

- CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS -

H E A R I N G S

Before The

COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE CHARGES

AGAINST

INTERNATIONAL LONGSHOREMEN AND
WAREHOUSEMEN'S UNION

O. A. Knight, Chairman

Joseph A. Fisher, Member

J. J. Moran, Member

Transcript of Hearing held by the
Committee, commencing on May 17, 1950,
at National CIO Headquarters, Washing-
ton, D. C.

Norman E. Metcalf
and
John E. Connor,
Reporters

May 17, 18-19, 1950

Metcalf, Mahan, Mahan & Connor

Fletcher Trust Building, Indianapolis

Shorthand Reporters

Turn

C
go

ANTONIO RANIA

QUESTIONS BY MR. BRIDGES:

Q. The name is Antonio Rania?

A. Yes, sir. R-a-n-i-a.

Q. What is your job, Tony?

A. Well, I am president of the United Sugar Workers,
Local 142 of the Hawaiian Islands.

Q. You're an International Board member too, of the
ILWU -- no, I'm sorry. I am wrong.

A. I was elected by the four locals of the Territory,
namely, Local 136, 142, Local 150 and Local 152 to
represent the rank and file.

Q. You were elected by the entire membership of the ILWU
in Hawaii to come here.

A. That's right.

Q. Instead of one of the International Board members
coming up?

A. Right.

Q. What is the membership of your local?

A. About 18,000.

Q. Are you familiar with how policy is determined, how
the policies of the unions of the ILWU is determined

in Hawaii?

A. Yes, I am.

Q. You have heard the statements made by the other witnesses here, Duarte and the others as to ILWU policy being determined by membership meetings, referendum votes and so forth. If you were asked the same questions would your answers be the same?

A. The same.

Q. You are familiar with the fact that the same procedure, that is, membership meetings, referendum votes, Territory conventions and other conventions are held in the Territory of Hawaii and in that way policy is formulated there?

A. Yes.

Q. You heard the statement by Steinberg to the effect that the workers in Hawaii when organized by the ILWU were organized to achieve the purposes of the Communist Party. Is that a correct statement?

A. That was a statement he made. That is not true.

Q. And you know better.

A. I know better.

Q. Have you been a part of the organization in Hawaii since it started?

A. I indicated my willingness to join the ILWU in 1944.

I was only interfered with because of my going into the army to serve the United States Army, being a combat veteran. Then I came back in 1946. Then actually from 1946 after my discharge I was a dues paying member of the ILWU.

Q. What was the average wage in the sugar industry prior to organization by the ILWU?

A. Oh, I can remember way back in 1916 when my father used to work for 75 cents a day. After the labor struggle there in 1920 it was raised to \$1.10. That's for ten hours work. Very poor working conditions.

Q. What would be the wages down there for example during the war, Tony?

A. During the war somewhere around 48 cents an hour.

Q. 48 cents an hour?

A. Yes.

Q. No overtime pay?

A. No. You were frozen. Do you remember?

Q. That's right, you were frozen to your jobs by the military government.

A. Yes.

Q. What is the minimum wage now in the sugar industry.

A. The minimum wage is somewhere around -- according to

the employers' figures -- \$8 a day.

Q. A dollar an hour ?

A. Yes.

Q. That's minimum.

A. Yes.

Q. For the 40-hour week, and overtime?

A. During the grinding season they have 48 hours in the plantations.

Q. The fact of the matter is that before organization down there there was no such thing as a 40-hour week or overtime or anything like that, was there?

A. No.

Q. You worked days, nights, Sundays and holidays all for the same wage.

A. Yes, sir.

Q. The bosses were pretty bad, were they, Tony ?

A. Oh, yes, they controlled us in everything. Even controlled our lives there, politically and socially and economically.

Q. And the boss had control of you when you were off the job and on the job.

A. Right.

Q. They'd walk into your house any time of the night and

tell you what to do.

A. Oh, they will kick your door if you don't wake up.

Q. Do you ever remember the CIO ever doing anything for the workers in Hawaii outside of the ILWU?

A. I have heard of an effort in 1937 that failed.

Q. That is the only time the CIO ever did anything for you down there.

A. They failed to organize the workers.

Q. Do you recall any request made by the workers in Hawaii of the CIO to do something?

A. Very vague because I was just a student in high school there.

Q. And until the sugar workers and the others were organized outside of the longshoremen that was practically the only organization in Hawaii?

