

Dockworkers fight for a decent contract

written by Lallan Schoenstein
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Keith Shanklin, past president of ILWU Local 34, was interviewed about the Port of Oakland Shut Down, protesting the lack of a contract after five months of negotiations with the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA).

Early in the morning on Nov. 2, dockworkers, members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Locals 10, 34, and 91, walked off the job in a one-day work stoppage, closing down the Port of Oakland. It was reported on KTVU Fox News that it will take a week to recover from the one-day work stoppage.

Keith Shanklin, past president of ILWU Local 34, said, “We’ve been trying since July 1 to negotiate a contract with the PMA. We’ve been faithfully working, even through the pandemic, without any stoppage.” The workers are angry that the Pacific Maritime Association, representing the port’s cargo ship carriers and terminal operators, is prolonging ill-faith contract negotiations with ILWU.

The militant “point of production” action occurred at the Port of Oakland. Dockworkers say that if all the ILWU locals on the West Coast were to call a strike, they would have the powerful leverage they need to settle contract negotiations with PMA.

PMA is under additional seasonal pressure to unload the holiday merchandise currently in the port and still at sea. At the same time, a possible nationwide rail strike that was thought to have been settled looms again after two major unions rejected that contract proposal.

KTVU Fox News reported that a “West Coast port closure and a national rail strike would quickly return the entire U.S. to the bad old days of the supply chain crisis, perhaps even worse.”

Keith Shanklin served as president of Local 34 during the pandemic. He and past president Trent Willis of Local 10 demonstrated strong leadership during the pandemic. Keith Shanklin, ‘Shank,’ also served as the secretary-treasurer of the Million Worker March.

