

CHAPTER XII

THE GREAT MARITIME STRIKE OF 1934

*Any strike in history is a conflict
between the pocketbook of the capitalist
and the stomach of the employee.*

– A. H. “Pedro Pete” Peterson, February 1934¹

Promptly at 8:00 a.m. on May 9, 1934, 12,500 members of the International Longshoremen’s Association hung the hook at all West Coast ports. The ILA locals sought to shut down all piers until shipowners, stevedoring companies, and dock operators acceded to recognition of the Pacific Coast District ILA, union control of the hiring hall, and higher wages. Bosses insisted that negotiation of wages and working conditions take place at each port. At sixteen small ports, waterfront operators closed down for the duration of the strike. Los Angeles, Portland, San Francisco, and Seattle employer associations decided to fight to keep their docks operating.²

In contrast to 1916, union longshoremen did not face employers alone. Sailors, Marine Engineers, Masters, Mates, and Pilots, as well as other marine unions, tied up their vessels when they reached port. At special meetings maritime men voted to walk out. As co-equal, but separate strikers, seagoing men made three demands: higher wages, three instead of two watches, and abolition of fink halls. Employers refused to meet representatives of the marine unions. Thus, the first industrywide strike in American shipping history began. Eventually nearly 35,000 workers struck, eight were killed, and hundreds injured in bloody clashes from Seattle to San Pedro.³

The West Coast maritime walkout was one of 1,856 strikes that occurred in the United States during 1934. Over 1,470,000 workers hit the bricks.⁴ At the same time as the Pacific Coast maritime strike, notable confrontations occurred

between strikers and guards at the Auto-Lite plant in Toledo and in front of Minneapolis warehouses. The Ohio and Minnesota governors called out National Guard units. Auto-Lite settled on June 1, acceding to recognition of the union and a wage increase. In Minneapolis the end came when employers conceded on August 21 to striker preference in reemployment and arbitration of wages.⁵ During the long summer of 1934, direct communication did not exist between West Coast and Midwest strikers. Each followed the fortunes of the other through local newspaper accounts.⁶

Getting Ready

In every port on the West Coast, maritime unions elected strike committees to conceive strategy and supervise day-to-day activities. In Seattle on the morning of May 9, a twenty-five-man strike committee directed the eighth union attempt in forty-eight years to gain job control on the waterfront.⁷ Dewey Duggan recalled the major problem this strike committee encountered, "We didn't know each other when the strike started because each gang worked at only certain docks. The bosses kept us from meeting each other."⁸ To bring about cohesion, men not on picket duty met daily in the hall at 3:00 p.m. to hear the latest news about the strike.⁹

The strike committee designated Local 38-12 Secretary Dewey Bennett and Harry Evans as the press committee. To handle emergency situations, John "Jack" Shannon formed a flying squad. Earley Douglas and a dozen other men installed a soup kitchen in Longshoremen's Hall. Morris "Spike" Rose headed a relief committee that appealed to landlords and grocers to extend credit to strikers and their families. Rose also called on other Seattle unions asking for food and money donations.¹⁰

During the evening of May 9 Seattle Central Labor Council delegates discussed the waterfront strike. Eight Teamster locals and the Masters, Mates, and Pilots pledged financial

and tactical support to longshoremen. The MMP promised to stop towing barges so that cargo could not be transferred at sea. Teamster Delegate Frank Brewster reported that members would not haul any freight into or out of Seattle docks.¹¹ At the request of United States Senator Robert Wagner, chairman of the National Labor Board, Dave Beck ordered Seattle Teamsters back to work on May 11.¹²

On May 8, Waterfront Employers of Seattle (WES) had decided on a course of action in case longshoremen struck. Members volunteered to serve on special strike committees: publicity, recruitment of strikebreakers, housing, transportation, and finance. The membership agreed that no one should take independent action unless the group approved. Everyone should avoid speaking to the press. Instead, prepared statements would be handed to reporters. Chairman Edward A. Quigle told members he would coordinate joint activities with Oregon and California employer groups. WES sent hiring hall manager Frank Foisie south to assist Thomas Plant, president of the San Francisco Waterfront Employers Union. Foisie reported regularly by telephone and letter to Quigle about the status of negotiations in the Bay City.¹³

