Seafarers are answering the call to action following the devastation brought to the Philippines by Typhoon Haiyan.

With thousands dead, millions displaced and infrastructure in many places destroyed, the need for relief has been enormous. Heeding that call, the SIU, its members and its international partners stepped up to do their part in helping the country recover from the second-deadliest storm in history.

In the days following the storm, which made landfall Nov. 8, several SIU-crewed ships were activated and dispatched to the region to provide emergency supplies, medical services and housing. Stateside, the SIU activated and began soliciting donations for the Seafarers Disaster Relief Fund (SDRF) to help financially with what is expected to be a daunting recovery. Individual members, meanwhile, pitched in on a personal basis, with at least two crews holding a relief fundraiser for victims of the storm.

The SIU also teamed with the affiliated International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF) and other international partners to provide further relief and ensure the donated funds make their way to mariners and their families. When it came to the at-sea relief effort, several SIU-crewed ships sailed with the U.S. Navy’s George Washington Carrier Strike Group (GWSG) – an assembly of vessels sent to support the Third Marine Expeditionary Brigade in assisting the Philippine government. The SIU ships participating included the USNS Bowditch, the USNS Charles Drew and the Emory S. Land. The Bowditch is operated by Maersk Line, Limited, while the latter two vessels are part of the SIU Government Services Division fleet.

“We have the ships conducting a variety of missions,” said Rear Adm. Mark Montgomery, who serves as GWSG commander. “The USNS Bowditch is surveying water conditions in the Leyte Gulf. USNS Charles Drew and USS Lassen have helicopters and supplies that are bringing emergency supplies into Tacloban, one of the worst-hit areas. Emory S. Land also provides good ship-to-shore hotel services to Tacloban.”

The SIU-crewed hospital ship USNS Mercy was also activated for service in the aftermath of the storm. Berthed in San Diego, the Mercy has already spent time working in the area during a mission in 2012.

“Because of the long-standing partnership between the two nations, the U.S., working through the Philippine government, is able to rapidly respond with critically needed capabilities and supplies in times of crisis,” read a news release issued by the U.S. Navy regarding the activation of the Mercy.

Amid all of this, the SIU crews of the USNS 2nd Lt. John Paul Bobo (operated by Maersk) and USNS Pililaau (operated by AMOIA) also made the trip to the Philippines for disaster relief.

On the financial front, the SIU’s decision to activate the SDRF allowed those who weren’t traveling to the region to do their part in the relief effort. Designed to aid devastated mariners and their families, the fund is activated following disasters around the world and has helped thousands of people get back on their feet.

The crew aboard one SIU vessel – the Maersk-operated USNS Henson – took it upon themselves to start raising money immediately. AB David Arcilla said the crew of the Henson knew right away they wanted to help victims of the storm: “The real reward for us is being able to alleviate some of the suffering and comfort others in their time of need,” Arcilla said.

The generosity was greatly appreciated. In a heartfelt message to the SIU and its members, Dr. Conrad Oca, president of the Associated Marine Officers’ and Seamen’s Union of the Philippines, said he was touched by the “genuine concern for our less fortunate brothers and sisters who have become helpless victims” of the storm. “SIUNA’s donation will certainly go a long way towards helping our needy and suffering countrymen in Central Philippines,” Oca said, speaking not only of the Henson effort but also that involving the SDRF. “The kindness and concern you have shown are very reassuring for our people and speaks well of the convictions and principles you stand for.”

The SIU and the U.S. Merchant Marine have a long history of responding to such disasters. From statewide emergencies like Superstorm Sandy and Hurricane Katrina, to international disasters like the Japanese tsunami and the current devastation of Typhoon Haiyan, SIU crews have helped with recovery all over the world.

In announcing the pay increase, NOAA Director of Marine Operations Eric Berkowitz described raising mariner wages as a “top priority” of NOAA and its leadership.

This news comes following a difficult period of time for federal workers throughout the country. Since 2010, workers have been under a government-wide pay freeze that kept their wages stagnant, while budget cuts and other reductions have led to workers being forced to take unpaid furlough days. A modest increase in federal wages was proposed by President Barack Obama in August.

A provision that ensured the increase would happen was attached to the October bill that reopened the federal government after it was shut down for two weeks during a budget impasse between Congress and the administration.

These are confusing and uncertain financial times for federal workers. Fresh off a 16-day government shutdown during which millions didn’t know when their next paycheck would arrive, federal workers have also had to deal with forced unpaid furlough days and a pay freeze for the majority of the workforce that is approaching its fourth year.

