



West Coast Sailors

Official Organ of the Sailors' Union of the Pacific

SPECIAL EDITION  583

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Friday, March 12, 2004

In memory of the Emancipator of Seamen

Andrew Furueth

150th ANNIVERSARY

With this special edition of the *West Coast Sailors*, the Sailors' Union of the Pacific proudly honors the memory of Andrew Furueth who was born 150 years ago this month.

His was a life of superlatives, monumental battles, transcendent victories, and horrible defeats: a fantastic voyage. Just as his life, his personal descriptions tend to the extreme. He was relentless and resolute, austere and severe, virtuous and uncompromising, monolithic and multi-faceted. He founded, built and cared for the Union that he would eventually expel from the International Seamen's Union of America (ISU). Though his personal trajectory contained steep angles in all directions, Furueth himself did not waiver in his single goal: to improve the conditions of those who go to sea for a living. The age's feudal system of seagoing employment, however, which legalized the slavery of sailors, made legal revolution a prerequisite to improving conditions. Only the complete transformation of the legal foundations of seagoing employment could set the stage for changes to the evil boardinghouse system, to sadistic punishments at sea, and to forced labor. A task such as that, to overturn centuries of maritime law in the face of the determined opposition of the United States government and powerful shipowners, and to do it nearly single-handedly, must rank among the greatest social reforms ever achieved.

Furueth's dream that seamen could break the shackles of slavery and step into the light of a new day, became a reality on his watch in the SUP, earning him the moniker "the Abraham Lincoln of the Sea." His story and that of the Union are inexorably intertwined, as Andrew Furueth personified the Sailors' Union of the Pacific in its formative years.

Early Years

Furueth's background was like that of many Norwegians who followed the sea for a living. His father, Andreas Nielsen, who worked in the peat bogs, married Marthe Jensdatter on April 17, 1846. The young couple lived in Gaaberget until 1852, when they moved to a cottage in Furueth, a farm southeast of the town of Romedal, Stang Municipality, Hendmark, Norway, about fifty miles north of Oslo (then known as Christiania). Here Anders, the fifth child, was born on March 12, 1854. In accordance with Scandinavian custom, the boy was known by the name of the village in which he was born—Andrew Furueth. In 1855, the family moved to

Damstuen, where five more children were born. Nielsen's job there was to look after the locks of a dam. His income was too small to support such a large family, and the Nielsen's suffered continuous poverty. Meals often consisted of potatoes dipped in herring sauce and bread made of tree bark and flour. To supplement this starchy diet, the father would hunt and fish.

When Furueth was eight years old, he was sent to Ostby in Romedal to live and

work with Jonas S. Schjotz, a farmer, in order to help his family. The choice was fortunate, for Schjotz, noticing the boy's keen interest in learning, arranged for his admission to a private Lutheran school. When Andrew was confirmed in 1869, at the age of fifteen, the church register recorded, "knowledge good, fairly good condition." On June 2, 1870, he left the Schjotz farm and went to Christiania, where he remained for three years. For a time he clerked in a grocery store, and then entered a training school for noncommissioned officers in the hope that he might be admitted to the Norwegian equivalent of America's West Point. Despite coaching by his friends, he was rejected. But his keen interest in languages, developed while he was a student, enabled him to supplement his earnings by translating English, German, Dutch, and French.

Goes To Sea

Furueth began going to sea in 1873 in the bark *Marie* out of Drammen and sailed in Norwegian, Swedish, British, French and American vessels until August, 1880, when he quit a British vessel out of Calcutta in San Francisco, and went commercial fishing on the Columbia River.

Having lived under the brutal conditions that existed at sea during

those years, Andrew Furueth came ashore determined to change them.

Joins The Union

While Furueth was at sea, the Coast Seamen's Union had been organized in San Francisco on March 6, 1885, in response to a drastic wage cut by the shipowners. When he returned, on June 3, he promptly joined. This simple act changed the course of his life and eventually affected the lives of hundreds of thousands of seamen throughout the world.

For two months, the newly formed organization skirmished with the shipowners in attempts to stop them from shipping non-Union men at the reduced wage scale (\$20.00 a month for "inside" ports and \$25.00 a month for "outside" ports).

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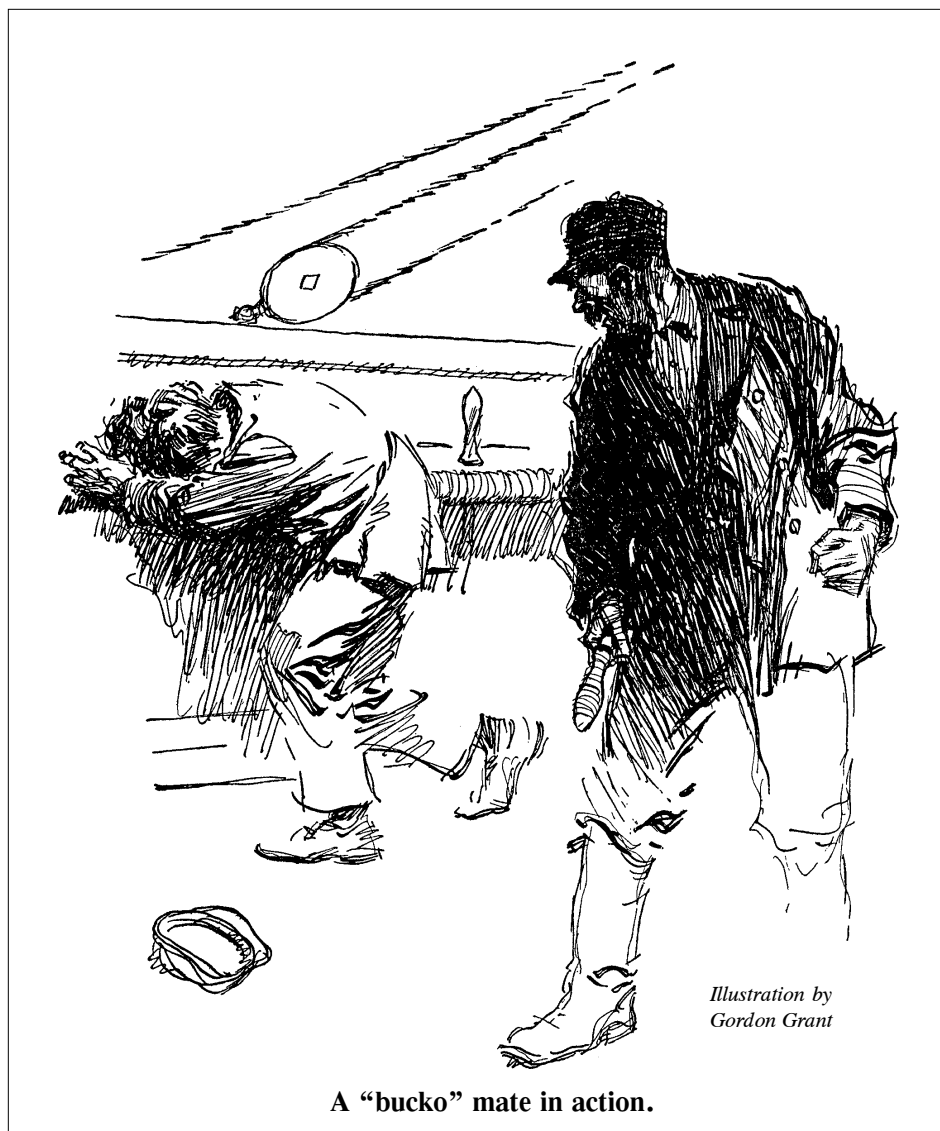
Andrew Furuseth continued

By July, 1885, the Union had 2,200 members and was locked in a life-and-death struggle to wrest control of shipping from the boarding house masters and crimps and to prevent non-Union mariners from sailing at all. As Furuseth biographer Hyman Weintraub stated: "The situation was not conducive to sweet reasonableness."

By the spring of 1886, the Union was strong enough to enforce a higher wage scale on all coastwise vessels—\$35.00 to inside and \$40.00 to outside ports. Prompted by a strike against the Oceanic Steamship Company by the Marine Firemen's Union, the shipowners formed an association and issued an order that all men were to be hired through a shipping office established by the association. No one could ship through the office unless he surrendered his Union book and obtained a "grade book." Captains would record a seaman's service in his grade book, noting the dates of the voyage, the grade and capacity in which the seaman had served, and a comment on the quality of his work. Without the book, a man could not get a job on any vessel belonging to a member of the association. With the book anyone who complained about the food, refused to kowtow to the officers, or quit because he could no longer endure the conditions under which he worked, would receive an unsatisfactory mark. This would effectively prevent a so-called "troublemaker" from securing future seagoing employment.

By late August, the Union struck the Shipowners Association and pulled its members from all coastwise vessels.

During the entire month of September, blood flowed freely on the San Francisco waterfront as Union pickets tried to prevent crimps from shipping men through the association office. Several men were killed. Off the waterfront, Union officials tried to negotiate with shipowners, but despite several meetings and compromise proposals made by the Union, the owners insisted upon complete sur-



A "bucko" mate in action.

render. The Union, without funds and with many deserters, gave up the fight on September 30, 1886. Many of those who had not left the Union while the struggle was in progress now saw no reason to remain with it. They either sailed non-Union or took jobs ashore.

In the wake of this disastrous defeat, Furuseth was elected secretary—the highest office of the Union—in January 1887. Instead of retrenching, Furuseth worked for an expanding Union with a dynamic program. In the same month he was elected, he urged the membership to retaliate against the shipowners.

Several months later he was among those most actively supporting the establishment of a Union newspaper, and he was on the committee that made this dream a reality in the *Coast Seamen's Journal*. In June, Furuseth tried to put the shipowners on the defensive by requesting the California Bureau of Labor Statistics to investigate the waterfront situation. Such action, he was certain, would reveal "*evidence of the most startling character...[and] show how the sailor has been kept purposely in his present acknowledged degraded condition, to render him a will-less commodity in the hands of unscrupulous speculators with which they could 'bear' and 'bull' the market.*" Union finances were put on an eve-keel. Wages gradually rose to the pre-strike level, members began to return to the Union, the treasury was rebuilt, and morale was restored.

However, after two years as secretary, Furuseth decided not to seek re-election but instead return to sea. His last financial report in early 1889 showed more than 2,000 members and a treasury of more than \$22,000.

Furuseth was prevailed upon by the membership of the Union to run for secretary again in 1891 after his successor, Henry Ark, was tried and convicted of stealing \$2,000 from the Union's coffers.

SUP Established

Shortly after his election, Furuseth focused his attention on ending the jurisdictional battles between the Coast Seamen's Union and the Steamship Sailors' Union that had been ongoing since the latter organization was founded in 1886.

Whenever a sailing ship was modified for steam, both organizations claimed jurisdiction. At first Furuseth tried to destroy the new Union.

Furuseth, soon realizing the futility of attempting to destroy the Steamship Sailors' Union, advocated an agreement providing for an exchange of books, which would allow members of both Unions to work on either sail or steam vessels. Several times Furuseth served on a committee to negotiate with the steamship sailors. Problems concerning the jurisdiction of particular vessels could be solved, but, despite repeated efforts, no satisfactory compromise could be worked out to eliminate conflict between the two groups. Finally, on July 29, 1891, Furuseth signed his name to a formal agreement which provided for the amalgamation of both organizations into the Sailors' Union of the Pacific.

Just over six months later, on February 8, 1892, Furuseth submitted his resignation as secretary. When the Union took no action, he insisted that his resignation be accepted on the grounds that many people felt he had "grown fast in his seat" and he himself thought that some other work would be better for himself and the Union both. As soon as arrangements were made to replace him, Furuseth shipped out on a fishing boat. But within two months the membership asked him to return. He agreed on the condition that he be paid as much as he would make fishing, and by the middle of June he was back in the post that he was to hold until 1935.

Battle of 1893

During 1892, the conflict between the SUP and the owners was neither a strike

nor a lockout. The shipowners tried to hire men who would sail ships for less than Union wages. They enlisted the aid of crimps to find among the unemployed and the deepwater sailors enough men to crew their vessels. If they could not get a non-Union crew, they paid the Union scale, but they tried not to hire through the Union hiring hall. The primary objective of the Sailors' Union was to prevent anyone from sailing below Union scale. It was aided by the fact that San Francisco was a "Union Town," where workers would not think of working for less than the scale, and others could be shamed into refusing to take the jobs of Union men.

