

ILWU President blasts PMA threat to shut down US ports

Photos of empty docks show that PMA employers, based largely overseas, are worsening a congestion crisis at West Coast ports to pressure American workers

The ILWU has provided the media with several pictures disputing the PMA's claims that West Coast ports are too congested to unload ships. In fact, they have acres of asphalt waiting for containers and hundreds of longshore workers willing to unload them.

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (February 5, 2015) – ILWU International President Robert McEllrath today blasted the Pacific Maritime Association for threatening to shut down West Coast ports, bargaining in the media, and distorting the facts. “What the ILWU heard yesterday is a man who makes about one million dollars a year telling the working class that we have more than our share,” said McEllrath. “Intensifying the rhetoric at this stage of bargaining, when we are just a few issues from reaching an agreement, is totally unnecessary and counterproductive.”

In mid-January, PMA claimed that there was a lack of dock space for containers, and it eliminated nightshifts at many ports. Today, the union provided photos disputing the employer group's assertion that docks are too congested to unload ships.

“PMA is leaving ships at sea and claiming there's no space on the docks, but there are acres of asphalt just waiting for the containers on those ships, and hundreds of longshore workers ready to unload them,” said McEllrath. “The employers are deliberately worsening the existing congestion crisis to gain the upper hand at the bargaining table.”

The union provided several photos of marine terminals in Southern California that show large tracts of space that would easily fit thousands of containers.

“The employers' threat to shut down West Coast ports is a reckless and unnecessary move,” said McEllrath. “What the employers need to do is stay at the negotiating table and work through a few remaining issues with the workers who have made them successful for the past 80 years. We are very close to reaching an agreement.”

The PMA is an employer association whose largest members include Denmark-based Maersk Line, Taiwan-based Evergreen Marine, Korean-based Hanjin Shipping, Philippines-based ICTSI, Japan-based NYK Line, Hong Kong-based OOCL, China-based COSCO, and other employers based in France, Norway and worldwide.

The International Longshore and Warehouse Union is based in San Francisco, Calif., and is negotiating a contract that has covered longshore workers at 30 West Coast ports in California, Oregon and Washington since 1934.

– *ILWU news release*

