Build the International Network of Active Solidarity

In August 2000, four trade unions in the left bloc of the Brazilian CUT organised an international conference which founded the International Network of Active Solidarity (INAS). This established a co-ordinating committee in Latin America, and took a decision to develop this committee in other parts of the world.

For this reason, we welcome the fact that the INAS co-ordinating committee is considering a proposal from participants and supporters of the founding conference that a European meeting should take place in June this year in Barcelona.

Workers International believes that this initiative must be based on four principled aims:

- **Trade unions independent of the state and employers;**
- **Democracy in the trade unions;**
- **Workers' internationalism;**
- **A common international fight against the anti-trade union laws.**

Last month we invited trade unionists to take part in a discussion on the problems and tasks of the trade unions in preparation for such a conference. Iranian oil workers' leader, Yadollah Khoshrashahi was the first contributor. He explained the problems in Iran where there are no legal independent trade unions.

The Iran Human Rights Working Group therefore campaigns to assist workers to understand their rights, build their independence, their confidence and their organisation. They demand that the Iranian government observes its responsibilities as a signatory to the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which, amongst other things, stipulates the right of every worker to form a trade union.

The second contribution comes from HEWAT BEUKES, workers' advocate in the labour courts and JACOBUS JOSOB, leading shop steward at Namibian Breweries. Both are signatories with others to a 'Petition to stop the emasculation of the Labour Act by the labour courts' which is being presented to Namibian President, Sam Nujomo and those responsible for the labour courts.

The rest of pages 3,4,5 and 6 of this issue of 'Workers' International Press' contain reports on the struggle against the new labour code in Russia and the defence campaign for the Charleston dockers in the US.

Resolution of the conference of free trade unions on the Labour Code

held 3–4 March in Moscow

This report is from Svetlana Baiborodova, translation by Mark Harris. Thank you to International Solidarity with Workers of Russia for the use of this material

A conference of the representatives of the Free Trade Unions took place on 3-4 March in Moscow, at the premises of the Federal Co-ordinating Council of the Alliance of Trade Unions of Russia SOTSPROF, with the participation of the Deputy of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation O.V. Shein.

Participating Organizations:
Federation of Russian Aviation Dispatchers' Trade Unions. The Russian Trade Union of Locomotive Railway Teams. Russian Dockworkers' Union. Free Trade Union of Russian Light Industry. Alliance of Russian Trade Unions SOTSPROF. Alliance of Workers' Trade Unions "Zashchita Truda" (Defense of Labor). Confederation of Labour of Saint Petersburg and the Leningrad region. Siberian Confederation of Labour. The Trade Union of AvtoBAS workers "Edinstvo" (Unity)

The following resolution was accepted:

1 **To make this Conference permanent for work on preparation of O.V. Shein's Trade Union "Draft of the Labour Code" (Russian constitutional law governing labour and unions) of and on organizing the campaign to support it.**
2 **To continue the most extended promotion and discussion of the amendments as participants of the Conference, as well as in the organizations which are represented by participants in the Conference.**
3 **To direct the members of the working group to distribute the draft Labour Code to the participants of the Conference, and to publish it, with an explanatory memorandum in brochures, in the Labour press, and on the Internet.**
4 **To direct the secretary of the Alliance of Workers Trade Unions "Defence of Labour", S. Baiborodova to implement the distribution by electronic mail of O.V. Shein's proposed amendments to the Labour Code to the participants of the Conference.**
5 **To create forums on the sites of "Defence of Labour" and SOTSPROF for discussion of the draft Labour Code and amendments to it.**
6 **To consider it expedient to take part in the sessions of the Russian Committee of Workers,which will take place 17–18 March 2001 in Nizhni Novgorod.**
7 **To hold regular meetings of the participants of the Conference until the introduction of the "Trade Union draft of the Labour Code" to the Duma by O.V. Shein.**

For the participants of the Conference to begin an informational campaign with the organizations for the advancement of the "Trade Union Draft of the Labor Code" of O.V. Shein (publication of brochures, newspapers, publications in the mass media, round tables, etc.)

For the participants of the Conference to utilize international connections with organizations recommended by them for the development of an international campaign of support for O.V. Shein's "Trade Union draft of the Labor Code" in the Duma, immediately after its introduction to the Duma, and in the period immediately following (letters to the Duma and government, publication in foreign mass media, etc.)

