



# The DISPATCHER

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## Strike/Story!, the Harry Bridges play

photos by Slobodan Dimitrov

A new play about the life of Harry Bridges debuted to an overwhelmingly positive reception at the ILWU Convention in April.

The play, titled "Strike/story!", was financed and developed by the Harry Bridges Institute for International Education and Organization. The hour-long performance was written using the actual words of Bridges and others taken from personal interviews, court transcripts, audio and written text and archival documents provided by the ILWU Library.

The play covered the days of the shape-up and Blue Book unions, the '34 strike, the trials of Bridges, and the development of an interracial union. It was presented in the form of a stage reading by professional actors at the Hilton in Los Angeles. The actors included Ian Ruskin as Bridges (complete with Aussie accent), and noted actor John Randolph as a narrator.

Of the General Strike: "I stopped in the middle of an intersection and listened. The city was literally holding its breath. Nothing moved. Labor had withdrawn its hand and everything came to a halt."

From Harry: "First of all, the strike was about power. We showed the world that when working people get together and stick together there's little they can't do. Second, it was about democracy. We said that the rank and file had the right to decide, and if you give them the facts, they'd make the right decision. Finally it was about how people treat each other. We forced the employers to treat us as equals...I don't know of any way for working people to win basic economic justice and dignity except by being organized into a solid, democratic union."

Delegates gave the performance a long and rousing standing ovation, and many stayed afterward to talk with the actors and actresses, greeting them like old friends.

The play was produced by Susan Franklin Tanner, written by Rob Sullivan, directed by Heidi Helen Davis. Production manager was Kathy Schutzer. The institute also thanked ILWU Librarian Gene Vrana, the Southern California Library for Social Studies, Prof. Robert Cherney, and others who shared stories and made the play possible.

The institute plans to have videotaped copies of the play available in June. For more information, contact the institute at 1188 Franklin St., Suite 203, San Francisco, CA 94109, or phone (415) 563-2957.



The cast of "Strike/story!": from left, Louis Dezseran, John Randolph, Ellen Geer, Sumi Haru, Ian Ruskin (who played Bridges), William Marshall and Kenneth Tigar.