A. Right.

Q. You have seen this trial, Tony, you have seen the witnesses and others and you have heard what they said about the union and the officers of the union and what the union stands for and does. Do you think that is true?

A. That is not true. I particularly resent it because it means a lot to the people, the workers of the Ter-

ritory of Hawaii.

Q. Do you think the National CIO is going to be able to convince any workers in Hawaii that what they are saying here is true?

A. I don't think so.

Q. Do you see any difference between what has been said here by Steinberg and his witnesses and what the Big Five of Hawaii are saying all the time?

A. I am trying to add one and two. Now, that is red baiting in which Mr. Steinberg is very much interested and is being used terrifically against our unions and against the workers.

Q. As a matter of fact, when the union down there asked to arbitrate, if they asked for arbitration the Big Five down there calls arbitration communism, is that right?

A. Right.

Q. When the workers ask for a wage increase the Big Five always says that is orders from Moscow.

A. Communistic. In 1948 we had to fight back for a wage cut proposal of the industry, sugar industry, a wage cut of 11 cents an hour. Terrific.

Q. And when you fought back and when you fought the lock-

out they said that was communism, too, did they?

A. Yes. Strangely enough, in 1948 we had our first experience in red baiting tactics. You remember the famous union officials who revolted because of communism, and oprating right along with that program was the wage cut proposal which we had to fight like hell. Then during the longshore strike --

A. (Interposing) Oh, they did everything, everything. But the main issue, in order to cloud up the negotiations, was communism. And since we had this famous -- what do you call it -- broom brigade -- it was nothing but communism, Harry, Harry, Goldblatt, all those things.

Q. And some people came down from the mainland and started talk about communism and they started to quote "Phil Murray and to try to break the strike?

A. Right, strangely enough.

Q. And they tried to use the statements of CIO to smash it, didn't they?

A. Right.

Q. And the longshoremen were down there at that time trying to arbitrate.

A. Right. They could have easily settled it without a

strike if they really wanted to.

Q. And you know that that strike went on for five and a half months last year, didn't it?

A. Yes, 177 days, I think.

Q. Do you know if the CIO did anything to help it at all?

A. I don't remember.

Q. In Hawaii.

A. No.

Q. Did the CIO do anything to help you in 1946 in the sugar strike?

A. Well, I wasn't very familiar with it. I was in the picket line day and night.

Q. As a matter of fact, all strikes are outlawed down there, aren't they, Tony?

A. Oh, my.

Q. It is illegal to strike.

A. They'd do anything to break a strike, race baiting and everything.

Q. During the last longshoremen strike, as a matter of fact, the government of the Territory, supported by the President passed a law saying the strike was illegal and ordered everybody back to work, didn't they?

A. Right.

Q. Then he got out an injunction to arrest everybody that stayed on strike.

A. Right.

Q. And he used the fact, didn't he, of what the CIO was saying in order to get the law passed?

A. Right.

Q. Because he said the strike was a communist strike.

A. He called a special session, you remember, during the longshore strike in order to pass laws against the strike. Special session.

Q. Of the Territory Legislature?

A. Territory Legislature. And they have what they call a replica of the Taft-Hartley Act, including the invitation of the republican dominated legislature of the Un-American Dies Committee to come over. They did come. It's so bitter, because while the un-American Committee was going on in the Senate Chamber of the Territory I had to be out in the field day and night because the bosses of my units there were effecting a terrific speed up program, mass layoff, in spite of the fact that we have about 18 per cent of the working force of the workers in the Territory.

- Q. Tony, can you answer this question: If because of these charges the ILWU is kicked out of CIO do you think the workers in Hawaii will worry much about it?
- A. They don't worry. As one brother said, they like to separate the International leadership from the Territory, and we know why they want it, because our strength depends on our affiliation with a strong union such as the ILWU controlling the shipping industry in the Pacific Coast, and they all know that Harry has done a good job, they know what Harry has done.

