

# West Coast ports shut down

Association won't send workers to docks until union signs contract.

By **JUSTIN PRITCHARD**

The Associated Press

**SAN FRANCISCO**— West Coast ports will remain shut indefinitely, the association representing shipping lines announced Sunday evening.

The Pacific Maritime Association said it would not order any new workers to the docks until the longshoremen's union agrees to sign and extend a lapsed contract they have been negotiating.

The labor crisis will ripple through the U.S. economy as ports that handle about \$1 billion daily worth of cargo shut down.

"They're just doing whatever they're doing," said Steve Stallone, a spokesman for the International Longshore and Warehouse Union.

Association president Joseph Miniace called the decision a "defensive shutdown" that came less than 12 hours after longshoremen returned to the docks at 29 major Pacific ports as shipping lines lifted a Friday lockout imposed immediately after contract negotiations with their union fell apart.

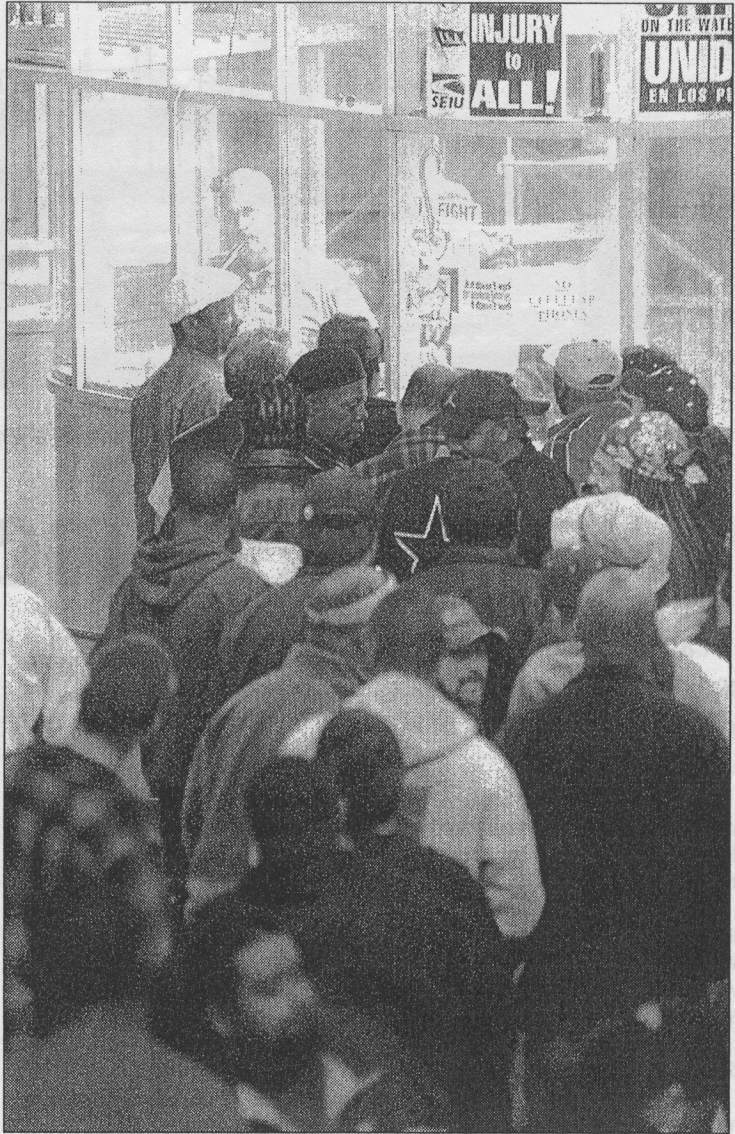
The association, which represents shipping lines and terminal operators, accused the union of deliberately disrupting work by understaffing operations and dispatching unskilled workers.

The association said productivity had "fallen off the cliff" Sunday, because of what some association managers said was the way the union was dispatching workers.

"It's like a plumber showing up to roof your house," said Bill Niland, a manager for the association's San Francisco area.

"I will not pay workers to strike," Miniace added.

West Coast ports handled more than \$300 billion in cargo over the past year. In the 36 hours the docks were closed, about 30 ships had to moor outside berths at ports in Los



JAKOB MOSSUR / AP

**Members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, ILWU, Local 10, stand in line to receive their job assignments at the Longshoremen Memorial Building in San Francisco Sunday.**

Angeles, Oakland and Seattle and Tacoma, Wash.

That meant hundreds of millions of dollars worth of Pacific Rim trade wasn't entering the U.S. distribution chain—a blow to importers who are scrambling to secure goods for the holiday season. At the same time, exporters feared a prolonged disruption would see their

goods rot on the docks.

Miniace appealed for a mediator.

A message left Sunday evening with the U.S. Labor Department was not immediately returned.

The union has accused the Bush administration of meddling in talks, which began in May and showed some signs of progress before deteriorating in the late summer.