



ESSO FLEET NEWS



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STRAIGHT TALK

A Message to Esso Seamen

AS seen from the Company's viewpoint, Esso seamen have been the targets of a cleverly designed plan for conquest that began more than two years ago. The objective of the plan was to switch the Esso fleet's unlicensed men to an outside hiring hall union—specifically, the SIU.

The plan was sparked by a sustained campaign of false propaganda, virtually all of which, in our opinion, is written not by real seamen, or by Esso men, but by paid professionals. These outside propagandists know very little about the Esso fleet or Esso seamen. They do know how to twist facts, distort truths and to misrepresent. They are adept at the subtle hint, the crafty innuendo and the art of spreading unrest, discontent and suspicion.

During the past year, much propaganda has been leveled at the Company. Recently the tempo has been stepped up, has become more vindictive and has been directed not only at the Company, but at members of management.

Such methods have long since been discarded by reputable union leaders. Character assassination, smears and false propaganda are considered disgraceful tactics beneath the dignity of honest working men and women. As many Esso men see it, the current smear campaign directed against the Company and its management is an insult to their intelligence.

For the past nine months, Esso seamen have been working without a contract. What are the facts behind this unsatisfactory situation? Perhaps it might be well to look back and review events leading up to the situation in which Esso seamen now find themselves.

ETMA REORGANIZED IN 1958

In 1958 there was a reorganization of the former Esso Tanker Men's Association. A new union, the Esso Tanker Men's Union, emerged. Charles E. Gallagher, who had been an elected official of the predecessor union, became President. Edward Derry, also an elected member of the former union's Board of Governors, was named Port Representative. A third elected representative of the previous union, Joe Rose, remained in office in the new union. Three non-elected officials were also named to the council over a period of time.

A new constitution, which among other things eliminated the rule restricting membership to Esso seamen, was voted on by the membership. The type of voting envelope used was questioned by many Esso seamen. A protest in court was overruled and the new constitution went through.

The President, Charles E. Gallagher, told THE NEW YORK HERALD-TRIBUNE that the union would not affiliate with the SIU or the NMU.

This statement was repeated many times by Charles E. Gallagher, who promised Esso seamen a union "for, of and by Esso seamen". He pledged to keep out "outsiders".

In April, 1959 Charles E. Gallagher notified the Company in writing that the contract would be cancelled on June 30.

BARGAINING BEGAN MAY 3

Contract talks with the union began on May 3. In all, there were a total of 30 meetings. During the course of the bargaining, the Company made a genuine effort to reach an agreement on mutually satisfactory terms. The Company put forth a proposed new contract which contained many important improvements. Gallagher turned it down. The Company suggested that the contract be put to a vote by Esso seamen. Gallagher refused.

At no time did the ETMU present the Company with a written list of proposals. This is unusual. Most unions submit a list of demands, usually at the outset of bargaining and the employer usually presents counter-proposals.

The Company learned that on July 20, Charles E. Gallagher and his Council had signed an agreement with Paul Hall of the Seafarers International Union. The pact affiliated the ETMU with the outside hiring hall union and was to be submitted to Esso seamen for a "secret vote" during a 35-day period starting July 27, 1959.

When this news was flashed to the fleet it touched off a storm of protest from Esso seamen. On August 6 the Company received a telegram from Lester Payne, a Steward, stating that a new union, the Esso Seamen's Association, represented a majority of Esso seamen.

The Company replied to Mr. Payne suggesting that he take this claim to the National Labor Relations Board. At the same time, the Company withdrew recognition of the ETMU-SIU and ceased bargaining. That was the only lawful course open to the Company under the circumstances. To have done otherwise would have brought on unfair labor practice charges and endless legal wrangling. This action was later upheld by the NLRB.

On August 25 the ESA filed a petition with the NLRB seeking an election to determine the bargaining agent for all unlicensed personnel. On August 31 the ETMU-SIU filed a similar petition.

On September 18 the ETMU-SIU filed unfair labor practice charges against the Company. It was charged that the Company "organized, formed, dominated and interfered with Esso Seamen's Association and gave assistance and other support to it" and also "refused to bargain in good faith with Esso Tanker Men's Union and engaged in unlawful activities and conduct to impair and destroy the representative status of the Esso Tanker Men's Union."

Under its rules, the NLRB will not act on a petition for an election in any case where unfair labor practice charges are pending against one or more of the parties involved. This is standard procedure. The Board must first settle the unfair labor practice question before it can proceed with the matter of deciding whether or not to hold an election.

UNFAIR LABOR PRACTICE CHARGES DISMISSED

Plainly, the unfair labor practice charges were groundless. This was proved when the Regional Director of the NLRB dismissed the charges for lack of evidence. This dismissal upset the ETMU-SIU so much that they appealed over the head of the Regional Director to the General Counsel of the NLRB in Washington. The General Counsel saw through the charges also and rejected the appeal.

By filing the charges, the ETMU-SIU delayed the election for months. The Board was obliged to undertake a detailed, impartial investigation—to interview many witnesses—to sift and appraise a volume of records and correspondence in order to check out the facts and decide the charges were without merit.

The NLRB tried to get the parties to agree to a “consent” election to save time and to avoid red tape.