Nevertheless, the SUP had a hard fight on its hands and resorted to a variety of tactics. It took non-Union sailors out of the boardinghouses where they would be at the mercy of the crimps and sent them, at Union expense, to live in the country. It shipped Union sailors in the deepwater trade, thus encroaching on a field of employment which the crimps had exclusively controlled. To harass the shipowners, the Union brought suit in court for the recovery of advances made to crimps above the amount allowed by law. Using a tactic called "The Oracle," "dummies" were sent aboard ship for the purpose of quitting the vessel at the very last moment, thus delaying the sailing. When these methods failed, SUP patrolmen used force to prevent scabbing. Blood flowed freely on the waterfront in 1892 as the crimps fought the Union for control of shipping.

In January, 1893, Furuseth confidently reported to the membership that many of the shipowners were ready to give up, but he warned that the San Francisco Employer's Association was urging a lock-out.

The association reopened its own shipping office and issued instructions that all hiring must be done through it. The Union countered with a broadside asking sailors to stay away from the association's office and offering to provide room and board until the men could be shipped out. It rented a house in the country for this purpose. More than a fifth of the Union treasury, \$10,000, was withdrawn from the bank to finance the fight.

Furuseth appealed to public sympathy. At a mass meeting on the Union's birthday (March 6), Furuseth declared that seamen were asking for justice. "**American seamen are the worst fed and the worst treated...Conditions have so degenerated that no native American nor self-respecting men of any flag will sail in [American ships]...**" Furuseth warned that the seamen would go elsewhere to earn a living if shipowners continued to degrade them.

In May 1893, the situation became even worse for the SUP. All shipowners who had so far refused to work with the association now joined the combination. The Union increased the size of the patrols guarding the waterfront and drew out the balance of its funds from the bank. But by the end of July, it was evident that the SUP had lost the fight. It ceased to patrol the waterfront and began to seek a basis for settlement. In September, 1893, it decided to lower its wage scale. According to Andrew Furuseth, this was not done because the Union was defeated, ran the statement

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Andrew Furuseth continued

in the *Coast Seamen's Journal*, but because the economic situation had changed. The depression was no longer local or even national, but "universal."

September 24, 1893, brought more bad news when a bag containing dynamite exploded outside a well-known crimp's boarding house killing six British sailors. Furuseth was questioned by the police and argued that the Union had nothing to gain from such a crime. He asserted that the parties who might benefit were the shipowners, crimps and boarding house masters. The SUP offered a reward of \$1,000 for any information leading the arrest of the criminals.

But there was little use in protesting, as the public and press were convinced the Sailors' Union was behind the bombing. A week after the bombing, the Union closed its hiring hall and allowed members to find work on whatever conditions the shipowners set.

Tomorrow Is Also A Day

With an empty treasury, with members rushing to accept any job, with public opinion which had been nurtured for eight years suddenly turned against the Union, the situation look bleak indeed. In this darkest hour, Furuseth wrote a message of courage and hope to the membership. His words were not merely the proper sentiments to be expressed on such an occasion; they had the ring of sincerity which made their central theme, "*Tomorrow Is Also A Day*," the watchword of the Union. After reviewing the events from 1891 to the decision to reduce wages in September, 1893, Furuseth wrote in the *Coast Seamen's Journal*:

Like a clap of thunder from the clear sky came the dynamite outrage setting the whole city against us. We are innocent...but it is there and must be reckoned with in all our dealings for the future. Hence peace, even the Christian peace of turning the other cheek, must be our policy in the future...

Since we do submit we do so without grumbling or crying...that is our lot a present and [through] it we shall yet come up to our old standard, but we shall reach there through the mind...Let us comrades take our medicine like stoics and from our trouble shall we rise again ennobled and purified...They cannot prevent us from staying with the Union, paying our dues and joining other willing sailors into our ranks. Our money is our own—our soul also—and while we are true to ourselves time is passing and we remember that tomorrow is also a day...Like the bird sucking sweets from the poisoned flower let us from our troubles suck strength and devotion to our cause.

Legislative Efforts

After the defeat in the 1886 strike, the Union turned to legislative reform.

The sailors knew that their chief enemy was the crimp and that, once free of their stranglehold, they could deal with the shipowners. Congress had already tried twice, unsuccessfully, to deal with the evils of the crimping system. The Shipping Commissioners Act of 1872 provided that seamen must sign their shipping articles, or articles of agreement, before the shipping commissioner in a sober condition. It was thought that this would abolish the shanghaiing practiced by crimps, but the law was easily evaded by having a sober man sign the name of a doped derelict who was later delivered to the captain. Another attempt was made in 1884 with the passage of the Dingley Act, which forbade allotment of wages to anyone except a wife or a close relative. So complete was the control of the crimp over the shipping of seamen that scarcely a man sailed except in violation of the law. After two years the Dingley Act was modified to permit allotment to "original creditors"—crimps and boarding house masters.

In studying contemporary court decisions, Furuseth discovered that seamen in the coasting trade were not subject to the penalties for desertion and other offenses provided for in the Shipping Commissioners Act of 1872. This had come about because shipowners had objected to the inconvenience of signing men on and off before a commissioner when the total distance traveled might be less than ten miles. Congress in 1874

obligingly exempted the coasting trade from the provision of the act of 1872. When the courts began to interpret the act of 1874, they read it literally and decided that if owners in the coasting trade were exempt from signing their crews on before a commissioner, the coasting sailors were exempt from the penalties provided for in the earlier act.

By long custom the seaman had come to occupy the relationship of a serf to the vessel. The earliest American law dealing with seamen, in 1790, provided for the arrest of deserters. All maritime nations had similar laws. Furuseth realized that the courts' interpretation

a Union, wages could not be increased, conditions could not be improved, and the men who would be attracted to the sailor's occupation would be the misfits, the derelicts of society. Such men would further depress the standards of the industry. If reform could not be achieved in the industrial field, it might be achieved in the legislative field. The Scandinavian seamen who manned American vessels believed that their adopted country could not deny them the liberty that it extended to all other citizens.

The Maguire Act

In January, 1892, the SUP elected a committee to formulate a legislative program. The result was an "Appeal to Congress" in which the Union proposed almost thirty needed reforms.

Most of these recommended amendments to the Shipping Commissioners Act of 1872 were restrictions upon shipowners. Vessels would be required to carry a full crew at all times and to replace any men who deserted. Owners would be required to provide transportation back to the United States for seamen discharged in foreign ports. This would apply to men who became ill, were forced to sign off because of cruelty, or left the vessel after it was legally declared unseaworthy. Shipowners would be prohibited from paying an advance on wages. It was proposed that the fore-castle space be enlarged from the legal minimum of 70 cubic feet per man to 120 cubic feet, that the scale of provisions be improved, that the deck crew be divided into two watches, that no unnecessary work be done on Sundays and holidays, that the vessel be made liable for any cruelties inflicted upon the men by its officers, and that the punishments for desertion, absence without leave, and willful disobedience to commands be slightly reduced.

Another proposed change was elimination of the "master's option." Under the act of 1872, the master was required to pay a seaman one third of his earned wages in any port unless the shipping articles specified otherwise. It soon became common practice, however, to insert in the articles a "master's option" to pay the seaman only when the captain wished. Another amendment would have given a majority of the crew, exclusive of the officers, the right to demand a survey of the seaworthiness of a vessel. The existing law made it necessary to have the consent of one of the officers. Since officers feared to incur the dis-

pleasure of the owners, they would seldom consent, and the crew was forced to sail even when a majority of the men considered the vessel unsafe. To counteract the shipowners' grade book, the Union suggested that the government provide each seaman with a discharge book, but give him the option of keeping or discarding his individual discharges, much as a worker ashore may offer only those references that are favorable.

The Union found its legislative champion in San Francisco Congressman James Maguire. In December, 1893, Furuseth reported that Congressman Maguire had divided the SUP program into six bills which he would introduce. Furuseth, at Maguire's urging, testified before the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee in March, 1894.

Furuseth was shocked at the ignorance of congressmen on maritime matters, but pleased with their apparent eagerness to learn. When the hearings were over, Furuseth went to New York, where he secured written statements from the consuls of maritime nations to show that the condition of American seamen was inferior to that of foreign seamen. He returned to Washington to present these statements to the subcommittee charged with considering the Maguire bills. In the meantime the shipowners had become alarmed and began to flood Congress with mail denouncing the bills as "arbitrary and unjust," "communistic and subversive of discipline," and charging that the bills would "place a premium on desertion."

Maguire, with strong SUP support, was re-elected to Congress in 1895 and asked Furuseth to lobby for the



Earliest known photograph of Furuseth

of the act of 1874 had suddenly made the coasting sailor a free man. He could now quit his vessel just as any worker could quit his job without fear of being imprisoned. After the 1886 strike the shipowners had lowered wages and imposed the grade-book system. Following Furuseth's advice, Union men accepted the grade book and went aboard the vessels, but just before the ship was to sail, they would quit. The captain was then obliged to delay his sailing until he could get a new crew. Often the same procedure would be repeated several times, and a vessel could be held up for days or weeks. Profits were made by keeping the vessels moving freight; delays meant financial losses. Under the old laws sailors could have been arrested and brought back to the vessel, but now they had the right to quit whenever they wished. Within a short time grade books were abolished and wages began to rise.

Now dissatisfied with the law that had been passed in their behalf, the shipowners went to Congress. On August 19, 1890 despite letters and telegrams of protest from West Coast seamen, they secured passage of a law making the coasting seaman subject to the penalties of the 1872 act, provided he signed articles before the shipping commissioner. For a time the Union conducted a vigorous campaign urging seamen to keep their freedom by refusing to sign before the commissioner: If a majority of the sailors had taken the Union's advice, there would have been no need for legislative reform. But in the early 1890's the Union was unable to maintain a solid front and was losing its fight with the crimps and the shipowners. If a sailor wanted to work, he had to allot wages to the crimp and give up his freedom by signing before the shipping commissioner.

Without freedom, there could be no Union. Without

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Andrew Furuseth continued

legislation in Washington. Furuseth and Maguire were successful and the first Maguire Act was signed into law on February 18, 1895 by President Grover Cleveland.

The new law abolished imprisonment for desertion in the coastwise trade, prohibited allotment of any kind in that trade, and exempted a seaman's clothing from attachment. *"The enforcement of its provisions,"* warned the Journal, *"rests with the seamen themselves through their Unions."*

During the fight the Union had made use of the Maguire Act to force captains to pay back to the sailors advances which they had given to the crimps. It was found, however, that the law was not entirely satisfactory. In the first place, if a sailor signed on a vessel without going through the shipping commissioner, an advance could be paid and no one would know. In a reversal of their former stand, the sailors now demanded that everyone be required to sign before the commissioner. Second, the shipowners hired any "farmer" or "hobo" ashore to take the place of men on strike. This could be prevented, the SUP asserted, if owners were required to hire competent crews.

The Arago Case

The most impressive demonstration of the inadequacy of the Maguire Act was the *Arago* decision. In May, 1895, SUP members Robert Robertson, John Bradley, P. H. Olsen, and Morris Hanson signed articles before the shipping commissioner in San Francisco to sail on the barkentine *Arago* to Knappton, Washington, then to Valparaiso and other foreign ports, and return to the United States. When the sailors reached Oregon, they decided they did not want to make the foreign voyage. Believing that they were protected under the Maguire Act, the men quit their vessel in an American port. The master had them arrested and brought back to the ship; then they were taken to San Francisco in chains. Furuseth petitioned for a writ of *habeas corpus* and hired H. W. Hutton to defend the men.

The case was recognized as extremely important because, if a seaman could be arrested when the articles included a non-American port, it would be a simple matter to insert such a port in all articles of agreement, and the Maguire Act would be worthless.

The White Act

In late 1895, Furuseth returned to Washington to work for enactment of the remaining Maguire bills.

To counteract the powerful opposition by the shipowners and crimps, required a skillful tactician like Furuseth. He kept his ultimate objective clearly in mind, found his opponents' weaknesses, and massed his attack where it would be the most effective. His stated objective was to revive the American merchant marine and man the ships with American citizens. By law, no foreign vessels could compete in the coastwise trade of the United States, but in the foreign trade American vessels had almost disappeared from the ocean.

American sailors were as scarce as American vessels. For even in the coastwise trade, it was estimated at the time that only 18 per cent of the total crew including officers, who had to be citizens, were Americans. No congressman could argue against Furuseth's stated objective. That he also wanted to build a strong Union was not stated, but was implicit in his every act.

Analyzing his opponents' weaknesses, Furuseth found that the American officer's worldwide reputation for "buckoism," cruelty to the men, was the most vulnerable spot. For several years the Union had been publicizing examples of sadism, and Furuseth had proposed printing a compendium of these outrages. The pamphlet, entitled *The Red Record*, became the seamen's most effective weapon. Every trade Unionist in America had an opportunity to read with horror the matter-of-fact listing of crimes. Every congressman was supplied with a copy to ponder his individual responsibility for the continuation of such a situation. In the ten years before publication of *The Red Record* in 1895, sixteen known deaths had occurred under circumstances justi-

fying the charge of murder. Many instances of cruelty resulted in the loss of eyes, limbs, or teeth. In only seven of the cases listed were convictions obtained. In the rest, the officers were exonerated for lack of evidence, or their actions were deemed justifiable discipline. The highest penalty inflicted was a \$1,000 fine and a one-year prison sentence. Penalties in the other cases ranged from \$25 to \$100.

