

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)

"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"



M.E.B.A. TELEX TIMES

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MARITIME, FARM INTERESTS ARGUE FOR FOOD AID AT HOUSE HEARING

The maritime and farming communities got their say on Wednesday after witnesses at a House Agriculture Committee hearing discussed the impact of the PL-480 Food for Peace program and the damage that would occur if it were cut from existence. The President's Budget proposal recommends "zeroing out" the humanitarian aid program which provides another source of cargoes for U.S.-flag ships. However, the President's disdain for the program was not shared by witnesses or the Congressional Members in a packed hearing room on Wednesday morning.

M.E.B.A.'s views were represented on the witness panel by SIU Political and Legislative Director Brian Schoeneman who spoke on behalf of USA Maritime. USA Maritime is a coalition of maritime unions, associations and shipping companies – including the M.E.B.A. and AMC – fighting for the U.S. Merchant Marine.

Food for Peace has proven to be the most successful international food aid program in the world providing transparency and reliability while lending crucial support to vital U.S. agriculture and maritime jobs. It has also been an advantage for international relations. The cargoes that the program provides are vital in maintaining the U.S.-flag fleet that is desperately needed by our country in times of war and national emergency.

However, through the years some opponents have called for reform of the PL-480 program by eliminating the U.S.-flag cargo preference component and transforming it into more of a cash-based system.

The drastic reduction of cargoes for U.S.-flag shipping over the past decade alongside the lowering of the food aid cargo preference level from 75% to 50% in 2012 has helped facilitate a precipitous reduction in the internationally-trading U.S.-flag fleet as ships continue to flag out from the Stars and Stripes. The subsequent erosion of the mariner pool will continue to complicate the nation's ability to fulfill DOD sealift requirements. "Without them, we cannot defend this country," Schoeneman said. "It's that simple."

Schoeneman noted that as Members of Congress begin to consider the next Farm Bill, "we urge the House Agriculture Committee to ignore the siren calls for "greater flexibility" from the so-called "food aid reform advocates" who would like to fundamentally change our international food aid programs

from what they are today – reliable, time-tested, and transparent U.S. commodity donation programs – into yet more foreign cash giveaway programs that the American people do not support and will not continue to fund.”

Farm advocates on the panel such as Ron Suppes, a wheat producer there on behalf of U.S. Wheat Associates, also praised Food Aid saying the program makes a significant impact on U.S. farmers and gives them something to be proud of. “These people aren’t looking for handouts,” he said. “They’re looking to make a better life for themselves.”

Michigan State’s Dr. Thomas Jayne said that underdeveloped and impoverished nations will come back as regular customers of American imports once they become sustainable for trade, helping to bring in revenue for the country. He also sees Food Aid as a way to promote world peace along with projecting a ‘soft sense of power.’ “[Agricultural development] could be money well spent from the standpoint of peace and stability and averting costs the U.S. might need to incur,” he said.

Margaret Schuler, representing World Vision, urged the Committee to reject the Administration’s budget proposal and fund Food for Peace and other important programs alleviating the suffering in needy nations. “Proposals to eliminate funding for these critical accounts will have life and death consequences for the poorest people in the world,” Schuler said. “It will threaten America’s own safety in the process.”

The hearing is available on YouTube at this link: www.youtube.com/watch?v=yjRXIWF5BQs

REPRESENTATIVE FOR BOSTON HALL SOUGHT

Current Boston Union hall Representative Pete Tsarides is retiring in September after three productive years in that post. On behalf of the membership, we’d like to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to Pete for his years of hard work and dedication to the Union.

M.E.B.A. is accepting resumes from an energetic and supportive member interested in serving as the next Representative in our Boston Union hall. This is a rare and exceptional opportunity available only to a member in good standing. The official start date will be September 15.

Those who wish to be considered for this position should send a cover letter and résumé to Atlantic Coast Vice President Jason Callahan jcallahan@mebaunion.org and Secretary Treasurer Bill Van Loo at bvanloo@mebaunion.org.

PASS PREDICTS TURBULENCE FOR AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL PRIVATIZATION

The President of M.E.B.A. affiliate PASS – the Professional Aviation Safety Specialists (AFL-CIO) is not sold on a White House proposal to privatize the air traffic control system and called it a “risky and unnecessary step.”

PASS National President Mike Perrone issued a statement this week on behalf of his 11,000 members opposing a Trump proposal to transfer Federal Aviation Administration responsibilities (over 30,000 employees) to a private nonprofit organization.

“It is unfathomable to consider gambling with the future and safety of our air traffic control system by putting it into the hands of an organization that diminishes the voice of the American citizens who will be most affected by it,” Perrone noted. “The FAA employees represented by PASS ensure that

this country's National Airspace System is operating safely and efficiently every day. Stripping air traffic control from the federal government will only introduce uncertainty and risk."

Perrone noted that privatization is a heavy-handed approach for a problem that is being addressed through various ongoing programs. "Breaking apart the system to establish a monopoly will take the focus off the substantial progress already being made," he said. "This would slow down enhancements and possibly compromise safety to fix a system that's not broken."

