

Port Truck Drivers Denounce Harassment

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By Isaías Alvarado

"Stop the war on workers," says the picket sign that is held by Ramon Guadamuz, a driver who says that he has been intimidated by his employer, Green Fleet Systems (GFS), who serves the port of Los Angeles, since they found out that he was part of group that wanted to form a union.

"They give you the worst jobs so you get desperate and leave," affirms Guadamuz who participated yesterday in a 24-hour picket outside of Green Fleet Systems warehouse in Carson. Some of his co-workers and members of the Teamsters Union joined the protest that finishes today at 5:00 p.m.

Although Green Fleet Systems drivers who pick up and deliver containers at the Ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach are employees of Green Fleet, their salary is based by the loads they carry and they do not receive any overtime.

"We can work 10 or 12 hours but we don't know what overtime is," laments Guadamuz, originally from Nicaragua, who has worked at Green Fleet Systems for 3 years, although the last few months have been the worst he says. "They told one coworker that they would fire us as soon as we took action."

Agustin Cuevas, who started working at Green Fleet Systems in 2012, says that he and his coworkers have received bad treatment "They give us bad trucks and the worst schedules. They have made our lives impossible."

Others say they have forced truckers to sign documents rejecting the union, or have been asked directly if they are part of the movement to form it. The Teamsters claim that the company allows opponents to put posters in their cars posters depicting those that drive the formation of the union as "donkeys."

"We should be treated with more respect at work," says José Rodríguez, one of the leaders.

The drivers filed a complaint with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), resulting in unfair labor practices according to the Teamsters, alleging that the company ignored the law by retaliating. This could not be confirmed immediately in that federal agency, since the strike began after office hours.

Green Fleet Systems, whose customer base is the athletic shoe company Skechers, denied the allegations and said they pay and treat all their employees well. One worker said the protest was organized by outside interests without the input of the workers.

"It is regrettable that unions have taken advantage in the search of an issue that has been firmly rejected by the vast majority of our drivers," said the worker.