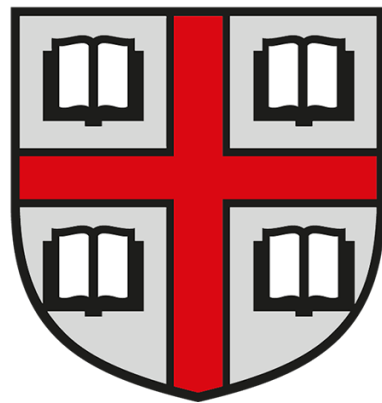
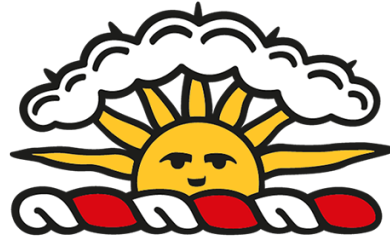


**BUCS VIII**



**BROWN**

**Background Guide**

*The Hawaiian Sugar Strike of 1946*



# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Delegates,

My name is John Metz, and I'm thrilled to be chairing the Hawaiian Sugar Strike committee at BUCS 2019. I am a Junior at Brown studying History, with a focus on the United States. American labor history has fascinated me years, and Hawaii is particularly interesting because its experience with unionism seems in many ways to have been unique in American history. Within the span of the decade ending in 1946 Hawaiian sugar and industrial workers went from being almost totally unorganized to almost universal membership in the International Longshoremen and Warehouse Union (ILWU), which over the course of the next decade waged a colossal and largely successful battle against an authoritarian political and economic system comparable to the Antebellum South. The purpose of this committee is, to the extent possible, to ask how this remarkable feat was achieved.

It is difficult to imagine today, but in the 1940s Hawaii was more famous as an agricultural and military center than as a tourist hotspot. Sugar plantations – which dominated Hawaii's economy in 1946 – were known for their racial and ethnic diversity, poor working conditions, and low wages. But union-backed attempts to strike in 1920 and 1924 failed miserably as employers brought overwhelming force to bear against fractious bands of labor organizers. The outbreak of the Second World War, during which Hawaii was a vital military asset, delayed change still further. By 1946 Hawaii was ripe for change, but labor would first have to contend with the immense power of a ruthless and authoritarian economic and political leadership. Your task will not be an easy one. I wish you the best of luck and, most importantly, hope that this committee will be as enjoyable for you as preparing it has been for me. I look forward to meeting you all at BUCS VIII!

Sincerely,

John Metz  
[hawaii@browncrisis.org](mailto:hawaii@browncrisis.org)

## BUCS VIII



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# COMMITTEE DETAILS

This committee takes place beginning on August 2, 1946, the day after an overwhelming vote by the International Longshoremen and Warehouse Union (ILWU) to initiate a strike against Hawaii's sugar plantation owners. The strike is scheduled to begin on September 1. Each delegate to this committee is a leader of, or represents an interest group or faction closely tied to, the ILWU, which is the primary union representing Hawaiian sugar workers. Your task is to prepare for and then to successfully execute the strike in the face of massive opposition from plantation owners, other business leaders in Hawaii and around the United States, and potentially government forces.

Given the nature of the confrontation to come, this committee will be fast-paced and will require that delegates approach it with a cooperative and adaptable mindset. This is not a traditional background guide. You will note that it has no traditional topics. This has been done not to confuse you but to better suit the nature of the committee. **The ultimate goal of this committee is not to pass distinct resolutions addressing each topic individually, but to establish goals for the strike and, through direct action and negotiations with business and government leaders, to achieve those goals to the fullest extent possible.** Instead of discussing each topic discretely, we will begin by establishing your goals for the strike and negotiating strategies. The first committee session will consist of the month between the committee start date on August 2 and the scheduled beginning of the strike on September 1; delegates will therefore begin the committee with a discussion of what explicit demands the union should pursue before moving on to a discussion of strategies and logistics, such that the union is well-prepared for the beginning of the strike at the start of the second committee session. **The outcome of the strike may change dramatically depending on the choices the committee does or does not make before and after it begins. These changes may not always be in your favor.**



# COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

## Structure

Committee and debate will be run in a permanent moderated caucus; this committee will not use a speaker's list. Delegates may motion to introduce a new subject for discussion, set a speaking time, or enter an unmoderated caucus. Delegates may also motion for round robins (in which all delegates speak in succession on a given subject), to introduce directives and policies, and, at the chair's discretion, to suspend the rules for free-form debate and directive-writing. If absolutely necessary, the chair may suspend the rules or modify rules of debate in the best interest of the committee. The bulk of the work done by delegates will consist of debating and drafting two forms of written document:

- Directives: order union organizers, officials, and other forces under your leadership to take specific actions
- Policies: specify the manner in which union members should act in the future when faced with particular actions or circumstances

As in most specialized committees, delegates may also issue press releases and communiques, which must be passed by a majority vote if issued on behalf of the whole committee. As topics arise in debate, delegates should draft directives and policies to be voted upon. At any point during a motion a directive or policy may be introduced, usually accompanied by a motion to debate it. Policies may be amended at any time, but directives may only be modified if the actions specified therein have not already been completed.