Adopted unanimously.

The address for submission of amendments is:
zashmrp@mail.samtel.ru.

The address of the site of the Interregional Alliance of Workers' Trade Unions "Defence of Labour" is:
http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Senate/4580/zashchita.html.

The address of the SOTSPROF site is:
http://www.sotsprof.ru

Ex-Yugoslav trade union tour

AYUDA OBRERA BALCANES, the Barcelona-based organisation working to rebuild working-class solidarity and trade union organisation throughout the former Yugoslavia, has organised a tour by leaders of Serb and Kosovar engineering workers.

The tour will take place between 26 March and 3 April 2001. It will involve Milan Nikolic, president of the engineering section of the independent Serb union, Nezavisnost, and the president of the Kosovar engineering union, Hasan Abasi.

The Serb and Kosovar trade unionists will meet with the three Spanish unions, the Comisiones Obreras (CCOO), the UGT and the CGT. They will address meetings of members of those three unions and there will be a public rally in Barcelona and another in Madrid.

Fight is on for legal rights

RUSSIA is far from being the only country where trade union rights are threatened by reactionary legislation.

In Britain, the Thatcher Tory government passed laws which stripped trade unions and shop stewards of many rights, removed union immunity from damages claims by employers and customers and imposed masses of petty regulations to stop workers taking industrial action.

Blair's 'New Labour' government has done little to restore union rights.

While they have removed unions' obligation to provide employers with names of workers who plan to engage in action, the reworded law forces unions to provide a lot more 'relevant information' about such member.

It was quibbles over such regulations which enabled a judge to declare action by the London Underground workers' union (RMT) illegal last month.

None of the substantial rights that British workers have won in centuries of struggle and which the Tories removed have been restored by Blair.

Australia, too, has seen two waves of workplace legislation changing the character of industrial courts and limiting the power of trade unionists.

Last September in South Africa the national conference of the Cosatu union federation angrily condemned the ANC-led government for breaking the promises to the nation's workers it had made during the elections and publishing draft labour law amendments which would put into question all the gains made by the workers' movement over decades, especially advances by workers in the public sector.

Cosatu bitterly commented that this had encouraged the employers' organisation to drop attempts to find an agreement with the unions and go on the offensive against them.

The congress resolution called for a general strike to prevent the changes from becoming law.

However, such a call remains a pious dream where there is no independent industrial and political working class leadership and where unemployment is growing. At the same time the splitting up and privatisation of every kind of public service is simply going ahead. Militant workers protest and demonstrate industry by industry but are unable to seize the initiative back off the pro-capitalist government.

As the article on page 4 of this issue emphasises, although there is positive labour legislation in Namibia, it is a struggle to make the courts operate in a way favourable to the working class.

Brazilian workers have beaten off an attempt to amend articles 8, 111 and 114 of the Federal Constitution (dealing with trade union organisation and the work of labour courts).

Under the pretext of 'modernising' union organisation and streamlining negotiations, the amendments would have abolished many rights workers have won, limited their recourse to the labour courts and reduced the powers of the courts to help them.

But the government is already preparing new attacks against workers right to organise with the same intention of reducing the unions' power, limiting members' rights and imposing plant-by-plant agreements.

And this is only in those countries where certain trade union rights have been achieved. In many countries across the globe workers have no trade union rights at all.

Militant Brazilian workers, like these taking a vote at last year's CUT union congress, have fought off one attempt to reduce trade union's rights, but more attacks are under way

Namibian workers challenge Labour Courts

By Hewat Beukes and Jacobus Josob

In Namibia there are independent trade unions and the rights of workers are contained in the Labour Act 1992 which was carried by the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) government following the first independence elections. Nevertheless these rights have to be established and fought for in practice, and we are now in a situation in Namibia where it is necessary to demand that the government and the Labour Courts properly observe the Labour Act.

The Labour Act of 1992 was intended to be an important gain for the working class after independence. As a result of the strike struggles to establish independent trade unions from the 1960s to the 1990s and especially the general strike of 1971-72 and the Rossing Strike of 1978 trades union and other working-class leaders took part in negotiating and formulating the fundamental provisions of this labour legislation.

