Mutual Aid Pledge

ILWU-ILA Plan Action Program

NEW YORK — The presidents of the two unions that represent all dockworkers on all American coasts, last week pledged “all-out mutual support to win our strike.”

At a press conference, ILWU president Harry Bridges and Thomas W. Gleason, president of the International Longshoremen’s Association (AFL-CIO), issued a joint statement on a three-point program of mutual aid.

The conference was held at ILWA headquarters, 17 Battery Place, New York City.

The statement follows:

“We pledge to recommend to our respective executive councils this course of action:

1. That the two unions demand a common national agreement on all coasts covering the handling of containers;

2. That the two unions work for a common expiration date;

3. That the two unions map plans now to assure that gains won in collective bargaining are not taken away by governmental action under Phase Two.”

During the course of the well-attended press conference, Gleason said his union was thinking about sending some ILA strikers to the West Coast to set up picket lines against operations of companies that are being struck on the East Coast.

The ILA has been on strike on both East and Gulf coasts since the first of October.

WOULD HONOR LINES

In response to a question, Bridges said if picket lines are set up he had no doubt they would be honored by ILWU members.

ILWU members are now working all West Coast ports under an 80-day "cooling-off" Taft-Hartley injunction which was demanded by President Nixon for the West Coast only.

When asked for any details of the plan to extend their picket lines, Gleason snapped: “Does Macy’s tell Gimbel’s?”

Concerning East Coast negotiations, Gleason said their employers “don’t seem to want to negotiate. They’re always going into causation — afraid to sit down and bargain.”

Bridges told the press that on the West Coast the ILWU and PMA were in the process of negotiating a tentative agreement when Taft-Hartley was invoked, putting an end to those negotiations.

In reply to another question, Bridges said the ILWU “wouldn’t necessarily” go back on strike when the injunction is lifted. He added, however, that both unions will be in “close contact” on the progress of negotiations on both coasts.

He also warned that if negotiated settlements are not approved by the Pay Board under Phase Two, “we’ll go out together and won’t go back until it is settled.”

NO DIVIDE AND CONQUER

Mr. Gleason said the three-pronged mutual assistance pact is aimed at meeting the federal government’s ‘tactic of using the Taft-Hartley law to “divide and conquer’ the two longshore unions.

He referred to the use of an injunction to stop the 100-day West Coast strike, while employers seek to use the National Labor Relations Board on the East and Gulf coasts on a local-to-local basis to force workers back to the job.

“The administration wants to divide and conquer us,” he declared. “They think they have us on the run, but they haven’t.”

At a number of major East and Gulf ports, employers have filed legal challenges with the NLRB to try to force the men back to work. The legal actions claim that ILA members are conducting secondary boycotts in support of their unions’ demands against shippers in New York. Injunctions have been sought in New Orleans, Mobile, Philadelphia, Baltimore and other ports. There have been threats of massive fines.

ILA RETALIATES

Gleason announced that the ILA has filed complaints of its own. One of these, against the New York Shipping Association and its employer members, charges them with “refusing to negotiate in good faith” and in conspiring to negotiate “an illegal agreement in restraint of trade.”

The ILA leader said the shippers refused to continue the Guaranteed Annual Income, now the course of the wage freeze, and wanted to change the contract unilaterally instead of bargaining across the table.

Another complaint was filed with the NLRB against the Council of North Atlantic Shipping Associations—a management group representing New York, Boston, Providence, R.I., Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Hampton Roads, Va.

This complaint also charged refusal to bargain in good faith.