

MEBA Inks New 4-Year Crane Deal

Potential to Expand

When this administration first came into office, the future of our job base on the former Sea-Land cranes was bleak. During the sale of Sea-Land's assets to Maersk Lines and CSX Company, the former administration entered into a collective bargaining agreement with the crane operating company CSX World Terminals. CSX World Terminals in turn entered into a business contract with APM Terminals (who owned the cranes). The collective bargaining agreement had no job security provisions in the event CSX World Terminals' business contract expired with APM. President Ron Davis and Atlantic Coast Vice President Don Keefe have worked continuously over the past 2 ½ years to save the crane engineer jobs for MEBA.

The first step in the process was to section off the Puerto Rico crane operations from CSX World Terminals. Vice President Keefe began negotiations with CSX Lines to take over the Puerto Rico Cranes. Soon after, CSX Lines was able to obtain the Puerto Rico operations from CSX World Terminals. Prior to this separation, Keefe secured an agreement from CSX Lines in which CSX Lines would assume the entire port engineers' agreement covering the crane engineers. Horizon Lines then purchased CSX Lines. However, just prior to this sale, MEBA completed an agreement with Horizon Lines to assume the collective bargaining agreement covering crane engineers for the Puerto Rico operations.

The next step in the process was to



Taken in the crane shop in Elizabeth, NJ, are (left to right) MEBA members Jim Nightingale, Atlantic Coast V.P. Don Keefe, Garrett Harrington, Charlie Priscu and New York Patrolman Bill McHugh.

convince Maersk and APM Terminals that MEBA crane engineers are the most experienced crane supervisors on the docks. Pres. Davis and V.P. Keefe reached out to Maersk Lines Ltd. CEO John Reinhart and advocated MEBA's experience on the cranes. They explained MEBA's historic presence as crane maintenance supervisors that began in the mid-1960's when shipboard cranes were actually removed from the ships and placed on the docks. The ship to shore movement took place during the containerization explosion under the vision of former Sea-Land executive Malcom McLean. Together Ron Davis and Don Keefe began a public relations campaign to educate the industry on the value of MEBA crane engineers, which in turn brought the Union recognition as the Society of Marine Port Engineers annual industry award winner in 2003.

Throughout 2003, MEBA conducted a slew of crane discussions with Maersk. Also discussed was the fact that the business contract between CSX World Terminals and Maersk would be expiring thereby leaving the crane operations without proper MEBA supervision. Maersk CEO John Reinhart gave

President Davis and V.P. Keefe verbal assurances that he would advocate MEBA's position with APM Terminals. As a result, early this year APM Terminals posted a Request for Quote (RFQ) for the operation and maintenance of the cranes operated by CSX World Terminals. The RFQ provided the stipulation that the companies would keep the existing MEBA crane engineers.

Shortly, after the posting of the RFQ, Don Keefe entered into exclusive recognition agreements with all the companies bidding for the work. He also began negotiations with the bidders to assume the existing port engineer's contract (which covers crane engineers). At the end of the day, East Coast Crane and Electric won the RFQ bid. The contract calls for 3% increases each anniversary date, assumption of the prior collective bargaining agreement and future work coverage for MEBA crane engineers should East Coast Crane and Electric secure new crane engineer work. In essence, MEBA has formed a partnership with an established company that the Union can help grow - as East Coast Crane grows, MEBA grows as well.