Despite the fact that the basic elements of exploitation remained in Namibia, the Act was meant to put an end to the slave-like labour relations of the apartheid-colonial era. Those relations were embodied in the 'master-servant' legislation of South Africa. They expressed the fundamental apartheid philosophy of not only racial superiority, but essentially the natural superiority of employer (master) over the servant (worker) in all respects including moral superiority.

Prior to independence the 'goodfor' and 'ration' systems were acceptable by law. The 'goodfor' coupons were a payment for work and forced employees to exchange them for goods at the employer's store or from specific shopkeepers. The 'ration' system applied especially to farm labourers who were paid in kind rather than in money.

Consequently, labour relations and minimum conditions were arbitrary and dictated by the employer (master). Even wages were very arbitrary with the labour market and competition playing a role in setting some sort of uniformity in wage structures from place to place. Thus wages were mostly conditioned by apartheid legislation and so there were no minimum wages or any other minimum conditions. It was left to the discretion of the employer. Unfortunately we still find that the 'ration' system applies in some parts of Namibia.

The authors of the Labour Act set out to protect workers from the abuse of the colonial era and to establish certain minimum conditions of employment to regulate labour relations according to a more coherent, rational and humane legal code. It was necessary to establish a different, more concrete basis for labour law as against the meaningless abstraction that 'all men are equal before the law' used to describe criminal and civil law (impossible in a class society in which an employer has vastly greater access to material and legal resources).

The Labour Act was meant to establish some equality through concrete means by making the law courts accessible to every worker and to speedily resolve labour matters. The Act therefore contained an important provision which allowed a worker to appoint his or her own representative for a hearing in the labour courts and this need not be a lawyer. It put the responsibility on magistrates and judges to use their legal knowledge to assist the worker's representative to establish the necessary facts.

Hewat Beukes

Jacobus Josob

Continues page 5

Typical cases

The following cases are typical of the judgements in the law courts. The names are not specified on the grounds of confidentiality and because some are still pending:

A retired store-man of 80 years of age is still awaiting an appeal against a luxury vehicle company for the unilateral reduction of his salary by two thirds from N$1500 to N$500 for the same work. The date for the appeal has not yet been set.

The old man registered the complaint in October 1997.

He had worked for the company for 19 years. He had also worked for the company previously since he was 18 for a number of years.

In 1993, he had reached maximum retirement age and the company informed him as such, but he found out that there would be no gratuity or other lump-sum payment as he had expected. These expectations among retiring workers were mostly speculation or wishful thinking, because in line of the company's disregard for keeping records remuneration and keeping workers informed, they simply ignored queries until the last days.

When he found out that there would be no compensation for his outstanding service, he asked to remain on as a store-man, providing the same service as before, to be able to meet his debts.

They agreed in writing, but at the end of the month he found that his payment was unilaterally reduced to such an extent that his travel and eating expenses were more than the N$500 he was paid. No amount of inquiries to the management would force them to clarify the matter.

He then went to a trade union leader who told him to be patient, because his bosses are obviously saving his money for final retirement. He reasoned that they still had the racial patronage for black persons, but as no one can be so immoral as to draw such a dirty trick, he was sure they were saving the money for him. He nevertheless tried to ascertain from the management throughout the following four years to ascertain what happened to the N$1000 which was deducted from his salary and what he could expect at the end of his final retirement. Management would not clarify the matter and there was no record in his job file.

When he finally retired in 1997, they informed him that there was no money saved for him. He registered a case, and won the condonation application.

When the case was postponed, he made an urgent application to the Labour Court on the grounds of the provisions of the Labour Act and his special circumstances of age and health. The judge disregarded this and cited the welfare states of Europe, America and Australia where labour matters may take three years. He also proclaimed that people from the street think they know the law, but they don't.

The case was eventually heard after almost a year in which the magistrate lied about and misrepresented the evidence and found that he had indeed agreed to have his salary reduced.

His appeal has now taken more than two years and no date has yet been set.

A worker won a judgment for N$45000 from a multinational furniture company in 1998, but the order was not enforced until 2000 until the representative succeeded in forcing the bailiff to seize a lorry of the company.

