

# CHAPTER VI

## *Year of Rebirth*

### (1934)

In the history of world labor, 1934 was perhaps the most significant single year of this century. Brusquely, the American working class burst out of the cocoon-like environment of the 1920's and early 1930's: a world of self-delusion based first on an intense post-war reaction against labor and then on the pain of the Depression. Three mass strikes in the U.S., in Toledo, Minneapolis, and in the West Coast maritime industry, announced to the planet that the working class in the great bastion of capitalism had begun to take a new road.

In the labor field, as the year began the San Francisco weekly newspaper *Pacific Shipper* and the shipowners to which it generally catered, anticipated success in the hammering-out of a federal maritime code, based on an employer-union partnership, under the National Recovery Administration.

Unemployment continued to remain high, and business failures closely followed. Shiploadings stayed recessionary. A mild upturn had been felt, but not enough to make a serious dent in the general economic distress. Smaller nations such as Cuba found themselves unable to manage their debts and threatened a moratorium on their obligations. In addition, Cuba and other less-stable countries witnessed growing political and social disaffection. Radical movements had begun to attract more followers; workers were growing more militant.

Certainly, little was smooth in the process of *NRA*. code approval. S.U.P. Headquarters secretary George Larsen wrote to Gill toward the end of January that Paul Scharrenberg, a leading S.U.P. official, "has been appointed labor advisor" to the divisional code board but that this was "the only capacity in which the owners would consent to have him sit in on the deliberations." The gains to which the Union looked forward under the Code were extremely meager. A \$50 per month minimum wage was, in fact, no gain at all; but at least it seemed that the Code would establish an 8-hour day (three-watch system).

#### **Longshore Movement**

Communist inroads in San Francisco were undeniable. The *Waterfront Worker*, a throwaway, had become a major voice for the dock workers, with the support of the Communists' allies among the Albion Hall group of I.L.A. activists, headed in turn by an Australian, Harry Bridges. It is now generally established that Bridges was *not*, himself, a member of the Communist Party. As the month of January drew to a close, the S.U.P.'s Pete Gill reported from Seattle that "a number of men on the steam schooners are joining the I.L.A." On February 2, Larsen described, in his reply to Gill, the situation of the San Francisco longshoremen. "The I.L.A. here is far from a harmonious body," Larsen wrote. "A so-called rank-and-file movement is particularly pronounced. Since they began organizing last summer, talk from some of them has been to the effect that cargo work in steam schooners should be handled by longshoremen, and not by the crew." This reflected a return by the longshore leaders, presumably including the Communists, to the old policy, followed by the I.L.A. in the first decades of the century, of attempting to raid work away from the Sailors on "jurisdictional" pretexts. Larsen warned the I.L.A. was arguing that "one union book should be sufficient, and, of course, that should be the I.L.A. book. This seems quite a favorite argument among those who have been members of this union," i.e., past members of the S.U.P. who had been forced to work ashore by the bad conditions and miserable wages at sea.

Against this worldwide background, in the last week of February and the first week of March, the West Coast I.L.A. organization held a regional convention, and voted to formulate demands for presentation to the stevedoring employers. Should the call for a closed I.L.A. shop, coastwide bargaining, a six-hour workday, and \$1.00 per hour be rejected, the longshoremen were to take a strike vote on March 7. "Strike fever" had emerged in various places around

the country. In Pennsylvania, 30,000 independent anthracite miners struck for a month and won some of their demands. In New York, taxi drivers, laundry employees, and hotel workers joined "revolts," according to a contemporary account published by the League for Industrial Democracy, *Strikes Under the New Deal*, which pointed out that the taxi strike "which at its peak involved 30,000 drivers, would have ended fairly successfully had it not been for the disruptive tactics of the communists ... They succeeded in having rejected an agreement which they had previously helped to negotiate. The strike lost strength, however, and within a short time the union was forced to beg for the terms previously rejected. The strike collapsed."

The March longshore strike vote showed 6,616 in favor of a withdrawal of labor and 699 against, along the length of the Coast. The week of March 5, *Pacific Shipper* hopefully but wrongly reported that "the outlook for a stevedoring strike was considered less foreboding last week, after a meeting of the International Longshoremen's Association failed to issue its anticipated order for a lockout. The I.L.A. group is said to be divided," the pro-employer magazine averred, "with the left-wing insisting on wages of \$1.00 an hour against a present scale of 85 cents, and the 'right' wing seeking only recognition of the I.L.A." The night of March 5, the Sailors' Union held its regular meeting in San Francisco but without recorded discussion of the possible I.L.A. walkout. Paul Scharrenberg had come back from Washington and, like the I.L.A.'s Ryan, expected an imminent approval of the N.R.A. shipping code. The Union also received word from Furuseth regarding the passage of immigration legislation considered favorable to the maritime unions. Along with Victor A. Olander, another top official of the International, Furuseth had come to center his activities in the nation's capital.