The brutal treatment of seamen was not Furuseth's major concern. Brutality was only a symptom of a much more serious malady, but it was a means of putting Congress in a sympathetic mood to listen to the rest of the story. Cruelty was practiced not out of sheer mean-

cient provisions for the crew.

For months on end Furuseth remained in Washington passionately lobbying for a bill that would ultimately be carried by Senator Stephen White of California.

Although considerably watered-down from what was originally sought, the White Act passed the Congress and was signed into law on December 21, 1898 by President William McKinley. As enacted, its principal provisions were: abolition of imprisonment for desertion from American vessels in any port of the United States; reduction from three to one month's imprisonment for desertion in a foreign port, and then only at discretion of the judge; one month's wage permitted as allotment to an "original creditor" in the foreign trade; total abolition of corporal punishment; the majority of the crew, without concurrence of an officer as previously required, given the right to demand the survey of an unseaworthy vessel before commencement of the voyage; and an improved scale of rations.

It also gave seamen on vessels of the United States the right to receive in ports of loading and discharging cargo half of the wages due them, unless the contrary was expressly stipulated in the contract. The previous proportion (fixed by the Act of July 20, 1790) had been one-third wages due, with a like proviso. In both cases the proviso was the means of rendering the right of no practical value. It became important only with the abolition of the proviso in 1915 with the passage of the Seamen's Act.

The Seamen's Act

Although the Maguire Act and the White Act improved conditions for seamen, Furuseth was not satisfied. Until the freedom granted to the sailor in the coastwise trades under the White Act was extended to all American sailors—in fact, to all the sailors of the world—Furuseth would continue to come to Congress.

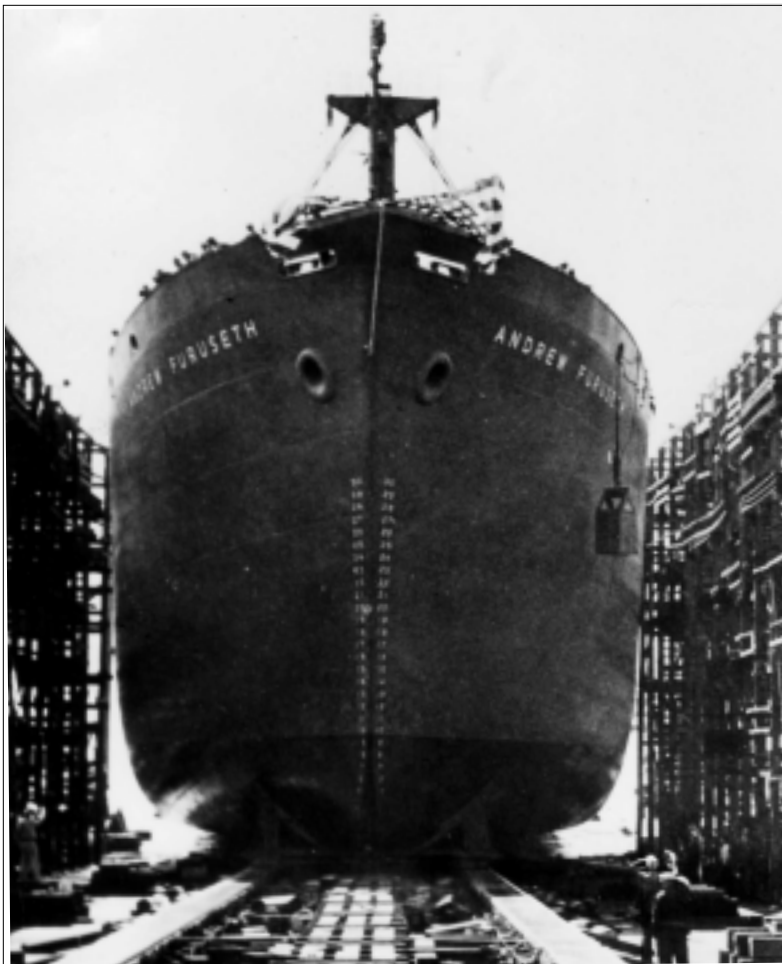
As long as the seaman was bound to the vessel as the serf was bound to the soil, he would occupy an inferior status. Furuseth's study of history led him to the conclusion that seamen during feudal times had been among the freest of workingmen. The master of the vessel had shared the hardships and dangers of the sea with every member of the crew. With the rise of capitalism, the owner stayed ashore. He insured or overinsured his vessel and cargo so that his self-interest no longer necessitated hiring the best crews. Men were now kept at sea, not by being the best treated and the highest paid, but by laws that made it a crime against the state to leave a vessel.

The first part of Furuseth's philosophy was that the seaman must be free. The second part was that the shipowner must be regulated, his freedom curtailed. Furuseth would not have approved of thus placing the two parts of his philosophy in juxtaposition. This, however, is exactly what he believed. Modern insurance, limited liability laws, and the increasing safety of navigation had made it possible for the shipowners to send to sea leaky vessels with incompetent crews without fear of losing money. It was therefore necessary for the state to step in and set minimum standards for the protection of the crew and the passengers.

The struggle to pass a comprehensive seamen's bill that began in 1892 gained impetus in 1904 when Congressman Edward Liverwatch of San Francisco introduced a bill to establish a system for watches at sea and a nine-hour day in port with the provision that no unnecessary work be done on Sundays and holidays. It increased the penalty for failing to "pay off" promptly at the end of a voyage, provided that a majority of the ship's crew might ask for a survey of the vessel's seaworthiness, and abolished imprisonment for desertion in a foreign port.

In the next session of Congress, Representative Thomas Spight of Missouri introduced a similar bill, which in addition called for increased forecabin space, the abolition of corporal punishment, payment of half wages in port, and more butter and water in the seamen's food scale. The same bill was introduced again in 1908. Congress, dominated by standpat Republicans, gave scant attention to the seamen's proposals, and none of them reached the floor for debate. Only as a substitute for

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The Liberty Ship s/s Andrew Furuseth pictured above at her launching on October 8, 1942. Built at Permanente Metals Corporation Shipbuilding Division in Richmond, California in less than a month, the Furuseth was designated a War Shipping Administration Transport with a capacity of 550 men and was operated by Matson Navigation Company. During World War II the Furuseth served in the Atlantic and Mediterranean Theaters. In 1947 she was sold to Norwegian interests and was renamed the Essi. In 1959 she was sold to the Japanese and renamed the Niobe. She was scrapped in Nirao, Japan in June, 1967.

ness, but to drive inexperienced men to do work they did not know and did not want to learn. Such men were obtained by shipowners through the crimping system. Abolish advance and allotment in the foreign trade as they had been abolished in the coastwise trade, and the crimp would disappear because he could not make a dishonest living. To make sure that the crimp would not use some subterfuge to get his pound of flesh, it was merely necessary for Congress to make the sailor a free man.

Again the shipowners were placed on the defensive. They argued that the crimp was a necessary evil of the shipping industry and that giving sailors the right to desert was unthinkable. "Why?" asked Furuseth.

"Is there any good reason why, because I am a sailor, I should have shackles put upon my hands and made to feel that I, of all men, am the one upon whom the United States is putting the stamp of servitude?" Furuseth patiently explained the relationship of these conditions to the building of an American merchant marine. In the early days all the sailors were American citizens. The captain and the crew came from the same town and discipline was easy. As competition increased and profits grew smaller, seamen began to be cheated, Americans refused to accept the lower standards. In seeking replacements, owners utilized the crimps, who found men without previous experience. These men had to be driven to their tasks. This brutality drove more American seamen out of the merchant marine, until now less than 10 per cent of the sailors were citizens.

Furuseth also found the shipowners vulnerable for failing to supply adequate forecabin space and suffi-

Andrew Furuseth continued

subsidy proposals or as extraneous discussion on naval appropriation bills did the seamen even have the opportunity to present their views.

An important alteration in the seamen's bill came about as a result of Furuseth's attendance at the sessions of the International Transport Workers' Federation in Vienna, where he found the European seamen unsympathetic to his, "*humble supplication ... that the nations issue a decree of emancipation*" for the sailor. If the European seaman would not strive for his own freedom, America would strike a blow for the freedom of all the seamen in the world. Hence Furuseth included a proposal which he had made several years before merely as a humanitarian gesture, but which now became the cornerstone of the seamen's bill: that the United States abrogate all treaties providing for the arrest, detention, and return of seamen deserting in an American port. Any seaman coming to America would be a free man.

If foreign seamen could quit in American ports, foreign shipowners would be forced to hire crews in those ports at American wage scales, or they would have to pay the same rates to their European crews to keep them from deserting when they got to America. But this was not all. In order to put foreign and American shipowners on an equal footing, all the provisions regarding safety, manning, allotment, and advance in other proposed legislation were included in the seamen's bill and made applicable to foreign ships in American harbors.

Many of the new ideas were incorporated into the bill introduced by Representative Spight on May 21, 1909. With a single bill embodying most of the seamen's proposals, Furuseth threw his full energies into arousing public sentiment to force Congress to take some action. The highlight of the campaign took place during the International Seamen's Union (ISU) convention in December, 1909, when eighteen hundred seamen in New York paraded through the streets and ended the evening in a mass meeting at Cooper Union, which Furuseth and American Federation of Labor President Samuel Gompers addressed.

The son of William Lloyd Garrison sent a message for the men who were not freed by the Emancipation Proclamation. The theme of freedom set the dominant tone of the meeting and the campaign that followed.

Increased agitation and the acquisition of a "strong earnest friend," Senator Robert La Follette, led to the first full-scale hearings on the seamen's bill in February, 1910. Furuseth, and other leaders of the ISU who testified before the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries were certain that they had created a favorable impression. But the final days of the session passed without any action because the Republican chairman of the committee prevented the committee from meeting.

Much more serious opposition came from the shipowners, who in the past had been little concerned with seamen's legislation. They had approached the problem from an entirely different tack. Most owners believed that American seamen were already the best paid and the best fed in the world, and they argued that these high standards forced them to operate at a disadvantage vis-a-vis foreign shipowners. The solution, to the owner, was obvious: subsidize the American merchant marine in the same way that Congress passed tariff laws to protect the high wages paid in American manufacturing concerns.

Although he denied that he opposed subsidies in principle, Furuseth led the ISU in fighting every subsidy measure proposed in Congress.

At the 1912 and subsequent hearings on the seamen's bill, when it seemed possible to pass the Seamen's Act, the shipowners united in their efforts to defeat it.

The most important objections of the shipowners concerned the provision for language qualifications and the specification that 75 per cent of the deck crew be able seamen with three years of sea experience. If such

provisions were included, they contended, there would not be enough seamen to man the ships. This would put the American merchant marine into the hands of a few "irresponsible strike leaders." Furthermore, such rigid qualifications were unnecessary on a modern steamship; any sailor could be taught everything he needed to know in a few months.

Furuseth's pride in his profession was sorely wounded by the suggestion that the sailor was an unskilled laborer. Indignantly he explained the myriad duties expected of a seaman and the knowledge and experience necessary to perform these duties. Most of all, he emphasized that while many men could do a seaman's work under ordinary circumstances, in emergencies,



In the last days of the great 1934 strike, Andrew Furuseth convinced the membership to make a grand gesture before returning to work, a symbolic event that would be picked up by the national press and "shown on screens around the country." His idea centered on the hated "fink book," which was required to secure a job from the government-sanctioned but corrupt and shipowner-controlled Shipping Offices. The Union had fought against the indignity since it was introduced for decades, but only the Big Strike could deliver the killing blow. So the sailors gathered in a vacant lot next to the SUP hall and built what Furuseth called a "beautiful and horrible bonfire." Each man dipped his fink book in gasoline, and then tossed it into the fire. It was a brilliant and effective maneuver, and although the battle was not over, it announced to the world that henceforth the Sailors' Union would control the hiring process. Andrew Furuseth is fourth from right in suit and tie.

when life and property were at stake, it was absolutely essential to have trained, experienced personnel. Anyone could polish the brass on a fire engine, but only the trained fireman was capable of quick and accurate response when a fire occurred.

In the midst of this controversy, when the House Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries was deliberating over which, if any, bill should be reported to Congress, the *Titanic* sunk on April 14, 1912. That maritime disaster prompted the committee to vote in favor of the bill on May 2, 1912.

