

# A Call to Action

From the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum (Washington) Central Labor Council –  
January 2, 2012

**"We are imploring all able working class people willing to take time out of his or her own lives, to come to Longview, Washington for a historic protest.**

**.... The class struggle never really goes away. Right now the rich and the ruling class are attempting to deal a blow that labor might never recover from....**

**.... If you believe in a better future for the 99% of us that work for a living, do what you can to support ILWU Local 21."**

**The resolution that was just passed by the Labor Council in the Longview area is attached.** (This is the "Call to Action" to accompany the Resolution.)

**A Call to Action: It is estimated, sometime in late January or early February the [scab] EGT facility at the port of Longview will receive its first grain ship to be loaded at its berth. The name and timing of this ship will undoubtedly be kept secret until the last possible moment. It is likely there will be a few days to as little as 24 hours notice of when the ship will dock. Notification will be given via the Internet and any other relevant means of networking throughout the country.**

**We are imploring all able working class people willing to take time out of his or her own lives, to come to Longview, Washington for a historic protest.**

This is the time for workers everywhere to take a stand. Unions and the working class standard of living that have benefited from collective bargaining for so long are in danger of being extracted completely. You can see this systematically taking place over the last 30 years or longer, and especially in recent times. Unions have lost

ground over this period of time due to unjust anti-labor laws, corporate influence on the government, and complacency on the part of organized labor among other reasons.

We recognize the danger of, and view the government attack on collective bargaining of public employees as a warning shot to labor as a whole. Wisconsin was ground zero and the spark that awoke the sleeping giant that is labor. Workers are beginning to remember there is indeed strength in numbers, regardless of how many unjust laws are made to divide us.

We have not been pacified long enough, as to give up our constitutional rights or to give up all the gains our forefathers fought and died to achieve over the last hundred years. People inherently ask WHY? Why should I, or others come to the aid of the ILWU? Why should I care, and what does it matter if this ship gets loaded and they lose this struggle?

The ILWU has a proud history of being arguably the strongest labor union in the world for almost 80 years. The secret of this success lies in the bottom up, rank and file democratic structure. This empowers and involves every member. And the intelligence and foresight of the leaders who knew without unity on the entire west coast and unity with the working class, there was no strength.

EGT is attempting to break the ILWU. EGT is operating on public port property where the ILWU have worked for decades. They are in violation of their lease agreement, which states that the ILWU is to be the workforce on port property. Longshoremen have done work in port grain elevators before the ILWU was formed [in the 1930s]. If EGT succeeds, they will have essentially broken the ILWU.

First, they will set a precedent that work on public port docks is no longer automatically Longshore Jurisdiction. Then within less than a year, when the northwest grain handlers agreement is set to be negotiated, all the other grain elevators will seek to either go non-ILWU or will seek to match the eroded standard EGT creates. Shortly thereafter in 2014, the ILWU will negotiate its master contract with

the Pacific Maritime Association. If they lose, you can bet the PMA will take notice and hit hard.

Most importantly to note is that grain accounts for 30% of the ILWU health and welfare package. If you lose a third of your bargaining power and your traditional jurisdiction on port property, what are you left with? Either no ILWU, or a union that would resemble nothing like what it once was. There would be little or no collective power up and down the west coast, and no way to fight for social justice or defend the working class, just as the ILWU has done for so long, in its entrenched and strategic position at the gates of international commerce.

Longshoremen have traditionally been a rough and tough bunch, but they always make sure to educate their members on the importance of history, unity and the power of collective bargaining. People nowadays forget or have not been taught their own history, they forget what it means to cross a picket line, and become a scab the rest of their life. For 30 years or more we have been sliding downhill, while some would argue unions have outlived their time. The reality is unions are the last defense when the imperfect system of checks and balances within our government fails to serve the interests of the workers.

The class struggle never really goes away. Right now the rich and the ruling class are attempting to deal a blow that labor might never recover from. The ILWU has always been the vanguard of labor everywhere. Today, the ILWU's value of "An Injury to One, Is an Injury to All" couldn't be any more pertinent for all organizations. So please, if you believe in a better future for the 99% of us that work for a living, do what you can to support ILWU Local 21.

**"The most important word in the language of the working class is solidarity."– Harry Bridges**

In Solidarity,

Kyle Mackey, Secretary/Treasurer Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Counties Central Labor Council, and ILWU Local 21 member