In Portland, the ferment in the I.L.A. had begun to have visible effects on the Sailors. With the end of February, local Agent Carl Carter had written to Larsen warning that "the M.W.I.U. organizers are getting busy around here and I am having a lot of fighting to do." Larsen had answered, "With regard to members of the Marine Workers Industrial Union, it would seem they are getting increasingly active. However, that's well. The more they raise hell, the merrier, as long as we don't get too many of them within our own ranks ...Incidentally, in the I.L.A. here, they have a considerable number of Communists. and they are creating considerable trouble and disturbance. ..Let them raise all the hell in and around the ships," he concluded benevolently.

The March 19th San Francisco minutes record that discussion under Good and Welfare "centered around the reported walkout of the longshoremen and the position this union should take in the event the longshoremen walk out. It was agreed that headquarters advise our members as follows: that in vessels where our members are working under an agreement we continue to abide by our agreement; that our members in all other vessels, especially in the steam schooners, be advised to leave such vessels in case a strike is called by the longshoremen and that in doing so they are not merely doing so out of sympathy with the strikers but also because of the low wage and rotten conditions prevailing."

With this simple decision, the Sailors' Union joined the longshoremen at the center stage of the American labor epic of 1934. Although Larsen was not fully confident of the dock workers' ability to win a strike, the growing impatience of the rank-and-file was irresistible.

A change in attitude among the seamen was marked, and continued to show itself through the month of April, in the reports of Carter and Gill. On April 6, Larsen wrote to Carter outlining the situation as he saw it. "The union represents but a minority of the men sailing," he noted. "The majority, those who sail outside of the union, has done nothing and is doing nothing. ..If a majority of the men in the ships today was in the union we would not have to depend on codes for shipping to get decent wages and proper working conditions. ..Let the men understand that it is because of lack of organization among us that we are faced not only with delays but also have to sail for low wages, miserable working conditions, and intolerable employment conditions. Let them be reminded that in vessels where men are doing the hardest kind of physical labor, namely, in many steam schooners, no raise has taken place since they were reduced to the starvation point some two years ago, .." He further stated that "whatever the longshoremen will finally get, they will get because they have sense enough to get into one organization. They get it through action which could not come otherwise than by concerted action. Their spokesmen speaks for the majority group of longshoremen."

# **STRIKE-SEAMEN-STRIKE**

**Now is the time to fight for better conditions and  
remedy long standing grievances.**

**ALL  
SEAMEN  
UNITE!**

# PULL TOGETHER!

stevedoring employers and the I.L.A. by the Federal Mediation Board, under which the I.L.A. would not gain a coastwide closed shop but would be recognized as the dockworkers' representative in the San Francisco Bay Area. Neither this nor various subsequent recommendations of the board found favor with the I.L.A. membership or with the employers. A new longshore strike date was set for May 9 and, on that day, the West Coast longshoremen walked off the job in the thousands. The seamen in Portland joined them immediately. The next day, Larsen wrote Gill in Seattle that the dockers had taken "a sudden notion" to strike but that "the longshoremen's union has not taken the trouble to notify any of the unions officially; nor, as far as I know, has the Labor Council been notified." Larsen advised Gill that the sailors should continue working on ships where a contract was on force and should remain at their posts on other ships if the operators were prepared to sign a one-year agreement 'with the union providing for the conditions outlined in the union's *NRA*. code proposal; namely \$75 per month minimum wage, abolition of the fink halls, three watches at sea, and a six-hour day in port. Larsen added that "Harry Lundeberg has phoned here a couple of times requesting advice as to what they should do. Both times, he was advised to stay with the ship and take it back to Seattle." The ship on which Lundeberg was employed, the steam schooner *James Griffith*, was operated by Griffith and Sons, a company that was friendly to the union.

Harry Lundeberg, however, decided not to take Larsen's advice and, according to a later statement by Edward Coester, who would join Lundeberg as a major leader of the union in the period to come, "during the 1934 strike, Lundeberg walked off his ship in Frisco two days after the longshoremen's strike was called and was in Seattle during the entire strike as a member of the Strike Committee." It is here that Lundeberg, along with other members, stepped forward from obscurity and into the harsh spotlights of public attention and, ultimately, of history. Coester went on to declare Lundeberg "all but sacrificed his life in the interests of the seamen. No single individual during the 1934 strike took a more active, militant part than Brother Harry Lundeberg," Coester stated.

On May 11, the district committee of the International Seamen's Union met in San Francisco. The S.U.P. was represented by Larsen and Selim Silver, with J. McGovern and Joseph Stanley as delegates for the Marine Firemen, and Eugene Burke and T. McGlenchey for the Marine Cooks and Stewards. The committee heard reports that "many of the steam schooners are tied up because the crews have deserted them. Several riots have occurred along the front between the strikers, non-union men and police. A serious riot broke out this forenoon on Mission outside the Shipowners' Employment Bureau and, as a result, the fink hall has been closed up." The sailors' strike vote recorded on May 15 showed, in San Francisco, 55 in favor, 14 against, 1 disqualified; in Seattle, where the branch had agreed on May 14 to voluntarily walk out, 54 in favor, none against or disqualified. In Portland, men were already being fed by the I.L.A.'s soup kitchen, and they voted 14 in favor, 1 against. Finally, in San Pedro, 8 cast their votes in favor with none against, and 1 disqualified, for a total of 131 supporting strike action, 15 against, and 2 disqualified coastwide. The almost ridiculously tiny numbers in the vote demonstrate far better than any verbiage the weakness of the S.U.P. after 13 years of government and shipowner tyranny. But that grim period in the organization's history had already passed. The greatest challenge to the dependent status of seafaring workers in the history of this nation and the world, the West Coast maritime movement of the 1930's, had been born. Woe to those employers, government officials, "labor fakers," or agents of a foreign ideology, who would seek to stem this mighty force! Rank-and-file men who went to sea for a living, like Harry Lundeberg; men like George Larsen, conscientious if limited in their vision; and their brothers on the docks and sympathizers in the rest of society, had begun to seize their destiny. Labor politics on the Pacific had changed forever.