Both the Democrats and the Republicans were now in support—at least philosophically—of a seamen's bill. On March 2, 1913, the bill passed both Houses of Congress and sent to President William Howard Taft.

It appeared that years of work by Furuseth were about to be climaxed by success. However, Taft vetoed the bill on the grounds that it might create "friction with the commerce of foreign nations."

While dejected and disappointed, Furuseth was undeterred.

Hearings were held on the bill from December 1913, through March 1914. Furuseth in a report to the SUP membership summed up the hearings:

"The hearings on our bill closed yesterday, (Friday the 13th and full moon). If anybody is superstitious and thinks it is unlucky it ought to be to those who caused the hearings to be held. We did not ask for any hearings, that is sure.

The hearings were a perfect carnival of criticism on the sailors and witnesses testified that they were "mere creatures; they needed no skill or experience; anybody could do a sailor's work; they might need a month's experience or so, but they would not need more than three or four months even at the wheel." In short, it was the unanimous opinion of those representing the steamship companies that they did not need any sailors. Then came along the representa-

tives of the sailing vessels and said they did not need any sailors....

If the people of the United States could have listened to the testimony, there would either be a fundamental sweeping change from existing conditions, or feeling that, they would never travel by sea unless they were compelled to. The testimony is such as necessarily brings to the minds of any person a conviction that everything at present is done with a view of cheapness and that the whole effort is toward the safety of investments for those on shore instead of safety of life to those at sea, regardless of whether they be passengers or seamen, male or female, children or adults..."

Furuseth with the assistance of Senator La Follette continued the fight through 1914 and 1915. After a House and Senate conference committee came to agreement, the bill passed the Senate on February 27. The difficult task of getting President Woodrow Wilson to sign it lay ahead.

Wilson and Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan were both troubled by the provision of the bill that would make it applicable to foreign seamen and would, in effect, break twenty-two commercial treaties.

On March 2, Furuseth and La Follette met with Wilson at the White House. Wilson said that he had not made up his mind.

Finally on March 4, 1915, President Wilson signed the Seamen's Act.

Furuseth's immediate reaction to the news can only be imagined. But the following day he sent his greetings to the Sailors' Union expressing his elation and his sober sense of responsibility for making the Seamen's Act effective: **"I celebrate with you...the freedom gained and the larger hope for the future. When the act just passed becomes operative we shall be free and have the power to protect our freedom. Freedom ever demands loyalty and prudence."**

Opposition to the Act

The ink had barely dried on President Wilson's signature on the Seamen's Act when outraged shipowners, newspapers, and magazines began to malign it as they had never

done while Congress was considering it. Long before the act went into effect on November 4, 1915, dire predictions were made that it would lead to serious international complications, that it would drive the American merchant marine off the seas, that its safety features were not enforceable, and that there were not enough seamen qualified to meet the high standards it set. These led a host of other charges.

Leaders in the fight to repeal the Act were Robert Dollar, a shipowner who operated most of his vessels under the British flag until wartime conditions forced him to seek protection under American neutrality, and R.P. Schwerin, manager of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. Both operated companies in the Pacific trade with Chinese crews and white officers. Both claimed that the language clause of the Seamen's Act would deprive them of their Chinese crews and thus make it impossible for them to compete against Japanese vessels.

To answer the charges Furuseth wrote articles and spoke before any group that would listen. Furuseth told them that congress had followed the advice of the shipowners for 150 years. As a result, the United States had practically no American merchant marine.

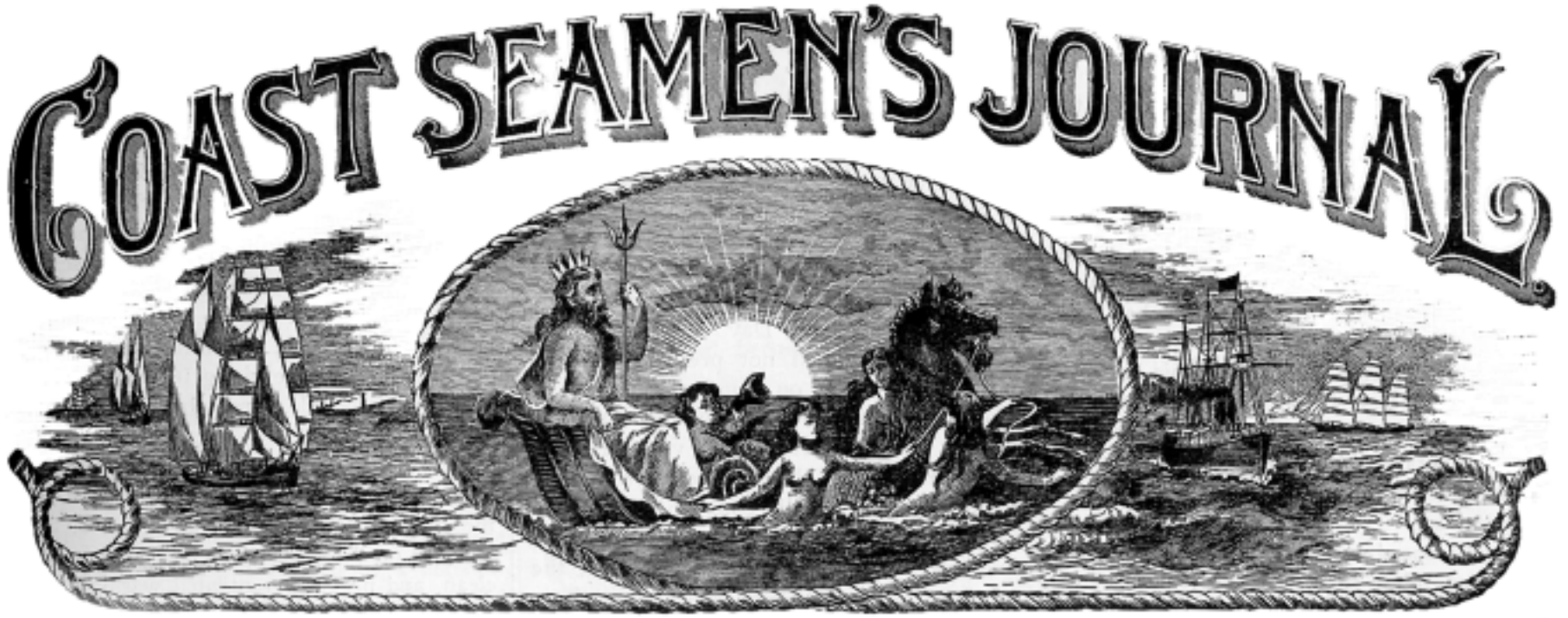
Whenever the Department of Commerce was asked to interpret the Seamen's Act, the decision was almost always in favor of the shipowners. Furuseth then initiated a series of costly court cases to clarify the Act. Before the courts handed down any decision, the Wilson administration forced the Commerce Department to modify some of its orders.

Freedom for Seamen of the World

During the years Furuseth spearhead the legislative fight to free American seamen from bondage, he also made several trips to Europe. In 1908 Furuseth took his proposals to Europe, attending the Vienna Congress of the International Transport Workers' Federa-

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EDITORS NOTE: THIS PAGE AND THE NEXT IS A REPRINT OF THE MARCH 10, 1915 COAST SEAMEN'S JOURNAL.



FOR THE SEAFARING PEOPLE OF THE WORLD.
Official Paper of the International Seamen's Union of America.

A Journal of Seamen, by Seamen, for Seamen.

Our Aim: The Brotherhood of the Sea.

Our Motto: Justice by Organization.

VOL. XXVIII, No. 26.

SAN FRANCISCO, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 10, 1915

Whole No. 2320.

PRESIDENT APPROVES SEAMEN'S BILL.

Seamen's Long Struggle for Freedom Crowned With Success.

It has come to pass at last!

And it "happened" when many of us had given up all hope of securing the enactment of the Seamen's bill at "this" session of Congress.

Some of the more pessimistic among us had even abandoned the hope of "ever" securing justice at the hands of Congress.

We had been told to wait and wait for so many, many years; and we had been disappointed so often and so regularly that *many* of us had ceased to look upon patience as a virtue.

Of course, the JOURNAL had never lost hope and faith in ultimate victory.

And victory came on March 4, 1915; just twenty-three years and two months from the time the organized seamen on the Pacific Coast determined to secure such legislation from Congress as was necessary to secure for seamen the same rights—the same freedom—as is enjoyed by the workers ashore.

Well, Congress finally did pass such legislation.

And the President of the United States has signed it.

It is no longer the "Seamen's bill." It is now an "Act." Let its christen it "The La Follette Act."

And it will be in full force and effect on November 4, 1915, so far as American shipping is concerned. And with reference to all foreign shipping touching at United States ports it will be in effect twelve months from the date of enactment, namely, on March 4, 1916.

Here are the salient features of the La Follette Act:

Abolishment of Compulsory Servitude.

Freedom for seamen is secured in this enactment by wiping from the United States statutes all imprisonment penalties for desertion of seamen. This applies to all American ships—whether in United States ports or abroad. It also applies to seamen on foreign ships at United States

ports but it will first be necessary to abrogate so much of our treaties with other nations as provides for the arrest and imprisonment of seamen.

A Standard of Efficiency.

The Act provides that no one shall be rated or qualified to serve as able-seaman on ocean-going vessels unless he is nineteen years of age and has had at least three years' service on deck at sea.

A MESSAGE FROM SENATOR LA FOLLETTE.

Among other inspiring messages read at the meeting held at San Francisco on March 6th in honor of the thirtieth anniversary of the Sailors' Union of the Pacific, was the following telegram:

Washington, D. C., March 6, 1915.
Sailors Union of the Pacific,
San Francisco, Cal.

As you meet to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of your organization I rejoice that in the Providence of God I am permitted at last to hail you as free men under the Constitution of our country. The fourth of March, 1915, is your emancipation day. The Act approved by President Wilson makes America sacred soil and the Thirteenth Amendment finally becomes a covenant of refuge for the seamen of the world. In the years to come, as you commemorate this great event, you should dedicate a part of the service to the memory of Andrew Furuseth. Except for his intelligent, courageous and unswerving devotion to your cause for twenty-one years you would be bondsmen instead of free men to-day.

ROBERT M. LA FOLLETTE.

For service on the Great Lakes or on the smaller lakes, bays or sounds, the same age is required but only one and one-half years' service on deck is required.

The foregoing stipulations are somewhat modified by the following section of the Act:

"Graduates of school ships approved by and conducted under rules prescribed by the Secretary of Commerce may be rated able-seamen after twelve months' service at sea; provided, that upon examination, tender rules prescribed by the Department of Commerce as to eyesight, hearing, and physical condition, such persons or graduates are found to be competent; provided, further, that upon examination, under rules prescribed by the Department of Commerce as to eyesight, hearing, physical condition, and knowledge of the duties of seamanship a person found competent

may be rated as able-seaman after having served on deck twelve months at sea, or on the Great Lakes; but seamen examined and rated able-seamen under this proviso shall not in any case compose more than one-fourth of the number of able-seamen required by this section to be shipped or employed upon any vessel."

The Language Test.

The Act provides that at least seventy-five per cent of each department of a vessel's crew must be able to understand any order given by the officers of such vessel.

Able-Seamen Must Be Employed.

Under the old law shipowners were permitted to employ any landsman who had never seen service on the water.

Under the terms of the Act just passed no vessel will be permitted to depart from any port of the United States unless she has on board a (leak crew composed of a certain percentage of able-seamen exclusive of licensed officers and apprentices.

In the first year after the passage of die Act such percentage mint be at least torte. In the second year forty-five: in the third year fifty: in the fourth year fifty-five, and thereafter sixty-five percentum of the deck crew.

Enforcement of "Standard of Efficiency."

The section of the Act providing the machinery for the enforcement of the "able-seamen" standard, and the "language test," reads as follows :

"Any person may make application to any board of local inspectors for a certificate of service as able-seaman, and upon proof being made to said board by affidavit and examination, under rules approved by the Secretary of Commerce, showing the nationality and age of the applicant and the vessel or vessels on which he has had service and that he is entitled to such certificate under the provisions of this section, the board of local inspectors shall issue to said applicant a certificate of service, which shall be retained by him and be accepted as prima facie evidence of his rating as an able-seaman.

"Each hoard of local inspectors shall keep a complete record of all certificates of service issued by them and to whom issued and shall keep on file the affida-

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COAST SEAMEN'S JOURNAL continued

vits upon which said certificates are issued.

