

A CALL TO ACTION

by Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Central Labor Council on Monday, January 2, 2012 at 10:10pm

(THIS IS THE LETTER TO ACCOMPANY THE RESOLUTION)
A Call to Action

It is estimated, sometime in late January or early February the 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 over 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. They are 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 1934. 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