The day after the strike began, Waterfront Employers of Seattle strike committees reported to the general membership. The housing committee had located vessels to serve as floating hotels for strikebreakers. Recruiters had found replacements and obtained promises from the police chief to protect property and the lives of strikebreakers. Alaska Steamship, Pacific Steamship, and Pacific Lighterage already had 250 men working. Transportation committeemen related that launches had been chartered to move strikebreakers around the harbor. The strike finance committee assessed each steamship company \$500, stevedore firms \$250, and dock businesses \$100.¹⁴ From May 9 until July 16, 1934, WES collected \$41,500 and spent \$36,000. Not all companies could afford to pay the standard fee for their division. Others paid more than the minimum.¹⁵

On May 16, employers created a policy committee with unlimited authority to make decisions. Only at key moments in the strike would the entire membership need to assemble. Quigle appointed A. F. Haines, Thomas B. Wilson, Keith Middleton, and himself to the new committee. For the first time since the founding of the Seattle waterfront employers' organization in 1907, W. C. Dawson did not participate as a member of the policy committee. Dawson became WES liaison to the Seattle Chamber of Commerce.¹⁶

The Seattle Press and the Strike

From the start of the strike, employers and unions recognized the importance of public opinion. Local 38-12's Harry Evans told *Seattle Star* readers in his special column: "It will be the public that settles this strike ultimately. Directly or indirectly public opinion will bring pressure to bear to force one side or the other to give in. Public opinion will seek to fix the blame."¹⁷ Employers Dean Ballard and William C. Dawson told the Seattle Chamber of Commerce that public opinion should be aroused to make certain that Seattle officials enforced law and order on the docks.¹⁸

Both Local 38-12 and WES publicists portrayed their causes in simple terms. Harry Evans wrote that all the longshoremen wanted was a "fair shake," that is, the right to organize the same as the bosses.¹⁹ Waterfront employers' press releases emphasized that Seattle men enjoyed the best earnings and working conditions of all longshoremen in the United States. "These men, almost all of them, don't want to strike, but they have been misled by labor leaders who have promised them everything." To WES, the whole trouble centered on a little group of willful men who sought to make West Coast waterfronts closed shops, "the one thing the employers are fighting against."²⁰

The molders of Seattle public opinion were divided about the strike. During May 1934 neither the *Post-Intelligencer*

nor the *Seattle Times* took an editorial position. In news reports the Seattle dailies emphasized plant shutdowns and worker layoffs in industries dependent on maritime commerce.²¹ *Marine Digest* and *Railway and Marine News* thought longshoremen overpaid already. Both trade publications strongly opposed the union dispatch hall.²² The business-oriented *Town Crier* laid blame for the strike on the Roosevelt Administration. "Its whole tendency has been to give the labor organizations a lot more than was coming to them, and at the expense of other interests including the consuming public as well as employers."²³ At the other extreme, the *Seattle Star* insisted that the dispute be arbitrated personally by President Roosevelt. "We know he will be fair."²⁴ The University of Washington *Daily* asked students "Will you sell out 'the University of a Thousand Years' for 90 cents an hour?"²⁵ The Communist-controlled *Voice of Action*, strongly supported longshoremen. *The Voice* noted on May 15 that the Communist's Marine Workers Industrial Union had "issued a call to all longshoremen to join the ILA, [to] make it a fighting, rank and file controlled union of all dock workers on the coast."²⁶

Throughout the strike, outsiders participated in marches, mass meetings, and confrontations. Behind a banner proclaiming "Unemployed Won't Scab," on May 11 the Unemployed Citizens' League, Communist Party, university students, and the Marine Workers Industrial Union paraded to Longshoremen's Hall. These groups pledged maximum assistance to the cause. The men of Local 38-12 applauded each presentation.²⁷ Within three days, a Seattle longshore spokesman indicated that the local had second thoughts about Communist support. "We feel that the public is with us, and that if we allow some of these groups to come down, they will start trouble."²⁸