"The collector of customs may, upon his own motion, and shall, upon the sworn information of any reputable citizen of the United States setting forth that this section is not being complied with, cause a muster of the crew of any vessel to be made to determine the fact: and no clearance shall be given to any vessel failing to comply with the provisions of this section: provided, that the collector of customs shall not be required to cause such muster of the crew to be made unless said sworn information has been filed with him for at least six hours before the vessel departs, or is scheduled to depart: provided further, that any person that shall knowingly make a false affidavit for such purpose shall be deemed guilty of perjury and upon conviction thereof shall be punished by a fine not exceeding \$500 or by imprisonment not exceeding one year, or by both such fine and imprisonment, within the discretion of the court.

Any violation of any provision of this section by the owner, master, or officer in charge of the vessel shall subject the owner of such vessel to a penalty of not less than \$100 and not more than \$500: and provided further, that the Secretary of Commerce shall make such rules and regulations as may be necessary to carry out the provisions of this section, and nothing herein shall be held or construed to prevent the Board of Supervising Inspectors, with the approval of the Secretary of Commerce, from making rules and regulations authorized by law as to vessels excluded from the operation of this section."

Watch and Watch at Sea.

The Act provides that sailors shall, while at sea, be divided into at least two watches: and the firemen, oilers, and water tenders into at least three watches.

The Act also provides that seamen shall not be shipped to work alternately in the fireroom and on deck, nor shall those shipped for deck duty be required to work in the fireroom, or vice versa.

It is expressly stated in the Act, however, that the foregoing "provisions shall not limit either the authority of the master or other officer or the obedience of the seamen when, in the judgment of the master or other officer, the whole or any part of the crew are needed for the maneuvering of the vessel or the performance of work necessary for the safety of the vessel or her cargo, or for the saving of life aboard other vessels in jeopardy, or when in port or at sea from requiring the whole or any part of the crew to participate in the performance of fire, lifeboat, and other drills."

A Nine-Hour Workday and no Unnecessary Work on Sundays.

The Act provides that while a vessel "is in a safe harbor no seamen shall be required to do any unnecessary work on Sundays or the following named days: New Year's Day, the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, but this shall not prevent the dispatch of a vessel on regular schedule or when ready to proceed on her voyage. And at all times while such vessel is in a safe harbor, nine hours, inclusive of the anchor watch, shall constitute a day's work. Whenever the master of any vessel shall fail to comply with this section, the seamen shall be entitled to discharge from such vessel and to receive the wages earned. But this section shall not apply to fishing or whaling vessels, or yachts."

Prompt Payment of Wages.

The Act provides that two days' pay shall be paid to a seaman for every day he is kept waiting for wages due him if such waiting period extends beyond twenty-four hours after the cargo has been discharged or four days after the seaman has been discharged, whichever first happens.

The old law allows only one day's pay for each waiting day.

Increased Forecastle Space.

The old law relating to space for crew's quarters allowed only seventy-two cubic feet of space and twelve square feet floor measurement per man. The new law reads as follows:

"That on all merchant vessels of the United States the construction of which shall be begun after the passage of this Act, except yachts, pilot boats, or vessels of less than one hundred tons register, every place appropriated to the crew of the vessel shall have a space of not less than one hundred and twenty cubic feet and not less than sixteen square feet, measured on the floor or deck of that place, for each seaman or apprentice lodged therein, and each seaman shall have a separate berth and not more than one berth shall be placed one above another; such place or lodging shall be securely constructed, properly lighted, drained, heated, and ventilated, properly protected from weather and sea, and, as far as practicable, properly shut off and protected from the effluvium of cargo or bilge water. And every such crew space shall be kept free from goods or stores not being the personal property of the crew occupying said place in use during the voyage."

Health and Sanitary Regulations.

Hospital quarters, washing accommodations and occasional fumigation of forecastles is provided for in the following sections of the Act:

"On all merchant vessels of the United States which in the ordinary course of their trade make voyages of more than three days' duration between ports, and which carry a crew of twelve or more seamen, there shall be constructed a compartment, suitably separated from other spaces, for hospital purposes, and such compartment shall have at least one bunk for every twelve seamen, constituting her crew, provided that not more than six bunks shall be required in any case.

"Every steamboat of the United States plying upon the Mississippi River or its tributaries shall furnish an appropriate place for the crew, which shall conform to the requirements of this section, so far as they are applicable thereto, by providing sleeping room in the engine room of such steamboat, properly protected from the cold, wind, and rain by means of suitable awnings or screens on either side of the guards or sides and forward, reaching from the boiler deck to the lower or main deck, under the direction and approval of the Supervising Inspector General of Steam Vessels, and shall be properly heated.

"All merchant vessels of the United States, the construction of which shall be begun after the passage of this Act having more than ten men on deck must have at least one light, clean, and properly ventilated washing place. There shall be provided at least one washing outfit for every two men of the watch. The washing place shall be properly heated. A separate washing place shall be provided for the fireroom and engine-room mien, if their number exceed ten, which shall be large enough to accommodate at least one-sixth of them at the same time, and have hot and cold water supply and a sufficient number of wash basins, sinks, and shower baths.

"Any failure to comply with this section shall subject the owner or owners of such vessel to a penalty of not less than \$50 nor more than \$500; provided, that forecastles shall be fumigated at such intervals as may be provided by regulations to be issued by the Surgeon General of the Public Health Service, with the approval of the Department of Commerce, and shall have at least two exits, one of which may be used in emergencies."

One-Half of Wages Due at Any Port.

One-half of the wages due may be demanded by seamen at any port where the vessel shall load or deliver cargo. This was provided in the old law but a clause was usually inserted in the shipping articles practically nullifying the intent of the law. Under the Act just passed all stipulations in the contract to the contrary are void.

This section also applies to seamen on foreign vessels while in the harbors of the United States, and the courts of the United States are held to be open to such seamen for its enforcement.

Vessel Liable for Escape of Bucko Mates.

The Act provides that the master of a vessel or the owner of a vessel shall be liable in damages if the master fails to use due diligence in surrendering to

the proper authorities the officer of such vessel who has flogged or administered corporal punishment to a seaman.

Under the old law only the master was liable in damages.

Live-Saving Appliances.

The Act contains elaborate and comprehensive regulations upon different types of boats, rafts, davits, life jackets and life buoys.

This phase of the new law will be dealt with in a subsequent issue of the JOURNAL.

Manning of Boats.

The Act provides that "a licensed officer or able-seaman shall be placed in charge of each boat or pontoon raft; he shall have a list of its lifeboat men, and other members of its crew which shall be sufficient for her safe management, and shall see that the men placed under his orders are acquainted with their several duties and stations.

"A man capable of working the motor shall be assigned to each motor boat.

"The duty of seeing that the boats, pontoon rafts, and other lifesaving appliances are at all times ready for use shall be assigned to one or more officers."

"Certificated Lifeboat Men."

In addition to the "one able-seaman or licensed officer" to be placed in charge of each boat, the Act provides for a specified number of "certificated lifeboat men" for each boat or raft, as follows:

"There shall be for each boat or raft a number of lifeboat men at least equal to that specified as follows: If the boat or raft carries twenty-five persons or less, the minimum number of certificated lifeboat men shall be one; if the boat or raft carries twenty-six persons and less than forty-one persons the minimum number of certificated lifeboat men shall be two; if the boat or raft carries forty-one persons and less than sixty-one persons the minimum number of certificated lifeboat men shall be three; if the boat or raft carries from sixty-one to eighty-five persons, the minimum number of certificated lifeboat men shall be four; if the boat or raft carries from eight-six to one hundred and ten persons, the minimum number of certificated lifeboat men shall be five; if the boat or raft carries from one hundred and eleven to one hundred and sixty persons, the minimum number of certificated lifeboat men shall be six; if the boat or raft carries from one hundred and sixty-one to two hundred and ten persons, the minimum number of certificated lifeboat men shall be seven; and, thereafter, one additional certificated lifeboat man for each additional fifty persons; provided, that if the raft carries fifteen persons or less a licensed officer or able-seaman need not be placed in charge of such raft; provided further, that one-half the number of rafts carried shall have a capacity of exceeding fifteen persons.

"The allocation of the certificated lifeboat men to each boat and raft remains within the discretion of the master, according to the circumstances.

"By 'certificated lifeboat man' is meant any member of the crew who holds a certificate of efficiency issued under the authority of the

Secretary of Commerce, who is hereby directed to provide for the issue of such certificates.

"In order to obtain the special lifeboat man's certificate the applicant must prove to the satisfaction of an officer designated by the Secretary of Commerce that he has been trained in all the operations connected with launching lifeboats and the use of oars; that he is acquainted with the practical handling of the boats themselves; and, further, that he is capable of understanding and answering the orders relative to lifeboat service."

"Fellow Servant" Rule Abrogated.

The notorious "fellow servant" rule which usually protects shipowners in damage suits brought by seamen is abrogated in the following language:

"That in any suit to recover damages for any injury sustained on board vessel or in its service seamen having command shall not be held to be fellow-servants with those under their authority."

Furuseth's Credo

by Archie Green

Federal Judge William Denman, muckraking journalist George West, San Francisco editor Fremont Older, and sculptor Jo Davidson recall related anecdotes about Andrew Furuseth.

A. Carved in Stone

My [Denman's] first contact with Andy was in 1901, when, as a young lawyer, green then in knowledge of the history of seamen, I was asked to debate with him on the use of the injunction.

To my conventional argument that the orders of courts should be obeyed, he responded with a vivid description of the wrongful use of the injunction in labor disputes. His address concluded with the words now carved on the monument to him on the San Francisco waterfront.

"What would I do if they served an injunction on me to stop the organization of our men? I would put it in my pocket and the judge would put me in jail, and there my bunk would be no narrower and my grub no poorer nor I there more lonely than in the forecabin."

B. Injunction in My Pocket

My [Denman again] first contact with him [Furuseth], in 1904 or 1905 was in a hall near South Park, San Francisco. There in a discussion of the use of "injunction," as he pronounced it, in labor disputes, in response to a question, "What would you do if our anti-labor injunction were served on you?" He replied, "I would put the injunction in my pocket and go to jail and in jail my bunk would be no narrower, my food no worse, nor I more lonely than in the forecabin."

C. Fremont Older's Story

I [West] suppose most of the *Survey's* readers know the classic Furuseth story—how, after a San Francisco court had enjoined him from the normal and necessary activities of a successful strike, and after he had told his friend Fremont Older that he would not obey, and Older had mentioned jail to him, he said: "Very well! They couldn't give me plainer food than I've always eaten; they couldn't put me in a narrower room than I've always had. And they couldn't make me any lonelier than I've always been."

D. Philosophy of Life

Many years ago there was a strike on the water front and Furuseth was, of course, the leader of it. He was arrested at the instance of the shipowners and charged with violating an injunction issued by the federal court. While his case was pending he called at my [Older's] office.

"Are they going to put you in jail, Andrew?" I asked.

Then he poured out to me the philosophy of his life:

"I don't know and I don't care. They can't put me into a smaller room than I have always lived in. They can't feed me any plainer food than I have always eaten." Then with tears gathering in his fine old eyes:

"They can't make me any lonelier than I have always been."

E. Let 'Em Come

One day, when he [Furuseth] was sitting in a bar along the waterfront, someone came in and told him that the dicks were after him, and he had better vamoose. He had been making so-called "seditious" speeches. "No" he said, "they cannot put me in a room any smaller than I have always lived in. They cannot give me food any simpler than I have always had, and they cannot make me any more lonely than I have always been. Let 'em come."

Sources

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B. William Denman letter to *Silas Axtell*, Feb. 3,

1947; in Axtell, 1). 16.

C. George P. West, "Andrew Furuseth and the Radicals," *Survey* 47 (Nov. 5, 1921): 207.

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E. Jo Davidson, *Between Sittings* (New York: Dial Press, 1951), 1). 240.

We honor a handful of American workers who have acquired near-legendary status: Mother Jones, Joe Hill, Gene Debs, John Lewis, Andy Furuseth. Our memories of these figures ebb and flow with shifts in trade-union vitality, and with revisions in judgment by historians and biographers. Partisans know that no union "saints" have approached the stardom of Babe Ruth or Marilyn Monroe in popular



imagination. Yet labor unionists live with their own exemplars—those to whom fate has assigned a modest degree of fame.

I shall not attempt to elevate Furuseth's heroism, nor detail his life story. Born in Romedal, Norway, as a young windjammer sailor he faced then-common exploitation by captains at sea and crimps on shore. Arriving in San Francisco in 1880, he made it his home port, taking a turn as a Northwest coast salmon fisherman. In time, he found his true calling as a union leader and lobbyist for seamen.

Soon after a handful of men organized the Coast Seamen's Union in San Francisco in 1885, Furuseth became active in its ranks as well as in its successor, the Sailors' Union of the Pacific. As head of the International Seamen's Union after 1908, he worked closely with AFL president Samuel Gompers and Wisconsin senator Robert La Follette for legislation to free sailors from serfdom's hold. The Seamen's Act, signed by President Wilson in 1915, stands as but one monument to Furuseth's intensity and perseverance.

