



# PIER PRESSURE

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Spring 2010 #5

## *VIEWPOINT: Protect Our Jobs and the Environment*

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From the shores of Portland, Oregon to the beaches of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and beyond, the efforts to both preserve our environment and stimulate our local economies have often been pitted in fierce opposition to one another. However, this does not need to be true.

### **GREEN PORTS**

There are several U.S. ports implementing forward thinking ideas:

- ▶ “Cold ironing” of ships. This means using shore side electric power rather than ship crude oil to power vessels while they are at the dock;
- ▶ Upgrading trucks and equipment to reduce harmful diesel emissions;
- ▶ Reduction of the ports energy usage through alternative and renewable energy projects; investigating opportunities to participate in renewable energy projects, including the use of solar panels;
- ▶ Exploring ways to enhance current recycling and composting programs; and more.

### **ECONOMICS VS. THE ENVIRONMENT**

Longshore workers are worried about their jobs. New technologies, such as GPS, automated cranes and vehicles and computerized cargo tracking are a real threat to our livelihoods and the well-being of our families and port communities. New job creation through port expansion is therefore seen as positive.

Environmentalists have long cited destruction of endangered habitats, damage to water supplies, diesel exhaust and disruption of the ecosystem as reasons to discourage port expansion. They want to prevent accidents like the major oil spill that occurred when an 800-foot tanker collided with a towing vessel pushing two barges near Port Arthur in Southeast Texas in January 2010.

The catastrophic oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico last month will not only have a devastating impact on the environment, but also on the livelihoods of the affected port communities. ILA members in New Orleans, Mobile, and elsewhere could lose work if commerce and cruise ships are diverted when the spill reaches the coastline. The fishing industry will be impacted, affecting many local families' income.

### **COLLABORATION**

The truth is that many longshore workers understand that we must act reasonably in order to protect the environment by preventing pollution and promoting sustainable development. The economies of many U.S. seaports revolve around tourism and agriculture as well as transportation.

In New Jersey, members from Bayonne's ILA Local 1588 collaborate with a BayKeepers Organization and Bayonne schools in an effort to clean up the waterways in the surrounding ports through an oyster restoration project.

### **ADVOCATES FOR CLEAN TRANSPORTATION**

Longshore workers must be at the forefront of fighting for clean transportation. We must be the ones advocating for improved health and safety and environmental protection.

Otherwise we risk watching as employers use band-aid solutions to the profound health and safety and environmental concerns caused by pollution and environmental destruction. Without a more aggressive role by longshore workers, employers may also use the environmental concerns as justification to replace good paying waterfront jobs with labor-saving technologies.

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