



TRUCKERS ACROSS THE US STRIKE

SHUT DOWN DEMANDING BETTER PAY, WORKER'S RIGHTS

Port truckers went on strike starting June 28, in largely spontaneous shut downs that hit major East Coast and Gulf Coast ports. In Savannah, truckers parked their rigs along the road leading into the Georgia Ports Authority's main gate, while the yards inside were empty.

In New Jersey, the strike halted nearly all traffic in and out of the Port Newark/Elizabeth container complex. Tom Adamski, CEO of Cross Port Transportation, said the only traffic in and out of terminals was by over-the-road and company-owned vehicles.

Hundreds of truckers attended an early morning rally at the Newark port. Driver Alex Paredes said drivers wanted the right to organize and bargain over issues such as wait time. Truckers often spend more than five hours waiting in lines at the Newark port to receive chassis or to be inspected.

The ports of Charleston, Miami, New Orleans, and Atlanta were also shut down, according to media reports. Nearly 100 truckers rallied at the New Orleans port, and only a few truckers reported for work. In Miami, 150 truckers picketed outside the entrance to the port, prompting port authorities to agree to meet with the truckers. In Baltimore, traffic was down

by 50 percent on the second day of the strike.

The CSX rail yard at Charleston, SC, was shut down June 26, as truckers honored a 6 a.m. picket line set up by more than 70 truckers determined to block



Striking truckers stand in front of a truck leaving the Port of New Orleans Monday. The independent drivers are boycotting over wages, skyrocketing fuel costs and a law that bans them from collective bargaining. (Bill Haber/AP)

efforts to clear the yard of hundreds of loads before the Monday shutdown. Rail engineers refused to move trains in solidarity.

Port authorities threatened activists with arrest if they disrupted traffic, but dozens of truckers continued to picket Charleston's three container ports June 28 and 29, with only a handful crossing the lines. A handful of truckers picketed in Boston, while others met to consider actions from Philadelphia to Houston.

In Hampton Roads VA, where port truckers struck in May, a shippers' blacklist has barred several activists from work in the port. Companies also increased rates, organized

cook-outs, and took other steps to defuse truckers' anger. Although several Virginia truckers stayed home in solidarity with the strike, early reports indicate that the blacklist succeeded in preventing picketing, and so kept the port open.

Results on the West Coast were mixed, handicapped by lack of stable organization and communication. Leaflets circulated on

the coast cited poor working conditions and high fuel prices, but also demanded that the bosses drop all litigation against the Oakland 3 and recognize the troqueros as employees.

Many truckers were intimidated by an injunction against the Oakland 3, Rubin Lopez, Delph Jean and Irvinder Dhandu, troqueros who the companies accuse of instigating the April 30 - May 7 wildcat strike that closed the port.

When supporters showed up to join picket lines June 28, troquero activists were laying low to avoid being dragged into court. The Journal of Commerce reported that several truckers did strike in Oakland, but that because of chronic over scheduling of workers traffic was moving at near-normal levels. Early reports said that Los Angeles area ports were almost entirely shut down, but by noon most truckers had reported to work. However, an estimated 20 percent remained on strike.

The nationwide strike came at one of the slower seasons for many ports, but shippers worried that unrest could continue into August, when the busy season begins. The strike was part of a wave of largely uncoordinated actions sweeping the country.

The Teamsters held a June 14 national meeting of port truckers, and issued a press release calling on shippers to improve conditions in order to head off the strike. Their efforts appear to have undermined the strike in some ports. Press reports noted the IWW's efforts in support of the truckers, and several reporters contacted us for information.

Truckers!! We need your submissions. Send us news, updates, letters, pictures or drawings of the struggles in your ports and areas to print in our coming. Contact us at: intexile@iww.org or IWW, PO Box 11412, Berkeley, CA 94712.