By the third week of May, at least 8,000 sailors had joined the Pacific maritime strike. The shipowners had begun hiring strikebreakers as soon as the work stoppage began, but *Pacific Shipper* noted with dissatisfaction in a survey of dock operations after only some 10 days, that "work accomplished by strikebreakers, many of them inexperienced and laboring under unfavorable circumstances, was by no means comparable to the numbers actually employed. In some cases, at the Northwest ports, the operators themselves ordered the workers to desist as a precaution against violence to them." The slow work by scabs had backed up foreign ships in the coastal ports; and, in addition, the Australian trades were threatened by the probability that dockworkers Down Under would refuse to touch scab-loaded bottoms. The walkout had brought about "partial strangulation" of California business and a "blockade" in the Pacific Northwest, according to the *Shipper*. Much of the lumber industry was shut down completely and California fruit and vegetable growers were loud in their complaints. *Pacific Shipper* was worried by the effects of the strike on the police; although it reported that in Los Angeles and San Francisco "good order" had been maintained, the effort in Portland and Seattle was "vastly less" successful. On one ship in Seattle, "ships' officers held the rioters back at the points of their revolvers" during an attack by strikers on scabs; most of the latter chose to vacate the area. On the other hand, strikers in Puget Sound had responded to Alaska's supply problems by allowing sailing of one vessel, the schooner *Holmes*, northward. The Northwest unions were threatening a general strike if troops were brought in; although British Columbia dockers continued working, they were considering joining the movement.

**CHAPTER VII**  
***Year of Rebirth***  
***Part II***  
**(1934)**

Continuous attacks by police swung a certain section of public opinion toward the strikers, especially in San Francisco. Further, rumors of possible strike action on the East Coast and Gulf were spreading" Bargemen on the lines serving the Bay and connecting rivers were prepared to join the movement. In Port- land, the strikers had issued a public challenge to Mayor Joseph K. Carson, asking "why have you had nothing to say about the intolerable conditions which brought on the strike? You drag the red herring of

communism across the trail. Has no one ever told you that the only agitator we need fear is injustice?" Most importantly, the I.L.A.'s Ryan was trumpeting the claim that the strike was "settled." The Ryan "settlement" called for a joint union-employer hiring hall, preference for union members (without a closed shop) , and arbitration of wages and conditions. But the strikers were uninterested in such a truce. The dockers sought victory, and nothing less. Further, Ryan's proposals offered the striking seamen nothing. On June 17, the I.L.A. met in San Francisco to vote on Ryan's proposals.

Meanwhile, dramatic events had taken place in Seattle that would foretell the course of the movement in San Francisco. On the pretext of the Ryan "settlement," the Seattle employers were prepared for a forcible "opening of the port." On June 18, it was reported that the city's police had been reorganized along military lines, with squads equipped with gas, smoke bombs, and shotguns, and a fleet of cars pre- pared for service day or night. A cavalry section of 20 men had been set up. Seattle's "open port" was set to begin operations on June 20. In Portland on June 19, 2 men were arrested in a crowd that gathered at the home of a scab. The next day, Seattle turned out 450 police. Two hundred deputies were dispatched to dockside guard duty, with 150 in reserve to protect scabs. But 100 strikers halted work on the wharves by sitting on the Great Northern railroad tracks and thus stopping switching at Pier 40. The pickets also turned back trucks with supplies for the police and scabs, and persuaded a city utility crew not to install police floodlights.

June 21 saw a battle at Pier 41 in which Sailors' Union member Ole Helland was wounded in the head by a police gas grenade. Union representatives sought to prevent a massacre by warning the strikers not to sacrifice themselves to the machine guns of the police. Three strikers, in all, were injured when an attempt to stop a switch engine by another mass blocking of the tracks was answered by a mounted police charge, with clubs swinging. In response, the unions cancelled the agreement for movement of Alaska-bound ships. With rejection of the Ryan "settlement," the strikers' enemies in San Francisco, including the Waterfront Employers Union represented by T.G. "Tear Gas" Plant, and the anti-union Industrial Association, an old enemy of the Sailors, declared a similar intention to "open the port" by force. The Industrial Association assumed responsibility for this coup, securing the needed warehouse space and vehicles and coordinating with police. The lines were unmistakably drawn and the decisive clash was approaching. In the first days of its operation, after June 20, the Joint Marine Strike Committee repeatedly noted communications directed to Mayor Rossi, but they seem to have gone virtually unheeded.