An outstanding and exemplary worker was employed by a luxury hotel for 13 years. She never had a warning, never botched things, was held in high regard as a reliable worker.

On a particular day she asked leave to attend the funeral of a close relative and her political leader. She offered a stand-in, but was refused. In a fit of outrage she went to the funeral and was fired.

The court judged in favour of the employer's prerogative and not in line with the fundamental provisions of the Labour Act based on fairness and reasonableness.

A woman working in a bank for 18 years since she left school gets promoted a number of times due to outstanding work. Two years ago she tried to activate her home loan benefit. Her manager took an irregular short cut and gave her an overdraft on her ex-husband's 'grade three' account until her home loan would be approved.

When the manager from another branch raised the alarm, they unilaterally reduced her conditions of employment, cancelled her home loan and accused her of fraud the day she returned from sick leave after having been run over by a car.

She resigned in a moment of outrage, but later came back to ask for a discussion. The bank refused and the court ruled in their favour on the basis of the prerogative of the employer.

Continued from page 4

Unlike common, criminal and civil law, which, in Namibia, is based on South African law, conditioned by the 'master and servant' legislation and philosophy, the Labour Act subscribes to a bill of fundamental rights.

However, right from the beginning the labour law courts and the legal fraternity have used their influence to bring the Labour Act into line with common, criminal and civil law. They have created a number of fallacies such as: that the labour court's role is to advance good labour relations and not to enhance conflict; and the complexities and intricacies of the law make it comprehensible only to the judges and lawyers.

● The Labour Act took into account the fact that Namibia is not a welfare state with permanent unemployment benefits. The average Namibian worker is dependent for day-to-day subsistence on a monthly or weekly wage and cannot remain for any long period without income without severe hardship. Therefore the rules of the labour courts specifically stipulate that any labour matter shall be resolved within 60 days after registration with the Clerk of the Court.

● However, the labour courts allow hearings to drag on for months and even years. Workers who have taken their complaint to court often become demoralised and others do not even take their legitimate grievances to court. Furthermore, even if a worker does win a case the District Labour Court chairmen are often reluctant to enforce orders of court against an employer.

● It is a basic provision of the Labour Act that, in an 'unfair dismissal' or payments dispute, the burden of proof is on the employer. The workers' complaint is presumed correct until the contrary is proved by the employer. It is a legal obligation for the employer to keep a 'proper record' of the workers' contract of employment, and failure to comply can lead to a fine or imprisonment. But this vital principle is being disregarded in the labour courts. Employers are allowed to 'disprove' workers' claims simply through contradictory verbal evidence and negation through gruelling cross-examination, meaning a worker is expected to provide proof on the same technical basis as in criminal and civil law

● In the event that there is no settlement of a case in a labour court, both parties are obliged to provide the presiding labour inspector with all documents, and assist with relevant factual information for a report to be presented to the magistrate who will hear the complaint. However, in many cases this rule is simply ignored. Inspectors allow the parties to say 'we are not prepared to settle' and then leave, meaning — in most cases — that the employers are let off the hook and the worker is made to suffer.

● The provisions of the Labour Act mean that an employee can only be categorised as 'casual' when he/she works no more than two days a week under a three-monthly renewable contract. However, the employer has no obligation to permanently employ a worker after a probationary period, and so many such workers are forced to work five or six days, sometimes for years, and still to be considered 'casual'. The labour courts accept this and so remove the rights and provisions of the Labour Act from these workers, since 'casuals' do not qualify for any benefit and are completely defenceless against unfair dismissal.

● The law courts have also ignored the most obscene reintroduction of the slave trade through labour hire companies (agencies) which trade in human labour. These companies sell labour to mines, factories and commercial businesses. They then pay a nominal sum to the labourer who works on a day-to-day basis even though he or she may work at the same place for years. These workers are deemed by employers and the labour courts to have no rights whatsoever under the Labour Act.

With the end of colonialism the people of Namibia elected SWAPO into government and expected fundamental improvements in social and democratic rights. The Labour Act was part of these rights. However, the right of the employers to hire and fire is still the guiding principle in the hearing of labour matters.

Workers' representatives and trade unions consider that the time has come for Namibian jurists and judges to state clearly where they stand. It will not do to hide behind empty misleading abstractions. They must say whether they accept the provisions of the Labour Act as the law or they do not.

