



Turning the Tide

Port Workers Newsletter

Issue 1 - 10/18/2012

Grain Employers Threaten Lock Out

By Clarence Thomas, ILWU Local 10
Member, Port Workers United

As a consequence of the January 2012 negotiated Export Grain Terminal (EGT) contract for International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 21 in Longview, Wash., dockworkers and the Pacific Northwest Grain Handlers Association negotiations are headed for a show down. In fact, the grain handlers have threatened to lock out longshoremen who work at six Northwest grain terminals in Portland, Seattle, Tacoma, and Vancouver, WA.

These grain negotiations are setting the stage for the 2014 longshore contract negotiations, which will impact big money issues like pension and welfare.

The Northwest grain terminal employers are demanding EGT concessions like the 12-hour shift, the elimination of the union hiring hall, the ability to fire any longshoremen without cause, and over 700 other union busting demands.

The employers have retained JRG Services Inc., a division of GETTIER Security, which acts as a replacement workforce and special operations firm.

The grain handlers include some of the largest agribusinesses in the world such as Cargill and Louis Dreyfus Commodities, Inc. They control and monopolize the world's food supply chain. They have a global strategy, which is driving the grain negotiations in the Pacific Northwest. Their aim is to cut costs and increase production at the expense of hard fought longshore working conditions.

Nearly half of the grain, including wheat, corn, and soybeans in the U.S.--expected to be exported--will be handled by Northwest terminals.

To win this struggle, it will take ILWU rank-and-file unity along with unprecedented alliances such as the one seen formed during the ILWU struggle against EGT. That alliance included Occupy, labor, community, and grass roots social justice movements.

Plans are underway to organize boat pickets on the Columbia and Willamette Rivers in the event of a lock out.

Port Workers Assembly

Join us!

Saturday, October 27, 2012, 10:30am
Mosswood Park Amphitheatre (near the corner of
Broadway and W. MacArthur Blvd), Oakland, CA
occupyoaklandlaborsolidarity@gmail.com

Port Workers Unite

Joel Schor, Sailors Union of the Pacific

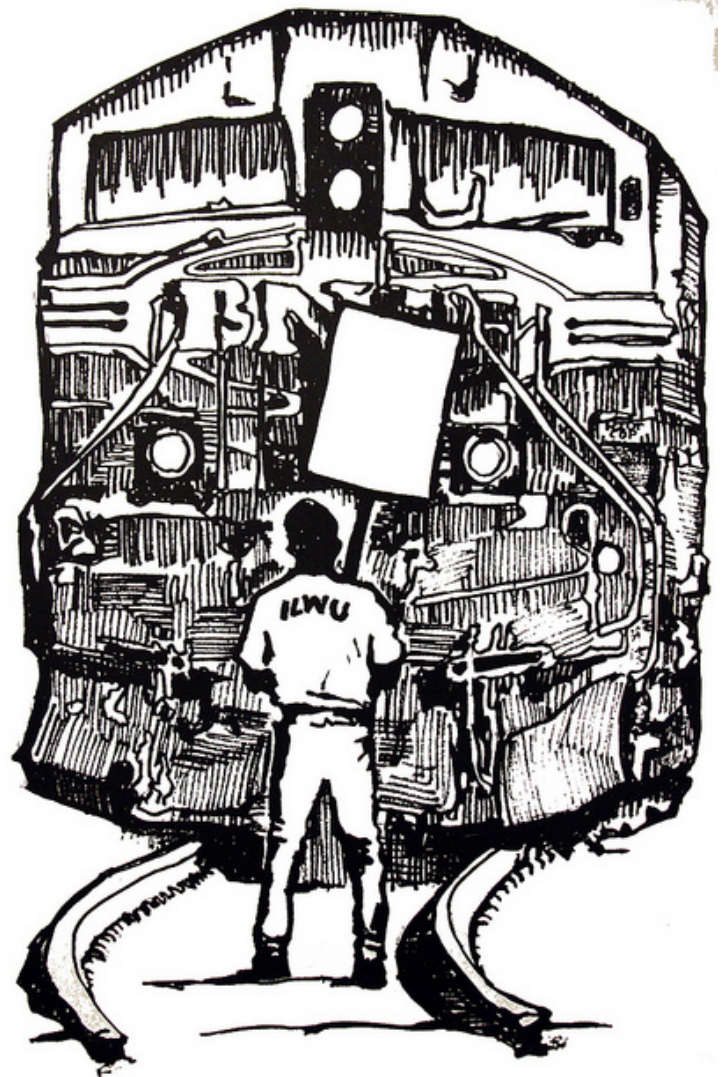
The Port of Oakland, which includes the airport and container shipping terminals, is a major economic engine in the Bay Area. The port takes in more than \$60 billion a year in revenues from overseas commerce and travel. Every year the shipping port handles some 2.5 million containers while the airport handles some 22.8 million passengers. The articles in this newsletter are all important accounts of what is really happening at the Port of Oakland for working people. Whether port workers are currently union-represented or not, there is a need to come together and support each others' struggle for better conditions, benefits, and monetary income.