Those who knew Furuseth deployed a series of allusions to note his nautical gait, craggy strength, and spartan values: Jeffersonian democrat, Old Testament prophet, Viking ship's prow, Abraham Lincoln of the Sea, Saint Andrew the Sailor. Legendary narratives accrued to him like iron slivers to a magnet. For example, at his death, an unnamed reporter for the *San Francisco News* wrote: "An old acquaintance ... revealed how Furuseth once saw \$10,000 in gold put before him as a bribe. Furuseth became indignant and

walked out after shouting a brief refusal." Similar tales of honor have been applied over the years to other labor heroes.

Well before Furuseth's death, a brief account of his indifference to a court's injunction had circulated in oral and published forms. On Labor Day, 1941, in Embarcadero Park fronting San Francisco's Ferry Building, the SUP dedicated a bronze bust with Furuseth's words inscribed in its granite base: "**You can put me in jail. But you cannot give me narrower quarters than as a seaman I have always had. You cannot give me coarser food than I have always eaten. You cannot make me lonelier than I have always been.**"

In comparing this inscription with the five passages cited above, we find rhetorical variation taken for granted in oral expression, but not anticipated in published form. Apparently, no one at the Ferry Building ceremony was aware of or commented on differences between the chosen text and others then in print.

To this day, I have not found the precise source for the words given to the monument's stonecutters by the SUP officers who commissioned the bronze bust and granite base. Nor have I found a letter, speech, or testimony by Furuseth confirming or denying the words attributed to him; I shall welcome such a discovery. Also, I remain mystified by the circumstance of selection for the pedestal text. Who favored one set of anecdotal words above all others?

Judge Denman in dual recollections of first hearing the credo credited a debate in 1901 and a discussion in 1904-5. Did he consider one occurrence more authentic than the other? George West in 1921 asserted that the *Survey's* liberal and literate readers knew "the classic Furuseth story" told by Fremont Older. Does not West's statement imply that Older had placed his item in print before 1921? The earliest Older report I have found dates to an Independence Day editorial in 1930 which recalls a text different from those previously attributed to Furuseth.

Sculptor Jo Davidson, meeting the Viking in Paris in 1919 and falling under his spell, invited him to sit for a bust. The sitting occurred in New York in 1929. Decades later, Davidson placed his recollection of the credo, romantically, in a waterfront bar with Furuseth bravely shrugging off "dicks" (detectives). Unlike others, Davidson did not mention law courts or injunctions.

In searching for the first appearance and subsequent circulation of "Furuseth's Credo," I have found clear openings and closed barriers. It reached beyond a trade-Union audience in 1916, in a sympathetic sketch for the *New Republic*, when Alvin Johnson reported the story of Furuseth smiling during a strike as friends feared that he'd be clapped into jail. The philosophic sailor calmed his companions, "They can't give me narrower quarters...Johnson's source has eluded me; his account is the earliest I have found in print.

Paul Taylor in the first academic study of the Sailors' Union of the Pacific wrote, "Older tells one of the best known stories" about Furuseth. In 1959, biographer Hyman Weintraub dated this variant to the San Francisco waterfront strike of 1906. At its close, the Hammond Lumber Company attempted to secure a judgment against the SUP leader. According to Weintraub, Older then asked Furuseth about jail and received his Scandinavian-accented reply.

Andrew Furuseth died in Washington, D.C., on January 22, 1938. A week later, the SUP paper, *West Coast Sailors*, ran a front-page photo of its Clay Street hall, flag at half mast and windows draped in bunting for the "Grand Old Man of the Seas." Under the caption, "Andrew Furuseth, SUP Book No. 11," the editor, without comment, presented yet another credo state-

continued next page

Furuseth's Credo continued

ment: "You can put me in jail, but you can not give me worse food than I have received on board ships, nor smaller quarters than I have been used to. Nor can you make me any lonelier than I have always been."

The *West Coast Sailors* reached a few thousand seamen in 1938 with its tribute to the holder of Book No. 11. Across the continent, the *New York Times* ran a long obituary, "Andrew Furuseth, Labor Leader, Dies" (January 23), and on the following day, an editorial, "The Sailors' Lincoln." Both the *Times* obit and editorial farewell included yet another credo variant: "You cannot make me any more lonely than I have always been. You cannot give me food worse than I have always had. My sleeping quarters will be no more cramped than they have been at any time."

Following Furuseth's wishes, seamen on the *SS Schoharie* scattered his ashes in the Atlantic midway between Europe and America. He could well have chosen any sea on the globe, for he had sailed in all seven. Immediately after his death, SUP members, young and old, sent contributions to Union headquarters requesting that a life-sized statue of "Old Andy" be placed on the San Francisco waterfront.

The Union's paper endorsed this spontaneous effort in a February 11 editorial. Fund-raising continued for month after month, as the planners wisely scaled the intended statue down to a bust on a stone base. Finally, on December 15, 1939, the paper pictured a clay model of Furuseth's head by local sculptor Hal Bayard Runyan, announcing that it would be cast in bronze by the "lost wax process," and that a granite pedestal had been cut but not yet surface-finished or inscribed.

Previously, in 1935, Harry Lundeberg, a fiery Norwegian-born sailor, had succeeded Furuseth at the Union's helm. Involved in constant disputes with a host of antagonists (shipowners, Stalinists, Maritime Commission bureaucrats, AFL "pie cards" frozen in office) Lundeberg had little time to devote to a memorial site. Nevertheless, committed to honoring his Union's champion, he negotiated in 1940 with foot-dragging politicians to place a worker's bust in Embarcadero Park. In time, he enlisted the state legislature and Governor Olson to secure a bit of space for the monument. On August 29, 1941, the *West Coast Sailors* announced a dedication ceremony for Labor Day (September 1).

This front-page announcement held an anomaly—a photo of Jo Davidson's bust of Furuseth without attribution to the famed sculptor. Having marched in the 1941 Labor Day parade, and recalling walks to the Ferry Building site, I, along with many San Franciscans, assumed that Davidson had sculpted "our" bronze. (I return to this matter below.)

After 1941, in war and peace, SUP members and fellow workers gathered annually on March 12, Furuseth's birthday, to place floral wreaths at his Embarcadero monument, swap yarns about the old Viking, and renew their sense of mission. Photos taken at these events reproduced in the Union's paper show a gallery of old-timers—a few who had sailed in Andy's early days; the rest, his "children." Facing their centennial in 1985, SUP members commissioned *Brotherhood of the Sea*, in which Steven Schwartz sought the origin of Furuseth's epitaph. Searching the literature, the historian fell back on judge Denman's "convincing account" of 1904-5.

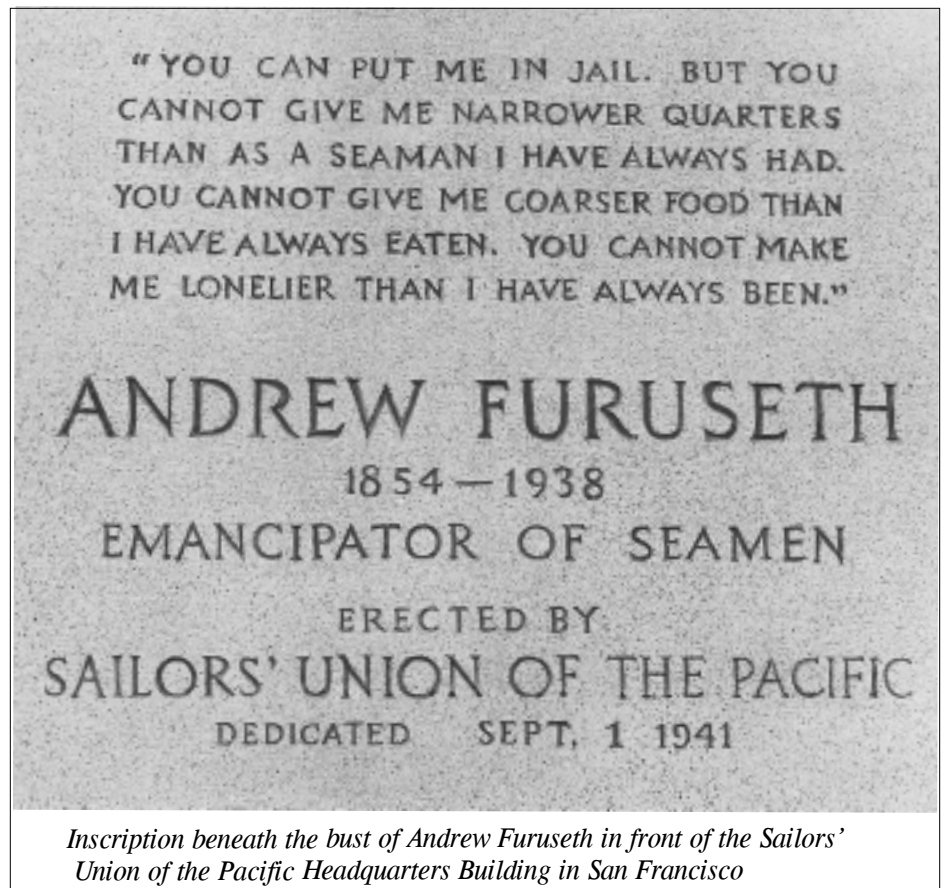
It is unlikely now that we shall ever trace the full history of "Furuseth's Credo." Did the sage actually use these words in 1901 during a discussion or debate with young lawyer Denman? Did Furuseth utter his remarks to editor Older in 1906? Could someone else have attributed the anecdote to Furuseth? Are answers

buried in faded letters and yellowed newsprint?

With construction of San Francisco's hated waterfront freeway in 1957, the Furuseth bust lost its majestic home at the foot of Market Street. Wisely, the SUP designated a new place for the monument: the outdoor entrance to its elegant art deco building on Rincon Hill (opened in 1950). This appropriate site recalled scenes of major labor battles with police and California guardsmen in the 1934 Pacific Coast maritime strike.

Upon Harry Lundeberg's death (January 28, 1957), the SUP commissioned Edwin Hurt to sculpt and cast a bust for him displaying his characteristic sailor's white cloth cap. On January 28, 1958, the Union dedicated this bust, on a granite base similar to that of Furuseth's. The two Norsemen, in bronze flanking their hall's entrance, now stand perpetual watch in calm and stormy weather. In truth, their parallel setting in front of a Union hall has become a labor landmark honoring workers of all callings.

Today, for those who pause to read, Furuseth's words cut into polished black stone bring vignettes to mind: sailing ships and icy jails; bucko mates and fights for dignity; heroism and continuity in labor struggle. In personal visits to the SUP hall, I reflect on the credo, bringing to it a folklorist's perspective. I ask: When



and then letting his wet clothes dry on him—terrible! Those who would behold it would say: "It is wonderful, Brother Drihthelm, that you are able to endure such violent cold," to which he simply answered: "I have seen greater cold." And when they said "It is strange that you will endure such austerity" he replied: "I have seen greater austerity."

"Furuseth's Credo" joins two discrete themes: denial of hardship's power and the analogy of jail/forecastle. Brother Drihthelm attested to the first long ago.

In 1759, the great eighteenth-century dictionary maker Samuel Johnson called attention to the second matter, when he attempted to release his black servant from abhorrent sea duty. Biographer James Boswell used this action to report Johnson's view of maritime life: "No man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into a jail; for being in a ship is being in a jail, with the chance of being drowned."

On a tour of the Hebrides in 1773, Johnson repeated this sentiment to a guide who had been "pressed aboard a man-of-war." In a subsequent conversation at Skye, he elaborated: "The man in a jail has more room, better food, and commonly better company, and is in safety." In 1776, at home in London, Johnson enlarged on "the wretchedness of sea-life": "A ship is worse than a gaol. There is, in a gaol, better air, better company, better conveniency of every kind;

and a ship has the additional disadvantage of being in danger Men go to sea before they know the unhappiness of that way of life; and when they have come to know it, they cannot escape from it."

Boswell's *Life of Johnson* has attracted extensive commentary for two centuries. I pause only to note that Sir James Mackintosh, who served as Recorder of Bombay, had attributed (in a journal entry dated January 26, 1811) Endymion Porter's "Consolation to [James] Howell" as Johnson's source in linking ship and jail. Howell, a Royalist in the camp of King Charles during England's civil war, had been jailed at the Fleet, a London prison. Porter, a fellow Cavalier, then tried to cheer his friend with a pun on the dual meanings of *fleet*.

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Furuseth monument erected September 1, 1941, by the SUP in front of the San Francisco Ferry Building. The monument was later moved to the entrance of the Sailors' Union of the Pacific's Headquarters building to make way for the construction of the Embarcadero Freeway.

and where did Furuseth first learn a stoic's response to nature's hardships or threatened jail?