### **"Opening" The Bay Area**

The Joint Marine Strike Committee (J.M.S.C.) at its June 21 meeting reported word received by Bridges of looming Federal action. "Opening of the port" in the Bay Area was now set for June 24. A letter of protest to Rossi was ignored. On June 24, a "Special Strike Bulletin" issued by the S.U.P. strike committee warned "The next few days will tell the story. We feel that we are nearing the crisis, the most important time of the strike. Every man who is honestly fighting the shipowners, fighting for a decent living, will be on his toes! Now

as never before, we are in need of good conscientious fighting pickets. Finks, rats, and yellow bellies may go home and sleep, if there are any such hanging around! Mr. John Shipowner, and our 'Industrial Association,' are planning to break the strike! They have a fleet of trucks all ready to go, and they have thugs, gunmen and scabs already to man them. They will attempt to open the docks in the very near future! ...Are we going to lay down? Have we fought this thing for thirty eight days, only to be broken?" Calling attention to members like Johnnie Lavoie, a prominent S.U.P. militant, and Bruce Pfeiffer, who were recuperating from wounds received in the battles with police and scabs, the union declared, "Strikers! Have you shed your blood in vain? Shall we tell the people of San Francisco that our brothers out in the Marine Hospital, were injured in a lost cause? Or shall we tell them that we will fight this thing to a finish! The answer rests with you! And make no mistake about it, you will be called upon to answer! And you must have your answer ready at a moment's notice!"

### **Sailors vs. Communists**

The competition with the Communists continued even as the Sailors girded for war. The June 29 Sailors' bulletin pointed out that the M.W.I.U. now had only some 25 individuals in Portland, and was absent from San Pedro. They answered the M.W.I.U. head on, arguing that while the M.W.I.U. claimed to be controlled by its rank-and-file it did not assert that it actually represented the rank- and-file of the striking seamen, who had cleaved to the S.U.P. The Sailors listed the following five demands which the M.W.I.U. accused the S.U.P. of refusing to support: a joint settlement of all the striking unions, no discrimination, abolition of the fink halls, "a seamen's hiring hall to be controlled by democratically elected committees of seamen on the beach," and "a joint negotiations committee." The

Sailors answered that they did *not* refuse the first three points, and they already had a joint negotiating committee. But they concentrated fire on the idea of a "beach-controlled" hiring hall. This was a threat that had existed in the seamen's labor movement since the 1880's --that the union could fall into the hands of men who did *not* go to sea for a living. Either the M.W.I.U. did not realize this, or did, and hoped to utilize a shore-based structure to control the usually-absent seamen. The latter construction was applied to the issue by the S.U.P., which declared "we will never recognize a hiring hall run by farmers and coal miners!" The Sailors concluded this particular blast at the Communists by reminding their fellow-strikers that the M.W.I.U. "accuse our officers and officials of selling out. Remember that the I.S.U. is *still* on strike!" In the same vein, an editorial by Herbert Mills, the S.U.P. strike committee chairman, said the M.W.I.U. was feeding only 350 men per day, the majority of them scalers, not seamen, while the S.U.P. was feeding 1,970 per day.

The first two days of July remained tense on the Coast as the strikers awaited the attempt to "open the ports." The "glad day" had been advanced by the Industrial Association to July 2, a Monday. Sunday, July 1, seemed quiet. The Sailors busied themselves with preparations to turn their *Strike Bulletin* into a *Joint Marine Journal* to be issued in 4,000 copies daily, and with other housekeeping matters. A third daily relief meal had "pepped up" the picket line, but was an expensive luxury and could not be long maintained.

At headquarters on July 2, the regular meeting of the Sailors' Union noted that "owing to reports that the port was to be opened by force the hall on two occasions today was completely emptied of men. No attempt was made, however, to get any trucks through the picket lines." Twenty thousand strikers and sympathizers had blocked the Embarcadero.

In Seattle, as noted, after June 21, the Alaska vessels that had been released by agreement with the strikers had once again been halted. The union informed mayor Charles L. Smith that "he had shown great favors to the other shipowners by placing hundreds of armed policemen at Pier 40 to assist in importing strikebreakers, and that if he would agree to take his private army from Pier 40, the Alaska fleet would again be manned." Although this suggestion was ignored, a vote of over 2,000 longshoremen had called for resumption of the Alaska agreement and the S.U .P. was under pressure to comply. At the July 2 Seattle branch meeting, members were warned to show caution on the picket line; an I.L.A. leader, Shelby Daffron had been killed by Standard Oil thugs at Point Wells two days before.

On July 3, the San Francisco Joint Marine Strike Committee addressed a letter to all locals of the American Federation of Labor, pointing out that that day, San Francisco Police Chief William J. Quinn had ordered the public away from the front. The committee warned that "pickets of all striking unions who have maintained their lines solid for eight weeks are now being driven blocks away from the piers." The J.M.S.C. called on the A.F.L. unions to elect delegates to a conference set for Saturday, July 7, to discuss and prepare for a general strike in the Bay Area, "made necessary due to the avowed intention of the employers to break this strike through force and bloodshed." In addition, they asked that unemployed members of all unions be sent to the waterfront "to stand shoulder to shoulder with our brothers in this struggle."