In the early 1900's, West Coast maritime workers organized under the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) along with a group of itinerant lumberjacks, coastal seaman, and longshoreman who moved up and down the coast looking for work. This early organization was a precursor to the historic 1934 General Maritime Strike, which united all maritime trades and garnered the support of city workers and the community. This eventually led to the establishment of union-controlled hiring halls (which monitor the dispatch of work on the docks) and an end to the slave-like markets for hiring that previously existed.

Shipping companies at the port, such as Stevedoring Services of America SSA have received significant investments from financial and political powerhouse Goldman Sachs. Beginning with the former CEO Hank Paulson, appointed by Bush as Treasury Secretary in 2006, Goldman Sach's has been a revolving door turning its top personnel into high positions at regulatory government agencies. In particular, the marketing of high-risk derivative securities and the tying of residential home-lending to investment banking was a specialty of many of Goldman Sach's

former advisors, such as the current Treasurer Larry Summers. Who was appointed by Obama in 2008. While large financiers on Wall Street reap record breaking profits from their investments at the Port of Oakland, working people are suffering tremendous losses in this economy. In the unregulated sectors of the industry, big shipping companies are favored against small operators and employees at small logistics companies connected to the Port. Workers who are in unions with SEIU and ILWU are under attack from the Port of Oakland and the Grain Monopolists, who want to drive back all the gains earned with the blood and sweat of the rank and file. Together we can fight for a better port in all of our interests as workers at the Port of Oakland!

Port Workers Unite!



Warehouse Workers

Anonymous Warehouse Worker

Among the various sectors of port workers are the warehouse workers at the logistics companies. Workers at logistics companies transfer goods from railcars and long-distance trucks into the shipping containers, which the port truckers then transport to be loaded onto export ships. Containers carrying imports are similarly unloaded and transferred.

The level of organization among these workers is very limited due to decades of union-busting and other anti-labor maneuvering by the bosses. Efforts to reverse this trend in recent years have met with some positive but limited results. G.S.C. Logistics, for example, was a non-union shop until certifying with the Teamsters in 2011. However, there is still work to be done before the port warehouse workers are an active, fighting force capable of defending its interests in a coordinated fashion.

If warehouse workers act in solidarity with other port workers would be a positive step in this direction. They could benefit from the knowledge and experience of more organized workers, such as the ILWU. The ILWU is widely regarded with a degree of envy by warehouse workers. Their collective power is demonstrated whenever the ports are closed. Yet, the potential to follow this example is within reach. No model is perfect, of course, but anything remotely resembling the functioning of the ILWU would be a tremendous leap forward.

Warehouse workers acting in solidarity with other



port workers could also add their weight to the struggles of those sectors. For example, the situation with the port truck drivers is a key issue that will almost inevitably escalate into more decisive confrontations in the future. The solidarity of other port workers would strengthen their cause tremendously.

Port Truck Drivers

Anonymous Port Truck Driver

We haul containers full of goods we all use-- to and from the docks and warehouses every day. It's one of the most dangerous occupations, but we love being behind the wheel. We are proud of the work we do to keep America's economy moving. But we want fair working conditions, and we want to drive clean and safe vehicles that don't spew out deadly toxins. But we feel humiliated when we receive less-than-minimum-wage paychecks, especially when we work 60 or 70 hours a week.

Just like Wall Street doesn't abide by rules, our industry isn't bound by regulation. The trucking companies call us "independent contractors," as if we were our own bosses. But then they boss us around. We can't negotiate our rates. We are paid by the load, not by the hour. So when we sit in long lines at the port or get stuck in traffic, we become volunteers who donate our time to the trucking and shipping companies. We call it modern-day slavery.

The companies demand we cut corners to compete. It makes our roads less safe. When we try to blow the whistle about skipped inspections, faulty equipment, or falsified logs, we get fired or "starved out."