Scab-clearing Seattle Docks

By the third day of the strike, 650 Seattle strikebreakers busily worked at unloading cargo behind locked dock gates. Everett and Tacoma strike committees recognized something had to be done or the port of Seattle would soon be completely open. At five in the morning on May 12, 1934, Tacoma and Everett longshoremen gathered at their halls for what they thought would be special meetings. Flying squad lieutenants Ed Harris, Arne Jones, and George Soule loaded 850 union men into trucks, buses, and cars for a foray on Seattle docks.²⁹ After assembling in their hall, Local 38-12 men walked down the hill. As Seattle men crossed Railroad Avenue, Everett and Tacoma longshoremen crashed Pier 6. When the strikebreakers refused to leave, two scabs were roughed up and another thrown into the water. At Pier 1, Everett, Seattle, and Tacoma longshoremen joined together. Approximately 100 striking sailors merged into the raiding party.³⁰

As the strikers spread out along the waterfront, hundreds of curious spectators gathered across Railroad Avenue. Dozens sat on the tops of boxcars waiting for something to happen. Fifty police officers made no attempt to stop the union men. The lawmen did warn strikers not to resort to violence.³¹ Local 38-12 striker Gordon "Buck" Wiley recalled the surprise scab-clearing raid, "We went to Alaska Steam, Pier 1, then Pier 2. We got a bunch of them out of there. Then we went down to the old Nelson Dock where young boys were working. They were discharging oranges. We got them out. From there we went down to American-Hawaiian, at Stacy and Lander. The high point was at Pier 2 when seventy-five scabs filed through a crowd of strikers. Last to come out was the foreman 'Iodine' Harradin."³² By 6:00 p.m. strikebreakers had been driven off all piers except Bell Street Terminal. Puget Sound longshoremen had achieved their most dramatic victory since

the founding of Seattle and Tacoma stevedore and rigger unions in the spring of 1886.

Three hours after the scab-clearing episode, stunned employers conferred with Seattle Mayor John F. Dore and King County Sheriff Claude G. Bannick. The waterfront bosses wanted assurance of future protection from the Seattle, Tacoma, and Everett longshore "mob." Until Chief L. L. Norton stationed an adequate number of policemen on the piers to protect replacements, WES would not work any more cargo. Dore refused to order Chief Norton to send additional police to the waterfront. "We don't want to have anyone killed," Dore declared.³³ On May 14, Sheriff Bannick told employers that he could handle the waterfront situation if given command of the Seattle police force. Dore agreed to sign a letter giving Bannick authority over the police department, but later reneged. Near the end of the meeting, Dore agreed to send a telegram to Governor Clarence Martin, "To avoid bloodshed and the tying up of this port it is absolutely essential that we have troops here immediately."³⁴

During the morning of May 15, Governor Martin met with Seattle and Tacoma waterfront and chambers of commerce officials. The Governor refused to call out the National Guard. Martin reported that he had already sent a telegram to President Roosevelt asking for federal assistance in settling the strike. The governor invited a committee of five employers to his 2:00 p. m. meeting with union leaders.³⁵ At the afternoon session, Governor Martin asked employers and unions to submit their dispute to an arbitration board. Both groups refused. Employers urged Martin to use guardsmen to open Washington ports. Union representatives told Martin to keep his hands off.³⁶

At the governor's afternoon meeting, Alaska Steamship Manager Thomas B. Wilson raised the question of supplying food for Alaskans. Dave Beck agreed Alaska should be treated as a special case, but Paddy Morris refused to make any exceptions.³⁷ The next day, May 16, Beck informed Governor

Martin and Manager Wilson that unions would load and sail an Alaska-bound vessel. The seagoing and longshore unions had voted to work the *Victoria* after the owners agreed to union recognition, wages, and working conditions. Waterfront employers expressed amazement at Dave Beck's activities. The Teamster organizer's support of the longshoremen on May 9 had been unexpected. They were also surprised at Beck's considerable influence with Governor Martin, and his inside knowledge of federal government plans to mediate the strike. Equally puzzling was Beck's ability to get waterfront workers and seamen to reverse themselves overnight. "Mr. Beck is a smooth article and has to be watched very carefully," Quigle wrote Foisie, "otherwise he will jockey us into an uncomfortable position."³⁸