Historian Felix Reisenberg, Jr., a witness to these events, states that "police had cleared pickets from the Embarcadero outside of Pier 38 on the sunny morning of July 3. Longshoremen, armed with bricks, railroad spikes, and clubs, moved back slowly toward First Street and fell silent as noises came from within the dock. The Industrial Association of San Francisco had answered merchants' pleas by organizing the Atlas Trucking Company. They were about to break the strike, to open the port of San Francisco." These were the tactics that the Association had used to fight the Sailors and Teamsters' unions three decades before, in the great strike battle of 1901.

Reisenberg continues, "Shouts inside the pier were answered by strikers nearest the entrance: 'come out, you dirty scabs! Come out and get it!' A cobblestone winged above the crowd, ringing against a corrugated iron door. A whistle blew. Then a break showed under the steel barrier. It was rising. Wild yells drowned out the racing of an engine as the door went up. The mob surged forward, sending a rain of missiles at the first truck. Policemen's nightsticks thwacked on unprotected skulls; curses, screams, and grunts rose from the milling crowd. In a cloud of dust the strikers were fighting furiously with every kind of weapon short of firearms, forcing back the law. Police lieutenants bawled new orders; a barrage of tear-gas bombs broke in the strikers' ranks. Choking, the men fell back, shaking their fists, hurling vile epithets at the policemen. On the fringes, cars full of strikers raced off after Atlas trucks, their running boards lined with shouting sailors, longshoremen, and radicals. Beaten by the tear gas, small parties stormed along Brannan, Townsend, and King Streets. Drivers without union buttons were pulled from their seats and beaten, men in side streets were roughly questioned. Five o'clock brought temporary peace. Casualties from that first day of open fighting numbered twenty-five, thirteen of them police.

In Portland, nearly 30 striking seamen, including a marine fireman named Frank Conner, were arrested at the Linnton oil dock. The next day was comparatively tranquil in San Francisco, save for the explosion of Independence Day fireworks. However, the train crews on the Belt Rail- road walked off the job and the I.L.A. strike committee noted they were now eligible to join the dock union. Attempts to secure replacements for them from the main-line railroads failed. Governor Merriam used the excuse of interference with the state-owned belt railway to threaten the dispatch of the National Guard to San Francisco, but held off a day. Under heavy political fire from a left-wing Democratic gubernatorial candidate, the writer Upton Sinclair, Merriam was eager to show a firm hand.

### **July 5**

The morning of July 5 found hundreds of pickets on the San Francisco waterfront between King and Mission Streets. Thousands of spectators had also turned out, lured by newspaper headlines. Many of the pickets carried guns. "Excited, swearing groups hustled past silent pier fronts, moving along like low-lying storm clouds," says Reisenberg. "Men stopped to pick up loose bricks, and strike cars raced by, carrying strategists." Policemen patrolled in gas masks. At eight a.m., according to Reisenberg, the signal came when a truck drove out of Pier 38, and police began using gas and night sticks on the pickets. All witnesses agree that a shout rose from the crowd, and the strikers joined battle.

It was war. Boxcars on the belt tracks were set afire. Groups of strikers attacked policemen who continued firing gas grenades and swinging their long, brutal night sticks. Terrible wounds appeared, blood flowed, a haze of red seemed to settle on the battleground. The fighting continued through the fumes of tear gas. Ambulances tore back and forth along the Embarcadero. The enraged strikers were pushed into the downtown area. The spectators fled. This day, from then on, would be known as "Bloody Thursday." Strikers, evading police clubs and gas, ran along First Street and up the promontory known as Rincon Hill, where more stubborn fighting broke out. The clouds of gas forced the strikers to the top of the hill. Combat raged until noon, when a sudden quiet fell, and a truce. In the afternoon the fighting resumed with even greater ferocity. Says Reisenberg, a "new strategy was to avoid large gatherings. 'Then the gas won't be no good.' ...A woman with disheveled hair was shrilling near the foot of Mission Street. 'The bloated scabherders aren't here,' she rasped." More freight car fires broke out close to Pier 38, although most of the pickets were now in the area of Mission Street near the Embarcadero, several blocks north. Tear-gas salesmen mingled with police, anxious, perhaps, to procure endorsements for their products.

The gas and clubs of the police had taken their toll, through the morning and early afternoon, on numerous innocent members of the public, as well as on strikers. Resentment grew, even among the bystanders. The police began to show fear, and fired their weapons into the air. Then everything changed. "Pro- testing shrieks trembled the entire length of the water- front," writes Reisenberg. "'They're killing now! They're using guns!' , On Mission, at Steuart, police fire laid two men low. Another was shot down around the corner. Of the first two, a striking longshoreman named Howard Sperry was killed, as was the man around the corner, a Greek

Communist cook named Nick Counderakis, who called himself Bordoise, and who had been working in the I.L.A. relief kitchen. These men would not be forgotten. But the fighting did not cease. Clerks fled the office buildings, sickened by the gas and carnage. Nausea gas doubled men over, leaving pools of vomit here and there. Many in the crowd were covered with dust and sweat and blood, their clothing in shreds.