As Congress and the administration continue to spar over budget issues, it is likely this uncertainty will remain. That means there’s also a good chance that federal workers could face another round of furlough-induced budget cuts and the possibility of yet another government shutdown if Washington continues to be mired in partisan gridlock.

But just because there’s uncertainty, it doesn’t mean there’s nothing workers can do to plan and prepare.

In a piece published by Government Executive, Tammy Flanagan, senior benefits director for the National Institute of Transition Planning, wrote about how workers can navigate the current financial waters. Her organization, cont...
Not long after Typhoon Haiyan devastated much of the Philippines, Seafarers decided to do its share in such situations. We jumped into action, lending assistance both on the job and as volunteers.

As of this writing in mid-November, at least a half-dozen SIU-cruised ships had mobilized for the relief mission, both from the private sector and from our Government Services Division. We have activated our Seafarers Disaster Relief Fund (SDRF) and are working with our international maritime labor partners to make sure the donations specifically go to mariners and their families affected by the Typhoon Haiyan. It’s tough to even comprehend such a tragedy, and it’s a reminder that we can’t take tomorrow for granted.

It also didn’t just fall from the sky. We have to climb a gangway, and (heaven knows) a stack of credentials just to be able to work. That may have worked a century ago. In this day and age, it takes sophisticated training and calling that person a mariner. That’s why I enjoy getting down to the docks. That’s why I enjoy getting on the ships. My staff looks at me and I get out there and I’m talking to these young folks that are on the docks and on the ships, and it just excites me, because they’re proud of what they’re doing. And I couldn’t be prouder of them, because of the professionals they are. The patrons that they are, the sacrifices that they and their families are making on a day-to-day basis to meet the mission—- the mission to continue to have a vibrant maritime industry.

Fraser pointed out that more than 90 percent of the goods moved “into theater” go by sea.

The top officers at the U.S. Transportation Command (USTRANSCOM) and U.S. Military Sealift Command (MSC) delivered powerful remarks at the SIU-affiliated Maritime Trades Department (MTD) convention, stressing the enormous value of the U.S. Merchant Marine.

Both men received standing ovations as they candidly expressed appreciation for civilian mariners, their unions and American-flag vessel operators. Both also called for an effective national maritime strategy. Describing MTD officials and the members of MTD-affiliated unions as “tremendous partners,” Fraser added, “TRANSCOM is greatly appreciate of what you do, and we couldn’t do our job without you.”

Our Seafarers are able to harness strength far beyond their numbers. The Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) are better off using the adrenaline to take a closer look at their respective finances.

Seafarers International Union Directory
Michael Sacco, President
Augustin Tellez, Executive Vice President
David Heinold, Secretary-Treasurer
George T ef r i e k, Vice President Contracts
Kornell Mccargue, Vice President Government Services
Chester Whobler, Acting Vice President Government Services

Dealing With a Climate of Furloughs and Shutdowns

Flanagan pointed out that this was the sixteenth government shutdown in the past 37 years. It happens. And while it’s unsettling, individuals are better off using the adrenaline to take a closer look at their respective finances.

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You’re the Backbone of Our Success

USTRANSCOM, MSC Commanders Stress Partnerships

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Headed by SIU President Michael Sacco, the MTD is a constitutionally mandated department of the AFL-CIO with 21 port maritime councils and 21 affiliated unions representing more than 5 million mariners. It serves as yet another example of how SIU federal mariners are able to harness strength far beyond their numbers.

Gen. William Fraser, commander of USTRANSCOM, and Rear Adm. Thomas “T.K.” Shannon, commander of MSC, also emphasized that they are going to bat for the maritime industry during these times of severe budget cuts.

Fraser addressed the convention in Los Angeles on Sept. 6, while Shannon delivered his remarks one day earlier. Both men received standing ovations as they candidly expressed appreciation for civilian mariners, their unions and American-flag vessel operators. Both also called for an effective national maritime strategy.

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He said rank-and-file mariners and dockworkers “really make us successful. They make us who we are and allow us to do the things that have been talked about, whether responding to a crisis, responding to humanitarian assistance or disaster relief.”

Even if it’s here in the States, like Hurricane Sandy, or abroad in other opportunities that we’ve had to decrease human suffering and save lives, you’ve always responded in an outstanding manner and I can’t thank you enough for that…. Nothing moves without you and those that you represent.”

Seafarers International

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Brant Ahern, editor (ahern@siufn.org)

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Fraser pointed out that more than 90 percent of the goods moved “into theater” go by sea.