## Voting Procedure

Voting on all motions will proceed as follows.

### **Procedural:**

- Unmoderated caucus: majority vote
- Change in speaker time, caucus subject, or total debate time: majority vote
- Round Robin: majority vote
- Suspension of rules: at chair's discretion, 2/3 vote

### **Substantive:**

- Friendly Amendments: No debate, added automatically
- Unfriendly Amendments: One speaker for, one speaker against, followed by a majority vote
- End debate on a directive/policy and enter voting procedure on that directive: one speaker for, one speaker against, majority vote
- End discussion on a topic, move on to a new topic: 2/3 vote



# COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

## Position Papers

Please submit a position paper by the conference deadline **February 28, 2019**, to the committee email [hawaii@browncrisis.org](mailto:hawaii@browncrisis.org) to qualify for awards by February 24, 2019 if you wish to receive feedback. The position paper should cover your position on all three topics and include a brief summary of the general positions of your delegate. No specific length is required, but brevity is encouraged. The paper should be submitted as a Word document, saved with the title of your position in the name. Please limit the paper to one page with double-spaced type in 12-point font. Be sure also to include your name, school, and position in the body of your email and on the first page of your position paper.

## Diversity and Inclusion

This committee deals extensively with colonialism and its legacies. Oppression along racial and ethnic lines was so deeply ingrained in the society simulated in this committee that it would be a disservice to participants to downplay or conceal the indelible impact it had upon the course of events in 1946 and earlier. We are trusting you to exercise restraint and good judgement at BUCS by taking care to ensure that you act in a manner sensitive to the impact that racism, sexism, and the legacies of colonialism can have on those around you. Ultimately, we ask that you consciously seek to be respectful of your fellow delegates and BUCS staff as we seek to do the same.



# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

## Origins of the Sugar Economy

Hawaii became a major center of the sugar industry during the second half of the nineteenth century, although efforts to begin large scale commercial production of sugar on the islands date back to the establishment of the first recorded Hawaiian sugar mill in 1802, by which time sugar had grown naturally in Hawaii for centuries.<sup>1</sup> The single most important factor in the capitalization of the Hawaiian sugar industry was the land reform of 1848, known in Hawaii as the Great Māhele. Implemented by King Kamehameha III (r. 1825-1854), the reform completed the process of replacing Hawaii's complicated feudal system of land ownership with a system of private land ownership deemed more modern by Hawaiian leaders.<sup>2</sup> Beginning in 1850, foreigners – the bulk of whom were Americans – were permitted to purchase land under the new system. A number of distinct factors, including the disruption of Louisiana sugar production, rapidly rising American demand for sugar, and the abolition of U.S. duties on Hawaiian sugar in 1875, resulted by the 1870s in the development of a large plantation system of sugar production on American-owned land.<sup>3</sup>

By the late 19th century the Native Hawaiian population had fallen substantially from 18th

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1 Ronald Takaki, "Introduction," *Pau Hana: Plantation Life and Labor in Hawaii, 1835-1920*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983.

2 RE3 LLC Real Estate Services, "Land in Hawaii" (2004). Accessed February 1, 2019: [http://files.hawaii.gov/dcca/reb/real\\_ed/re\\_ed/ce\\_prelic/land\\_in\\_hawaii.pdf](http://files.hawaii.gov/dcca/reb/real_ed/re_ed/ce_prelic/land_in_hawaii.pdf)

3 Tataka.

century levels, largely as a result of diseases introduced by the arrival of Europeans. Sugar plantations therefore came to depend largely on imported foreign labor, most of it from Asia. Major waves of immigrants arrived from China, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines beginning after 1850, 1878, 1903, and 1906, respectively. Fed by a large immigrant workforce, Hawaiian sugar production rose rapidly after 1875, rising from under 100,000 tons to more than 500,000 in 1915. By the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor and the U.S. entry into the Second World War production approached one million tons.<sup>4</sup>

The capitalization of Hawaiian sugar production was reinforced by political shifts. Increasing American land ownership in Hawaii, along with the U.S. government's interest in Hawaii's strategic significance as the site of a potential naval base, led to increased foreign influence in Hawaiian politics that culminated in 1887 a coup d'état that placed American economic interests and Native Hawaiian elites in power and established a new "Bayonet Constitution" favorable to economic development. In 1895 the planter-dominated Hawaiian government successfully pushed for annexation as a territory of the United States. Planters have continued to wield outsized influence in the governance of the Territory of Hawaii. Of particular note is the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association (HSPA), the unofficial governing body of Hawaii's agricultural elite, which operates labor recruiting offices in

