

## **Negotiations continue in clerical worker strike at West Coast ports**

By Kristopher Hanson, Staff Writer  
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LONG BEACH - Negotiations were continuing late Wednesday between office workers and shipping companies involved in a week-old strike at the ports.

The parties are seeking to resolve differences on job security language for more than 900 people who process orders and handle customer service at the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles.

The workers walked off the job July 1 after failing to reach an agreement by the expiration of their old labor contract.

So far, there has been limited disruption of cargo.

Union negotiator John Fageaux Jr. said negotiations Tuesday were fruitful, with gains made on seniority and grievance language, but the groups remain far apart on proposed job protection wording.

The Harbor Employers Association, which represents 14 international shipping companies, began negotiating with a unit of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union in mid-April, but the talks stalled in late June after both sides failed to move significantly from their positions.

Workers have set up picket lines at a few terminals around the port complex, but the strike is not being honored by the ILWU's longshore division, whose workforce handles the bulk of cargo along the West Coast.

Longshoremen have typically honored picket lines, but a labor arbitrator has prevented them from doing so this time by ruling that the strike is not legitimate under union-employer rules.

The arbitrator said strikers "bargained in bad faith"

Meanwhile, employers contend their offer guarantees job protection and limits outsourcing - a claim the union disputes.

"The employers ask simply that they only be required to call in temporary employees or hire new employees when there is a real business need," Steve Getzug, the group's spokesman, said in a statement.