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Sept 11, 2015

Surge in transpacific trade shows no sign of slowing

Linton Nightingale | Wednesday, 09 September 2015

Imports from Asia climb 12.2% in July, as Pacific ports continue to win back traffic from Atlantic rivals



Transpacific traffic recorded double-digit growth for the second successive month in July.

With service levels gradually returning to normal at ports on the Pacific coast and sustained growth in the US economy helping to add weight to the American consumer's purse, imports from Asia have risen steadily since April, and in July it was the biggest leap yet.

The latest figures from Container Trades Statistics show that box numbers on the trade surged 12.2% in July from 1.4m teu to 1.6m teu over last year, while year-to-date volumes are tracking 8.4% above 2014 levels at 9.7m teu.

Healthy levels of growth were reported at ports on the Atlantic and Pacific seaboard in July, but it was the latter that increased its market share once more that month, as confidence continued to return to the US west coast in light of improved reliability following the resolution of its much-documented waterfront dispute in February of this year.

Asian imports at ports on the US west coast grew 11.2% to 713,004 teu in July, and by 9% at Canadian ports in the northwest to 164,678 teu, helping the Pacific ports increase their share of transpacific trade to 55.2%.

US east and Gulf coast ports handled 623,872 teu, up 13.2% over last year, representing a 39.3% share of overall traffic. In June, Pacific ports held a majority share of 54.7%, while those on the Atlantic seaboard held a 39.8% share.

This time last year the share of traffic was split at 55.9% and 38.9% in favour of the Pacific ports, with the remaining volumes handled by ports further south in Mexico.

Meanwhile, global volumes in July fell for the first time in four months with a number of key trades reporting a slowdown in traffic, including the world's largest trade, the Asia-Europe, which [reported a 7.1% drop in container volumes compared with last year](#).

According to CTS, global volumes carried by lines fell 0.4% to a shade below 12m teu in July, and were also down on the 11.9m teu reported in the previous month.

For the first seven months of the year, however, container volumes were up 0.8% from 80m teu to 80.6m teu.

There was also better news for the global spot market in July with the CTS index climbing for its third consecutive month to 77 points, bringing the average monthly index for the first seven months of the year up to 77.6 points. This time last year, the average stood at 85.6 points, highlighting once more how the growing imbalance between supply and demand over the past 12 months has negatively impacted the spot market.

The transpacific index rose one point in July to 99 points over the previous month, and is up 4.2% over the corresponding month of last year.

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Seafarers' union takes government to court over foreign sailors

Union alleges government is granting temporary work permits for jobs that should be going to Canadians

By Murray Brewster, The Canadian Press Posted: Sep 08, 2015 8:09 AM PT Last Updated: Sep 08, 2015 8:09 AM PT

The Seafarers International Union of Canada is preparing to take the federal government to court over the use of foreign sailors - some of whom are allegedly being paid as little as \$2 per hour - on internationally-flagged ships in Canadian waters.

The labour group, which represents unlicensed sailors in all of the country's coastal waters, has been firing warning shots for month over the growing refusal of shipping agents to hire Canadian crews - something to which the federal government has allegedly has turned a blind eye.

The Canadian Press has learned the union intends to ask the Federal Court in Vancouver on Tuesday for a judicial review of the practice of issuing the foreign sailors temporary work permits.

The union points to the 60,000 ton, Greek-owned tanker Almathea, which was just in the Port of Montreal and licensed to be transporting crude oil in Canadian waters until Sept. 13.

Fourteen employment contracts, obtained by The Canadian Press, show hourly wages for non-licensed crew members range from as little as \$2.13 to \$8.80, depending upon the job and before overtime.

\$2.75 to \$3.00, depending upon the job and before overtime.

Exploitation is 'common'

Seafarers union president Jim Givens said such exploitation is common in international shipping, where companies will hire sailors from the Philippines, Indonesia or other poor countries for a tiny fraction of what Canadians would make.

"The Government of Canada is letting foreign ships replace thousands of qualified Canadian workers at a time when 25 per cent of our workforce is unemployed," said Givens. "The law is very simple. They're giving work permits to foreign workers on ships in Canadian waters when the law says those jobs should go qualified Canadians first."

Canada Border Services Agency last year issued 142 exemptions to foreign ships so their crews could work legally in Canada, even though the union says shipping companies made no attempt to hire Canadian sailors. Another 59 C-10 exemptions have been granted so far this year.

It's scandalous and meant to improve the corporate bottom line of both oil companies and shippers, Givens said in an interview Monday.

A request for comment was made to Immigration Minister Chris Alexander's office, but no one was immediately available.

Givens said more than 800 of his members are currently looking for work and the temporary foreign worker exemptions are being abused.

"Those permits are intended for those who are going to open a company and employ people and there is some big economic benefit to Canada," said Givens.

"There is no economic benefit to Canada to this, other than allowing Suncor to put more money into their pocket."

Foreign worker clampdown

The Harper government [clamped down on the temporary foreign worker program earlier this year](#) when it set a deadline of April 1 for low-skilled workers to either become permanent residents or leave the country.

It also overhauled the program, requiring some employers to provide a labour market impact assessment and demonstrate no Canadians were available before hiring foreigners.

There are loopholes that allow international companies to bypass the assessment, but whether they apply to shipping companies is unclear.

At the time, Alexander cast the measures as "putting Canadians first."

