

Railroad Workers & Oil Refinery Strikers - Natural Allies in the Struggle

At the recent conferences sponsored by Railroad Workers United (see front page and Pages 4-5 of this issue of *The Highball*), striking refinery workers spoke about their struggle. In Richmond, nearly a dozen refinery workers - many of them on strike at the Shell Refinery in nearby Martinez, CA - attended the conference. Their testimony to the company's imposed "speed-up conditions", short staffing, forced overtime, harsh attendance policies, safety shortcutting and chronic fatigue would mirror what railroad workers had to say throughout the conference.

And at the Olympia conference a week later, United Steelworkers of America (USW) Local #12-591 President Steve Garey would confirm the same scenario during his lunchtime address to the conference. Garey, whose local represents striking oil refinery workers at Tesoro in Anacortes, WA talked of the dangerous working conditions that he and his co-workers have been exposed to over the years, and the fatalities that far too

many have suffered at the plant.

In addition to pointing out the similarity in working conditions that railroad workers face, Garey pointed to the need for a labor - community alliance around the oil industry, similar to the one needed by railroad workers. The local union president stated that "there are countless ways that refinery workers and the community can work together", including issues of worker safety, enforcing environmental regulations, and more. "Let's agree to work together on issues that we can agree upon."

Pointing to what is apparently a pattern endemic to the modern American workplace, other workers present —including power plant workers, longshoremen, and public workers — would echo these experiences throughout the course of both the California and Washington conferences.

Stay tuned for future updates and calls to solidarity action.