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## **LONGSHORE UNION INITIATES ORCHESTRATED WORK SLOWDOWNS, CRIPPLING PACIFIC NORTHWEST PORTS**

### **Actions by ILWU During Coast-Wide Contract Negotiations Threaten Ports of Seattle and Tacoma in Midst of Holiday Shipping Season**

**San Francisco, CA (November 3, 2014)** — The International Longshore & Warehouse Union (ILWU) has initiated orchestrated slowdowns at the Pacific Northwest ports of Seattle and Tacoma, severely impacting many of the largest terminals during the peak holiday shipping season. The two ports handle an estimated 16% of containerized cargo on the West Coast.

The work actions come as the ILWU and its employer group counterpart, the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA), are in the sixth month of negotiations for a new contract covering nearly 13,600 workers at 29 ports along the West Coast, from California to Washington. Initially, the PMA and ILWU set a goal of reaching a new agreement in July.

Once the contract expired on July 1<sup>st</sup>, the parties agreed to continue negotiating in good faith, and to resolve their differences at the table. The PMA and ILWU specifically stated that they were mindful of the broader economic implications of these negotiations. As such, they agreed that normal operations at West Coast ports would continue until an agreement could be reached.

“Now, the ILWU has reneged on that agreement,” said Wade Gates, a spokesperson for the PMA.

The ILWU initially targeted select terminals in Tacoma on Friday, October 31, and expanded to more terminals in Tacoma and the Port of Seattle throughout the weekend. The slowdowns began within hours of the end of the latest negotiating session on a new coast wide contract.

The PMA has found that the slowdowns at these Pacific Northwest ports have resulted in terminal productivity being reduced by an average of 40 to 60%. For example, terminals that typically move 25-35 containers per hour were moving only 10-18, according to statistics compiled by PMA, which tracks historical productivity based on the number of containers moved per hour for each vessel at the same terminal.

After several days of crippled productivity, employers demanded that union leaders return to normal workplace practices. When the ILWU refused by continuing its severe slowdowns, employers were forced to begin sending workers home, paid for time worked, mid-shift on Sunday.

“In Tacoma, the ILWU is not filling orders for skilled workers, including straddle carrier operators who are critical to terminal operations,” said Gates. “This is like sending out a football team without the receivers or running backs. You can’t run the plays without them,” he said.

“We have been told that ILWU business agents sent the slowdown orders out late last week,” Gates added.

For generations, the ILWU leadership has long disputed the existence of slowdowns. The Los Angeles Times, in an article *The Art of the Slowdown*, exposed the long-refined practice which the union has historically used to try to gain leverage in contract negotiations. Often, the ILWU will make false or exaggerated claims of safety issues in order to justify unilateral actions that have repeatedly been found to be in violation of the coast-wide contract.

In fact, the ILWU has refused to agree to a temporary contract extension – which it has agreed to during past negotiations – because such an extension would give both parties access to the well-established grievance procedure that has served the waterfront for decades. Jointly appointed arbitrators have continually found slowdowns on the waterfront to be impermissible, but with no contract extension in place, employers cannot access the arbitration process.

“We are calling upon the ILWU to cease its slowdowns and agree to a temporary contract extension while we negotiate a new contract,” Gates said. “The Union’s agreement to a contract extension would give confidence to shippers and the general public, and would prove our willingness to solve our differences at the negotiating table, rather than by staging illegal actions at the docks.”

“The PMA remains committed to good-faith bargaining until an agreement can be reached,” Gates said. “It is extremely difficult to have meaningful negotiations under the current conditions in which the ILWU is deliberately slowing productivity in order to pressure our member companies. We urge the ILWU to re-think their slowdown strategy, which has the potential to cause great damage to the local, regional and national economies. It is essential that we resolve our differences at the negotiating table, rather than on the job site.”

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