

Dock Strike Brought On by Union Fight?

SAN FRANCISCO — (UPI) — The current West Coast dock strike may have been brought on as a showdown between Harry Bridges and a group of "Young Turks" in the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union who want to oust him, a high federal official said yesterday.

Helen D. Bentley, chairman of the Federal Maritime Commission, told a luncheon meeting that government officials have heard "stories" about the tieup in Pacific Coast ports.

"The stories being that sharp differences exist between the Old Guard leaders of the ILWU, that there is bitter friction between Harry Bridges and Lou Goldblatt, that all of the Young Turks want to bounce all of the old timers," she said.

Mrs. Bentley spoke before the San Francisco Commonwealth Club.

It is not clear, she said, "as to whether the basic malaise behind the strike is economic differences between labor and management, or whether it is in whole or in part caused or aggravated by internal ILWU difficulties."

She said if the strike is caused by internal union problems there would be no value in government interference.

The suggestion of an internal union dispute at the center of the strike is supported by the occurrence of brief port shutdowns on at least 10 days last month, Mrs. Bentley said.

ILWU "Young Turks," she said, may "want" to be able to tell the old-timers that at long last they too, have tasted the fruits of a strike and no longer have to sit around and listen about "how it was back in the thirties and forties."

Bridges, now 69, recently was re-elected president of the ILWU, a post which he has held for more than 30 years. He led a bloody three-day general strike in San Francisco in the 1930s and endured a 16-year battle with the U.S. government which sought after World War II to deport him to Australia charging that he was a communist.