“In the maritime industry, you’re the backbone of our ability to project our power,” he continued. “It has been amazing to me as I’ve gotten out there and visited a lot of places, because there are a lot of ships at sea. On any average day, we’ve got about 35 of them that are loading, unloading or at sea sailing somewhere with our stuff on it. And that’s very, very important to us in order to accomplish our job.”

Turning to the agency’s civilian workforce, he said the fact that those personnel haven’t had a wage increase or any bonuses in three years “is unacceptable, and then they wound up being furloughed. That’s breaking faith with people, and that’s why I’m reaching out to other areas to make sure that others hear our story.”

Fraser said that because the partnership between the military and the commercial maritime industry has been so successful, it is taken for granted by some who don’t understand the operations. For example, he cited the drawdowns in Iraq and Afghanistan: “If not for our commercial partners being able to turn to in a timely manner to get the job done, we would not have been successful…. Our commercial partners are the key to our success. They really are. You’re the backbone of our success.”

He concluded, “The Department of Defense couldn’t do our job without the superb relationship we have with (the industry). That’s why I enjoy getting down to the docks. That’s why I enjoy getting on the ships. My staff looks at me and I get out there and I’m talking to these young folks that are on the docks and on the ships, and it just excites me, because they’re proud of what they’re doing. And I couldn’t be prouder of them, because of the professionals they are but also the patriots that they are, the sacrifices that they and their families are making on a day-to-day basis to meet the mission—- the mission to continue to have a vibrant maritime industry.”

Shannon similarly said the maritime industry “is in a bit of a crisis. I, for one, am not going to sit on a shelf and do nothing about it. I look forward to partnering with every element of the maritime industry to help leave it in a better place after I’ve been in this job for two or three years.”

He said he appreciated the fact that many of the labor officials attending the convention came up through the ranks, just as he has done. He also comes

Continued on Page 3

Dealing With a Climate of Furloughs and Shutdowns

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Congressmen Tout Benefits of Unions, Fight Back Against Critics

Negatives reactions to unions are especially baffling given the real and tangible benefits of union membership are taken into consideration. Study after study show that unions and increased union membership not only benefit workers, but the economy as a whole. Year after year, government data finds union members earn significantly more and receive much better benefits than those in non-union counterparts. According to a 2012 report by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 77 percent of union workers had guaranteed pension plans (compared to 17 percent for non-union workers), and 84 percent had paid sick leave time (compared to 62 percent of non-union workers.) The positive aspects of union jobs also benefit the nation’s entire economy, as workers have more money to spend and invest, resulting in an increase in overall employment and a rise in tax revenue for the government. Richmond said workers and the labor movement needed to make sure the public knows about these benefits so they can realize just how misleading and destructive the attacks on unions and the labor movement are.

“We have to make sure that we don’t let the conversa- tion diverge into areas where it just doesn’t make logical sense,” Richmond said. “And the more we do that, the more I think the labor movement will remind America of its obligation that the right to prosperity is one of our rights we take great pride in.”

Over the past few decades, however, anti-worker in- stitutions have waged well-funded attacks against unions and the labor movement. As they’ve attempted to convince workers that better wages and benefits are not in their interests, union membership has decreased and economic inequality has skyrocketed.

In short, the decrease in union membership has led to a greater number of workers producing more and earning less. Again according to government reports, from 1980 to 2008, productivity increased by 75 percent while income only increased by 22.6 percent. CEO pay, however, in- creased dramatically during that same period. Thirty years ago, the average CEO earned 42 times the aver- age worker’s pay. Today, CEOs earn approximately 380 times the average worker’s pay.

It wasn’t always this way. During the postwar pe- riod of the 1940s through the 1970s, union membership expanded greatly and the median household income increased by nearly 100 percent. If union membership increased from 1980 to present day like it did during the post-war years, workers would be earning 43 percent more than they are today. Unfortunately, that hasn’t been the case, as the anti-worker attacks paint unions, work- ers and the progressive movement in general as harmful. Thompson called on the movement to aggressively reject those slurs and step up the fight for unions and middle class fairness.

“Don’t let anybody try to convince you that as a member of organized labor you don’t love this country,” Thompson said. “It’s the greatest country in the world. We’re going to have to work as hard as we can to protect it.”

Another problem with anti-union attacks is the way in which opponents of labor try to turn worker against worker.