During the first week of the strike, serious confrontations occurred in Oregon and California. On May 10, Portland employers tried to bus strikebreakers from their hiring hall to the piers. An angry crowd of striking ILA men forced the scabs back into the hall. The next morning strikebreakers went directly to pier gates where they were met by strikers. After a battle, the scabs retreated. Mayor Joseph Carson and Sheriff Martin Pratt requested troops from Governor Julius L. Meier. On May 13, Meier conferred with organized labor and waterfront officials. After the meeting, the governor announced the National Guard would not be called unless Portland police proved unable to handle the situation. The Portland Central Labor Council passed a resolution on May 18, declaring, "We favor and will advocate a general strike of all workers if and when the Guard is called out to police the waterfront."³⁹

On the first day of the strike, San Francisco ILA men clashed with Luckenbach Line scabs. On May 12, 500 men threw rocks at the Waterfront Employers' Union fink hall. Mayor Angelo Rossi held a session with employers and maritime union leaders in an attempt to bring about a settlement. Rossi's efforts failed. Similar to Local 38-12's situation, Local 38-79 had trouble blockading San Francisco's forty-

three piers, which were spread out over a large area. On May 15 newspapers estimated 1,000 scabs at work. From the beginning of the strike most Los Angeles area piers stayed open. Again, the docks were dispersed over a large area. On May 15 Wilmington police fired into the ranks of 500 strikers who were charging a barricade in front of a scab hotel-ship. Police bullets cut down twenty-three strikers. ILA longshoremen Richard Parker died on the spot and John Knudsen later from wounds suffered in the melee. The first week of the 1934 maritime strike ended without a clear victor. San Francisco and Los Angeles ports remained partially open while Seattle and Portland's stayed closed.⁴⁰

On May 13, San Francisco waterfront employers expressed to newspaper reporters their profound shock that Teamster Local 85's 2,500 members had voted unanimously not to transport merchandise to or from the piers. It did little good to unload cargo from ships, employers stated, if the merchandise could not be moved to warehouses and trains.⁴¹ Oakland Teamsters passed a resolution to boycott dock work on May 14, and eight Seattle locals reinstated their blockade on May 15. An alarmed Frank Foisie called Keith Middleton on May 17. Foisie told Middleton the longshore strike had gotten out of hand, "This is borne out by the fact the Teamsters' Union and the several Marine Unions are not only striking in sympathy but with the ultimate idea of absolute domination of the shipping industry." Foisie added that San Francisco employers believed that ships loaded by nonunion men on the West Coast would be tied up when they arrived at North Atlantic ports.⁴²

The May 28 Offer

In response to appeals by Mayor Angelo Rossi, on May 17 the Roosevelt Administration sent Assistant Secretary of Labor Edward F. McGrady to San Francisco. McGrady tried to get ILA district officers and employers to agree to United States Employment Service control of dispatch halls, but

neither side would give up the struggle for sole control.⁴³ WES sent shipping managers A. F. Haines, K. J. Middleton, and T. B. Wilson to serve as consultants to the California negotiators. Bargaining deadlocked when employers refused to recognize the ILA district. At the requests of Senator Robert Wagner, the President's special board, and Mayor Rossi, ILA President Joseph P. Ryan flew to San Francisco on May 24.⁴⁴