Governor Merriam had called out the Guard, and by late evening they appeared in the streets. In Portland, fighting had also gone on for long and bloody hours: strikers blocked the tracks of the Seattle, Portland, and Spokane rail system at the Linnton oil dock with their own bodies, throwing rocks and jumping on locomotive units.

That night Paul Nundstedt, S.U.P. picket captain in San Francisco filed a report describing his own experience in the fray. At 8:00 a.m. he had proceeded to Pier 38, and had then gone to Pier 34, where policemen blocked the strikers in every direction. The sailors then tried to make their way to 3rd Street, but the police drove them back to Pier 30-32. At 9:40, an unknown man had attempted to get the pickets to force their way into Pier 36, but they had been pushed back to the foot of Main Street. At 9:45, the police hurled gas bombs. The pickets hid between the freight cars, with the bombs going off around them. They crawled over the cars and reached Harrison and Main, where they began throwing rocks. The police charged with gas. At 10:30, the police again attacked, at Rincon Hill and Harrison Streets. The crowd headed for Main and Folsom, and were met by policemen coming down Folsom Street in open-doored squad cars, ready for throwing gas bombs. They pushed the strikers down to Main and Folsom where many were overcome by the gas. At 11 a.m. Nundstedt returned to the Union Hall for instructions.

To this report Carl Lynch added a summary written at around 5 p.m. Fighting was still continuing, with reports of eight to twelve dead and 44 wounded. Police were shooting directly into the crowds, and using a great deal of gas. The strike committee had decided to patrol the waterfront through the night, hoping to head off further confrontations. Attempting to kill policemen isn't going to do our cause any good," Lynch noted. Meanwhile, the Union relief kitchen had been gassed out. No strike bulletin had been issued that day, as there was "no time to write one."

July 6 was "very quiet" on the San Francisco waterfront, the impact of the two dead, Sperry and Counderakis, was enormous: notwithstanding the unsympathetic reporting of the daily press, much of public opinion was now firmly on the side of the strikers. The general strike option was seen not only as a protest against the presence of the National Guard but also as a memorial to the men struck down by police gunfire. Above all, a general strike could quickly resolve the situation by forcing the employers to back down. Writing to Carter on July 6, Larsen reacted to Bloody Thursday in the following words: "Yesterday was the worst yet; it was real war with two killed and a number wounded, many of them seriously. It was a complete change of tactics on the part of those sworn to uphold law and order; it seems to work only one way, and for one class."

On July 71 the *Joint Marine Journal* appeared with an editorial titled "Unity." "Strikers--You put up a splendid battle in defense of your rights the other day, and since that battle, the general impression seems to be that the strike is won," the editors noted. But they

went on to warn, "our adversaries tried to split the I.L.A. by attacking certain of their leaders through the medium of newspapers. They failed. So they started on the I.S.U., only they are working a little bit differently ...are you going to fall for it? Are you going to give up now after this long splendid fight?" The statement added "There isn't a man on any of your committees that wouldn't gladly resign. ...right now! Because we feel that some of the gang are swinging against us...we don't represent you anymore. ...but we are not going to quit under fire! And we are not going to stand by and see our union turned over to a bunch of irresponsible windbags! And we are not going to play the shipowners' game!" The editorial concluded, "Look before you leap. ...think before you act!"

An article in the same issue described the "strange opening" of the port of San Francisco. "The National Guard stands with fixed bayonets, in front of every pier with machine guns on bridges, roofs, and other points of vantage. Pickets are restricted by a ring of steel, a half dozen trucks made furtive trips from one pier, to a warehouse three blocks away and then the Industrial Association had the nerve to announce with pleasure, that the Port of San Francisco is now open to commerce. It would be funny if it weren't so serious. ...so stupid. ...And two of our comrades who came out to fight against the rotten conditions are dead. Others are dying...Many are maimed. ...They won't fight any more." The bulletin called on all veterans to report to the I.L.A. hall in uniform on the morning of July 8.

the funeral of Sperry and Counderakis . On the afternoon of July 7, a mass meeting at Eagles' Hall called by the J.M.S.C. heard reports from numerous union locals in the Bay Area, reporting favorable votes for a general strike. In Portland, July 7 had seen "some excitement" between about 7:00 in the morning and the noon hour. The railroads had attempted to move freight into terminal 4, but the rails were oiled for several hundred yards. After chasing the pickets back and forth, the police gave up and sent the trains back out of the strike lone. The Portland branch strike committee reported to headquarters that "the boys up here have taken up and old pastime of their childhood days, slingshots; and from the looks of the windows of the pilot house of the police boat, the boys are getting very accurate." The Portland A.F.L. unions had scheduled a meeting for noon, on the 9th, to vote on a general strike.