As a schoolboy in Romedal, Andrew had absorbed Norse sagas, not as quaint children's tales but rather as the sinew and marrow of Viking identity. Did he hear or read a saga about a hero impervious to the elements? Presently, I lack knowledge of a particular Norse text which stands behind "Furuseth's Credo" but have found a related passage in the annals of Britain. Bede, writing in the eighth century, and looking back at the exploits of Celts and Saxons, told the story of a visionary monk:

Drihthelm ... developed habits of extreme asceticism, such as going down to the river Tweed at night and standing in the ice-cold water, saying psalms and prayers, sometimes with broken ice floating round him,

Furuseth's Credo continued

Already jailed for four years and uncertain of release, Howell wrote to Porter on January 2, 1646. He thanked him for his "comfortable Advice, that having been so long under hatches in this *Fleet*, I should fancy myself to be in a long voyage at Sea." The prisoner continued:

"You go on to prefer my captivity in this *Fleet* to that of a Voyager at Sea, in regard that he is subject to storms and springing of Leaks, to Pirates and Picaroons, with other casualties. You write, I have other Advantages also, to be free from plundering and other Barbarisms, that reign now abroad. 'Tis true, I am secur'd from all these; yet touching the first, I could be content to expose myself to all those chances, so that this were a *floating Fleet*, that I might breathe free Air."

I do not know whether Johnson indeed had borrowed views of seafaring directly from James Howell or from previous writers. Perhaps Johnson formed such thoughts out of general knowledge of maritime life during the eighteenth century. I find it significant that word-play on sea duty/prison dates back at least as far as the 1640s, and suspect that further reading will reveal additional branches on the family tree for "Furuseth's Credo" beyond that treated by Johnson, Porter, and Howell.

Like many seafarers, Andrew had read widely, and, alongside labor activists of his era, had mastered rhetoric's power. Possibly, he had encountered Bede or Boswell and had used their influential books to formulate an ascetic's creed comparing jail and forecandle. Yet, I prefer to believe that Furuseth had tapped

into a vein of distant tradition—poetic saga, concise aphorism, circuitous tale—when he had talked to Denman, Older, Davidson, or others about his calm fearlessness in facing the state's dungeons.

Norwegian biographer Haakon Lie (in a letter to me) noted Furuseth's familiarity as a schoolboy with Snorri Sturluson's (1179-1241) classic tomes on the Icelandic sagas. Giving a book to a young relative, Andrew inscribed a few words, "*These Norsemen were honest and courageous men. Be thou like them.*" We do not strain credulity to speculate that Furuseth saw himself as a bold Viking navigator steering a course both by the stars and by the poetry of ancient bards.

With luck we may yet unearth a clue to the earliest printing of Furuseth's defining belief. To complement library and literary search, I suggest visits to the SUP hall on San Francisco's Rincon Hill and to the National Portrait Gallery in Washington. The former holds an outdoor monument to Furuseth; the latter, Jo Davidson's bust of Andrew—a bronze whispering mysteries twined with those of the credo itself.

Here, I turn to the bust's strange story. Maritime attorney Silas Axtell, in 1918, had proposed a statue in Furuseth's honor. The "Old Man" rejected the plans angrily, insisting that the SUP needed men, not monuments. However, in 1919, when Davidson met Furuseth at the Paris Peace Conference, the sailor and the sculptor became friends. A decade passed before Andrew agreed to a studio sitting in New York.

On March 29, 1929, Davidson wrote to Furuseth in Washington that the bronze would be ready at the foundry in a week or two. During the sitting, both men

had speculated that the finished bust might be placed at Sailors' Union of the Pacific headquarters. The sculptor liked the idea, providing that the members themselves would contribute directly to its cost without assessing the Union treasury. Anticipating that placement details would soon become firm, Davidson entrusted the bust to his friend Lincoln Steffens. Sadly, no SUP fund drive took place.

By 1930, the depression left seamen penniless, unable or unwilling to recognize the value in Davidson's artistry or the importance of housing one of his works in a union hall. Also, radicals in the SUP scoffed at the bust, and used hard times to gnaw away at Furuseth's character, thus denying him honor while alive. Fortunately, a few of his friends persisted in treasuring the bronze.

By reading letters in Davidson's papers at the Li-

over that of rank-and-file seamen in their struggles. This may well have been Saint Andrew's wish. However, I sense also the early belief that a photographer might steal a subject's soul.

Furuseth's "fear" of a picture had been noted previously in *La Follette's Magazine*, March, 1915. Upon passage of the Seamen's Act, editor Senator La Follette combined a tribute to the sailor—lobbyist with an announcement that his face would appear in the April issue:

[Furuseth] is a picturesque fighter, a curious character, a unique American figure. But a picture of "Andy" has never been seen in the papers.

He has never permitted his photograph to be published. In every American Federation convention his lean, crouched figure rises. His eyes glow. His face is screwed with intensity. His shrill voice tells of the

seamen's fight for better things. And year after year, Furuseth has been going before Congress trying to get a bill passed abolishing involuntary servitude on board American ships.

Now his fight is won. With the signing of the seamen's bill by President Wilson, Furuseth has triumphed for his cause.

And the face of Andrew Furuseth will appear in La Follette's Magazine for April!

This splendid champion of his fellow men has consented to the first publication of his photograph in this magazine.

True to promise, the April issue featured a front-page photo portrait by Edmonston of Andrew Furuseth, as well as another reminder that he had "refused to be photographed until the Seamen's Bill should

become a law." In a previous sketch for the magazine (July, 1913), Carl Sandburg (then freelancing for labor/socialist journals) launched the photography-fetish story by noting that, unlike famed publicity seekers, the sailor threatened severe retaliation for photographers who caught him in their sights. Furuseth "has a reputation for having smashed more cameras than J. Pierpont Morgan."

Sandburg also engaged in a bit of Furuseth legend-building by penning memorable lines: "He takes only seaman's pay as 'salary' from his Union. When he attended an international seamen's congress in Europe a few years ago, he worked his passage across, rated as an ordinary seaman. He sleeps in a sailor's bunk at the San Francisco headquarters. He has never married, explaining that a sailor is a slave without a home to share with a woman."

Returning to the matter of Andy's face, Sandburg concluded with a bit of intra-Union gossip: "Bill" Mahon, president of the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees, reputedly held a "secret" photo of Furuseth. Learning of this sin, the sailor's chief threatened to lead a squad to ransack Mahon's Detroit home for the picture totem.

Our photography digression ends happily in 1934, when Dorothea Lange "caught" a serene "Old Viking" a few years before his death. In retrospect, we know that pictures of Furuseth remained scarce until photos of the Davidson bronze began to circulate after 1929. Even before the bust could be seen in public, the ISU

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Jo Davidson sculpting Furuseth in 1929 in New York

brary of Congress, we sense the uneasiness in labor's ranks when confronted by a piece of art. Apparently, after Steffens failed to effect the bust's purchase by the SUP, the sculptor sent it to Fremont Older in San Francisco. Writing to Davidson, the editor indicated that he had talked to SUP officers who reported their failure in resolving the matter. Older continued: "Some of the men say, why put up a man's bust while he is still alive. Meanwhile this great masterpiece, for that is exactly what it is, stands on my desk, a homeless waif. What shall I do?"

Davidson responded to Older: "It seems to me that this bust of Andy should go somewhere, but where—I really have not the slightest idea. I don't care anything about making any money on it—I had my kick in moulding that extraordinary head of his, for it is an amazing face & I would like to think of it somewhere where those for whom he had given his life would see it."

Two details add to Davidson's poignant letter. He had been very well paid for bronze heads by millionaire bankers and industrialists; thus he could offer the Furuseth bust to sailors who, despite empty pockets, might appreciate it. Quite unrelated to problems in placement, the bust's availability in 1929 helped bring to the surface Furuseth's aversion to photography.

On March 25, 1929, Victor Olander, International Seamen's Union secretary-treasurer, had sent a fascinating letter to Davidson expressing pleasure that Furuseth had finally agreed to a sitting. Olander elaborated that years before Andy had refused a Boston paper's request to photograph him in that such a picture might suggest the injection of his own personality

Furuseth's Credo continued

made available a striking photo of Davidson modeling Furuseth in clay. A number of labor papers then printed the picture with Olander's story of the "camera-shy" sailor.

I have found it as difficult to trace the path of the Furuseth bust as that of his credo. Charles Crane, a former American minister to China, may have purchased or borrowed the "original" piece (first casting) from Davidson in 1929. To get the Crane bronze, or a second casting, to the SUP, the sculptor entrusted it to Fremont Older and Lincoln Steffens, both of whom had friends in the labor movement.

No one seems to know how many castings Davidson made from his clay model, if indeed he made more than one. During 1934, a year turbulent with intense ideological/jurisdictional conflict in labor's ranks, Crane or a maritime-Union officer may have "loaned" (perhaps for safe keeping) the Furuseth bust to the Department of Labor for lobby placement. More likely, New Deal Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, who had known Jo Davidson for many years, may have persuaded him to send the bust to Washington before the dedication (February 25, 1935) of the department's new building on Constitution Avenue.

The *Washington Post* and the *Washington Star* both reported on the building's opening, at which Perkins hosted a musical concert featuring a United Mine Workers' (brass and wind) band from West Virginia and a United Textile Workers' string band from South Carolina. Other performers offered Irish ballads, Negro spirituals, and "People's Chorus" favorites. Adding color to the festivities, Perkins borrowed for exhibit 150 paintings from the Public Works of Arts Project—President Roosevelt's initial foray into relief-based art patronage.

Assuming that Frances Perkins also secured the Furuseth bust from Davidson for her building's dedication, I shared my hunch with Nancy Balz, a Montgomery County, Maryland, librarian, who hit "paydirt" at the National Archives. On February 25, 1935, immediately after the Department of Labor ceremony, John J. Leary Jr. of the Federal Housing Administration sent a typed note to Perkins thanking her for an impressive service and most interesting program.

In bold script, Leary added a personal note of praise: "and bringing in the busts of Mother Jones and Furuseth was positively worthy of Belasco." (The David Belasco analogy invoked memory of a master drama producer, 1854-1931.) With Leary's letter unearthed, we continue to hunt for corroborative details on the perhaps-informal transactions between the sculptor and Perkins in securing busts of the maritime and coal-mine exemplars. Davidson's bronze of Mother Jones on a marble-block base, still in Labor Department hands, rests in its current hall-of-fame lobby installation.

In 1944, Secretary Perkins returned the Furuseth bust not to Crane, Steffens, Older, or any of the former ISU officials but directly to Davidson. Why did he request its return? Sensitive to its loss, Perkins wrote to the sculptor reminding him that New York mayor Fiorello La Guardia had promised a replica of the original for the Labor Department. Nothing came of this proposal. The circumstances of the bust's arrival in Washington and its departure remain a mystery.

Seemingly, Davidson, or his heirs, kept the "Perkins" Furuseth bust hidden in storage from 1944 until 1985, when the National Portrait Gallery purchased it (or another casting) from a private art dealer; this bronze is now on display in the Gallery's Davidson room. Curator Brandon Fortune, in tracing the background of the NPG piece, has found a bewildering set of references to other (or derivative) castings. Dr. Fortune's paper trail suggests that the sculptor or associates may have cast as many as eight copies:

Charles Crane (1929)

Lincoln Steffens/Fremont Older (1930) Department of Labor (1935)

Baltimore Museum of Art exhibit, borrowed from ISU (September 5-30, 1938)

Sailors' Union of the Pacific (date ?)

International Seamen's Union or its successor, the Seafarers International Union (date ?)

United Seaman's Service, N. Y. (\$500.00 payment received by Davidson, April 21, 1943)

Andrew Furuseth Club, New York (World War II)
American Academy of Arts and Letters exhibit, New York (November 26, 1947-February 1, 1948)

I have found no trace of any castings except the one now displayed in the National Portrait Gallery, and am uncertain about duplications in the list above. Nor do I know whether the "original" Furuseth bust in Ambassador Crane's possession went to the Department of Labor and, ultimately, to the NPG. Perhaps, we can yet locate a lost Davidson bronze of the Spartan sailor.

I add these details on the bust's numbers and locations to my account of "Furuseth's Credo" to illustrate that unresolved questions surround artistry in bronze as well as in words. Seemingly, Davidson had not only captured Saint Andrew's craggy features but also the tension in his lined face—an insider's calm generated by pride in craft played against an outsider's wariness after a life of fighting against odds.

