblatt, Louis, *Working Class Leader in the ILWU, 1935-1977*. Vol. 1. Oral history interview conducted by Estolv Ethan Ward. Bancroft Oral History Office, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, California, 1980.

<sup>5</sup> Lannon, Albert Vetere, *Second String Red: the Life of Al Lannon, American Communist*. Lanham, MD, Lexington Books, 1999, 78.

<sup>6</sup> "Albert Francis Lannon, Jr. Federal Bureau of Investigation files", *San Francisco 158-77*, February 26, 1965, and *San Francisco 100- 44382*, April 30, 1965. Both documents attest to the existence of a San Francisco Warehouse Club of the CP which sought to advance the CP program in the union.

<sup>7</sup> Davis, Angela Y., *An Autobiography*. New York, International Publishers, 1988 [Random House, 1974], 232.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. There are many mentions in her book of her four comrades. Mercado and Barnette are cited as bodyguards, with Alexander as the ideological leader of the Club and "Taboo" as a trusted comrade.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 237. Expecting a police attack, "weapons were checked out, loaded and distributed;" see also page 385 re "target practice."

<sup>10</sup> Lannon, A.V., *Fight or Be Slaves...*, op. cit., 166.

<sup>11</sup> Keith Eickman interview, June 7, 2002, San Francisco California. Eickman, expelled from the Communist Party in the 1950s during one of the CP's regular purges, was Local 6 Secretary-Treasurer and then President.

<sup>12</sup> Lannon, A.V., *Fight or Be Slaves...*, op. cit., 180.

<sup>13</sup> James W. Ryder. Interviewed by author June 9, 2002, Oakland, California.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Eickman interview.

<sup>16</sup> Ryder interview.

<sup>17</sup> Eickman interview.

<sup>18</sup> Ryder interview.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Slates are forbidden by the Local 6 Constitution, but are formed anyway. The prohibition goes back to 1949-50 when the Teamster's Union raided the ILWU which had been expelled from the CIO for alleged communist domination. Only a statement and

photograph in the official union bulletin and a small card with "Vote For" and the candidate's name and office are allowed. Slates sometimes used the device of printing all their candidates cards identically, and, in the East Bay, began publishing their candidate's statements in both English and Spanish.

<sup>22</sup> Ryder interview.

<sup>23</sup> Eickman interview.

<sup>24</sup> Ryder interview. Also question to Keith Eickman by phone, June 15, 2002.

<sup>25</sup> Shinoff, Paul, "Bitter Feud Behind Fatal Shooting at ILWU Headquarters", *San Francisco Examiner*, May 31, 1981, B1, B4.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Eickman, Keith et al., "Letter to the Membership", *Local 6 Bulletin*. San Francisco, May 29, 1981.

<sup>28</sup> Eickman interview; Ryder interview.

<sup>29</sup> Eickman interview. Keith Eickman became president of ILWU Local 6 in 1977 when Curtis McClain was elected Secretary-Treasurer of the International union.

<sup>30</sup> Ryder interview.

<sup>31</sup> "Local 6 BA is seriously wounded." *The ILWU Dispatcher*, 4. April 2, 1982. See also issue of May 7, 1982, 3.

<sup>32</sup> Ryder interview.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> "Brother Roberto Flotte." *People's World*, May 1, 1982, G.

<sup>35</sup> That information was related to me by several union members who had chosen to align themselves both with the left and with union officials. I was, finally, invited to speak, and did so.

<sup>36</sup> Allan, Stephanie, "Mysterious circumstances". *People's World*, June 12, 1982, 2.

<sup>37</sup> That discussion took place in early 1982 at the author's home in San Francisco, with Coalition activist, and later West Bay business agent, David Schermerhorn present.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Allan, William and Smith, Lincoln, "Commentary", *People's World*, Berkley, July 24, 1982, 4.

<sup>40</sup> Ryder interview.

<sup>41</sup> Green, Nato, "Reformers Throw the Rascals Out", *Labor Notes*. 6, January, 2002. Meade, Richard, "Rumble in Frisco Longshore", *Waterfront Worker*. November 6, 2000.

<sup>42</sup> Eickman interview.

<sup>43</sup> Meade, Richard, "Rumble...", op. cit.

<sup>44</sup> Eickman interview.

<sup>45</sup> Meade, Richard, "Rumble...", op. cit.

<sup>46</sup> Green, Nato, "Reformers...", op. cit.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Eickman interview. See also Spinosa, James, "The Truth about the International's efforts to resolve the Local 6 internal dispute", *ILWU Dispatcher*, 2, March, 2002.