The signatories to the petition, representatives of trade unions and other working-class organisations, are asking for an urgent conference with President Nujomo and others responsible for the administration of the Labour Act to discuss their demands.

The dirty work of capitalism

by Prince Cele in Durban

IN South Africa we have many illegal immigrants, to such an extent that there is a big outcry among the locals that the immigrants are taking over their jobs.

This is the case, because immigrants accept lower wages which gives the employers big opportunities for exploitation.

In the Cape we have seen the refugees being attacked by the locals. In Kwazulu-Natal in some factories in the Mandeni area employers are transporting illegal immigrants to make them cheap labour and this has caused a tense relationship between the locals and the immigrants.

It is said that the immigrants are being paid between R50 and R300 a month, which is almost a quarter of the poverty line in South Africa.

But I would like to appeal to all workers, citizens and socialists to solve this problem in a way that all the oppressed, irrespective of country, race or religion come to the common understanding that the cause of their poverty is the work of the capitalist masters who use the name of democracy in Africa and worldwide.

Workers do not fight among yourselves.

The demand to free Mumia Abu Jamal and other political prisoners was prominent when over 10,000 marched through San Francisco on 20 January to protest against the inauguration of President George W. Bush (picture Socialist Action)

Stop the Execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal

DURING the past year a growing unity has developed between those demanding a national moratorium on the death penalty in the USA and those who fight for justice for Mumia Abu-Jamal.

On death row for 19 years, Mumia was falsely convicted of the murder of a police officer. He was sentenced to death by the notorious "hanging" Judge Albert Sabo. There were 30 constitutional violations in his case, including coercion of witnesses, exclusion of black people from the jury and the denial of the right to self-representation.

Mumia, his lawyers and the protest movement in the US and worldwide has won a temporary stay of Governor Thomas Ridge's second warrant ordering Mumia's execution. Now Federal District Court Judge William H. Yohn Jr. must decide whether evidence barred by a Pennsylvania court will ever be heard, determining the record in all future appeals.

Critical to this process is the challenge by Mumia's defence team of recent decisions of Judge Yohn and the US Court of Appeals, Third Circuit, to refuse consideration of amicus briefs and a writ of mandamus that for the first time provide indisputable evidence of collusion to deny Muma the right of self-representation.

Unity between the US anti-death penalty campaigners and Mumia Abu-Jamal should come as no surprise. For political prisoner Mumia, an award-winning journalist and a fighter for social justice, leads his campaign from death row. His struggle symbolises and cannot be separate from the barbaric use of the irrevocable punishment by death in the United States.

After a decade-long campaign, opponents of the death sentence can now claim to have won majority status in US society. Campaign organisers of a national emergency conference in Washington DC on 24 February called to develop the campaign: Stop the Execution of the Wrongfully Convicted Mumia Abu-Jamal, say that this was strengthened by the growing numbers in the US learning from tragic experience that race and class prejudice are an inherent component of the so-called criminal justice system.

The call for that conference said:

"At 'five minutes to midnight' our movement stands poised to mobilise the largest political and social force in the past half century.

"But we have not yet reached the point where our power can make the price of Mumia's murder too high to pay in regard to a fundamental loss of credibility in the criminal 'justice' system. This is the central task before us."

Commentary by Mumia Abu-Jamal

Philadelphia: First Amendment Free Zone!

A MERE mention of the place-name "Philadelphia" is sufficient to evoke a host of images upon the mind, a mix of myth and mayhem; the differences between what one is taught, and what one has learned from the lessons of life.

To many Philadelphia means the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall, and the staging ground of what came to be called the American Revolution. To others, Philadelphia means the MOVE bombing, unbridled police repression, the flames of Osage Avenue, marking signs of a Revolution to come.

Philadelphia, in fact, was the first capital of the fledgling United States. It was also, in the eyes of those most deprived of freedom, ex-slaves like Frederick Douglass, a city remarkable for its racism, and a dangerous city that spawned mobs who burned buildings which were centres of abolition.

