

**INTERNATIONAL
LONGSHORE &
WAREHOUSE UNION**
AFL-CIO



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December 6, 2011

To: All ILWU Locals, IBU, Affiliates, Pension Clubs and Auxiliaries:

Brothers and Sisters:

On October 5, 2011, I published a statement in support of "Occupy Wall Street." In that statement, I thanked the organizers of the "Occupy Wall Street" protest in New York City for shining a light on some of the most pressing issues of our times – corporate influence on democracy, the growing disparity between the rich and the poor, and the failure of accountability for the financial crisis. These issues are linked to issues that concern the membership of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), namely, the attack on Social Security and Medicare, the refusal to level the playing field by supporting workplace democracy and employee free choice, and the failure to implement any kind of meaningful change to an unjust tax system, and we find strength in the courage of the supporters of the Occupy movement.

Since my October 5 statement, the Occupy movement has spread from the East Coast to the West Coast and captured the hearts and minds of the 99% who have had enough. Some in the movement have begun to draw comparisons between the broader struggle against Corporate America and the ILWU's labor dispute with its employer EGT in Longview. The fact is that the story of corporate greed and its impact on the working class is the story of the 99%, and, of course, this reality connects us all.

While there can be no doubt that the ILWU shares the Occupy movement's concerns about the future of the middle class and corporate abuses, we must be clear that our struggle against EGT is just that – our struggle. The ILWU has a long history of democracy. Part of that historic democracy is the hard-won right to chart our own course to victory. As the Occupy movement, which began in September 2011, sweeps this country, there is a real danger that forces outside of the ILWU will attempt to adopt our struggle as their own. Support is one thing, organization from outside groups attempting to co-opt our struggle in order to advance a broader agenda is quite another and one that is destructive to our democratic process and jeopardizes our over two year struggle in Longview.

Most recently, groups directly connected to the Occupy movement and other loosely affiliated social media groups have called for the shutdown of certain terminals and the West Coast ports. At the same time, these groups seek to link these shutdowns to the ILWU's labor dispute with employer EGT. None of this is sanctioned by the membership

of the ILWU or informed by the local and International leadership. Simply put, there has been no communication with the leadership and no vote within the ILWU ranks on EGT associated Occupy actions.

Further, since our November 22, 2011 press release clarifying our position regarding third-party protests to occupy West Coast ports on December 12, 2011, we have been the subject of much criticism from individuals affiliated with the Occupy movement. This is shortsighted and only serves the 1%. We ask only that our internal process be respected and that whatever transpires not be in our name as we have not taken part in the call for that action.

With respect to EGT, the International Officers are fully engaged. That struggle, as managed by the Coast Committee and local elected officers, is center stage and will be until victory is achieved.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Robert McEllrath". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Robert McEllrath
International President

RMcE/AKJ
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