They may hang him tomorrow, but they can never take away what he has done for the workers of the territory, the economic gains, the political freedom. Now, they are able to call themselves men and women in the society of the territory.

I still can remember the days when complete control, the Big Five, when they determined the wages and the hours and the mode of living in the territory, particularly in the plantations of the territory, the sugar plantations when you either have to be a Republican or else you don't have a preferred job. That is true. And you would either be a supervisor to be what they call mixed up with the society of whites in those days, or a good boy. But now we have that, we have the economic strength to gain and improve wages. We have political freedom; we are now intensely able to participate in politics and tell them that we are just as good Americans as any one of you whites, that we should be accepted in society as a whole as Americans.

They will never be able to tell these people to give that away, and that is what the Big Five are trying to take away right now. They are doing everything they can under the sun. This thing is just like an electric shock. We are at the end of the American domain --

approximately 5,000 miles from here -- and we feel it. This trial of Harry, this trial of your union with the CIO and then the un-American hearings over in the territory have done nothing but point^{up}/the ILWU leaders there. You could really just see that line and, believe me, those employers over there are using it every day -- no, every hour -- to intimidate the workers who have gained through the leadership of this ILWU. That is the truth. I am speaking from the experience because I have been working there ever since 1916, and by virtue of having an opportunity to become an American citizen because I fought for America, I am one of those who feel the same today in the territory and who can well remember how the American way of life has been really demonstrated by wilfull, well-organized, cold-blooded anti-workers, and anti-organization employers -- the Big Five. They are Red-baiting and they are using that cry of Communists -- of which we have only about a hundred in the territory -- but I firmly believe that that is not what they are after. They are after the union, the union of the workers over there, ILWU, CIO. They are proud to wear that button in spite of all this.

Q. In other words, what you are saying, Tony, is that the Big Five, the big employers of Hawaii are taking

charges and statements of people like Steinberg as well as statements of the leaders of the CIO to smash the workers' union in Hawaii.

A. I believe that. I can just imagine what is happening now in the territory. I often jokingly say to the guys that we might as well charge these Big Five newspapers for royalty because they have nothing but "ILWU; Harry Bridges; Goldblatt."

Q. Is a large number of the Hawaiian workers and membership Filipino people?

A. Yes, 75 percent.

Q. They are interested in the relations between the Philippine Islands and the United States of America?

A. Yes.

Q. They are acquainted with the Act known as the Bell Act, is that right?

A. Right.

Q. And they are all opposed to the Bell Act?

A. They are.

Q. Are they aware - - -

A. (interposing) As far as the workers of the territory are concerned, I have made some studies of the Bell Act and how it affects their families back home. They have knowledge, and they don't like it.

Q. And they know, do they not, that the CIO says that they have no right to oppose the Bell Act? Do you know that -- well, I will withdraw that question. I am talking about the Bell Act.

For the benefit of the Committee, the CIO over my objection endorsed the Bell Act. That is the Act that gives the United States a one-way trade deal with the Philippines and gives American citizens extra territorial rights in the Philippines, notwithstanding the so-called independence that was granted the Philippines, it gives preference to American finance capital to do certain things in the Philippines, and it places an unfair burden all the way down the line upon the Philippine people, as well as in all walks of life, working people, business people and others. Of course, the results, in the Philippine Islands, being more or less in the way of an economic serf of the United States of America -- and no one understands that better than a native of the Philippines, including those who reside in Hawaii -- and these questions are directed along those lines because at the last CIO convention on the convention floor and in the Resolutions Committee I asked that the Bell Act not be endorsed and got the same answer from the Committee then. Nobody knew what the

Bell Act was, and I explained it. Later on the convention floor I raised the question, but notwithstanding my request in the interest of the Filipino people, including large numbers on the Hawaiian Islands, that the CIO should not endorse and support the Bell Act, the CIO endorsed the Bell Act. The point here is to find out from somebody right from that neck of the woods just what the people down there think of the Bell Act.

The question I will ask now is do the Philippine workers and other workers affected in Hawaii know that the National CIO endorses and supports the Bell Act?