When Ryan arrived in San Francisco, negotiations were stalled. Every time the ILA insisted on negotiating as a district, Thomas Plant asserted he could bargain only for San Francisco employers. Plant absolutely refused to consider proposals submitted by seamen and marine engineers. On May 28, Frank Foisie telegraphed Seattle employers the terms of a new offer made by Plant to the ILA. Plant agreed to recognize the ILA district as bargaining agent for the men and to joint management of hiring halls. In return, the bosses wanted the ILA to agree to no discrimination in hiring of either union or nonunion men. WES representatives Haines, Middleton, and Wilson approved Plant's proposal. Middleton sent word to Seattle employers that the May 28 offer would probably be rejected by ILA locals.⁴⁵ However, ILA President Ryan exuded optimism. He promised to support Plant's offer before the men, explaining, "It enables the ILA to get a strong foothold on the entire Pacific Coast."⁴⁶ ILA district negotiators John Bjorklund, William Lewis, Paddy Morris, and Cliff Thurston told reporters they were dissatisfied with the terms. District officials did agree to submit the May 28 proposal to a coastwide membership referendum.⁴⁷

The next day Joseph Ryan flew to Seattle accompanied by Dave Beck. The Teamster leader told the press that continuing the strike would ruin Seattle's waterfront business. "The whole thing," the Teamster organizer declared, "is playing into the hands of Los Angeles, which remains at least partly open, and doesn't want the strike settled until she has grabbed off the waterborne commerce of San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, and the rest." When told of Beck's statement, Dewey

Bennett replied, "Absolutely nothing doing. We'll stick with every local on the coast. One union agrees—all unions agree. That's our policy."⁴⁸

The day before Ryan addressed Local 38-12, Tacoma strikers turned the May 28 proposal down flat.⁴⁹ Halfway through his speech in Seattle, "Little Red" Wilson interrupted. Wilson waved his pocket watch and yelled, "Hey! Ryan! You've still got time to catch the Empire Builder for New York!" Like the men in Tacoma, Seattle longshoremen voted NO with a deafening roar.⁵⁰ Longshoremen were not in the mood to compromise their demand for sole authority over the dispatch hall. Up and down the coast, the May 28 employer proposal met defeat. Rank-and-file rejection caused federal conciliator McGrady to suspend the next round of talks scheduled to start June 1 in San Francisco.

The First Alaska Agreement

From the beginning of negotiations in San Francisco, the President's special board pressured ILA officers to get Seattle Local 38-12 to load fishing supplies on Alaska ships. On May 20, McGrady secured a pledge from ILA district officers that Alaska cannery ships would be loaded in Seattle.⁵¹ Local 38-12 ignored district requests to load Alaska ships.⁵² On May 23 Paddy Morris asked the Tacoma longshore union to call together representatives of all Washington and Oregon ILA locals in order to form a Joint Northwest Strike Committee. The purpose of the committee would be to effect the release of the cannery ships. After electing Walter Freer chairman and Edgar Harris recording secretary, sixty-five delegates argued about the cannery ships for thirteen hours. Debate grew hot and heavy. Several times delegates nearly came to blows.⁵³ On May 26 the committee voted 28 to 10 to load one ship for southwestern Alaska. Loading gangs and sailing crews had to be 100 percent union men.⁵⁴ On May 29 Governor John W. Troy telegraphed the Joint Northwest Strike Committee,

pleading for resumption of all Alaska shipping. The committee referred the governor to the waterfront employers.⁵⁵



Joint Northwest Strike Committee 1934, Webster & Stevens
 Bottom Row, Left to Right: Charles Peabody, Portland; Carl Stotts, Seattle; Art Woolbert, Seattle; Unknown; Chris Martin, Seattle; Emil Swanson, Seattle; Art Whitehead, Seattle; Tom Mitchell, Seattle; Perry Conrad, Port Angeles; Roy Collins, Seattle; Andy Larson, Tacoma; Unknown; Joe Marshall, Seattle; Unknown; John Beaton, Portland. Top Row, Left to Right: Jack Shannon, Seattle; Harry Olson, Seattle; Unknown; Art Wills, Seattle; Art Hassell, Port Angeles; George Clark, Seattle; Unknown; Unknown; Harry Hazel, Seattle; Perry Conrad, Port Townsend; Karl Isakson, Everett; Les Getchell, Port Angeles; Ernie Tanner, Tacoma; Ed Morton, Seattle; Harry Pilcher, Everett; Unknown; George Miller, Tacoma; John Fallboom, Seattle; Unknown; Louis Taggart, Seattle; Unknown; Unknown; Unknown; Unknown; Unknown; Thomas, Astoria; Matt Mehan, Portland. Identified by Elmer Barth, Burt Nelson, Jac, Spurrell, and T. Alden Thronson.