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4 "Quick Stats," National Agricultural Statistics Service. Accessed January 4, 2019: <https://quickstats.nass.usda.gov/results/961E9CF8-DF5E-39E9-947B-A7B0A56D1BE5>



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the Philippines and oversees joint efforts to head off labor unrest by force or using positive incentives to workers.<sup>5</sup>

## The “Big Five”

The sugar industry has consolidated even as it has grown tremendously, such that by 1946, Hawaii’s economic system was dominated by the “Big Five” sugar companies:

- Alexander & Baldwin
- American Factors
- Castle & Cooke
- C. Brewer & Co.
- Theo H. Davies & Co.

Together, these companies account at the start of this committee for at least 90% of Hawaiian sugar production. Beyond cooperating to curtail labor unionizing, the Big Five have colluded to keep prices high by carefully limiting production; it is not uncommon for executives in one company to sit on the board of directors of another.<sup>6</sup> An extremely high degree of intermarriage among the wealthiest families supplements these economic ties with ties of blood.<sup>7</sup>

5 Tataki.

6 Charlotte Curtis, “Where Aristocrats Do the Hula and Vote Republican; Land and Commerce Screens From Japan New England Heritage Attended Punahou Cousins Society Plumeria and Orchids” *The New York Times* (1966). Accessed via New York Times digital archive January 2, 2019: <https://www.nytimes.com/1966/11/27/archives/where-aristocrats-do-the-hula-and-vote-republican-land-and-commerce.html>

7 “1946: Sakada Filipinos and the ILWU,” ILWU Local I 142, Honolulu, 1996, 9-15

Beyond their financial resources, the Big Five benefit from massive political influence, especially within the Hawaii Republican Party which has controlled the Territorial legislature for its entire existence, and from financial stakes in major newspapers and other industries. The centralization of the Hawaiian economic and political systems has prompted at least one journalist to compare the Territory to France under King Louis XIV.

## Hawaii’s Labor Movement: An Inauspicious Legacy

The ILWU is not the first organization to attempt to coordinate a large-scale sugar workers’ strike in Hawaii. Previous efforts culminated in generally unsuccessful strikes in 1909, 1920, and 1924.

### *The HWCA Strike of 1909:*

In the first major Hawaiian strike of 1909, 7,000 Japanese workers on the island of Oahu under the leadership of the High Wage Consumption Association (HWCA) demanded equal pay with Portuguese and Puerto Rican workers. The HSPA fought a bitter struggle to suppress the strike; Hawaiian government leaders ordered the arrests of strike leaders on specious grounds despite court injunctions to the contrary, and English-language newspapers in Hawaii – largely under the control of the Big Five – were staunchly anti-labor. Most importantly, HSPA leaders hired non-Japanese strike breakers to continue their operations. The strike fell apart, and the HSPA





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offered minor concessions to workers as an empty gesture of goodwill.<sup>8</sup>

## The Oahu Sugar Strike of 1920:

For six months, a coalition of two unions – the Federation of Japanese Labor and the Filipino Labor Union – struck for an almost 50% increase in wages and paid maternity leave for women workers. The strike spread to six plantations and more than 8,000 workers. From the start strike leaders faced immense organizational challenges, including food shortages and evictions of striking workers and their families, who largely resided on property owned by the plantations. More deleterious still was ethnic disunity, which provided an opening for plantation owners to break apart the fragile Japanese-Filipino coalition. The HSPA was able to convince key Filipino labor leaders including Pablo Manlapit that the Japanese labor leaders were agents of the Japanese government bent on colonizing the islands itself. By July 1920 the strike fell apart. The strikers had won no concessions. Worse, participants were subject to severe recrimination, including eviction and criminal charges.<sup>9</sup>

## The Piecemeal Strike of 1924:

In 1922 Pablo Manlapit and George Wright of the American Federation of Labor founded the “High Wages Movement”, which in 1924 launched a slow-moving but relatively large-scale strike almost exclusively involving Filipino workers. From the start, the so-called

“Piecemeal Strike” of 1924 was plagued by problems. Manlapit was arrested on trumped-up charges of conspiracy, and significant language barriers among Filipino workers made for an uneasy solidarity even in the absence of Japanese workers, whose Hawaiian union had disbanded after 1920. In what was perhaps the twentieth Hawaiian labor movement’s low point, a September 1924 confrontation between strikers and strikebreakers – also Filipino – turned violent when police intervened, killing twenty strikers in what came to be known as the “Hanapepe Massacre.”<sup>10</sup> Like the 1920 strike before it, the Filipino Piecemeal Strike ended largely in failure despite a few minor concessions.