A. Well, I know, Harry, that we have shared the discussions on the Bell Act, and that the leadership of the discussion came from your union. They share the opposition from the ILWU to the Bell Act.

Q. Do you think the membership is going to take any notice of the fact that the CIO will try to penalize the membership in Hawaii for opposing the Bell Act?

A. Give me that again.

Q. Do you think the membership of the ILWU in Hawaii knows that they might be expelled from CIO for opposing the Bell Act?

A. Well, the same as they know that now they are on trial on account of some of the ILWU stand with regard to

some of these policies that were recommended to the membership and the membership saw fit to ratify it, like our stand on the Marshall Plan, for example. They took the same attitude on such policy of the CIO in regards to the Bell Act.

Q. Quite a large number of the membership in Hawaii are very much concerned with what happens in China, is that right?

A. They are, very much.

Q. And because many of them have close ties to China they favor the resumption of relations and trade with China, is that right?

A. Yes, and for all practical purposes we should.

Q. Do you think they favor such resumption of relations because those people in Hawaii are trying to support Communism or because they believe that it will be to the best economic interests to do so?

A. Because they believe they can support themselves, as I said earlier. There are now about 18 percent of the workers out of jobs and more are being laid off from jobs. They are taking advantage of this debacle and all kinds of stuff against the union there. The employers are really showing their viciousness. I say that again and again, they are vicious. When they

suspend guys that's bad enough, but when they lay them off, unjustifiably lay them off -- mass lay-off, for example in the pineapple industry, where they have been able to reduce the working force for the last three years from approximately 7,000 to less than 5,000. They are still laying them off. They are laying them off because of speed-up, and that is what they are planning in the sugar industry. They are putting up a terrific speed-up program and mass lay-off. They are using all kinds of ways to lay off the guards -- forced pension. We have nothing to do with pensions. We haven't come to a point where we are strong enough to really put in these pensions, and because of speed-up they are able to eliminate jobs.

For example, in the sugar industry during the un-American hearing we have several protests from some of our units in the sugar locals. In one plantation they laid off twenty-eight workers and in another plantation they threatened to lay off one hundred all at the same time on the plantation. They threatened to eliminate jobs if they could eliminate them. For example, in one of our large units composing over 2,000 workers I understand there's a report from the business agent that there are about 500 workers being down-graded

and approximately three hundred will probably be laid off in a few months. So they would really welcome trade with China. We can see the practicability of resuming trade with China, how we can really affect the job opportunities there in the territory, shipping ^{ing} com/ in and going to China, from the Coast. It would be good. As a matter of fact, at our last general Executive Board convention of all the locals we strongly recommended to the rank and file through their representatives in the Executive Board to ask the United States government to approve a resumption of trade with China.

Q. Did you attend the hearings before the un-American Activities in Hawaii?

A. I attended once only because I was so busy. I wanted to at least attend once, and that was the last day.

Q. Do you think there is any difference between those hearings and what is going on in this trial?

A. Strangely enough, Harry, it is something like it, similar. The same questions.

Q. Is it your belief, based on your experience in the Hawaiian Islands, that the purposes of the un-American Activities hearing in Hawaii were for the purpose of breaking the union?

A. Well, they are helping the Big Five. The Big Five

has an overwhelming majority in the make-up of the legislature right now. It is mostly Republican controlled, and it was the Republican control in that special session that invited this un-American Committee, and the Republican representatives of the political influence of the Big Five of the territory.

MR. BRIDGES: That's all.

CHAIRMAN KNIGHT: I would like to interrupt the proceedings for just a moment. I have a phone call.

(A brief recess was taken at this point.)

AFTER RECESS

M F FLS.

MR. BRIDGES: We are finished with the witness.

MR. STEINBERG: No questions.

