"The only way to do this is collectively as a whole!"

US West Coast dockworkers speak out against pro-corporate government intervention, call for a joint struggle with Canadian longshoremen

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On Tuesday, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) in Canada called for a stop work meeting where 7,400 workers were told by the union leadership that it was now recommending a vote in favor of the Terms of Settlement imposed by the government of Prime Minister Trudeau. Workers are being forced to vote a second time on a sellout agreement they rejected after their union shut down their 13-day strike.

On the US West Coast, the ILWU leadership continues to keep 22,000 dockworkers on the job without a contract after more than a year, giving workers no access to the terms of a Tentative Agreement produced in backroom deals between the ILWU, the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA), Democratic Party officials such as Biden's acting Labor Secretary Julie Su and Executive Director of the Port of Los Angeles Gene Seroka.

The ILWU bureaucracy has made every effort to isolate dockworkers' struggles across the border and prevent a joint strike that could effectively bring the North American and global supply chain to a halt. Despite all efforts, opposition is mounting among the rank and file, who furiously oppose the pro-corporate intervention from both the Trudeau and Biden administrations and are angry about the conspiratorial character of the so-called negotiations.

This is taking place in the context of a major escalation of class struggle worldwide that is gaining momentum. Anger is rapidly escalating among rank-and-file UPS workers to a last-minute deal announced by the Teamsters union in advance of a July 31 strike deadline. At the same time, a wave of strikes, from WGA writers and SAG-AFTRA actors, to Los Angeles hotel workers, to National Steel Car Workers in Ontario, continue. All of these struggles express workers' determination to fight back against years of concessions.

Dockworkers have expressed calls for unity against the strikebreaking intervention by governments on both sides of the US-Canada border.

Raul, a US West Coast dockworker whose name has been changed to protect his identity, spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site* about the issues involved in this struggle.

Responding to the Canadian government sending dockworkers back to work, Raul said, "How do you vote that a worker can't go on strike? That baffles me."

He compared Trudeau's move to slavery. "So basically, it's forced slavery or forced labor and you get all the profits, keep all the profits and feed us pennies.

"It is not cool to force somebody to go and accept something like that," he continued. "If you actually lived in reality and actually had to go to work, you wouldn't accept it. Whoever the damn person is up in Canada [ILWU Canada President Rob Ashton] that's forcing those guys to go back to work, they don't live in reality. They don't have to go to the gas station. They don't go grocery shopping for themselves. They

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don’t drive around in society and see how messed up the roads are.”

Raul stated that, in his opinion, both Americans and Canadians are being cheated out of a fair contract.

“We’re getting shorthanded, underhanded, uppercutted, body shot, that’s what we’re getting,” he said. “Every working person that wants to continue to work and potentially retire with a decent pension is getting f***ed. And it is definitely going to be worse after that Canadian contract, if it’s four years, four years from now they’re going to get f***ed again. And after this one gets voted up for the US dockworkers, after six years it’s going to be the only way.”

Asked who bore responsibility, Raul said: “Whoever is in there, [ILWU International President] Willie Adams.”

Raul then proposed a way forward, stating, “The only way to do this is collectively as a whole. If all of the people in the world that go out here and go to work on a daily basis band together and say, ‘We’re just fed up with it.’ Everything that we need as a necessity rises in price, and you don’t want to pay us accordingly, what are you trying to do? Make us live in poverty? And instead of somebody being worried about what I’m making over here, why not we all get together and make sure that we’re all making a decent living? And that’s the only way it can truly happen is if we all band together and say, ‘pay us or you figure it out.’”

He also emphasized the need to expand the struggle to other industries. “You know the actors that are out on strike, we should all be on strike as well.”

Addressing the role of the pro-corporate union bureaucracy, Raul stated, “That’s why the big companies and corporations keep profiting because they [the union bureaucrats] do this divide and conquer and smear tactics, pitting the workers against each other. And if that’s what it is, be a man and say that. Don’t smile in my face and stab me in the back. I’m talking about the union bureaucrats, the politicians, anybody that’s forcing someone to go to work and continue to make somebody else rich and they don’t give a damn about the people that’s making them rich. Just pay us what we’re worth. The crime rate will go down, the economy will go up.”

A dockworker from San Diego by the alias name of Daniel also spoke to the WSWS, expressing his solidarity with all dockworkers and his willingness to fight alongside them.

“To all my fellow dockworkers, if you pay attention globally, then your actions are being taken as one of great necessity and you all should not be afraid to stand on what’s right,” Daniel said.

“Your actions are more than right because it’s well past time that the corporations be reminded that they have thrived off of we the people’s backs, and actually see that there is no profit without the people. Not only is this a worthy cause for today, but more importantly, for the future workforce, our children.

“Just ask yourselves, why are we always in these dogfights every so many years while corporations’ profits continue to grow? It can’t be from a lack of commitment to our jobs. It appears the corporations are in cahoots and we laborers are to accept the status quo or else. Well, I say it’s about time they find out we are not accepting the status quo and will not allow them to replace us with these so-called robots. You can’t continue to put profit over human beings and think that it’s okay. Stand strong, brothers and sisters. This fight is bigger than just us.”

The way forward for dockworkers lies in forging a fighting unity with other sections of workers in a common struggle against the gang-up of the White House, Wall Street and the pro-corporate trade union leadership.

Dockworkers in the US, Canada and internationally must join forces and take the initiative through the formation of rank-and-file committees. These committees, democratically run by workers themselves, should broaden the fight to other sections of logistics workers including workers at UPS, who have established a rank-and-file committee.

If you or other dockworkers in your area wish to form a rank-and-file committee, fill out the form below today!

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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