When businesses disguise workers like us as "independent contractors," it's called mis-classification and it's illegal. They get away with it because everyone is doing it. Terminal operator SSA Marine owns Shippers Transport Express, a major trucking company. SSA also owns mega-rich Maersk, a huge Danish shipping and trucking conglomerate. So with all these funds, why is SSA doing

this? To cheat on taxes -- they don't pay into workers comp, unemployment, disability or Social Security like legitimate businesses do. And they deny us the right to belong to a union.

The typical arrangement works like this: Everything comes out of our pockets or is deducted from our paychecks. The truck or lease, fuel, insurance, registration, you name it. Our employers do not have to pay the costs of meeting emissions-compliant regulations; that is our financial burden to bear. They still call us "independent contractors" and give us a 1099 instead of a W-2.

The more underwater we are, the more our restlessness grows. We are being thoughtful about how best to organize ourselves and do what is needed to win dignity, respect, and justice. We are fighting to overcome our exploitation. So please, stick by us. The Teamsters have our backs. They help us make our voices heard. But we need your help too so we can one day raise our fists and declare: "No one could stop us from forming a union."

Clerical Workers
Rank and File Member of SEIU 1021

This is written from the perspective of a rank and file member of SEIU 1021. It does not reflect the views of our elected officers or our negotiating committee.

The SEIU 1021 and the Port Of Oakland have been in contract negotiations since July 2011. When SEIU 1021 came to the table, it did not ask for raises and left the contract as it has been for the last 3 years. The port countered with 42 takeaways. One of which was a "No Strike Clause."

The port said the necessity of takeaways is due to budget issues. But a union researcher dug through the port's public financial records and discovered quite a surplus of funds. When questioned about this, executive director of the port, Omar Benjamin, said these figures are correct. When asked why so many takeaways were put on the table, he simply

responded with,

"Everyone else is doing this, so why not..."

After several months of meetings, SEIU and the port reached a tentative agreement with some of the takeaways removed. The "No Strike Clause" was still there, although the members voted it down.

The port's board of commissioners voted to send us to an impasse. What does this mean to the rank-and-file members like myself? We feel we can't trust port management. To say the members feel a lot of uncertainty is an understatement. While none of us want to strike, we feel we can not sit idle. Should we take any action, we have been assured the support of the Longshoreman.

What is next for us? I don't know, but I will support whatever action other workers want to take.

**Port Workers Assembly of
the Port of Oakland**
Resolution 10/6/12

Motion adopted unanimously: that this port workers assembly calls for solidarity actions with:

- 1) The rank-and-file of the SEIU, in the port of Oakland trying for 15 months now to secure a new contract;
- 2) The port truck drivers and warehouse workers who have been trying for years to organize a union in the port, and
- 3) The ILWU (Longshore Union) in its struggle in the Northwest to negotiate a decent contract with the grain monopolies who are demanding major concessions and threatening a lockout;
- 4) The airport workers who are being attacked by the boss for organizing efforts;

And finally a call on workers in other West Coast ports to organize similar workers assemblies to coordinate a united defense against our common maritime employers.

Port Workers Assembly of
the Port of Oakland
Resolution 10/20/12

The Port Workers' Assembly, a newly-formed grouping of Bay Area longshoremen, port truck drivers, port truckers, clerical workers, warehouse workers, airport fast food workers, and other members of the working class hereby commit to the following resolution.

Whereas, the longshoremen of the Pacific Northwest are facing a potential lockout bolstered by the hiring of scab labor, so that multinational grain company EGT can force a concessionary master grain contract on grain terminal port workers.

Whereas, workers across sectors at the port of Oakland are under attack by SSA, a Goldman Sachs-backed company that profits from the people's port while exploiting the producers of that profit. They are being forced into concessions, being punished for organizing, and suffering racist mistreatment at the workplace, among a host of other forms of oppression.

Whereas,
An attack on longshoremen and port workers is an attack on the entire working class.

Whereas
The longshoremen have been an essential ally supporting a number of working class struggles, and have a legacy of bottom-up, militant resistance.

Therefore, be it resolved that,
Members of the PWA hereby call on rank-and-file workers at the port of Oakland to take bold actions through pickets, work stoppages, or other direct actions, in solidarity with Pacific Northwest longshoremen and Oakland port workers.

Therefore, be it resolved
The PWA calls on longshoremen to use their collective power and knowledge gleaned from past struggles to materially and politically stand in solidarity with Oakland port worker

Therefore, be it resolved
The PWA will provide material and political support for such actions taken by both Oakland port workers, PNW longshoremen, and all members of the working class suffering attacks at the hands of the boss.

Port Workers Assembly of Oakland, 20 October 2012





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