*Joint Marine Journal* associate editor Charles Quentin was arrested on July 11, while distributing the paper. But the next morning, Judge George J. Steiger dismissed the case, declaring "that he thought we still have the freedom of the press and he was very glad that the working men still have a few rights ...The Judge stated that this appears to be a very clean cut paper," the *Journal* remarked. The bulletin also expressed the dissatisfaction of the Union's members over the rumors that the strike would have to be ended through arbitration. "The main fight of the seamen is for the abolition of the infamous Fink Hall," the editors wrote. ':Are we going to ARBITRATE that question? The Fink Hall must go, and all shipowners' employment bureaus must go with it. That includes these little shipping offices on docks, where the college boys (who are scabbing now) used to come with their letters and get jobs and go to sea while we stood around all day and every day. ..waiting. .. waiting. ..chased away by police, if too big a crowd of hungry *seamen* gathered there."

## **General Strike**

But aside from the controversy over arbitration, the following days were also occupied with the solidarity effort that produced a general strike in the Bay Area. On July 12, the California Federation of Labor addressed central labor councils and local unions throughout the state, calling on them to donate funds for strike relief, and stating that all labor organizations should "come to the aid of the men who have carried the banner in this momentous contest between entrenched wealth and the New Deal. ..While big business has obtained the aid of the militia, the soldiers will neither load nor man the ships," the organization affirmed, adding, "This strike can and must be won!"

The *Joint Marine Journal* of July 17 summarized the outlook of the S.U.P. leadership on the general strike. Quentin, who had taken over the editorship after Carl Lynch had fallen victim to exhaustion and illness, wrote "we are fighting for decent living conditions, and the right to safe liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Our adversaries are the shipowners, and the San Francisco Industrial Association. We are not fighting against innocent women and little children! A general strike is a desperate remedy, and can easily lead to unforeseen terror, misery and starvation. It is intended as a gigantic mass protest of all labor, against unjust grievances. Let us

take care that we are not carried away by our enthusiasm or our bitterness, to the extent of harming the innocent. A General Strike is aimed at the capitalistic interests and not at our brothers of the working classes. Remember at all times to do *your own thinking*." Quentin jocularly listed the things that because of the general strike you can't do in town: Go to the movies, Call a taxicab, Get your trousers pressed, Buy gasoline, Eat in a hotel dining room, Get a shave or haircut, Buy fresh vegetables, Have your automobile repaired, Board a boat for Tahiti or even Los Angeles, Move your household goods, Get your shirt washed, Go to a night club."

On July 19, the general strike was called off. Within two days, the teamsters had begun moving cargo to and from the docks, although the marine unions were still on strike. No ships were arriving or departing from San Francisco. Lynch bitterly scored the teamsters for their return to work, and wrote that he expected something similar from the I.L.A., but, supported by Furuseth, he declared that "we must not weaken now." The Union was fighting to preserve its autonomy, its self-determination, within the broad movement, and had told the J.M.S.C. that any "matters of vital importance" aside from negotiations would have to be brought before the S.U.P. strike committee before any binding decisions were carried out. Lynch wrote, "We have taken the stand that the Joint Marine Strike Committee, is in reality only supposed to be a committee of negotiators, and that any matters discussed or acted upon by that committee should be matters connected with Negotiations. If the Strike Committee of the Sailors Union is not allowed to run our end of the strike, we might as well disband." An identical position was taken by the Firemen's and Stewards' Unions.

## **Winding Down**

On July 23, the longshoremen began voting on a proposal that arbitration by the Presidential board be imposed in all matters still disputed. Lynch noted in his report to the branches that '~ committee of five longshoremen arrived here today from the Northwest Strike Committee to find out what the score is. It seems that the boys up there aren't getting any news from the San Francisco local. If the longshoremen elect to go back to work ahead of us, we can't stop them. Our negotiations committee believes that the seamen are in a relatively strong position, and that we will get a break no matter what the longshoremen do." He also warned that 'Cmany former Marine Workers are running over here now to ask for our strike cards. We are not accommodating any of these communist lads of course." At the headquarters meeting that night it was revealed that the shipowners had a new weapon. On the SS *Dakotan*, which had left the coast before the walkout and was therefore declared "fair" although its crew consistently attempted to strike, the American-Hawaiian Steamship Company had circulated affidavits calling on the federal authorities to recognize the company as the employees' representatives. Apparently only one member each of the deck and engine departments had signed the forms; of the remainder, who refused, some had joined the union.