More recently, in 1999 and the year 2000, it has been the place where the new Abolitionists — opponents of the death penalty — have found the hard face of police and judicial oppression turned against them. Demonstrators who have dared to exercise their alleged first amendment rights at the Liberty Bell have learned that such an exercise is a crime, punished by judicially-imposed silence, and banishment from the environs where so-called "constitutional guarantee" was written!

Those bold youth who dared to practice those alleged "constitutional guarantees" at the recent Republican national Convention in Philadelphia found Philadelphia's real face: the dungeons of Holmesburg Prison, the vomit-strewn holding tanks of the Roundhouse, and the malevolent repression of the DA's Office, which sought, and obtained, million dollar ransoms, for those who got the legal equivalent of traffic tickets. Welcome to Philadelphia, y'all.

Revolutionary journalist C. Clark Kissinger has been the latest to taste the tender mercies of the local judiciary. Banned from the city for daring to act as if the Liberty Bell represented liberty, Clark was recently hauled before a magistrate for — yet this — speaking in Philadelphia during the Convention. For speaking, without first getting judicial permission (that is, for practising free speech!) Clark was sentenced to 90 days in federal prison.

What was Clark's "crime"? The government claimed it was simply a violation of probation. Sure. But does anyone think he would be in stir, if he quietly came to Philly, because he wanted to see the Rocky statue, or The Thinker by Rodin, at the Art Museum? What if he suddenly got religion and wanted to pray at Bishop John Neumann's Shrine?

The prosecutor leaves little doubt about why Clark was there. His words: George W Bush is a smirking frat rat, son of a former head of the CIA, who went on to become a speculator oil man, and went on from there to be a blood-stained executioner, and now wants to be the ruler of the world!

This was the State's Exhibit no. 1, and this was the magistrate's incredible justification for this violation hearing. In Rappoport's words, "Past behaviour shows that his speech ends in civil disobedience."

This is the same guy who claims that Clark's case has absolutely "nothing" to do with the First Amendment! Is that not incredible? As Clark aptly put it when first faced with jail: If I were an executive of Firestone who killed people with defective tyres, I wouldn't have to fear a single day in jail. If I were one of the cops who fired 41 bullets at Amadou Diallo, I wouldn't have to worry about going to jail. If I were an army officer instructing death squad leaders at the School of the America at Fort Benning, Georgia, I certainly wouldn't be threatened with any jail time.

Welcome to Philadelphia, y'all. Where the First Amendment doesn't matter. Where both the media and the government conspire to punish you for protest. Where you can be beaten, jailed, threatened and insulted by a judge and jailed again! Philly — First Amendment Free Zone!

$13,640 raised for dockers'defence

Charleston tour takes Bay Area by storm!

International Day of Solidarity — Action pledged

By Jack Heyman

A delegation of Charleston longshoremen including ILA Local 1422 President Kenneth Riley, Vice President Robert Ford and two defendants in the case known as the Charleston 5, Peter Washington and Elijah Ford, made a whirlwind tour of the Bay Area February 21-February 25.

The tour was sponsored by the Labor Committee in Defense of the Charleston Longshore Workers. The purpose of their Northern California visit was to expose the legal onslaught against them and their union by non-union employer W.S.I. and the South Carolina Attorney General and to win the support of trade unionists, blacks and those concerned with civil liberties.

The Charleston 5, if convicted, face up to five years in jail for exercising their right to picket against a scab stevedore operation.

By the time they headed back home five days later, they'd won the hearts of Bay Area trade unionists and helped to raise over $13,640 for their legal defence, $7350 sent directly from unions to Charleston, with promises of more to come.

Greeted at the San Francisco airport on Wednesday February 21 by Trent "Buster" Willis (ILWU Local 10), Jack Heyman (ILWU Local 10), Eddie Gutierrez (ILWU Local 34) and Robert Irminger (IBU), all members of the defence committee, the Charleston longshoremen wasted no time in reaching labor's ear.

No sooner had they disembarked from their airplane than they headed for a mass picket line of some 400 United Air Lines mechanics. Local TV crews filmed the labor protest that was addressed by Executive Secretary-Treasurer of the California AFL-CIO, Art Pulaski, and other labor officials.

Riley was introduced, spoke from the platform and received resounding applause. No sooner had he finished speaking than Fox TV interviewed him by cell phone.

