

**La Prensa**

## **LABOR: Drivers at The Port of Los Angeles on Strike**

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WILMINGTON - More than a hundred truck drivers from the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles launched a limited strike for 48 hours against three freight companies.

And although the economic impact has not been quantified nor the delay in delivery of goods to distribution centers in areas of Southern California and the Inland Empire, drivers transporting cargo in and out of the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles, teamed up to not cross picket lines on the night of Monday 28 and Tuesday 29 April.

Represented by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, workers reported being harassed by their supervisors and owners of transport companies Green Fleet of Long Beach, Pacific 9 Transportation (Pac9), Carson and Total Transportation Services, Inc. (TTSI) of Rancho Dominguez.

The strike was not against the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles.

They claimed that the strikers picket lines spread to receptor sites of cargo containers in the cities of Carson, Rancho Dominguez, Wilmington, Long Beach, San Pedro, Commerce, South Gate, and Inland Empire: Rancho Cucamonga (Pacific Cycle), Mira Loma (Costco Distribution Center) and Moreno Valley (Skechers Distribution Center).

Alex Cherin, spokesman for transport companies said in a statement to USA that stocks have been part of the Teamsters, in attempts to pressure unions to organize truckers.

The California Transportation Association and Harbor Trucking Association, which represents owners of companies, operators, small fleets of cargo and domestic and international operators said in a statement that truckers are entitled to access freely and safely maritime terminals during protests on April 28.

"Although we fundamentally disagree with the ongoing efforts by special interest groups to prevent operators doing business at the ports, we respect the rights of individuals to peaceful freedom of expression," the statement sent to USA .

Lee Petersen, spokesman for the Port of Long Beach said the terminal LBCT (Long Beach Cargo Terminal) was the only one where events that affected the traffic of cars and trucks were registered. On the second day, picket lines were in two of its six terminals.

"We still have no reports of economic losses," Petersen said in STATES. "What I can say is that there were delays in the input and output [truck] port".

Philip Sanfield, spokesman for the Port of Los Angeles, told STATES that the impact on the landing was "extremely low".

"No terminal was closed and there was minimal disruption to truck traffic; have not made, although economic analysis companies that were targeted [the strike], "Sanfield said. "A federal arbitrator said they could not do picket lines here [at the Port of Los Angeles]."

Barbara Maynard, representative of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (International Brotherhood of Teamsters) said that "honestly, no one will say there was some impact. First, companies are not going to want to admit that we made an impact. "

Through a series of resolutions of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), Division of Labor Standards California (DLSE), and Employee Development Department of California (EDD), drivers publicly demonstrated at the side of one of the container terminals in the seaport of Long Beach, one of the busiest in the country.

"In retaliation to our request for rights and respect for our dignity, we reduced working hours and began to harass us," complained Dennis Martinez. "We are tired that we're being exploited."

Martinez, 29-year-old Honduran immigrant and told UNIDOS that "on a good day" could expect to earn \$ 300, which should remove \$ 150 to pay for the diesel truck that is leased to the company.

Last December, after more than 40 hours of work, total gross revenues were \$592.03. Deductions made with your check for \$397.77, at the end we were only \$194.00, ie, less than \$5 per hour.

Dennis Martinez and truck drivers demanding an end to alleged violations of the rights of workers who are misclassified as "independent contractors".

In addition, the company deducts them 25% of their wages in "repair charge" of the vehicle handling.

Other drivers such as Douglas Herrera, 39 years old and Ismael Portillo, 37, both from Santa Tecla, El Salvador and Pac9 workers say that their salary cannot afford even to rent a room. They live and sleep in the truck.

"The repair of the trucks we have to do, whether owned by the company," said Herrera. "I have to work 80 to 90 hours a week to survive."

Besides the long hours of work, port truckers move approximately 4 billion dollars worth of goods every day for companies such as Wal-Mart, Ikea and Home Depot.

According to the Department of Industrial Relations, in California have filed more than 500 complaints of wage theft related to misclassification of employees, and of these, 32 truck drivers have won the battle against 13 companies freight, and has granted \$ 3.8 million in wages and penalties for employers.

In early April, the California Workforce Commission set a precedent by granting \$ 2.2 million to seven truckers Pacer Cartage Company Inc. of Commerce City, classify its truck drivers as independent contractors rather than employees.

"We believe that these actions, along with the demands we have recently introduced and which we will present in the coming weeks, will force the trucking industry to make changes in their backward business practices to comply with state and federal labor laws," said attorney Alvin Gomez.

### **'A scam'**

Fred Potter, vice president of the International Guild of Teamsters, told STATES more strike action by drivers for effective justice and transform the industry moving cargo ports are needed.

"What these companies are doing with workers is a scam," he said.

Misclassification of "independent contractor" instead of employee transport companies allows employers to deny any kind of job or medical protection, they might receive under state and federal laws, including unemployment benefits.

"If my daughter [Dominique, 9 months] become ill do not know what I would do," said Dennis Martinez. "We have Medi-Cal for her, but eventually also have to pay."

Industry experts estimate that only 10% of truck drivers are employees of companies, and in recent years workers have been classified as independent contractors have filed lawsuits and complaints to state and federal agencies to change their status.

"This ranking has been part of a scam [salary]," said Eric Tate, secretary-treasurer of Local 848 of the Teamsters. "These workers were also denied unemployment insurance."