Many such attacks accuse union workers of earning more in wages and benefits than they “deserve,” lead- ing some unrepresentative employees to resent the fact that their wages are stagnant and their benefits are di- minishing. This is by design, as those funding anti-union campaigns are often the corporations and entities that are largely responsible for non-union workers’ stagnant wages and poor benefits in the first place. By convinc- ing unrepresented workers that union members “make too much,” these corporations distract workers and keep them from realizing the truth: Union workers don’t earn too much, non-union workers just aren’t earning enough.

Addressing those motivations, Thompson had a sim- ple explanation for anti-union sentiments among some workers.

“Don’t let them put you down. They’re a little jeal- ous,” Thompson said. “You know why? Because at the end of the day, you’ve done a good job, you’ve been paid a decent wage, and at the end of your working career you’ve got something called benefits.”

Fraser, Shannon Discuss Protecting Maritime Funding

Continued from Page 1

from a union family — his mother and two brothers all be- longed to unions.

“It’s my privilege to be here and look at maritime part- ners,” he stated. “In my opinion, we defend America together. Now, because I wear a uniform I get the credit. We drive the aircraft carriers. We fly the jets. We take submarines down to the depths of the ocean. We’ve got the Tomahawk shooters out there in the eastern Mediterranean right now poised for action if called on. That’s the stuff that Anderson Cooper and Wolf Blitzer cover, and so the uniform folks get it.

“But it is not lost on me that somebody’s moving strategic fuel stocks around the world,” he continued. “Somebody’s moving all kinds of defense cargo and ammunition around the planet. Somebody’s sitting on a prepositioning ship right now with war reserve matériel ready to weigh anchor and take it wherever the president needs it. And that’s you and the members you represent, and for that I offer you my utmost respect. The whole thing comes to a grinding halt without the United States Merchant Marine supporting what the uniform folks like me do.

He related a story from 1980, when he sailed as a cadet on the SIU-affiliated Sea-Land Seattle. Shannon said he never forgot the practical advice given to him by a seasoned AB who, in addition to teaching valuable lessons in seamanship, encouraged him (in colorful terms) to take advantage of promi- nent career opportunities.

“Here we are 33 years later, and it’s my honor to serve as Commander of Military Seafair Command, the largest em- ployer of mariners in the United States of America,” he said. Evaluating today’s industry, the admiral said in some ways it’s “both the best and worst of times.”

“In the worst category, sequestration (automatic federal spending cuts) is putting immense downward pressure on our budgets,” he said. “And it’s not only the loss of funding, but it’s the speed and velocity with which it is happening. It’s not like we could plan for this over a 5- or 10-year period, and so it is forcing us to make some very hard choices in a very short time. With the gridlock in our Congress, I don’t see that it’s going to change for the foreseeable future.”

On the positive side, he said that after assuming command of MSC earlier this year, “I know why the Defense Depart- ment and many other federal agencies look to us to provide a service, and it’s not just internal MSC staff. It’s our partners like you who I think are the best in the world. Mariners, other maritime trades, you’re the reason why I get up and enjoy going to work in the morning.”

He explained why he believes the Navy will be more im- portant than ever in the years ahead, and also pointed to new- build programs involving the joint high-speed vessels and mobile landing platforms as reasons for optimism. He also- cited overwhelmingly positive performances and feedback involving military-civilian hybrid crews on three Seafooders- vessels.

Shannon added, “Nothing that Defense does, happens without you. This is a partnership we value… When the president rings the bell and says it’s time to go, you’re the ones that respond. And I believe our country owes you a debt of gratitude for that.”

He reinforced MSC’s support for the Jones Act “and any other legislative effort to strengthen maritime shipping and shipbuilding… It’s my honor to serve with you.”
Delivering Since 1938
SIU Commemorates 75 Years Of Service to Members, Nation

Although we started observing our 75th anniversary a little early — beginning with last year’s Seafarers International Union of North America convention — Oct. 14 was in fact the actual date on which, in 1938, the old American Federation of Labor presented our charter. In some ways, it seems fitting that the true anniversary happens at a time when our union and many allies throughout maritime labor are fighting to preserve and revitalize the U.S. Merchant Marine. It is not hyperbole to say the industry is under severe and perhaps even unprecedented attack.

But, nothing about American maritime labor’s history has been easy. As SIU President Michael Sacco has said more than once, “No one is going to give us anything.” It has always been that way for mariners, including long before the SIU got started.