WITNESS RANIA: I would like to put this in the record. In the latter part of 1947 we were informed from the International through Brother Bob Robertson, -- Brother Robertson came down to the Islands and told the workers, "You must be prepared; you must be really prepared, because first of all you are going to be attacked by the employers, and the main attack will be Red-baiting." You know the employers started fighting it back. Brother Robertson made a terrific statement. I am warning you because on this thing here, as a trade unionist and experienced man, from the bottom of my heart, for the welfare of the workers, no matter what kind of workers or where they are, I feel this way, with our years of experience with the employers there is no such thing as a good boss. Mark this one, -- and you may hate me for this -- sure enough the employers took that statement and went over the heads of the union and went to every individual worker through their terror-organization, they employed more supervisors than necessary; some plantations there were five to one supervisor -- it used to be fifty to a supervisor -- and to that machinery

they have gone and taken this statement of Brother Bob Robertson, "You see, this is a Communist statement; don't believe the ILWU. We are all right; we are good bosses; you know that." And that went around for a period of months.

Then came the Red-baiting, the first Red-baiting experience of our local there of sugar workers. They were able to get a phony from our local elected by the name of Ignatius; they controlled all the newspapers, and the radio, they have everything; they control the transportation and everything. They played it up. They really scared many of our membership. We withstood that. Then negotiations came. They put up a wage cut proposal, instead of putting on a wage increase proposal. We had to fight that. They proposed overall about 11 cents wage cut. In one particular plantation, which they tried to isolate one plantation from the other, was proposed a 17.2 percent cut. At that time the cost of living was rising and rising. We had to fight, and until today we have been fighting, and they have been using this Red-baiting against the union there, against the workers.

And I am telling you what the workers say today, "Well, Brother Bob Robertson is a prophet."

Particularly now, as we review the viciousness of these employers, the Big Five, since 1932 to 1936 they used to employ about 54,000 workers in the sugar industry alone, and they have seen fit to put a terrific program against possible organized workers, and the way they did it, they knew the ILWU was already organizing in the sugar industry. They finally did a good job in organizing completely all the sugar workers. They started off with 25,000 workers in 1946. They knew, too, that the workers were really going after their advancement and gains, and they knew, too, that we were going to hit ^{the} bricks in 1946.

Now, what they did, during the war there was a period between 1938 up to the end of the war - - -

MR. BRIDGES: (interposing) What are you talking about now?

WITNESS RANIA: The way they are attacking our union over there.

MR. BRIDGES: You are talking about the general Red-baiting attack of the employers.

WITNESS RANIA: Yes, and its effect today, its effect upon the workers, because they are feeling the attack and the Red-baiting of the union, how it really affects the workers there today. Now they have these

workers, particularly the Filipino workers, because the majority of the people there were Japanese during the war, they needed Philippine labor to go in and help the war effort.

MR. BRIDGES: I think unless the Committee wants you to go on, I think that it won't be helpful any further to go into all the details of the union in Hawaii. We have covered the main ones, and we may as well get through. We agreed to go on without going to supper. That is what I have in mind.

WITNESS RANIA: All in all, they took in another 6,000 workers for their benefit to boss the unions. Now they have this terrific program of speed-up and lay-off. From 54,000 -- this is the point I want you to remember -- from 54,000 sugar workers they have been able to reduce them today until there are only about 19,000 in the bargaining unit, and we know their terrific plan, they are going to take off about 3,000 more, requiring us to produce even more than before. They want them to produce what it took 54,000 to produce.

That is what we are faced with today, the sugar workers especially today, and the pineapple workers.

So, all in a nutshell, this Red-baiting going

on, from the National down to the Islands over there is being used by the employers to carry on this vicious program of really cutting the guts and livelihood of the workers, and I hate to see the ILWU, which built up the union and put the workers in a position to fight back, I hate to see the CIO have a contribution perhaps to the destruction of the union there. That is what I am concerned with.

MR. BRIDGES: We have no further witnesses, and we are ready to conclude our case now.

(WITNESS EXCUSED.)

MR. BRIDGES: I would like to start off by asking that the record be reserved for a series of exhibits we have got numbered from 2 to 31. We have Exhibit No. 1 in, and want to put in another thirty exhibits. All I want at this moment -- I will come back to it very soon, is to have exhibit numbers for our side, No. 2 to 31 reserved, because I want to introduce - - -

CHAIRMAN KNIGHT: (interposing) Is it your desire to put in exhibits after the case is closed?

MR. BRIDGES: Certainly I can put in exhibits. What do you mean? The case is not closed.

CHAIRMAN KNIGHT: Go ahead and put them in.