



# Service Employees International Union, Local 503

Oregon Public Employees Union, AFL-CIO, CLC

October 28, 2004

## TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I am writing this letter in support of Ian Ruskin's one-man show "From Wharf Rats to Lords of the Docks" celebrating the life of Harry Bridges. Ian Ruskin presented this play at the SEIU Local 503/OPEU 2003 Stewards' Conference to an audience of over 300 rank-and-file leaders. The piece was compelling; we all became members of the ILWU and personal friends of Harry Bridges by the end of the play. Many of our members ranked the performance as the highlight of the two-day conference.

However, the importance this play was more than entertainment. Harry's story has important lessons for us today. Our members are hungry to know their history and eager to learn from the men and women who built our movement. Unfortunately, there are few opportunities available to do so. Labor's story is rarely told. This fact makes Ruskin's work all the more valuable. He has the skill to bring history to life, make it fun and show the connections we need for today, especially the understanding that we are part of the continuum. His work inspires us to discover our own history and acknowledge our heroes.

I would recommend Ian Ruskin's work to any audience, but it is uniquely relevant to labor. We are lucky to have a performer of his caliber telling our stories, keeping our past alive and help us preserve our living history.

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