We haven’t shied from that challenge and are continuing to fight for everything it takes to stand up not just for our union but also for an often overlooked industry that is so vital to national and economic security. The headline to this piece is our anniversary theme, and it sums up the service of Seafarers past and present. Not to be overlooked in those 75 years is the service of our members who sailed in harm’s way to support our troops — especially the 1,235 Seafarers who lost their lives in World War II.

SIU members also stepped up as part of the nation’s fourth arm of defense in every conflict since then, reliably answering the call and delivering the goods from Korea to Vietnam to the first Persian Gulf War, through Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. They have also mobilized with equal dependability and professionalism during numerous humanitarian missions around the world.

From helping the recovery efforts following Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy, to aiding in the aftermath of devastating storms like in Japan and the Philippines, SIU members continue to play a role in events around the world.

An eight-minute video celebrating the union’s anniversary is now available for free on the SIU website at www.seafarers.org/gallery/SIU75thAnniversary.asp. For an online timeline of SIU history, check out the November 2013 Seafarers Log at www.seafarers.org.

Union Participates in March on Washington

SIU trainees were among the tens of thousands of people who converged on the National Mall near the Lincoln Memorial Aug. 24 to support a rally in observance of the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington.

Clad in blue SIU T-shirts and khaki shorts, the trainees from the union-affiliated Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education departed the school in Piney Point, Md. via bus at 6 a.m. They arrived at the RFK Stadium parking lot, where buses were staged shortly after 8 a.m. From there, they marched about one mile to the National Armory Metro entrance where they boarded the train for the Smithsonian stop.

After arriving at their destination, they disembarked and marched another two miles to the grounds of the mall. During their trek, they patiently weaved in and out of islands of fellow rally goers, all the while representing themselves, the SIU and its affiliated unions in a fashion that would make their future union brothers and sisters proud.

Once on site, they joined in with the masses and answered the call of support for the rally.

Organized by the Rev. Al Sharpton and Martin Luther King III, the event attracted throngs of leaders and members of organizations and groups representing civil rights, organized labor, housing, media, education and politics. Sharpton is president and founder of National Action Network (NAN), and King is the eldest son of the late Coretta and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He is also president of Realizing the Dream, a non-profit created to carry on the civil rights work of the King family.

In addition to Sharpton and King, who were keynote speakers, several other dignitaries addressed the masses that converged on the mall. Included were: U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, U.S. Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.), House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), Minority Whip Steny Hoyer (D-Md.), the Rev. Joseph Lowery and Julian Bond. The Rev. Bernice King, the second daughter and youngest child of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., andplet Evers Williams, the widow of slain civil rights leaders Medgar Evers. The families of Emmett Till and Trayvon Martin also addressed those in attendance.

Representing labor at the podium were American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten; American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees President Lee Saunders; LaRaza President Mary Kay Henry; and National Education Association President Dennis Van Roekel, among others.

Collectively, the speakers urged the nation’s lawmakers to create more jobs, protect voting rights and address the litany of recent attacks on immigration and workers’ rights. Speakers also discussed criminal justice issues; Stand Your Ground laws and gun violence; environmental justice; and topics affecting contemporary youth such as higher education and college loans.

The rally was one of many affairs held from Aug. 17-28 to commemorate and celebrate the historic March on Washington which occurred 50 years ago on Aug. 28, 1963. The final event, the “March for Jobs and Justice,” took place Aug. 28. It concluded with the National Mall March at the Lincoln Memorial where President Barack Obama spoke from the very spot where Dr. King delivered his “I Have a Dream” speech 50 years ago.

Former Presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter also spoke at this commemorative event as did other dignitaries and celebrities. AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka was not able to attend this event. In his absence, he released the following statement:

“Fifty years ago, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., AFL-CIO Vice President A. Phillip Randolph, labor and civil rights activist Bayard Rustin, UAW President Walter Reuther and countless Americans marched for equality, jobs and freedom. That march became a pinnacle of the civil rights movement, symbolizing hope and the power of united action.

“Today, on the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, the fight for equality and justice for all continues. The Supreme Court weakened the Voting Rights Act. Extremists in the U.S. House of Representatives are stalling reform of our broken immigration system. Women make 77 cents to a man’s dollar. And workers’ rights are in jeopardy across the nation. But today, the unforgettable sounds and images from 1963 also remind us that change is possible.

“Today we re dedicate ourselves to the dream of economic equality that so many marched for a half century ago. We will work with those who strive for prosperity for all in this great country – regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or place of birth.”

Trainees with the SIU participate in an event Aug. 24 commemorating the 50th anniversary of the March on Washington.