

February 2020



# DELIVERING THE GOODS

*A Newsletter by the Maritime Labor Alliance*

## ***Maritime Labor Alliance OPPOSES Waterfront Ballpark in Oakland, CA***

A travesty is occurring in the Port of Oakland. One of the greatest economic and industrial assets of Northern California is being put in jeopardy for the benefit of a baseball team owner and a handful of real estate developers. On behalf of several thousands of workers and their families who directly or indirectly depend on the Port of Oakland for their livelihoods and the citizens of Oakland who deserve responsible government decision-making, the Maritime Labor Alliance vehemently opposes a proposed waterfront ballpark plan now under serious consideration in Oakland, California.

Over the last few decades there have been efforts nationwide to take waterfront property that has been used for commerce and industry and transform it into places of amusement, recreation and high-end housing. The most recent iteration of this phenomenon is the attempt to build a baseball stadium for the *Oakland Athletics* on the site of a deep-water container terminal at the Port of Oakland. This plan strikes right at the heart of the port, its limited deep-water facilities, and the future of all workers whose livelihoods depend on a working waterfront.

Attempting to mirror the success of the waterfront ballpark of the San Francisco Giants, a stadium that was built on the west side of San Francisco Bay in an area no longer suitable for modern vessel cargo, rail or trucking operations, the billionaire owner of the Oakland A's, John Fisher, has stadium envy. Mr. Fisher, heir to the clothing company The Gap and chairman of KIPP, a network of charter schools that have fought against teachers' unions nationwide, is attempting to affect a real estate transaction including the A's current home at the nearby Coliseum site which would result in a new baseball stadium and numerous condos and shops to be built along the working waterfront of Oakland at the Charles P. Howard Terminal.

Howard Terminal consists of two deep-water berths with container cranes and a roughly 55-acre container yard. It is located between a major rail line, an overweight truck and rail corridor, and the turning basin in the estuary where all the container ship traffic docking at the Inner Harbor has to turn. Since 2013, Howard Terminal has been used as a vital container staging facility for the Port of Oakland, the location of the ILWU training facility and a berth for layup vessels. The plan to build a 35,000 seat stadium at this location is ill conceived and an attack on the tens of thousands of workers at the port and the hundreds of thousands of workers in Northern California whose jobs depend on it.

A look at the site map shows the many grave concerns for the "shoe-horning" of a stadium/condo/shopping complex into the industrial heart of the city. Traffic congestion would slow down port operations and shippers are already looking for alternative sites from which to ship their goods. One concerned stakeholder summed it up, "They want to put a *playground* in the middle of an *assembly line!*"

If the stadium were to be built, the rest of the port would come under threat. The container cranes of Oakland have become a treasured symbol of the city. In a tone deaf statement, the President of the A's said they plan on keeping the two container cranes at Howard Terminal as an *homage* to the port. More likely they would stand as *tombstones* for the

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port. Residents settling into their new million-dollar condos at Howard Terminal—with great views of the port and San Francisco beyond—would quickly realize that the bright lights and noise associated with nearby container operations are not as alluring as they had imagined. The port would face political pressure to limit hours and, with a domino effect, to shut down and sell the land to real estate developers for more condos.

Instead of sticking to baseball, the A's management has played on the fears of a city, which recently lost its basketball team and will soon lose its football team, with not so subtle hints that the team would leave if they don't get Howard Terminal. Testimonials before the City Council regarding the A's proposed stadium do not highlight the benefits of a waterfront stadium but show the symptoms of extortion victims: *Give them what they want, we must not lose our last team.*

Similar attacks on the existence of the working waterfront have occurred and are ongoing in Seattle and Portland. In Seattle, the City Council fought back against the greed of developers and voted against an effort to clear the way for a waterfront basketball arena. Portland continues to court Major League Baseball with promises of a waterfront baseball stadium.

The Maritime Labor Alliance stands with the citizens of East and West Oakland. These majority African American communities have been gravely harmed by gentrification and decades of enforcement of eminent domain laws. By leaving East Oakland, the existing site of the Oakland Coliseum and the perfect site for a new stadium, the A's would be divesting from a community to which they give lip service with their slogan, "Rooted in Oakland." Similarly, with the construction of Candlestick Park in San Francisco in 1960, communities were leveled with the promise of jobs for locals which never materialized. The community remains scarred while the baseball team has moved on.

The Maritime Labor Alliance stands in solidarity to preserve our working waterfronts around the nation for generations to come. Good government and common sense cannot allow real estate developers to strike a death blow to the economic engines of our country in exchange for penthouses and playgrounds.



*The Maritime Labor Alliance consists of five leading maritime labor unions: American Radio Association (ARA), Inlandboatmen's Union of the Pacific (IBU), International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association (M.E.B.A.), and International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots (MM&P). Together, we represent maritime workers employed in every sector of the industry. Members of MLA unions have served the country on the docks and at sea in peace and war from 1875 to today.*