In the years from the "Big Strike" (1934) to Furuseth's death in 1938, waves of militancy again engulfed American seamen. Alone in Washington and in declining health, Andrew rejected old and new "enemies": SUP firebrands, Wobbly syndicalists, CIO industrial unionists, New Deal liberals, waterfront Marxists. The 1936 shift from the cautious and corrupt ISU to the newly chartered SIU left him stranded. It is to the eternal credit of his fellow workers in the Sailors' Union of the Pacific that, despite his sad end, they persisted in a drive for a dignified monument on San Francisco's Embarcadero. He had known its worn docks and finger-piers since his arrival from Norway.

In the early 1970s, the citizens of Romedal and labor unionists in Oslo decided to memorialize Furuseth on home ground. Failing to secure a copy of the Davidson bust, they commissioned Nils Flakstad, a local artist, to cast a "substitute." Visiting Norway in 1974 and viewing the Romedal bust mounted on granite, Joe Glazer composed "The Ballad of Andrew Furuseth," rewriting the credo in his song. Haakon Lie included this ballad text in his biography of Furuseth.

Jo Davidson had served as an honorary pallbearer at Furuseth's Washington funeral service in the Department of Labor lobby. The event's dignified brochure held photographs of Furuseth and the Davidson bronze, as well as the credo exactly as incised a few years later on the SUP monument. We can assume that Harry Lundeberg or a staff member gave the brochure text to the San Francisco sculptor or the pedestal stonemason. Conversely, the brochure designer in 1938 may have obtained a previous text from SUP headquarters in San Francisco, or from an ISU official. In short, I do not know who selected the "final" text and judged its authenticity.

Although I do not see the pursuit of a perfect or original text as the prime task in folkloric study, I believe that close attention to a tale's clustered words can aid working people in calling up their past and in charting a future. We gain perspective on life journeys by decoding "Furuseth's Credo." We enlarge understanding of constant interplay at the poles of job freedom and authority in rereading one sailor's words.

A reflection on the linkage of labor tradition to loss of institutional memory can be found in a poignant event during World War II, told by Captain Richard Harrison of the Liberty Ship *Bret Harte*. Passing the sister Liberty *Andrew Furuseth* at sea, Harrison asked the wheelman if he could identify Furuseth. Not only did the sailor confess ignorance but his shipmates also knew nothing of the hero who had toiled to unshackle them.

In opening comments on "Furuseth's Credo," I asserted that no trade unionists had risen very high in our pop-culture firmament. Although some partisans revere Joe Hill and Mother Jones as legends, most workers in the United States remain content to elevate sports and screen stars. Furuseth's name no longer calls up great recognition. Nevertheless, in considering his credo and looking at his countenance in bronze, we open again questions about labor's cause: Who best represents Americas workers? Why do we lack a hallowed pantheon? Who deserves beatification?

Walter MacArthur—Glasgow sailor and editor of the *Coast Seamen's Journal*—had worked for decades with Furuseth, observing his zeal as well as idiosyncrasies. Like a seaman facing a fanatical "Old Man" aboard

ship, the editor struggled to balance respect for authority with independence in the ranks. In a letter to labor historian Ira Cross, MacArthur attempted to place his associate's status in perspective:

"In some minds, the idea prevails that Furuseth is entitled to credit for the very existence of the Union. The fact is the other way around."

"From the very beginning the Sailors' Union has contained a large proportion of capable men, to whose courage and initiative is due the continuous existence of the Union and the progress made in the practical conditions of their lives. These men did not make speeches in public, but they spoke the only language that was understood by the crimps and runners on the waterfront."

"They patrolled the beach and boarded vessels in all sorts of weather and under all sorts of conditions. They took chances of being clubbed on the docks or thrown overboard in the bay. In short, they 'took the gaff,' and by so doing preserved the life of the Union."

Without resort to mystical or apocalyptic tones, MacArthur revealed the role of rank-and-file sailors in making possible the ascent of a hero. Beyond assessing this vital relationship, we can look back in time and marvel at the mutual exchange between Furuseth and the mariners who kept him in office. He articulated their belief in the Sailors' Union of the Pacific; they supported him in his many eccentricities and singular passion. His credo, far more than a personal statement, made sense to countless tars who plowed the waters.

Ultimately, we treasure "Furuseth's Credo" and art by sculptors Davidson, Runyan, and Flakstad because words and bronze combine to keep Furuseth's name fresh. We know that the head in metal above stone can not speak. Yet, it trumpets that seafarers served variously before the mast, on waterfront picket lines, and in legislative lobbies to uncouple the traditional bond of prison/forecastle.

I continue to seek the source of one salt's test. Do its roots rest in a Viking saga, Bede's chronicles, or James Boswell's writings on Samuel Johnson? Regardless of my quests outcome, I believe that, today, Andrew Furuseth's sparse words on coarse food and narrow quarters remain meaningful for those who read them in history books, hear them narrated, or trace them incised in a labor landmarks granite.



Furuseth's Credo is published with permission of the University of Illinois Press. It is one of the chapters in Archie Green's *Calf's Head & Union Tale: Labor Yarns at Work and Play*. The book can be ordered from the University of Illinois at www.press.uillinois.edu.

Archie Green is a San Francisco folklorist and noted labor historian who contributes to the *West Coast Sailors* from time to time. He is pictured here a SUP Headquarters beneath a montage commemorating the passage of the Seamen's Act of 1915.

Andrew Furuseth *continued from page 5*

tion (ITF). The British and the German delegates were particularly hostile to Furuseth's proposals.

In 1920, Furuseth and the American delegation again carried their proposals embodying the principles of the Seamen's Act to Europe, this time for adoption by the seamen of the world meeting in their own federation. The first, or "Open Conference" at Geneva was held as a preliminary to the League of Nations, International Labor Conference. Seamen of all ratings including officers were admitted, and delegates votes were not weighted according to number of seamen represented. At this conference the American resolutions demanding abolition of imprisonment for desertion were defeated.

Next followed the International Labor Conference to consider problems of seamen, under the auspices of the League of Nations. Each country was represented by four delegates, two appointed by the government, one by the shipowners, and one by the seamen. This conference endorsed principles favoring the abolition of criminal penalties for breach of the seamen's contract, but with this limitation: Although the shipowners, according to the resolution passed, were denied the right to invoke these penalties against the seamen, the public authorities were allowed to enforce them in cases of "violations of the clauses [of the contract] of a public character, maintaining public policy as distinguished from private interests."

World's Seamen Endorse American Policy

Two months later the International Seafarers' Federation held their own Congress at Brussels. The American delegates, Andrew Furuseth, Oscar Carlson, and Paul Scharrenberg again put forth their program demanding the right to quit the vessel in safe harbors, and the abolition of criminal penalties for breach of the seamen's contract of personal service. This program was adopted without dissenting vote, the seamen of the world thus placing themselves on record as endorsing the basic policies for which Furuseth, backed by the rank and file of the SUP, had fought for more than thirty years.

Furuseth continued his efforts for maritime safety at various European conferences of the International Labor Organization. Furuseth's spearhead the fight to have the ILO adopt the Minimum Wage (Sea) Convention (1920), Shipwreck Convention (1920), Placing of Seamen Convention (1920), Medical Examination of Young Person's (Sea) Convention (1921), Seamen's Articles of Agreement Convention (1926) and the Repatriation Convention of Seamen Convention (1926). In 1929 he made his last trip to Norway to visit his family.

Our story up to this point has focused primarily on Furuseth's monumental legislative efforts to free seamen from bondage.

However his other accomplishments must be noted. Furuseth helped organize the Atlantic Coast Seamen's Union, the San Francisco Labor Council, the California State Federation of Labor, and the International Seamen's Union of America, which he served as president from its inception in 1895 until his death.

Furuseth was the leader of San Francisco's City Front Federation Strike of 1901 and the successful 1906 strike in which SUP members won a substantial wage increase. In 1916 the SUP along with all other seagoing Unions across the country received an increase of \$5.00 a month and 25 cents extra for going into the war zone.

Government & Shipowners Defeat Union

After World War I ended, the American Steamship Owners Association and Admiral William Benson of the Shipping Board requested the Unions on the Atlantic Coast to accept a reduction in wages.

Union officials, under Furuseth's guidance, attempted to delay the wage reduction or to trade it off against

other concessions by placing the problem of maintaining an American merchant marine before the question of wages and hours. Furuseth charged that the conditions offered by the shipowners were part of an international conspiracy to drive Americans from the sea. The Union repeated its request that citizens be given first preference in hiring, and Union members second. It asked for enforcement of the Seamen's Act and abolition of the Sea Service Bureau, which was continuing to recruit seamen when there already was a surplus.

The shipowners refused to grant any kind of preference clause, and they disclaimed all responsibility for enforcing the Seamen's Act or for maintaining the Sea Service Bureau. The Union then rejected their request for a reduction in wages. It correctly concluded that the 15 per cent cut was on base pay and that the actual reduction would be closer to 35 per cent, since all overtime would be eliminated by going back to the two-watch system in which men worked eighty-four hours

West Coast, where the owners had presented similar demands to the seamen, the men answered the Union's call to strike even though half the Union members were already unemployed.

The 1921 strike and lockout virtually broke the back of organized American maritime labor. It would not recover until 1934.

The Sailors' Union did manage to survive during this grim period because "steamschooner" owners on the Pacific Coast continue to employ Union men and because Australian "wharfies" would not discharge non-Union ships, work for Union men could be found in Oceanic Steamship Company vessels that ran "down-under."

During the 1920's and 1930's Furuseth became increasingly more conservative in his views, opposing most social programs favored by the American Federation of Labor. Militants were now in control of the SUP and although admiring Furuseth's accomplishments viewed him as an anachronism.

After the 1934 strike, the International Seamen's Union of America essentially began to fall apart. While the Union controlled the apparatus they had lost control of the membership. In the SUP, the ISU controlled neither.

In order to strengthen the hand of the ISU Executive Board, Furuseth thought it necessary to amend the constitution, but a two-thirds vote for a revised constitution could never be obtained so long as the West Coast Unions opposed the amendments. The solution was obvious. Expel the SUP, which had given sufficient cause by repeated violation of the international executive board orders. Without the votes of the SUP delegates, the convention would be able to amend the constitution.

Presiding over the stormy convention in January 1936, for eleven days, proved too strenuous for Furuseth. He was ordered by his doctor to remain in his hotel room. When, a few days later, the moment came to vote on the revocation of the SUP charter, Furuseth sent a message to the delegates: *"It is with deep sorrow but under absolute conviction of necessity that I urge you all to vote unanimously for expulsion, and that I urge upon all the loyal members with whom I have lived and toiled for some*

fifty years ... to immediately affiliate with the Union to be chartered."

Those who knew the "Old Man" realized that his sorrow was not a literary expression. It was a wound so deep that he never recovered. His whole life had been dedicated to these men. He had argued their cause before shipowners, legislators, courts, and the public. He had battled longshoremen for their benefit. He had given unstintingly of his time and energy in their behalf. All the loving devotion and the fierce protectiveness of a mother had been lavished upon his Union.

What he was now doing was equivalent to throwing his only child out of the house.

Andrew Furuseth died on January 22, 1938 in Washington, D.C. His body was placed at *lit de parade* in the Department of Labor Building—the first labor leader to be thus honored. He had seventy-one honorary pall bearers, among them, the Secretary of Labor, nine members of the House of Representatives, seven United States Senators, two Supreme Court Justices, a representative of Norway, and many Labor officials. The body was cremated and the ashes were turned over to the master of the American vessel *s/s Schoharie*.

On March 21 in mid-Atlantic, the master assembled the crew for a brief ceremony. **"Fellow shipmates," he said, "we are assembled here to execute the wish to Andrew Furuseth, venerable man, an unselfish worker for the betterment of seamen, who through legal means has done more to secure improved conditions under which you work than any other man."** The ashes were then scattered at sea.



per week instead of fifty-four hours, as on the three-watch system. An additional important change in the working rules, to which the Union objected, was the provision that withdrew the right of Union officials to visit the docks and vessels.

Since the shipowners and the Union could not come to an agreement, Admiral Benson announced that beginning May 1, 1921, the wages and working conditions offered by the owners, which he considered reasonable, would go into effect on all government vessels. This meant that the new conditions would become effective on all vessels because the government owned or leased 70 per cent of the merchant marine. Before the deadline, Furuseth offered to submit the entire matter of the maintenance of an American merchant marine to the president. It may have galled him to propose arbitration, a procedure he had long and vigorously opposed, but there was no alternative. Nothing more could be gained by negotiation and the Union was in no position to fight, with thousands of men idle and ready to scab. A decision by the president, even if it were unfavorable, would provide the Union with an excuse for not striking. Admiral Benson and the shipowners refused to allow the Union this "out."

On May 1 any seaman who refused to work under the new rules was locked out. Any owner who leased government vessels was forced to accept the Shipping Board's decree for fear that the vessels would be taken back by the government. The seamen fought valiantly but vainly.

They defied injunctions on the East Coast. On the