Over the last thirty-five years changes in the global economy have undermined bargaining power for many U.S. workers. Corporations have pitted U.S. workers against workers in other countries to drive down wages, erode health and safety standards and avoid regulation. But the transformation of how goods are made and moved has also created enormous leverage for workers in the transportation chain. With organization and solidarity these workers are in a better position than most to reverse the global race to the bottom and reclaim good jobs for themselves and for millions of other workers across the country and around the world.

This pamphlet looks at the network of ship hands, longshoremen, truck drivers, railroad operators, and warehouse workers that make the global marketplace possible. To the average consumer these workers are almost invisible, but they stand at the center of today's economy, moving billions of dollars of goods daily. If globalization has allowed modern corporations to use the world as their workshop, it's only possible because of the increasingly complicated network of people and machines that move things from one place to another.
A REVOLUTION IN GLOBAL SHIPPING

Today the global economy depends on goods flowing seamlessly over oceans and across borders. Retailers rely less on inventory stored in big warehouses. Now they deliver goods “just-in-time” to the customer, using ships, terminal yards and trucks as their mobile warehouses. This global transportation network has become the circulatory system of the international economy.

Prior to the invention of the shipping container, transporting goods across the ocean was slow, costly, and labor intensive. A small army of longshoremen handled the crates, barrels, and cartons that mingled with fresh fruit, steel coils, and sacks of coffee in a ship’s hold. Muscle, not machinery, was the most common solution to moving goods in or out of port.

The container, a dull, 40-foot steel box, changed all that. Now the cargo riding inside a ship could be quickly unloaded by a crane onto the back of a truck or rail car. After containerization, a job that previously took 125 dockworkers ten days could now be done by 40 dockworkers in 12 hours. By transforming how things are moved, the container made it possible for manufacturers to move their factories nearly anywhere. Corporations jumped at the chance to boost profits, scouring the globe in search of low wages and lax labor and environmental standards.

TEUs (TWENTY-FOOT EQUIVALENT UNITS) ENTERING OR EXITING THE UNITED STATES, CANADA OR MEXICO

U.S. INTERNATIONAL TRADE 2006
Total value of all goods traded with the U.S. (imports plus exports), measured in U.S. dollars.
China includes Hong Kong and Macau, but not Taiwan.

GLOBAL CONTAINER TRAFFIC
Measured in Twenty-Foot Equivalent Units (a standard container box with dimensions of 20’ x 8’ x 8’-6”).
TEUs handled in 2004 (top 50 ports):

A Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit, or TEU, is a volume measurement equal to the dimensions of a 20-foot shipping container. Last year over 44 million TEUs moved in and out of the U.S. – almost double the number from ten years ago and more than four times the volume in 1980.
THE CARGO CHAIN

How does this dizzying array of commodities get from the factory to the shopping mall? Let’s take the example of the iPod, the music player that 35 million Americans have snapped off the shelves over the past six years.

1. THE FACTORY & LOADING DOCK

Orders for an iPod bought today were likely made online by China. It is becoming common for e-commerce orders to actually be drop shipped from manufacturers to US warehouses. The iPods are then loaded on to container ships at Shanghai and loaded on to ships bound for the US West Coast.

2. EXPORT TRUCK, RAIL & PORT

The container leaves the loading dock. It is loaded onto a trailer and driven by a company truck. If the client is in a coastal port, the trailer will drive to the rail yard and pick up the containers. It then runs to a nearby rail yard for loading onto a train, which will take it to the port. If the harbor is a river port, the containers are loaded directly onto the river boat that will ship it to the port.

3. THE SHIP & OCEAN VOYAGE

The container is loaded onto the ship. The ship leaves the port and heads to the US West Coast. The ship arrives at the US West Coast and unloads the containers.

4. THE HARBOR

The harbor will either deliver the containers to the ship or the ship will deliver the containers to the harbor. The containers are loaded onto the ship, which then leaves the harbor.

5. IMPORT TERMINAL

The container arrives at the container terminal on the US West Coast. The containers are unloaded and delivered to the warehouse.

6. TRUCK & RAIL

The container is loaded onto a truck and delivered to the warehouse. The container is then loaded onto a train and delivered to the warehouse.

7. DISTRIBUTION CENTERS, WAREHOUSES & CROSS DOCKING

The container is delivered to the warehouse. It is then cross-docked and shipped to the store. The container is then loaded onto another truck and driven to the store.

8. THE STORE

The container is delivered to the store. The store will unload the containers and sort them into the different categories. The containers are then loaded onto the trucks and driven to the store.

THE WORKERS

Each link in the chain depends on its own workforce, but the system of global cargo transportation requires coordination between every group of workers. A problem at any link in the chain can cause the entire system to back up.