During the morning of June 5, Henry G. Seaborn and Victor Elfendahl, representatives of Alaska Pacific Salmon Company, appeared before the Joint Northwest Strike Committee. Seaborn and Elfendahl agreed to the closed shop and union working conditions. Wages would be \$1.00 straight time and \$1.50 overtime.⁵⁶ That afternoon representatives of the Joint Northwest Strike Committee met managers of five additional Alaska shipping companies in the office of Seattle's new Mayor Charles L. Smith. Alaska shipowners acceded to

wage increases and union shop demands. Alaska Steamship Company insisted that their seventy-one nonunion company stevedores be taken into Local 38-12. Employers refused to accept an ILA counter proposal.⁵⁷

A compromise Alaska Agreement was signed June 8 that provided for union control of the hiring hall, the six-hour day, a 30-hour workweek, and the May 1 wage scale. If a subsequent coastwide settlement increased wages, the men would receive the new scale retroactive to June 8. Seventy-one nonunion men had thirty days to join Local 38-12 or leave the waterfront. Loading would not commence until each company had signed up with the other marine unions. These were substantially the demands established by the 1934 ILA district convention.⁵⁸ Afraid that a precedent might be set, the Waterfront Employers of Seattle issued a statement that the Alaska Agreement had no significance to other Pacific Coast ports. The June 8 settlement signified only a truce that would not be extended beyond the fishing season.⁵⁹

The Mayors' Attempt to Settle the Strike

After conferring with Seattle Mayor Charles Smith on June 11, Tacoma Mayor George A. Smitley and the city council invited Bjorklund, Morris, and Ryan to a private session. City officials offered to help settle the strike. After the meeting Ryan told the *News Tribune* that the mayor could do nothing. "It must be done from San Francisco." The next day Mayor Smitley met with Tacoma waterfront employers who gave him little encouragement.⁶⁰ That night Smitley telegraphed President Roosevelt asking the federal government to take over the West Coast maritime industry if the strike was not settled by June 16.⁶¹

Seattle Mayor Charles Smith used a different approach than Smitely. On June 12, Smith told Scripps-Howard reporters that if an agreement was not announced by 1:00 p.m. on June 14 his police force would open the port. That afternoon Smith

asked the Joint Northwest Strike Committee to appoint three men with full power to act. The strike committee elected Seattle delegates George R. Clark, Robert Collins, and William Craft as its representatives. In the mayor's office, the three longshoremen met steamship company managers A. F. Haines, Keith J. Middleton, and Thomas B. Wilson. Clark, Collins, and Craft presented the Alaska Agreement as the model solution, providing it was applied coastwide.⁶² Haines, Middleton, and Thomas rejected the Alaska Agreement. At the same time the shipping managers handed the union negotiators the May 28 San Francisco employers' proposal.⁶³

On June 13, Ryan, Beck, and Bjorklund joined Clark, Collins, and Craft in the negotiations. The union bargainers acceded to joint operation of the hiring hall with five provisos: That the union discipline the men, hire the dispatchers, and insure equalized earnings. Working conditions in Tacoma and Everett had to remain unchanged. Finally, maritime workers' demands must be met before longshoremen returned to work.⁶⁴ The next day Middleton and his associates told the ILA men they could not accept any of their five points. The employers' committee handed union negotiators the May 28 proposal again and said that was as far as they cared to go. Mayor Smith told the union men that he would extend his deadline twenty-four hours. If nothing happened by Friday at 1:00 p.m., he would furnish police protection to employers.⁶⁵