## The Rise of the ILWU in Hawaii

“While on the Mainland”, wrote a despondent Hawaiian labor organizer in 1944, “the past two years have been a period of phenomenal growth in union membership, the number of active union members in Hawaii today is probably less than it was on the eve of Pearl Harbor.”<sup>11</sup> But within two years Hawaii went from having perhaps the smallest organized labor presence in the country to having among the largest; in 1946 the International

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<sup>10</sup> Dean Alegado, “Blood in the Fields: The Hanapepe Massacre and the 1924 Filipino Strike,” *Positively Filipino Magazine*, online edition. Accessed December 11, 2018: <http://www.positivelyfilipino.com/magazine/2012/11/26/blood-in-the-fields-the-hanapepe-massacre-and-the-1942-filipino-strike>

<sup>11</sup> Moon-Kie Jung, *Reworking Race: The Making of Hawaii’s Labor Movement*. New York: Columbia UP, 2010, 1-20

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<sup>8</sup> “Sakada Filipinos and the ILWU,” 10-13

<sup>9</sup> Masayo Umezawa Duus, *The Japanese Conspiracy: The Oahu Sugar Strike of 1920*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.



# HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) claims 33,000 members in the Hawaiian archipelago, up from under 900 in 1944. The ILWU's astonishing success as an organizing force is the result of a confluence of political and economic factors that have produced a unique opportunity for labor victory.

## Origins of the ILWU:

The ILWU consists of the former West Coast locals of the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA, est. 1892), which seceded from the ILA in 1937 over disagreements over labor radicalism and especially over the management of the 1934 West Coast Waterfront Strike, generally considered a major victory for the dockworkers' unions. Struggling with widespread strikebreaking in the warehousing industry, ILA leaders organized warehouse workers on a massive scale in a campaign subsequently known as the "March Inland" of 1934, laying the foundation for the ILWU's formation. The union has been led since its foundation by Harry Bridges, an Australian-born organizer whose activist leadership has put the ILWU at the forefront of the West Coast labor movement. Bridges and other high-ranking ILWU leaders have made the organization and empowerment of Hawaiian sugar workers – which, like the March Inland, can be thought of as a sort of "vertical integration" of unionism because it entails an extension of the ILWU's reach to industries involved in all aspects of maritime commerce – a top priority. Viewed in this light, the ILWU's expansion to Hawaii can be seen as an attempt to carry its own organizing trends to

their logical conclusion by taking control of every aspect of the maritime transportation industry, from raw materials to warehousing.

## Explaining the ILWU's Success:

The ILWU has managed to organize Hawaiian sugar workers on an unprecedented scale, and at the start of this committee has, in effect, a monopoly on Hawaiian labor organization. To explain this success we must turn to the ILWU's history of multi-ethnic unionism and to the course of Hawaiian history during the decade preceding the present strike.

Many of the ILWU's prominent leaders cut their teeth in the vibrant agricultural sector of California's Inland Empire, where labor shortages comparable to the ones facing the Hawaiian sugar sector in the early twentieth century produced a similarly multiethnic labor force. In fact, the ethnic makeup of the Inland Empire's labor force is remarkably similar to that of Hawaii's plantation workforce, with Filipinos, Japanese, Koreans, and Mexicans predominating. Many organizers for ILWU and other labor groups active in Hawaii were well-versed in the complicated and often fraught politics of transracial unionism because they had experienced similar phenomena in California. "In Hawaii," notes one ILWU organizer, "you had to deal with these different racial camps the planters had set up, but I'd had a lot of experience with racial groups in California... in the Sacramento Valley you had Filipino and Mexican agricultural field workers." These groups "were similar [in many respects] to what you got in Hawaii"; thus, Thomas's experience with



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agricultural organizing in California early in his career had prepared him well for his experiences as a labor organizer in Hawaii. In 1930, for instance, California's Imperial Valley, a hotbed of union activity, was home to an estimated "7,000 Mexicans, 1,000 Japanese, [and] several hundred Filipinos", among others. They were represented variously by the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee of Southern California (AWOCSC) and the more radical Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (AWIU). These unions deployed organizers in much the same way that ILWU would in Hawaii and the Philippines during the 1940s, dispatching ethnically diverse teams to organize laborers and advocate on their behalf.<sup>12</sup> Notably, it was with AWIU that ILWU organizers like Frank Thomas gained that work experience which they later deemed to have prepared them so well for their time in Hawaii, and other prominent ILWU organizers like Karl Yoneda began their organizing careers with AWOCSC, AWIU, and other organizations that dealt extensively with Asian workers, like the Cannery Workers union. The Pacific Labor Network, then, was a wellspring of expertise from which organizers could draw talent and valuable experience that gave them a model of union deployment ready made for Hawaii and other under-mobilized regions.

