

...Port of Longview dispute widens

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most no plates were from Washington or Oregon. At one point, Myers said, up to 150 workers from Guatemala were hired for continuous pour construction of the cement grain elevators.

The plan was for the facility to become operational in time for the fall 2011 U.S. harvest. As construction entered its later stages in late 2010, ILWU Local 8 sought a meeting with EGT to discuss terms and conditions of employment. Meeting with Local 21 President Coffman Nov. 23, EGT told him it would have no need of the ILWU's services. After Coffman informed Port commissioners, Port Executive Director O'Halloran e-mailed EGT CEO Larry Clarke Dec. 3 saying that under the lease, EGT must adhere to the Port's agreement with Local 21 for the types of longshore/warehousemen jobs which that agreement covers.

On Jan. 12, 2011, EGT filed a lawsuit against the Port, arguing in the U.S. District Court in Tacoma that it is not bound by the Port's Working Wage Agreement with the ILWU as spelled out in its lease. In its suit, EGT attorneys say union labor would increase EGT's annual costs of operating the elevator by \$1 million. The lawsuit could take years to resolve. On July 18, a federal judge granted ILWU "intervenor" status in the suit. That means ILWU attorneys may introduce motions and take part in any settlement.

EGT continued to meet with ILWU until March, but pushed non-starter proposals like 12-hour shifts at straight time pay.

As construction neared completion, ILWU geared up to fight to operate the terminal. On June 3, 1,200 ILWU members from 16 locals rallied at EGT's downtown Portland headquarters. And the protests began outside the terminal.

Then, on July 17, a development took ILWU by surprise: EGT announced that it had signed a five-year deal with Federal Way-based General Construction Co., a subsidiary of Kiewit, to operate the terminal using members of Gladstone, Oregon headquartered Operating Engineers Local 701.

Protests continued at the terminal, but now Local 701 was targeted too. On July 22, about 100 ILWU members and supporters set up a picket line and blocked vehicles from entering the grain facility. On July 24, a powered hang glider flew over the terminal and dropped leaflets. July 27, about 100 ILWU members and a large inflatable rat turned up outside Local 701 headquarters and blocked the entrance.

Local 701 Business Manager Mark Holliday told the Labor Press in an e-mail that the union has had a relationship with General Construction for over 90 years. "Our contract is with General Construction. We don't have an agreement with EGT," he said.

ILWU took its case to the Oregon AFL-CIO Executive Board July 29, claiming Local 701 was "aiding and abetting" an employer that the ILWU had a dispute with.

"This is a major, major, major battle for us," ILWU Committeeman Leal Sundet told the Executive Board, explaining that the outcome will have ramifications on future bargaining throughout the West Coast. "We are going all in in this fight."

The Executive Board then passed a resolution submitted by ILWU "strongly condemning" Local 701's actions. The resolution initially was ruled out of order by President Tom Chamberlain, who determined it was a dispute over jurisdiction. But the board overturned him and passed it by a wide margin.

Holliday is a member of the Oregon AFL-CIO Executive Board, but he did not attend the meeting.

Nelda Wilson, assistant to the business manager of Local 701, told the Labor Press that the union didn't know the resolution would be discussed, and wasn't given a chance to tell its side of the story. "It's a very complicated issue, and there is a lot of disinformation going around," Wilson said. "There is a legal process that has to wind its way through the courts. I think we all need to calm down and allow time to sort out the facts here. There is a lot more to come."

The resolution currently is in abeyance until further review by the national AFL-CIO. If the resolution is ruled out of order by the national body it will be nullified.

"This is part of EGT's plan," Coffman said. "They want to sit off to the side and let the working classes fight it out. Our fight should be against corporate America that's taking collective bargaining rights from everybody. They're sitting back laughing at us. That's what they want us to do is fight amongst each other."

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