CONTAINER SHIP CREWS

- 70,000 men and women worldwide work on container ships.
- They are responsible for operating every aspect of the ship's operations.
- They are paid the same worldwide according to their rank.

HARBOUR PILOTS & TUGBOAT OPERATORS

- 26,000 people work as tugboat pilots or as harbor pilots in the United States.
- They are responsible for steering the ships in and out of port.

LONGSHORE WORKERS

- 60,000 US workers move cargo across the nation's docks.
- They work in nearly all American cities, both large and small.

PORT TRUCKERS

- 60,000 drivers carry containers out of the nation's ports to nearly rail transfer stations or warehouses.
- They are responsible for delivering the containers to the warehouse.

FREIGHT DRIVERS

- 460,000 freight truckers cross the nation's highways every day.
- They are responsible for delivering the containers to the warehouse.

RAILROAD WORKERS

- 165,000 people work in the railroad industry in the United States.
- They are responsible for delivering the containers to the warehouse.

WAREHOUSE WORKERS

- 350,000 people work in the nation's massive network of warehouses and distribution centers.
- They are responsible for managing the containers in the warehouse.

EXPRESSION PACKAGE DELIVERY

- 80,000 people work for the nation's largest package delivery service.
- They are responsible for delivering the packages to the warehouse.

LOGISTICS PLANNERS

- 440,000 people work in the logistics industry.
- They are responsible for managing the entire transportation process from the factory to the warehouse.

THE CORPORATIONS

Who sits atop this new web of worldwide production, shipping, and distribution? Some companies are household names. Others are anonymous giants of today's global economy.

CARRIERS OR SHIP OWNERS

- United States lines, Maersk, A.P. Moller-Maersk, Hapag-Lloyd

TERMINAL OPERATORS OR ST EDOREES

- CMA-CGM, Mediterranean, OOCL, Cosco

FREIGHT SHIPPING

- Schneider, Maersk, CMA-CGM, OOCL

R AILROAD TRANSPORT

- CSX, Amtrak, Norfolk Southern, Union Pacific

EXPRESS DELIVERY

- FedEx, UPS, DHL

RETAILERS

- Wal-Mart, Target, Amazon, Walmart, Costco

PLANNING, INFORMATION & CLERICAL SERVICES

- Amazon, FedEx, UPS, DHL, and others

LOGISTICS PLANNERS

- 440,000 people work in the logistics industry.
- They are responsible for managing the entire transportation process from the factory to the warehouse.
SOLIDARITY VERSUS COMPETITION:
FIGHTING FOR GOOD JOBS IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

This pamphlet shows the transportation network that corporations use to move goods into the United States from around the world. This network stretches through Canada and Mexico, connecting workers across national boundaries, industries and occupations.

Workers in this system can build strong unions, create safe workplaces, and secure good jobs for themselves and their communities, if they find a way to act together. With solidarity and coordination, they could also use their position in the global economy to leverage good jobs for retail workers in the U.S. and manufacturing workers overseas.

Corporations see the transportation network as an interlocking system, and it’s important for workers to see it that way too. The veins of this network reveal where workers have power; the shipping lanes, ports, highways, and rail lines that connect U.S. cities and towns to each other and to the rest of the world. These maps also show how corporations can short-circuit that power—playing workers in different parts of the system off of one another.

In this context workers can only build lasting strength through organizing and solidarity—bringing union rights to nonunion workers and building ties between different workplaces and across different industries.

Longshore workers must forge links with dockworkers in other ports, as well as with port truckers, rail workers, freight haulers and warehouse workers. The same is true for other workers in the system. The old saying is as true today as ever “An injury to one is an injury to all.”

CREDITS
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THE CENTER FOR URBAN PEDAGOGY (CUP)
CUP makes educational projects about places and how they change.
www.anothercupdevelopment.org

LABOR NOTES
Labor Notes is a non-profit organization that has been the voice of union activists who want to “put the movement back in the labor movement” since 1979. Through our monthly magazine, books, and conferences we connect workers across the country and around the world who want to fight back and win at work.
www.labornotes.org

THE LONGSHORE WORKERS’ COALITION (LWC)
The LWC is a movement of ILA members and retirees organizing to build a stronger and more democratic longshore union. We are crane operators and car drivers, checkers and baggage handlers, lashers, mechanics, hustler drivers, breakbulk handlers, tugboat operators and warehouse workers. We are black and white workers, women and men, immigrants and native born. We have members in ports up and down the East and Gulf Coasts: Hampton Roads, NY/NJ, Charleston, Savannah, Wilmington, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Jacksonville, Mobile, Ft. Lauderdale, Miami, Lake Charles, Houston, Canada, Puerto Rico and more.
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THUMB
Thumb is a graphic design office that works on both commissioned and speculative projects, usually in the areas of architecture and urbansim.
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