Another major factor in the ILWU's success in Hawaii is a result of the Second World

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<sup>12</sup> *Racism, Dissent, and Asian Americans from 1850 to the Present: A Documentary History*. Eds. Philip S. Foner and Daniel Rosenberg (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 200-201

War. During the war the U.S. government had declared sugar vital to the war effort, and as a result worker movement between plantations was limited. This meant that unlike in the past, when ILWU organizers arrived on the plantations they found relatively stable communities. The labor dislocation and liberalization that necessarily came with demobilization at the end of the Second World War provided a perfect opportunity for ILWU to follow through where earlier mobilization efforts had failed in spectacular fashion.

The present labor upheaval in Hawaii is part of a national trend. Since the end of the Second World War the country has been swept up in one of the largest waves of labor unrest in its history. Organized labor activity was limited during the war, and the difficult process of demobilization – often involving substantial layoffs and wage cuts – has helped touch off strikes around the country. By the start of this committee, more than one million American workers had taken part in post-war strikes, including auto workers, meatpackers, steel workers, coal miners, oil workers, and others. These strikes are part of a broader trend of growing political power for labor in the United States. The ongoing movement in Hawaii should be understood not as a one-off put as part of a national trend; members of this committee should take care to consider ways in which they can take advantage of this national trend to benefit themselves and their cause.

All of these factors helped the ILWU rapidly expand its Hawaiian membership beginning



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in the early 1940s; Hawaiian longshoremen, with the support of the ILWU's national leadership, led the task of recruiting sugar workers in the interior, and in 1944 the National Labor Relations Board supervised union elections on Hawaiian plantations; ILWU organizers often received in excess of 90% of the vote and organized some 20,000 workers in just one year. At the same time, labor won significant victories in the legislative elections of 1944, electing 15 and 6 members to the lower and upper houses of the Territorial legislature, respectively, including 2 ILWU members.<sup>13</sup> Whereas the Federal government had assisted states and territories in their efforts to crack down on unions in the 1920s, by the 1940s federal policy was more of a help than a hindrance. The National Labor Relations or Wagner Act of 1935 empowered unions dramatically, and the May 21, 1945 passage of the Hawaii Employee Relations Act or "Little Wagner Act" by Hawaii's increasingly pro-labor legislature guaranteed collective bargaining rights to Hawaiian agricultural workers.<sup>14</sup> Industrial leaders have regarded this developments nervously. Beginning in January 1946 they began to import Filipino workers – so-called sakadas – on a massive scale, reasoning that Filipinos would be especially resentful of the Japanese in Hawaii in the aftermath of the war – only to find that ILWU leaders welcomed the would-be strikebreakers with open arms and incorporated them into their own

ranks. Outraged, business leaders proved especially intransigent in contract negotiations later that year. Emboldened by their successes, ILWU's Hawaiian membership voted 15,406 to 123 on August 1, 1946 – one day before the start of this committee – to strike beginning on September 1.<sup>15</sup>

## Avoiding Mistakes of the Past

Preventing a repeat of the less than successful efforts at Hawaiian sugar strikes in the past will require members of this committee to be acutely aware of the causes of those failures, which were hinted at in earlier sections of this background guide.

### Racial and Ethnic Factors:

A critical failure of communication and cooperation between Japanese and Filipino leaders was a major factor in the failure of the major strikes of 1920 and 1924. Even the ILWU, which by the 1940s had already developed a strongly positive reputation with California's black and Hispanic worker populations, was not immune to the consequences of real or apparent racial insensitivity. One episode – the so-called "Stockton Incident" of 1945 – is particularly illustrative of this reality. In May 1945, shortly after the federal government rolled back Japanese internment, members of ILWU-CIO Local 6 in Stockton touched off a "constitutional crisis" within the organization when they refused to assist a recently released and newly unemployed man of Japanese descent. The incident was part of a

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13 "1946: Sakada Filipinos and the ILWU," 13

14 "Frank Thompson: Islands Organizer, 1944-1946," *International Longshore and Warehouse Union*. Edited by Harvey Schwartz. Accessed December 11, 2018: <https://www.ilwu.org/frank-thompson-islands-organizer-1944-1946/>

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15 "1946: Sakada Filipinos and the ILWU," 14



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much broader pattern of post-war anti-Japanese discrimination in the mainland United States and might have gone largely unnoticed had not the ILWU been engaged at the time in a massive expansion in Hawaii, where it sparked immediate and, in the eyes of Harry Bridges and other ILWU officers, potentially catastrophic outrage among Hawaiian union-members.<sup>16</sup> Manahu Tanaku, a newly organized Hawaiian ILWU member, condemned “the action of the Local 6 members [as] irrational, irresponsible, and reeking with fascism” and at least one organizer expressed fears that “if the union failed [in Stockton] that would have been the end of the ILWU in Hawaii.<sup>17</sup>”

## Capital’s Strikebreaking Tools:

The Big Five have a stranglehold on Hawaii’s economy and political system, and will bring their full strength to bear against labor. Their tools of the trade include but are not limited to:

- **“Divide and Conquer”**: In 1920, business leaders eroded strikers’ solidarity by successfully spreading rumors that Japanese labor leaders were agents of the Japanese government. In 1924, the use of Filipino strikebreakers of particular ethnicities helped company leaders cultivate divisions within the Hawaiian Filipino community. Given the opportunity, capital will likely use subterfuge and psychological manipulation to play labor communities against

each other and encourage workers to cross the picket line.

