



Organizing: A Light on the Horizon

Over the last several decades, the percentage of workers belonging to unions has steadily fallen to where today, it's just 13.2% of the total workforce. The MEBA faces a three-pronged challenge – seeing membership rolls fall with the decline of the U.S. Merchant Marine, raiding of our billets by non-AFL-CIO unions, and an explosive growth in non-union foreign-flagged vessels. However, it does no good to complain and wring our hands. It is important to recognize and understand our challenges, then act – and we are. In just the last year and a half, we've undertaken many significant campaigns. Our most recent success was with Interlake Steamship Company, which restored our presence on the Great Lakes – birthplace of our union.

Organizing is the lifeblood of a union. But it's important to understand that *most organizing drives fail*. That means you really have to have a sustained focus to get the job done. Yet, for too long, our Union lacked that essential ingredient and stood still when it came to going after new work. We have that focus now and the MEBA is growing thanks to a concerted effort to exploit new opportunities.

The MEBA is putting new resources into organizing and bolstering our membership

rolls. Upon taking office, I assigned Robert Martin, a MEBA member and veteran of previous organizing campaigns, to devote all of his time to growing our Union through organizing. Each week, Robert reports to me outlining his work and presenting recommended targets for the District Executive Committee's (DEC) consideration.

The members of the DEC identify, when appropriate, immediate targets for organizing. At any given time, we are monitoring as many as two-dozen potential opportunities. Decisions are made by the DEC on who will take the lead, how to proceed, and how best to achieve our goals.

Keep in mind that there is a cottage industry in defeating union organizing campaigns. It is absolutely essential that many of our efforts remain strictly under wraps until we're ready to go public at a time of our choosing. No one should mistake lack of news about organizing for "inaction." On the contrary, this administration is aggressively moving forward.

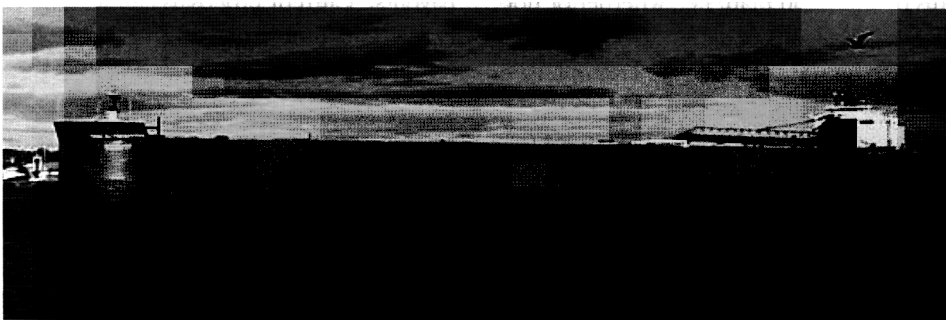
Indeed, over the past year we have successfully been recognized by Woods Hole, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket Steamship Authority and Boston Harbor Cruises. With Interlake Steamship Company, Brady

Marine Services, Governor's Island Ferry (Empire Harbor Marine), Gellatly & Criscione Services in New York Harbor and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (expanding an existing relationship), we've been successful in working out contract agreements to put members to work. It hasn't been easy. Organizing is a constant process, but fortunately, MEBA has a lot to offer.

This year has been a turning point. If we keep at it and maintain our focus, we've got a chance to grow and expand. Our reputation has grown after the MEBA's stellar performance in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. We proved our ability aboard the MSC Auxiliary, Special Mission, Prepositioning and LMSR vessels as well as on the lion's share of the MarAd Ready Reserve Force (RRF) ships. We won the battle to stay on the Matson vessels. We regained collective bargaining with GFC Crane. We have even added a new affiliate – our longtime friends at the American Radio Association (ARA).

We've got a great team working hard together and we're all pulling in the same direction. That says to me that the MEBA is a union you can be proud of once again. And ever so steadily, we're beginning to reverse that non-union trend, moving with calculated efforts at expansion. With a strong organizing program, the future really does look bright for the MEBA and – most importantly – our members.

Ron Davis



The 1,013 foot M/V PAUL R. TREGURTHA is the largest ship in the Interlake Steamship fleet. MEBA inked a ten-year deal with the company which reestablishes the Union's presence on the Great Lakes.