Because of the uncooperative attitude of the SIU-affiliate, however, it was necessary to hold a formal hearing in New York. Finally, on March 9 the Board in Washington directed that an election be held. The Board rejected an argument by ETMU-SIU which proposed that ESA not be allowed to take part in the election. The Board found the ETMU-SIU argument to have “no merit”.

“WHAT ARE WE VOTING FOR?”

As the time for voting nears, there are many questions that will arise in the minds of Esso seamen. Probably the most important questions are: “What are we voting for?” and “What’s in it for *us*, the Esso seamen?”

As we in management see it, one thing is crystal clear—Esso seamen are faced with a choice of either an independent and unaffiliated union (ESA) or a union that has aligned itself with a major outside hiring hall organization (ETMU-SIU).

Recently a letter from Paul Hall, head of the SIU, was sent to the NLRB in Washington and copies were distributed through the fleet. In his letter, the SIU boss tells the Labor Board how he wants his union to be shown on the ballot in the Esso fleet election.

The SIU prexy explains that his union is made up of many organizations, one of which is the ETMU. In our opinion, *the ETMU is a captive of the SIU*, plain and simple. If the majority of Esso seamen believe that SIU has something better to offer, they will have a chance to vote for it during the coming election. But they should not allow themselves to be deceived into thinking that ETMU-SIU is anything less than what it really is—the SIU under a mixed-up label.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

You are told that the affiliation is a very loose and easy connection. That ETMU will keep its freedom and autonomy. That the affiliation can be ended any time you wish. This story does not sound very convincing. What if Esso seamen should want to cancel the ties and dis-affiliate? Would you be given a voice? If so, what kind of ballot would you be handed by which to cast your vote?

The affiliation pact by its own terms required approval of the membership by “secret ballot vote”. It also required approval “by the membership of SIUNA”. What about dis-affiliation? Will such action not also require approval by the membership of SIUNA? If it takes two to make an agreement, doesn’t it take two to break one? Suppose Paul Hall and his SIUNA membership do not agree to end the affiliation? In a showdown, would Gallagher be a match for Paul Hall and his SIU high command? There are many important questions to be pondered.

Consider the role of the SIU in the coming election. Doesn’t it seem strange that Paul Hall’s union should be cast in the role of a candidate-by-proxy?

If the SIU, NMU or any other international union believes that Esso men are in need of the things such unions offer, why would such a union not

undertake a direct organizing drive—conducted in the open—calling a spade a spade? That is the orthodox method. That is the way other unions in the American labor movement usually approach the job of expansion.

LOOK AHEAD

Looking ahead, what's in it for *you*, the *Esso seaman*?

No one will deny that there is room for improvement in our tanker fleet. The Company has never claimed that all conditions are perfect in every respect. There are always problem areas, grievances and countless items that need review and attention. The contract that we offered to sign last summer included many betterments that we knew Esso seamen wanted and deserved.

At the same time we think it very unlikely that any fair-minded Esso seaman will say that the conditions in our fleet were such as to need major surgery—that in order to get a good contract it was necessary to dish Esso seamen up to the SIU on a silver platter.

We are of the firm opinion that a genuine independent union, dedicated to the well-being of Esso seamen and *only Esso seamen*, is the best kind of representation for the men in our fleet. That is the kind of union that Esso seamen were promised last year, before the affiliation by peek-a-boo ballot was announced. That is the kind of union with which Esso would prefer to deal. A union of its own employees, interested in their own welfare and in the Company's fortunes as well. A union whose spokesmen are Esso seamen, not strangers to Esso and its business.

Much has been said and written about job security. You have been told repeatedly that 300 to 400 Esso seamen were going to be laid off. This is a deliberate falsehood. This charge was denounced by the Company in a letter to our seamen dated August 4, 1959.

Speaking of jobs, you have also heard it said that the SIU is really on a job raid. That the 1,200 jobs in our tanker fleet are the real goal in the present drive to promote ETMU-SIU support in the coming Labor Board election.

We think Esso seamen themselves are well able to judge the facts on this question. If the ETMU-SIU should win the election, it is our opinion that *hiring* and not *seniority* would be the big bargaining issue. The Company is not in favor of the union hiring hall. The last time such a demand was made the Company refused and there was a bitter three-month strike.

VOTE ON THE REAL ISSUES

What are the real issues at stake? You have seen the kind of propaganda issued by the SIU-affiliate. Aside from the bombast, the sound and fury and the mud slinging, have any real aims or objectives been set forth? Are Esso seamen locked in a struggle against coolie wages, bucko mates, two-pot galleys, bell to bell slave driving? Such a claim would be hard to swallow.

Do Esso seamen need to be rescued from hungry ships, back door hiring, favoritism and discrimination? Are they in a fight against loggings, unjust firings, field days or a crimp style hiring set-up? Certainly not.

What then are the real objectives behind the current high pressure campaign to enlist support for the SIU-affiliate? Can it be the 30 cents per man per month head tax to SIU? We think that at 30 cents a man it is going to take a long time to recover the large sum of money that is being spent to bring Esso seamen into the SIU orbit.

How you vote is up to you. Your vote is important. It is secret. Your vote counts. Be sure to weigh all the facts before you decide how to cast your ballot.