- **“Carrot and Stick”**: Business leaders will use a variety of positive and negative incentives to pressure workers to defect from the union. During past strikes thousands of workers and their families were evicted from company property and denied access to company-owned stores. Because plantations control the bulk of employees’ housing and, in rural areas, access to market goods, denying housing and food to strike participants and their families has been an immensely effective tool. Business leaders may also offer non-financial benefits – e.g. special privileges at individual plantations – to all strikers or to a small number of strikes. Since these benefits may be very tempting for some workers, they tend to erode solidarity among workers. Such positive incentives also benefit capital because they expand company control over workers’ daily lives, whereas financial benefits – i.e. better pay – tend to reduce it.
- **“Red-Baiting”**: Anti-communism was a major factor in the failure of earlier Hawaiian strikes, and has long been one of the most potent political flashpoints in American politics. Its potency is only likely to rise now that the end of the Second World War has eroded the necessity of military cooperation with the USSR. The ILWU is particularly vulnerable to red-baiting because the communist influence among its leadership is genuine and undeniable. Committee members should be careful to avoid the consequences that may come from Federal intervention in the Hawaiian situation in the event that

<sup>16</sup> Harvey Schwartz, “A Union Combats Racism: The ILWU’s Japanese-American ‘Stockton Incident’ of 1945,” *Southern California Quarterly* 62, no. 2 (1980): 161-176

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 173



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federal authorities are convinced that Communist sympathies within the ILWU represent a threat to the national security.

- **Legal Action:** efforts to deport ILWU leaders or arrest them for espionage have proceeded largely through federal courts. Business leaders may seek to enlist the support of the courts, though pro-labor legislation and the appointment of pro-labor justices since the Great Depression will make this more difficult than it was in the 19th century.
- **Brute Force:** The Big Five are not above violence as a means of controlling their workers. Generally speaking, the dirty work of violent retribution against employees is likely to be carried out not by companies themselves but by the state, e.g. the National Guard, which the territorial government may mobilize during emergencies; in 1924, business leaders pitted strikebreakers against strikers in the “Hanapepe Massacre”, a key factor in the collapse of the Piecemeal Strike. Labor leaders should be prepared for violence. More recently, Hawaiian police were called in in 1938 to violently put down a dockworkers’ strike led by Harry Kamoku.<sup>18</sup>

## Labor’s Tools:

Of course, labor leaders are not without their own methods of putting pressure on capital. Though Hawaii’s organized labor history is full of defeats, members of this committee can look to Hawaii’s past and to the history of

organized labor elsewhere in the United States and around the world as they plan for the upcoming sugar strike. This committee will have a number of tools at its disposal, including but not limited to the following:

- **Confrontation:** Union members can, if necessary, use physical force to achieve their goals, e.g. to prevent strikebreakers from reaching their places of work or to disable industrial machinery. This category of action is not limited to physical violence; it may also include the occupation of company property or other forms of disobedience.
- **Boycotts & Eliciting External Sympathy:** Hawaii does not exist in a vacuum. Union leaders can seek to cancel out capital’s advantages by expanding the scope of the conflict to encompass external actors, including consumers (in this case, of Hawaiian sugar) and national news media, to take their side. This is as much a matter of optics and public relations as it is of on-the-ground tactics; for example, ILWU leaders might frame their struggle as one for equality with mainlanders rather than as one motivated by communist ideology; in doing so, they might hope to provoke backlash against the Big Five among US political leaders and citizens. This approach will, under the present circumstances, require ILWU leaders to widen their national appeal beyond the far left. This approach, then, is likely at odds with a consistent policy of confrontation with business leaders.
- **Morale-Building Techniques:** Strikes can cause a great deal of anxiety for workers

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<sup>18</sup> William J. Puette, *The Hilo Massacre: Hawaii’s Bloody Monday, August 1st, 1938*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Center for Labor Education and Research, 1988



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who may fear for their economic welfare and physical safety and that of their families. Consequently, keeping up morale is vital. Past strikes have organized parades, athletic events, and meals to keep hopes high during strikes.