He noted that PASS is part of a coalition of labor and management groups who oppose privatization including American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) and the American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees (AFSCME) among others. Another one of the FAA unions, the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA), held off on endorsing or condemning the proposal until they can evaluate the specifics. NATCA has advocated for reform of the air traffic control system and is insistent that there must be a stable, predictable funding stream for the system – something that is part of the White House plan.

Fearing that privatization and the White House proposal might lead to a system where prioritization would be lowered for air service in smaller and rural areas, House Democrats forwarded their own plan to restructure FAA and protect the funding stream from an uncertain appropriations process. While that bill has gained many Democratic co-sponsors and could satiate some of the concerns of the FAA unions, it is unlikely to make much headway in a GOP-dominated Congress.

But PASS remains a player in the process and pledges to be intensely involved, working with both sides of the aisle, to ward off the "misguided [Trump] proposal from coming to fruition."

MIDDLE EAST VOLATILITY AFFECTING TRADE ROUTES

Shipping companies are ironing out trade route alternatives to deal with the latest Mideast volatility centering on Qatar. Neighboring countries are taking a hardline stance with Qatar over that country's tolerance of radical elements undermining worldwide security. The subsequent trade restrictions imposed by Saudi Arabia and others is throwing a wrench into 'business as usual' for shipping companies such as Maersk Line. Maersk announced it has stopped accepting cargo between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The company said that other Middle East ports aren't accepting cargo coming from Qatari ports including transshipment cargo. Maersk was working on alternative solutions to address the disruptions until the countries involved iron out the situation with a diplomatic solution.

INTERLAKE MOVING MUSTANG PELLETS

The 1,004-foot M.E.B.A.-crewed M/V JAMES R. BARKER, managed by Interlake Steamship, has begun hauling a new specialized cargo: 60,000 tons of Mustang superflux pellets – the first shipment of its kind since the new pellet production began at Cliffs Natural Resources Inc.'s United Taconite mine last month. The specialized Mustang pellets, which will be used for the automotive industry and other markets, contain a higher level of calcium added to dolomite and limestone than the standard taconite pellets. Production of Mustang pellets began in May, after Cliffs invested \$75 million at its Minnesota operation to support the production with a new storage facility, a limestone crusher, conveyors and rail infrastructure. "We are proud to continue our role in providing best-in-class marine transportation of raw materials from the Head of the Lakes to ArcelorMittal on behalf of Cliffs," said Brendan O'Connor, Interlake's V.P. of Marketing and Marine Traffic.

SPACE AVAILABLE FOR AUGUST FAST RESCUE BOAT REFRESHER COURSE

Any member currently holding a Fast Rescue Boat endorsement on their USCG license and needing to maintain it for their job will need to take the Fast Rescue Boat Refresher course. Space is still available for the August 14–16 class. Please note when making travel arrangements that this is only a three-day course. Applications may be sent via the CMES website, fax (410) 822-7220, or email to applications@mebaschool.org

CHIEF ENGINEERS, 1st A/Es SOUGHT FOR OSG

OSG is looking for Chief Engineers and 1st Assistant Engineers who have prior time/experience in those positions. The positions also require Tankerman PIC or Tankerman Engineer. Contact Gulf Coast V.P. Erin Bertram at the Houston Union hall (713-923-9424) for additional info and details.

SIGN UP FOR M.E.B.A. VACATION PLAN DIRECT DEPOSIT

Designed for convenience, M.E.B.A. members can help themselves by taking advantage of the Vacation Plan Direct Deposit that will help save them time and ease Plans processing costs. Authorization forms are available from the Plans Office, Plans Outport Offices and at the Plans' website – www.mebaplans.org (Forms, Vacation). Complete details are available on the Plans' site as well. Contact (800) 811-6322 or vacation@mebaplans.org for more info.

CLEVELAND HALL WILL HOST JULY INFORMATIONAL MEETING

Members in the Cleveland area should plan on attending the July 7 informational membership meeting at the hall, the second such meeting in the last few months. Atlantic Coast V.P. Jason Callahan will be back in town on that Friday and will chair. The meeting held in April attracted a good gathering and produced lively and productive discussion. The July meeting will kick off at 12:30 on that day so plan to attend if possible. The Cleveland, OH hall address is 1250 Old River Rd. on the 3rd Floor.

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETINGS

Monday, July 3 – Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300;

Tuesday, July 4 – **Independence Day – Halls Closed**

Wednesday, July 5 – CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315;

Thursday, July 6 – L.A.@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Oakland@1230; Tampa@1300;

Friday, July 7 - Honolulu@1100.

Informational Meeting in Cleveland – Friday, July 7@1230.

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The M.E.B.A. is the nation's oldest maritime labor union, established in 1875. M.E.B.A.'s expertise and proven track record of readiness, safety, and loyalty in answering America's call to action in times of both peace and war is unrivaled in the world. M.E.B.A. HQ – Phone: (202) 638-5355; mebahq@mebaunion.org. Visit us on Facebook. For publication and related inquiries contact: Marco Cannistraro, M.E.B.A. Special Projects & Communications – marco@mebaunion.org