



**INTERNATIONAL LONGSHOREMEN'S ASSOCIATION
LOCAL 1422**

Affiliated with the AFL-CIO



FROM THE DESK OF
KENNETH RILEY, President

January 14, 2014

The Wyatt McMinn Defense Campaign
P.O. Box 86902
Portland, OR 97286

Drop the Charges Against Wyatt McMinn

To: The Labor Movement and all those Concerned for Workers' Rights

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

I'm writing to you on behalf of my union, International Longshoremen's Association Local 1422, in Charleston, South Carolina, which has endorsed the call to *drop the charges against Wyatt McMinn*. Brother McMinn is the vice president of the Painters Union Local 10 in the Portland, Oregon area who was arrested and charged with trespassing for protesting at a public meeting in Vancouver, Washington held to promote a "right-to-work" ballot initiative.

The event was sponsored by an outfit called the Freedom Foundation. This foundation is financed by notorious anti-union groups like the Koch Brothers and the owners of Walmart. Their idea of "freedom" is to use the government to prevent workers from joining unions and to shut them up when they exercise their right to free speech.

In South Carolina we're well aware of how so-called "right to work" laws can be used to destroy workers' lives and living standards. Today barely 5 percent of workers in our state benefit from union membership. In 2009, Boeing Aircraft moved the production of its 787 Dreamliner from Washington state to Charleston because South Carolina was a "right-to-work" state. By going non-union, they cut wages in half, to \$14 an hour. Try raising a family on that!

What's going on here is an attempt to destroy unions. In 2012 Governor Haley declared that "unions are not needed, wanted, or welcome in South Carolina." She said her priority was protecting employers. The union-bashers pushed through bills requiring unions to publish our membership lists, denying unemployment benefits to striking workers, prohibiting "project labor agreements" and raising fines for violation of the state Right to Work Act to \$10,000.

“Right-to-work” is a fraud. It’s really an attempt to destroy workers’ right to organize. A little over a year ago, anti-union forces snuck a bill for a “right-to-work” law through the Michigan state legislature in a lightning session. This should be a warning to labor everywhere. We’ve already seen how the flight of union jobs from the auto industry devastated Detroit. Now they want to carry out this kind of wrecking operation in Washington state, even as Boeing workers have courageously fought back.

I say to you from our experience in South Carolina: fight back now before this cancer spreads further. The construction workers and others who protested the “right-to-work” event in the state of Washington should be commended. Instead Brother McMinn is being prosecuted. I understand that he has also been active in building solidarity with Vancouver and Portland longshoremen, members of our sister union the ILWU, locked out by the grain terminal operators. The employers are emboldened by the economic crisis. Their profits are up while millions of working people are out of work.

We, Charleston longshoremen, have experienced first-hand how the employers use the police and the courts against workers standing up for their rights. When we picketed a ship that was using a non-union stevedoring outfit in 2000, they sent 600 riot police against us. But we have also seen how labor solidarity can win the day. Five of our members were arrested and faced up to ten years in prison. But due to solidarity job actions from Barcelona, Spain to the ILWU on the West Coast, they were finally freed of all charges after more than a year under house arrest.

I would like to bring this matter to other ILA locals on the East and Gulf coasts, and to defenders of workers and democratic rights everywhere. Let’s have some of that labor solidarity to defend Wyatt McMinn and win one for the labor movement.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "KR", enclosed within a hand-drawn oval.

Kenneth Riley, Pres.
ILA Local 1422

Cc: Jack Heyman