The labour movement has made defeating the Conservatives an objective in the federal election and in some key ridings has encouraged strategic voting.

Givens denied that the impending court challenge is politically motivated.

"I don't care who is elected next. There needs to be a maritime policy and there needs to be a policy on temporary foreign workers when it comes to seafarers," he said.



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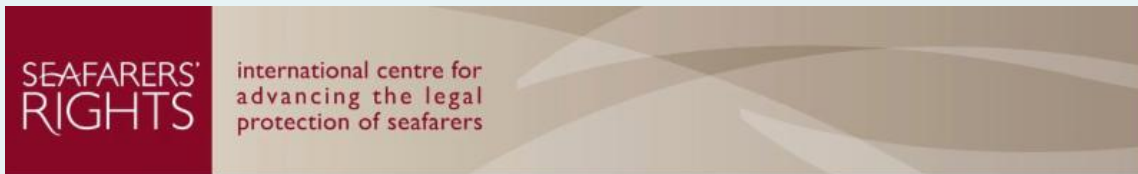
Are you happy with the status quo? Our country's slow economic recovery has left 2.8 million Canadians unemployed or underemployed. Nearly three quarters of the jobs created in the past six years have been precarious (part-time, temporary or in the self-employed sector).

With limited job prospects, household debt is at an all-time high.

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SEAFARERS AND THE CRIMINAL LAW

It is an inherent risk in the working lives of seafarers that they may be subjected to criminal charges either of a professional or a non-professional nature. Seafaring is transnational by nature. As seafarers transit from port to port, they are subject to the entire range of criminal laws of those port states. They cannot know and they are unlikely to have been warned about local criminal laws, and hence they are at risk of committing an offence without any awareness or intention to do so. Further, in recent years, several legal developments at international, regional and national levels have criminalised a number of previously considered lawful seafaring activities and created a blame culture, particularly in relation to environmental incidents such as oil pollution.

In an era where 'human rights' are considered sacrosanct and 'fairness' a right in itself, seafarers sometimes seem to be excluded from the entitlements accorded to others. They may be foreign nationals, and after an incident there is often a reluctance to release seafarer defendants or witnesses who are deemed to be a 'flight risk', and who might not appear at a subsequent trial. They are, therefore, treated differently and less fairly than nationals, and are often discriminated against. They might have the continued support of their employers, but if they are less fortunate once the ship itself is released, they may find themselves friendless in a strange land, facing charges that are incomprehensible to them under a wholly alien system of justice, and with defence counsel unfamiliar with the technical nuances of a maritime scene. Language, and the lack of adequate translation facilities, might well be a serious handicap.

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Western Transportation Advisory Council



WESTAC is a non-profit society of major transportation organizations in Western Canada represented by business, labour, and government decision-makers. The ILWU is a founding member and holds two positions on the Executive Board, one is ILWU Canada President Mark Gordienko and the other through the ILWU Affiliate in Saskatchewan the Grain Services Union General Secretary Hugh Wagner.

[Click here for the weekly information package we receive from Westac, with links to many interesting articles that relate to transportation.](#)

News in Review - September 5 to September 11, 2015

- Glencore considers selling part of unit
- Drought shrinks oilseed profits; Prices are up, but yields are down
- Potash corp. prepared to launch hostile bid for Germany's K+S
- Skagway set to embark on \$23M Yukon Gateway Project
- The real ticking time bomb in China's economy
- Will a weak Canadian dollar really lead to stronger exports?
- Tristin Hopper: Dear Canada, get over yourself. Nobody actually cares about you
- Innovation 'matter of survival' for oil industry
- New climate change policy will meet emissions targets, Alberta environment minister promises
- Ruling an advance in consultation issue
- Unilateral regulation is damaging shipping, warns IMO secretary-general
- Warren Buffett's railroad may suspend service over safety dispute with federal government

Disclaimer: These articles are not necessarily the opinions of either WESTAC or the ILWU. They are a sampling of topical reports on transportation issues only.

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Our Working Waterfront, 1945-2015

AN EXHIBITION EXPLORING THE DIVERSITY OF WORK ON NEW WESTMINSTER'S WATERFRONT

This exhibition explores the diversity of work on the New Westminster waterfront from 1945 to the present, including shipbuilding, longshore work, food service, and tug boating. The exhibit draws on more than 90 oral histories with waterfront workers, and is the culmination of 4 years of collaboration between the New Westminster Museum and Archives, longshore pensioners of ILWU Local 502, teachers in our City's schools, and Simon Fraser University.

The New Westminster Museum and Archives gratefully acknowledge the financial assistance of the Province of British Columbia.

Waterfront News

Reminder

The Waterfront News is the newsletter produced by ILWU Canada and mailed to members several times per year. The Dispatcher is the newsletter produced by our International Union and is also mailed to members several times per year. ILWU Canada keeps an address database for both of these, but we only receive addresses from the Locals or the Members directly.

[Copies of past editions of the Waterfront News are available here:](#)

[Copies of past editions of the Dispatcher are available here:](#)

If you are a Member of the ILWU in Canada, or on the A or B boards in any of the Longshore Locals you are entitled to receive one or both of these. If you are not receiving it now you should contact your Local to make sure they have your current address.

You can also send us an e-mail at communicate@ilwu.ca or phone us at 604-254-8141 to update us.



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