

Consistency Produces Results

Thorough and consistent attention to detail turned opportunity into a solid organizing success this year in the New York-New Jersey harbor.



1 Left to right is Captain Chuck Restivo, Mate Justin Shellington, and Engineer Floyd Barnhill aboard the tug *Flossie Gellatly* during a recent crew change.

Gellatly & Criscione Services Corp. employs 30 captains, engineers, mates, and unlicensed crew members on its three tugs and five oil barges. Their working day is devoted mostly to refueling the big cargo ships that call in the harbor, a task that is both dangerous and environmentally sensitive. The demanding and stressful nature of the job meant that the workers could readily understand the unique benefits of membership in a union like the MEBA.

Thus, New York Patrolman Bill McHugh found a receptive audience when he began visiting the vessels in early January of this year. Reaching all the workers was no easy matter, though, as the tugs/barges

are constantly on the move among the different petroleum terminals and vessels in the enormous harbor.

But Brother McHugh, along with Representative Jim LaRiviere, were dogged over a six week period, riding all the vessels numerous times and making the MEBA's case to every one of the officers and crew.

That paid off when collecting pledge cards. In mid-March, armed with cards from 100% of the work force, the MEBA demanded voluntary recognition as the collective bargaining agent. The Union's

thorough preparation made the demand a very very credible one: A week later the management at Gellatly & Criscione recognized the MEBA.

It was then up to Atlantic Coast Vice President Don Keefe to negotiate a first contract, a step that is usually the most difficult part of organizing a new company. An employer seeking to avoid a contract has many opportunities to delay or frustrate completion of the deal. But Brother Keefe, ably assisted by Brother McHugh and Brother LaRiviere, kept up the steady pressure needed to move negotiations consistently forward.



2 The tug *Peter Gellatly* during a crew change: Captain Sloan Danenhowe is on the port bridge wing. On deck (left to right) is Assistant Mate/Deckhand Jimmy Kuhn and Engineer Tim Nail. 3 Left to right is Engineer Tim Nail, Assistant Mate/Deckhand Jimmy Kuhn, Captain Chuck Restivo and Mate Justin Shellington. 4 In the galley of the *Flossie Gellatly* (l-r) is Captain Jim Lopez and Tankerman Brian Kelly filling out union applications at a recent crew change.



Undaunted by some of the fits and starts that often accompany a new labor-management agreement, new contracts were hammered out by August. (There are actually two MEBA agreements with Gellatly & Criscione - one contract covers the captains as supervisors, and the second covers all non-supervisory personnel.) Finally, on Sept. 4, the contracts were nailed down with final signatures.

The three-year contracts contain significant improvements in wages and benefits, so ratification of the Union-negotiated agreements by the officers and crew of the Gellatly & Criscione vessels went smoothly. With this ratification, the MEBA was

able to welcome the new members into the fold.

MEBA President Ron Davis extended his congratulations to the new members. He also thanked Brothers Keefe, McHugh and LaRiviere for their hard work in making this organizing effort a success.

"The MEBA team did a great job in mov-

ing from the collection of pledge cards, to the voluntary recognition of the MEBA as collective bargaining agent, through the negotiation of the first contracts, to the final ratification of the agreements by the Gellatly & Criscione workers," Davis said. "Our team has shown once again that they know how to achieve results, both for the new members and for the MEBA as a whole." ✕