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TIME TO THINK

A Message to Esso Seamen

Secret balloting in the fleetwide National Labor Relations Board re-run election is about to begin. The first crew to vote will likely be the *Esso Lima's* men at Philadelphia on January 4. Each ship will be voted the first time upon arrival at any of the ports or terminals in the range between Boston and Philadelphia. Each ship will be voted three separate times, with an interval of approximately forty days between. All eligible seamen are allowed one vote. The three separate voting sessions on each ship will ensure that those men who have been on leave will have a chance to vote in the election.

The weeks ahead will prove a crucial period in the affairs of Esso seamen. They will be a time of important decision. A time that calls for some sober and serious thinking. The choice of a union is an important matter. The outcome of the voting can have a far-reaching effect on the future of the men of the Esso fleet.

Esso seamen are being asked to choose between an independent, unaffiliated union of their own shipmates and an outside local, which is a part of an organization of shore workers, mainly truck drivers, headed by James R. Hoffa.

UNION POWER STRUGGLE?

If Esso seamen were to switch to such a union, they could easily become caught up in a

power struggle between Hoffa's outfit and the nation's major maritime unions. Can any intelligent Esso seaman see these unions sitting idly by while the seamen in one of the most important East Coast tanker fleets pay dues to the Teamsters? To old hands in the maritime labor movement it's too absurd a notion to even think about.

Do Esso seamen have any good reason to expose themselves to the prospect of being the pawn in a jurisdictional rumble on the waterfront? Not likely. In the many NLRB elections since 1939 they have chosen the independent road. In an industry known singularly for its labor turbulence, one that has for many years been strike-ridden, and torn by jurisdictional conflict, Esso seamen have sailed a smooth and steady course. They have kept themselves apart from outside entanglements. They have remained free and independent.

The Teamster propaganda will insist that Esso seamen need a powerful international union to represent them in collective bargaining. Every Esso seaman knows very well that it was not the Hoffa-controlled International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Warehousemen and Helpers of America that over the years brought conditions for Esso seamen to a level second to none in the industry.

GAINS MADE BY ESSO SEAMEN

It was not James R. Hoffa who introduced the original rotating relief plan. There was not a single truck driver seen at the bargaining table the day the first paid leave pact was signed for Esso men. The truck labor chief had no part in negotiating seniority pay, fleet reserve, transportation, overtime, air conditioning, television, 80 on and 40 off, or a single one of the many betterments that have been gained by Esso seamen.

These gains were made, not on a Teamster picket line, not from behind street barricades, not by violence or bloodshed, but across the bargaining table in genuine give and take collective bargaining. A bargaining table where both sides have been motivated by a common objective — an efficient, profitable and enduring operation that would provide lasting benefits for both shipowner and seaman. One cannot prosper and endure without the other doing likewise.

Often, in an election campaign, those seeking to oust the incumbents will raise the cry, "It's time for a change." Sometimes this is a

valid claim. Sometimes it is not. Any conscious, voluntary change in the affairs of men should be made only if the proposed change is one for the better. Otherwise, the "status-quo" may be the wiser choice.

To be sure, there is always room for improvement. There are always areas of dissatisfaction and cause for grievance. At the same time, no fair-minded Esso seaman would say that his conditions of employment are so bad as to need radical surgery, or that in order to get a better contract it is necessary to dish the Esso fleet up to the Teamsters on a silver platter.

The management of the Marine Department is of the firm opinion that a genuine independent union, unaffiliated and free of outside interference, is the best kind of representation for Esso seamen. A union of Esso men, dedicated to the well-being of Esso seamen, and **ONLY** Esso seamen.

The time for voting is drawing near. It is time to think. How you vote is up to you. Your vote is very important. It is secret. It counts. Use it wisely.