- **Legal Action:** Labor Unions have become a much more accepted part of the American economy that they were during the 1920s, and with newfound legal recognition comes the power to take legal action. If strike leaders find evidence that business leaders are in violation of federal or territorial laws they may file lawsuits. They should bear in mind, however, that the courts have hardly been friends of labor in American history, and victory is not assured; indeed, defeat may actually set your cause back instead of advancing it.
- **Negotiation:** ultimately, some sort of negotiations to end the strike will be necessary. But these negotiations can take many forms, and their tenor may vary dramatically depending on whether you negotiate from a position of strength or weakness. Knowing when business leaders should be manipulated and when efforts should be made to cultivate their trust will be vital to successful negotiations.

Ultimately labor's task will be a difficult one even if the strike is planned well, and a practically impossible one if the strike is planned poorly. Maintaining solidarity will be the key factor in the success or failure of the strike.

Workers will face steep economic, physical, and psychological costs for standing up against a system designed to exploit them with ruthless efficiency. This means that

keeping workers' morale up and preserving the ILWU's hard-won unity will be particularly important tasks. This committee must also contend with the realities of strikebreaking. We have established that past efforts to strike for better pay and workers' rights in Hawaii have often ended with the disintegration of multi-racial coalitions, especially when business leaders turned to particularly groups to look for strikebreakers.



# CAUSE FOR MEETING

This background guide has thus far provided a substantial, albeit not exhaustive, list of the tools available to committee members as they prepare to launch their strike, as well as of national and regional trends of which they should be aware. Ensuring that the value of this knowledge can be maximized will require committee members to devote a great deal of attention to setting realistic, achievable, and desirable goals. Ultimately, this aspect of the committee is up to its members, but you are advised to look to the demands set during past strikes in Hawaii and elsewhere in the country.

## Questions to Consider

As you write your position papers, consider the following questions as a loose guide for your research and argumentation:

1. What steps can the ILWU take to prevent the failures that have defeated past strikes in Hawaii?
2. How can racial and ethnic tensions be minimized during the strike?
3. What steps should strikers take to promote union morale?
4. How can the ILWU cooperate with other labor unions and external actors?
5. What steps should the ILWU take to promote external sympathy and potentially national or international action against the Hawaiian sugar industry?
6. What concessions should the ILWU seek from the Big Five and other industrial leaders?
7. What strategies should the ILWU employ in seeking to maximize its strength, and under what circumstances?





# COMMITTEE MEMBERS

## Harry Bridges

President of the ILWU since its foundation, Bridges has been among the foremost advocates for the union's expansion in Hawaii. Born in Australia, Bridges emigrated to the United States in 1920 and was naturalized as an American citizen in 1945. Bridges's high-profile association with communist leaders has made him a major target of anti-labor forces, who unsuccessfully sought his deportation between 1939 and 1945.

## Karl Yoneda

The ILWU's and the United States' most prominent Japanese American activists, Yoneda was so influenced early in his career by communist ideals that he changed his first name to emulate Karl Marx. He was briefly imprisoned at the Manzanar internment camp in 1942. Yoneda is a decorated veteran of the Second World War and has a talent for inter-ethnic labor organizing.

## Jack Hall

Hall moved to Honolulu in 1935 and shortly thereafter began to organize dockworkers and, later, truck drivers and plantation workers.<sup>19</sup> Outsiders regard Hall as Bridges' primary rival for the leadership of Hawaii's labor movement, drawing particular attention to Hall's desire to emphasize new member recruitment in the islands (Bridges, on the other hand, is regarded as favoring improving relations with current members over expansion).<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> "Jack Hall Dead; I.L.W.U. Official," *The New York Times*, January 5, 1971. Accessed via New York Times digital archive, January 3, 2019: <https://www.nytimes.com>

<sup>20</sup> Dick Meister, "Jack Hall: On the Right Side of the Fence," *Labor – And a Whole Lot More*, 2010. Accessed

## Ah Quon McElrath

She is a prominent Hawaiian-born activist and social worker particularly well-known for the major role she played in the labor response to the 1946 tsunami in Hilo. McElrath is the child of Chinese-born parents and a prominent force on the left wing of the ILWU, having had her political start as an advocate for communism.<sup>21</sup>

## Frank Thomas

A legendary Californian labor organizer, Frank Thomas was part of the first wave of ILWU organizers dispatched to Hawaii to lay the groundwork for the present campaign. In addition to his now-extensive experience in Hawaii, he has experience in inter-ethnic labor organizing from his days in Northern and Southern California.<sup>22</sup>

## Fred Kinzaburo Makino

Makino is founder and editor-in-chief of the Hawaii Hochi, a Japanese language newspaper in print since 1912. Makino was a major instigator of the 1909 Japanese strike, and after the establishment of his newspaper used it to promote the interest of sugar workers during the 1920 strike. Hoping to minimize anti-Japanese backlash, Makino renamed his paper the Hawaii Herald in 1942 and published

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February 1, 2019: <https://libraries.ucsd.edu/farmworker-movement/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/033-JACK-HALL-ON-THE-RIGHT-SIDE-OF-THE-FENCE.pdf>