From here it was off to the Soul Beat TV studio in Oakland where the four Charleston longshoremen and Trent Willis, secretary-treasurer of the defense committee, were interviewed on the evening news program which reaches some 400,000 viewers, mostly African-American.

After this first day's busy schedule they were treated to fried catfish and seafood at "Sweet Jimmie's", a restaurant/nightclub in downtown Oakland owned by a retired Local 10 member and a favorite hangout of many longshoremen who made the Charleston brothers feel right at home.

The following day they got a tour of the port of Oakland by Local 10 President Henry Graham and Business Agent Kevin Gibbons. With a bit of friendly jousting the Charleston brothers claimed their port was the fourth largest in the U.S., while Oakland longshore workers contended that their port was number four.

On a more serious note, President Graham took them on a hospital visit to former Local 10 President Lawrence Thibeaux, who had undergone a heart bypass operation. Thibeaux had flown to Charleston last year in the heat of the struggle to participate in the picket at the Columbus Street terminal and bring solidarity greetings from Northern California ILWU locals.

Thursday night Riley spoke at La Peña, a cultural center established in Berkeley in the '70's by leftist political refugees of Chilean dictator Pinochet's bloody terror. It was a packed house, mostly of longshore workers, yet the attention paid Riley's speech was so intense you could hear a pin drop.

The following evening at Local 10, Willis chaired and the same respectful focus was given. Both evenings' events were co-sponored by the Black Radical Congress, whose speakers included black journalist Fran Beal and Karega Hart, an organizer of S.E.I.U. Local 790.

That Friday morning the Charleston longshoremen went to the Local 10 hiring hall where Riley briefly addressed the longshore workers before the dispatch. Then it was off to a Labor Breakfast at the Crowne Plaza Hotel sponsored by the ILWU, the California AFL-CIO and the San Francisco Labor Council.

The event featuring Ken Riley as guest speaker was chaired by Jack Heyman and was attended by officials and members of dozens of Bay Area unions. Speakers included Jim Spinosa, International President of the ILWU, Art Pulaski of the California AFL-CIO, Walter Johnson, Secretary-Treasurer of the S.F. Labor Council. Eight unions present pledged donations to the defense campaign.

In each of his speeches Riley meticulously, articulately and passionately explained the chronology of events leading up to the attack by 600 riot police on Local 1422's picket line at the Charleston terminal. It followed the day after the predominantly African-America union was in the forefront of a march in Columbia against the flying of the Confederate flag at the state capitol.

He poignantly exposed the political vendetta against his local by the ambitious Republican State Attorney General Condon who will be running for governor of South Carolina next year. And he told of the disillusionment he experienced when Democratic Governor Hughes, under pressure from big business, asked Riley to refuse his nomination for appointment to the State Port Authority. Anti-labor legislation ensued in the wake of this retreat.

Friday afternoon the Charleston longshoremen joined the picket at Castagnola's Restaurant on Fishermen's Wharf called by Local 2, the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union, who were protesting the sale of the restaurant to a nonunion outfit.

Several of those union members volunteered their services serving food and drinks at the fundraiser benefit party the following evening in the Local 10 hiring hall. Some 200 celebrants partied the night away to the music of master DJ Haywood Richmond, a longshore mechanic when he's not spinning discs. And Local 10 longshore women didn't need much coaxing to dance with our Charleston brothers!

Finally, Riley and his members have been thankful for the groundswell of support expressed in the financial contributions from around the country and motions for solidarity actions. The only weak link in the defence campaign so far has been the silence and inaction from John Bowers, the ILA's International President.

All indications are that that is about to change. As the campaign gains momentum, ILA locals are beginning to come to the defence of Local 1422 with support rallies, financial donations for legal expenses and pledges of solidarity.

Riley and the Charleston brothers have been heartened by the growing support on the West Coast for an international day of solidarity actions on the first day of the trial (yet to be announced). Already the International Dockworkers' Council conference held last month in Barcelona, Spain is on board to flex labor's muscle in ports around the world in protest with solidarity actions.

The spirited defence campaign, begun in Northern California, will continue until the scab stevedore outfit W.S.I. withdraws its $1.5 million union-busting suit against ILA Locals 1422 and 1771 and the state of South Carolina drops its criminal charges against the Charleston 5.