

Mass Support Against 'Bush League' in South Carolina

On June 9, close to 10,000 union and community activists demonstrated in support of the "Charleston 5" at the South Carolina capitol in Columbia. The "Charleston 5" (pictured here with Ken Riley, President of Local 1422 of the International Longshoremen's Association) are members of Charleston ILA Locals 1422 and 1771, who are charged with felony rioting, stemming from what witnesses say was a police-initiated "riot," as union members gathered on the city's docks to peacefully protest the use of non-union stevedores in January 1999. The five—(left to right: Elijah Ford, Rick Simmons, Peter Washington, Jason Edgerton, Kenneth Jefferson, and Riley)—are currently under house arrest, with a 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. curfew. No trial date has been set.



These ILA locals represent hundreds of dockworkers, mostly African-Americans, who earn an average of \$25 an hour—one of the few "living wage" jobs still available to minorities in South Carolina. Breaking the union would have been a real feather in the cap of Attorney General Charles Condon, an ally of George W. Bush, and state chairman of Bush's 2000 Presidential election campaign, who organized the police action.

On Jan. 20, 2000, some 600 South Carolina police, in riot gear, some on horseback, some in armored vehicles, and some stationed as snipers on rooftops, used concussion grenades and rubber bullets at the Charleston port to break up a picket line by ILA members protesting the use of non-

union labor by the Nordana Lines.

Bush himself praised Condon's handling of the situation when he campaigned in Columbia prior to the South Carolina primary. Condon further intervened in the case, after the first charges against the union members—charges of simple trespass—were dismissed in a city court. Condon saw to it that the Charleston 5 were indicted on the felony riot charges, punishable by up to five years in prison.

The large turnout at the demonstration was a show of strength for those who oppose Bush's "Southern Strategy"—the takeover of American politics by advocates of Confederate "Southern justice," low-wage, union-busting policies.

the Senate Republicans are counting on the Democrats' vote, so they can override the governor's vetoes.

EIR: What do you think the Democrats will do?

Barrett: I think the Democrats will do it. Because everyone is against this Governor. This Governor is not going to have a good time trying to get re-elected next year.

EIR: Is he a friend of George W. Bush's?

Barrett: Oh, yes.

EIR: It sounds like the Republicans are in the same disarray in Ohio that they are in California, with the energy crisis hitting, and Bush's insanity on that.

Barrett: Right. There is a big split in the Republican Party here. We've got the liberal Republicans and the conserva-

tive ones.

EIR: So, it's a reflection of the national pattern.

Barrett: That's right.

EIR: Anything else you'd like to say?

Barrett: I'd just like to say that Ohio is in a crisis right now, not only from the budget, but also we're in a health-care crisis, and that's going to be my next issue, once we get this budget behind us. We have the diversion in the hospitals and the nurses leaving the profession, and even doctors are leaving the profession, because they cannot get reimbursement from managed care.

EIR: We have to do away with managed care.

Barrett: Right. That's what we need to do.