On July 24, Furuseth spoke at an open meeting in S.U.P. headquarters, and reported that the federal government was preparing a vote on union representation for the seamen. The vote scheme provoked dismay in Seattle and Portland, with the latter branch sending a wire to Larsen abusively ordering him to "keep us posted and don't crawl behind the bush." Controlling his temper but expressing his disappointment at this attitude, Carl Lynch declared in his report to the branches on July 25 that "I have learned the utter futility of trying to improve the lot of the average working stiff." He also informed the branches that the longshoremen had voted that day to return to work by a vote of 6,388 "yes" to 1,471 "no." In the evening, Furuseth again spoke to a strikers' assembly, which brought some 1,500 men to a San Pedro hall. Furuseth there argued that the interference with the State Belt Line had provided the authorities with the pretext they needed to send in troops, and that the Industrial Association had maneuvered the strikers into a general walkout. Most importantly, he pointed out that with the decision of the dockers to end their strike, the sailors now stood alone. The employers had taken the position that once the teamsters and longshoremen resumed work the strike was over, but the federal government had, it seemed, agreed with the I.S.U. that such was not the case. The "old man" emphasized the inequities of continued employment through the fink hall, or, as he habitually called it, the "scab office." He declared "the bankers are the real culprits," and cited an article in a New York newspaper quoting San Francisco banker William H. Crocker to the effect that "this strike is the best thing that ever happened to San Francisco. It's costing us money, certainly. We have lost millions on the waterfront in the past few months. But it's a good investment, a marvelous investment. It's solving the labor problem for years to come, perhaps forever..(when) the men have been driven back to their jobs, we won't have to worry about them any more. They'll have learned their lesson. ..Labor is licked." Furuseth commented that considering what the employers "said in their meetings about

arbitration, considering what they did about their vessel(s~ when they wanted to lay the foundation for a company union, it is not surprising that Crocker thinks it is over." But the Old Man disagreed. "I do not think it is over," he insisted. "I know it is not over if you are men!" Furuseth, and not Crocker, was right. The Old Man's remarks were met with prolonged applause. "Man after man came forward and shook Andrew by the hand," John Cooper wrote.

The movement was winding down; but the longshoremen seemed dissatisfied with the slow speed of the strike's conclusion. On July 28, at a special meeting of the J.M.S.C. held at the Fishermen's Hall in San Francisco, representatives of the I.L.A. called for an immediate return to work. The next day, July 29, a mass meeting of Sailors admitted the I.L.A. leaders for further presentation of their proposals. Paddy Morris, I.L.A. official from Tacoma, argued that the general strike had failed, that the dockworkers had been forced to vote for arbitration, and that even removal of the fink halls would be made dependent on arbitration. Although the government had promised to do away with the fink halls pending the arbitrators' decision, the federal authorities had then reversed themselves and declared that the halls could continue to function under the stewardship of a federal representative who would assure fair treatment. "The labor unions are tired of the fight," said Morris. "The return of the teamsters has weakened our position. We don't feel the fight is over --it has just begun," he explained. "This is merely a truce. The shipowners have lined up all Capital on their side, and it is a battle between Labor and Capital." But he admitted that a retreat would be "more strategic than a continued advance." Another member of the longshore delegation from Seattle, named Craft, affirmed that "we told you the other night that the northmen would

stick, and we say it yet, but the time is limited. We know that the arbitration vote weakened all of us. We must all return together and make the Marine Federation a reality."

The Sailors listened as a letter was read from 42 steamship companies, expressing their willingness to discharge all strikebreakers, to not discriminate, to accept a union representative in the fink hall, and to meet with a Sailors' representative for handling of any claims of unfairness. This had been answered by Scharrenberg who wrote that the joint I.S.U. strike committee would only recommend a return to work if the shipowners would agree to cease any use of the fink halls. Furuseth then rose to speak. After a few moments, a recess was called. The meeting was resumed and Furuseth continued, when a communication was received from the Shipowners' Association of the Pacific Coast declaring their willingness to meet with the Union for the purpose of collective bargaining, with none of the strikers required to use the fink hall.

The meeting voted for the burning of the fink books, plus communication with the branches for similar action in Seattle, Portland, and San Pedro, and submission of the rest to arbitration. On July 30, to "cheer after cheer," the hated fink books were reduced to ash, with Furuseth in proud attendance. The headquarters meeting that night authorized a return to work at 8:00 on the morning of July 31, although a coastwide vote on the return to work was to be taken. The greatest strike in the history of maritime labor in America had ended. The fink book fire was lit again on July 31, "and God help anybody that flashes one of those slave market records around these parts again," Carl Lynch noted with satisfaction. A cross was erected to mark the location of the grave of the fink hall. Lynch wrote,

"We have a real fighting membership now, and thousands of men who have a little taste of unionism, will no doubt line up later. We have forced the U.S. government to realize that Seamen are human beings." Referring to the vote in progress, Lynch said, "The spirit here in Frisco is wonderful, and if the verdict is to stay out, we'll stick. If the longshoremen go back without us, they will no doubt clean out the rats on the ship and we'll have the much less work to do when we go back." Post-strike cleanup work in Seattle included the election of a local patrolman, the need for which had become obvious to the branch. At the July 30 meeting, Harry Lundeberg was the only nominee and was elected on motion, by acclamation. Another item of business remained in Seattle. Ole Helland, shot in the head by a gas-gun wielding policeman in June, passed away in August, and was buried by the organization. The great conflict had taken, in total, seven valiant lives: Dick Parker and John Knudsen, of the San Pedro I.L.A., Shelby Daffron, of the Seattle I.L.A., Howard Sperry of the San Francisco I.L.A., Nick Counderakis (Bordoise), the San Francisco Greek-speaking Communist, and Helland, on the coast; with Bruce Lindberg, a 19-year old member of the S.U.P. stabbed to death by a scab in Hong Kong.