Union negotiators took the employers' proposal to the Joint Northwest Strike Committee. Delegates unanimously rejected the employer proposal a second time. Then delegates argued over a motion to notify Mayor Smith to stop interfering in the strike or the men would quit working Alaska ships. The committee tabled this motion until the new mayor's attitude could be fully assessed.⁶⁶ Meanwhile Smith announced that the mayors of Portland, Tacoma, and Bellingham would join with him in opening their ports within forty-eight hours. Smith issued a proclamation on June 14 declaring an emergency, "It has become necessary in order to maintain peace and order in

the City that I assume personal control, for the time being, of the police force."⁶⁷

The June 16 Agreement

While Seattle longshoremen braced for a confrontation with Mayor Smith and the police, Mayor Rossi assembled the leading negotiators from both sides in his office. On June 16, San Francisco Local 38-79 telephoned all Pacific Coast ILA locals that a new agreement had been approved. Thomas Plant had signed on behalf of the waterfront employers of Los Angeles, Portland, San Francisco and Seattle. Joseph Ryan and J. E. Finnegan endorsed the accord for the ILA. Guaranteeing the new pact were Teamster officials, members of the President's mediation board, John Forbes of the Industrial Association, and Mayor Rossi. The June 16 Agreement provided for district recognition, shared control of hiring halls, and no discrimination in the hiring of either union or nonunion men. Wages and hours would be arbitrated after the men returned to work.⁶⁸ ILA District President William Lewis refused to sign the agreement, stating that the membership would have to make that decision. After the signing ceremony, Dave Beck told United Press, "The teamsters underwrite this agreement and will begin hauling material from the docks at once."⁶⁹

During the morning of June 17 Seattle waterfront employers expressed relief when told by Keith Middleton that the agreement did not have to be referred to the men for ratification. In the afternoon Dave Beck told Middleton that there would be an ILA membership referendum on the settlement. Furthermore, Beck predicted Seattle men would turn down the June 16 agreement.⁷⁰ On June 17 San Francisco Local 38-79 unanimously rejected Rossi's agreement. Bay City longshoremen immediately telephoned the results of their vote to the other twenty-nine ILA locals. That evening Tacoma, Portland, and San Diego emulated San Francisco. The next

day, June 18, Seattle and all other locals except Los Angeles voted no. Longshore spokesmen told reporters the June 16 agreement failed to consider the demands of the other striking maritime unions.⁷¹

The failure of the June 16 agreement marked the end of the first phase of the 1934 maritime strike. Forty-one days of bargaining at both the district and local levels had failed to settle the strike. Government intervention had not succeeded. ILA officers, employers associations, and government officials recognized the futility of negotiating agreements that proved unacceptable to the West Coast ILA membership. Although the goals for both sides would remain the same, employers decided to implement new strategies to win the strike. Show-down time was coming.

CHAPTER XIII

SHOWDOWN

They got me boys! They got me!

– Shelvy Daffron, June 30, 1934¹

Three weeks after the creation of the Joint Northwest Strike Committee, ten San Francisco maritime unions created a Joint Marine Strike Committee. On June 13, delegates elected ILA Local 38-79 strike chairman Harry Bridges as presiding officer.² On June 19, Bridges asked Mayor Rossi to arrange a conference with employers for the purpose of a speedy settlement. The marine committee set two preconditions. There must be absolute assurance of no blacklisting because of strike activities, and joint settlements for all unions involved. The next day the marine committee amplified its demands. Strikebreakers must be discharged, the hiring halls under ILA control, and gang committees created to discipline men for drunkenness, pilfering, or shirking of work. Wages and hours would be submitted to arbitration.³

Charles Cutright, who had played an important part in Local 38-12's involvement in the Seattle 1919 general strike, was also elected a delegate from Local 38-79 to the Joint Marine Strike Committee. Along with other members of the marine committee, Cutright addressed a mass meeting of 10,000 strikers and their sympathizers in the Municipal Auditorium on June 19. Cutright advocated a general strike by all unions in sympathy with the maritime unions.⁴

On the day of the San Francisco mass meeting, Congress approved a joint resolution empowering President Roosevelt to establish boards of investigation and arbitration for labor disputes. The next day Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins wired Thomas Plant and Joseph Ryan proposing that they submit control of the hiring halls, "the one point still in