

A number of tug companies are at the academies trying to get the grads to come to work for them. What do the companies that operate only ATBs do? As a designated examiner, I cannot check a person off unless I have personally witnessed them perform the task. I am all for the TOAR, but it needs to be adjusted to allow someone with an unlimited mate license to serve as mate on an ATB.

**Richard K. Borden**  
St. Petersburg, Fla.

### **Industry needs to tweak its approach to recruiting**

The company I work for has boats tied up, just as other companies do. The boats could be working and earning money, but there are no crews to man them. It is time for the industry to rethink their approach to recruiting, and what it will take to attract personnel and keep them on board once companies have invested money and the training time in them.

There are many roadside billboards in south Louisiana advertising vacancies at boat companies, yet when you speak to a high school guidance counselor you will find that they are completely ignorant about our profession. They should be informed since they can steer people entering the work force in our direction. When was the last time company recruiters asked to speak to high school students before the military recruiters did? Are we really trying hard enough? Are we really looking for people in the right places?

But what kind of life are we offering these young people? Although pay has gone up, a large stumbling block is the insistence on keeping a 28-on/14-off work schedule because it is less expensive and problematic for the company. How much money are we saving with unmanned boats? Companies have the right to insist that potential recruits accept their work schedules. And our potential recruits also have the right to say, "No thanks!"

They want time off for play and for family. Family and significant others

want them home more too, and they have a say in the decision to accept a job offer. Once a recruit comes onboard and when the economic necessity of supporting a family impels them, they will probably want to work longer hitches and their families will agree to it. The problem facing the industry is getting them into our ranks in the first place. Boats manned at 14-on/7-off or even 14/14 must be better for the bottom line than unmanned boats.

Let's take a fresh look at the problem and be ready to make the changes necessary to get more young people onboard. Getting our fleet fully manned combined with existing training programs will improve the future outlook of our industry.

**Colin Corcoran Sr.**  
Covington, La.

### **Foreign workers are OK, but communication is a problem**

I have worked with mariners from other countries and have found that, for the most part, they are really good workers.

One thing that is a major concern is communications. Seamen from other countries often have problems with fully understanding what has been said. Instead of saying that they don't understand, they will nod their heads and you only find out that they didn't understand what you said after they have done something different than what they were told. In an emergency, clear communications could mean the difference between life and death.

Like I said, the mariners that I've worked with are good people, but good people die just as quickly as anybody.

**John Gibson**  
Master 1,600 Tons (Oceans)  
Freeport, Fla.

### **Corporations only care about maximizing profits**

In his May 2006 Mail Bag letter, "Temporary visas could ease mariner labor woes," Jake Lazarus wrote: "I cannot agree more ... do it quickly

while we still have an administration in Washington that is friendly to the working man."

What country are you living in? The present administration is dead set against the workingman. They are moving us rapidly towards a two-class system — eliminating the middle class. Under the guise of national security, this administration has attempted to take away from all government employees the right to be represented through collective bargaining under what they call the NSPS system. So far they have failed because of court orders. The Bush administration is dead set on trying to destroy unions, setting labor standards back 30 years or more.

Lazarus also said "big corporations are patriotic and will protect our job." Big corporations are interested in only one thing — money. They could care less about you, your skills or your job. If they could hire a foreigner at less than half your wages, paying little or no benefits, you would be standing on a street corner with a cup in hand begging for money. If not for the Jones Act, it would happen so fast you wouldn't even know what hit you. Open your eyes and look around. Corporations are outsourcing hundreds of thousands of jobs to foreign countries. They are not hiring U.S.-flag waving citizens with knowledge and skills from their own backyard. They are going where they can maximize profits — foreign countries with lower standards.

By all means protect the Jones Act and keep U.S. vessels that fly U.S. flags and are U.S. manned. How else can we make sure that maritime security will be protected and maintained? The U.S. has the best-trained and skilled mariners, but that does not always count. Profit is a big incentive to ignore these facts, and it is done all the time. Why do you think most flag-of-convenience vessels are U.S. owned?

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**WB**