<sup>21</sup>Judy Yung, Gordon H. Chang, and H. Mark Lai, *Chinese American Voices: From the Gold Rush to the Present* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006, 225-250

<sup>22</sup> Moon-Kie Jung, *Reworking Race: The Making of Hawaii's Labor Movement*, 143



# COMMITTEE MEMBERS

pro-American content. Nevertheless, the Hawaii Herald remains one of the archipelago's most influential newspapers.<sup>23</sup>

## Keiho Soga

One of Hawaii's best-known journalists, Soga is the founder and editor-in-chief of Nippu Jiji, which together with the Hawaii Hochi / Hawaii Herald is among Hawaii's most prominent Japanese-language newspapers. Soga used his power as the head of a newspaper to advocate for workers' interests before the war, but made concessions to Hawaii's military government during the war to prevent the closure of his newspaper. This did not stop the US government from interning him until 1945.<sup>24</sup>

## Harry Kamoku

Kamoku was the leader of the Hilo Longshoremen in the 1930s and led their merger with the ILWU. Kamoku is best known for his leadership of several strikes in the late 1930s, one of which, in 1938, was brutally suppressed by the territorial police.<sup>25</sup>

## Louis Goldblatt

The long-serving ILWU Secretary-Treasurer led the ILWU's media campaign against Japanese Internment during the Second World War. Along with Harry Bridges, he has been

the major leader of ILWU expansion into Hawaii, and has played a particularly prominent role in assuaging racial tensions within the organization.<sup>26</sup>

## J.B. Fernandez

A Democrat in the Territorial Senate, Fernandez was one of the first pro-labor candidates – and is certainly the most prominent – elected to higher office in Hawaii. He first introduced the Hawaii Employment Relations Act or “Little Wagner Act” in 1939 and was instrumental in its passage at the end of the Second World War.<sup>27</sup>

## John Burns

Appointed in 1941 as the leader of the Honolulu Police Department's Espionage Bureau, Burns used his office to build connections in the Japanese community and has since become a key figure in the Hawaiian Democratic Party, leading a makeshift coalition of Japanese American war veterans and Democratic Party operatives. Less radical than Bridges or Hall, Burns may prove especially useful because of his government and veteran connections.<sup>28</sup>

## Antonio Fagel

A former close associate of Pablo Manlapit, the Filipino labor leader who was permanent-

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23 “About the Herald,” *The Hawaii Herald*, 2019. Accessed January 15, 2019: <https://www.thehawaiiherald.com/about/>

24 Keiho Soga, *Life Behind Barbed Wire: The World War II Internment Memoirs of a Hawai'i Issei*. Honolulu; University of Hawaii Press, 2008

25 “Harry Kamoku,” *ILWU Local 142* (2016), accessed February 1, 2019: <http://ilwulocal142.org/blog/harry-kamoku/>

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26 “Oral History of Lou Goldblatt,” *International Longshoremen and Warehouse Union*, May 18, 2004, accessed January 2, 2019: <https://www.ilwu.org/oral-history-of-lou-goldblatt/>

27 Moon-Kie Jung, 143

28 “John Burns,” *Densho Encyclopedia*, 2019, accessed January 30, 2019: [http://encyclopedia.densho.org/John\\_Burns/](http://encyclopedia.densho.org/John_Burns/)



# COMMITTEE MEMBERS

ly expelled from Hawaii in the 1930s, Fagel is one of the most prominent Filipino labor leaders in Hawaii. In the 1930s he played a particularly active role in organizing workers in Maui, and is one of the most experienced veterans of the Hawaiian labor movement.<sup>29</sup>

## *Cirilo Sinfuego*

Part of the wave of sakada Filipino workers brought to Hawaii by the Big Five as part of an effort to head off the approaching strike, Coloma was quickly organized by the ILWU and, for the purposes of this committee, acts as the primary representative of that community in the ILWU's Hawaiian leadership.<sup>30</sup>

## *Manuel Olivieri Sanchez*

Born in Puerto Rico, Olivieri Sanchez led the legal struggle for American citizenship for Hawaii's small but influential Puerto Rican community in the early 20th century. A talented civil rights activist with a great deal of legal experience, he should be regarded for the purposes of this committee as the primary representative of the Hawaiian Puerto Rican community.<sup>31</sup>

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29 Gary Okihiro, *American History Unbound: Asians and Pacific Islanders* Berkley: University of California Press, 2015, 257

30 Elizabeth Ayson, "Labor Unions: Hard-won Successes, Uncertain Futures," *Fil-Am Voice*, September 19, 2017, accessed January 30, 2019: <http://filamvoicemaui.com/labor-unions/>

31 George Cooper and Gavan Daws, *Land and Power in Hawaii: The Democratic Years*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990.



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# Brown University Crisis Simulation



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