

## CHAPTER X

### IN THE LION'S MOUTH

On January 9, 1935, Jack Bjorklund resigned as Pacific Coast District ILA secretary. The executive board appointed Paddy Morris acting secretary until the next district convention. The new district secretary, President Bill Lewis, and executive board members A. H. Peterson and J. J. Finnegan met in San Francisco to plan a coastwide maritime federation. The ILA officers invited Teamsters, Seamen, Marine Engineers, Radio Operators, and Masters, Mates and Pilots to meet on February 18 to discuss participation in a coastwide federation. All agreed to join except the Teamsters. The decision of the IBT limited the effectiveness of the new organization from its inception.<sup>1</sup> The participating unions sent out a call for a convention to ratify a proposed constitution circulating among interested unions. When the unions assembled in Seattle during mid-April, daily newspapers described the Maritime Federation of the Pacific Coast convention as a struggle between left wingers and conservatives.<sup>2</sup> Since October 1934 the Seattle *Waterfront Worker* had kept up a running attack on ILA President Ryan, Bill Lewis, and Paddy Morris as labor fakers.<sup>3</sup> Harry Bridges stressed the same theme in a speech to the Everett ILA local shortly before the convention. The San Franciscan called for organizing the federation on a rank and file basis instead of the "old reactionary leadership."<sup>4</sup>

As the Maritime Federation convention opened, Bridges moved that proxy votes be recognized. Paddy Morris amended the motion to read that no union could carry more than one proxy vote. Morris's amendment carried 36 to 28. When the left wing tried to elect Karl Isakson chairman of the convention, conservatives nominated E. B. O'Grady. O'Grady won 38 to 30.<sup>5</sup> Later, the convention elected Sailors' Union of the Pacific Patrolman Harry Lundeberg president.

After approving the constitution, federation delegates established procedures to help each other. In case of a strike, a district (state) council would try to adjust the dispute. If the council failed, the federation executive committee could call for a membership strike referendum. The Maritime Federation already had a major strike on its hands. Seamen had walked off tankers on March 10, demanding preferential hiring for union members. Scab crews manned the ships and the strike faltered. The Maritime Federation tried to negotiate on behalf of the strikers, but the oil companies refused. The federation recommended, and the membership agreed, to call off the strike.<sup>6</sup>

Two weeks after the federation adjourned, the Pacific Coast District ILA convention assembled in Portland. The Tacoma Communist Party issued a

circular boosting Harry Bridges and Harry Pilcher of Everett for the district offices. The CP advised Local 38-97 delegates Robert Hardin, Andy Larsen, Ernie Tanner, and George Smith that "It would be a serious mistake to support any candidate just because he was from Tacoma."<sup>7</sup> Harry Bridges challenged incumbent district president Bill Lewis, while Hugh Adams of Portland ran against veteran Paddy Morris for secretary-treasurer. Lewis beat Bridges 69<sup>4</sup>/<sub>5</sub> to 50<sup>1</sup>/<sub>5</sub>, and Morris won 79<sup>1</sup>/<sub>5</sub> to 39<sup>4</sup>/<sub>5</sub> over Adams.<sup>8</sup>

The day after the district convention opened, Pacific Northwest timber workers struck. The district ILA convention voted to cooperate with the Timber Workers to the fullest extent. Thousands of Pacific Northwest ILA members refused to move any lumber.<sup>9</sup> In Tacoma, lumber handlers would be dispatched from the hall to the docks, see the armed guards, and return to the hall. Longshore spokesmen stated that the docks were unsafe.<sup>10</sup> On June 24, city and state police, as well as the National Guard, established a command center at the west end of the Eleventh Street bridge to check everyone going to the waterfront.<sup>11</sup> June 25 turned out to be the day of the "Battle of the Bridgehead." State police and national guardsmen armed with riot sticks and fixed bayonets stopped a parade of strikers. Some of the young guardsmen lost their heads and began swinging clubs on people who did not move out of the way fast enough. Tear and nausea gases rained down on the crowd. Eighteen longshoremen were arrested in various melees.<sup>12</sup> Pierce County Sheriff Jack Bjorklund refused to order his deputies to join the other law enforcement agencies. The old longshore leader said such action prostituted his principles.<sup>13</sup> When the lumber workers' strike ended on August 2, longshoremen resumed handling lumber with the satisfaction that they had helped fellow unionists in their time of need.

The struggle between the conservatives and left wing of the ILA resumed in New York City during July 1935 at the international ILA convention. President Joseph Ryan spoke about his fight against Communists on the docks. Soviet Russia was sending money to American Communists who were joining AFL unions. The "borers from within" sought to provoke strikes so that they could control unions. If it had not been for the ILA, Ryan added, Communists would be in control of the steamship industry in every port.<sup>14</sup> In his review of the 1934 strike, delegate Harry Bridges pointed out, "We had agreed that the old policy of one union scabbing on another was through as far as we were concerned . . . We are going to battle for it, and uphold it every inch of the way and if it is called Communistic, the whole West Coast is Communistic."<sup>15</sup> Delegate Robert Hardin told the convention that West Coast representatives were "in the lion's mouth." They had been instructed by the Pacific Coast District to work for the removal of President Ryan. "We have also got it inside of our own minds that these attacks made on our regular leaders on the Pacific Coast in the last few years puts us in a position like this, that we cannot go along with Delegate Bridges of San Francisco."<sup>16</sup> After four West Coast delegates announced that they was refusing to vote for ILA president, the other representatives reelected Joseph Ryan. After he returned to Tacoma, Hardin told the *Labor Advocate* that as long as there was an element inside the ILA directed by outsiders, no definite progress could be made.<sup>17</sup>

The power struggle in the Pacific Coast District ILA between Lewis and Morris and their allies on one side, and Bridges and his supporters on the other, came to a showdown at the May 1936 district convention in San Pedro. The incident that set off an eight-day debate between the rival factions was a San Francisco Local 38-79 bulletin on May 11 describing convention activities. The bulletin accused district secretary Paddy Morris of deliberately distorting the May 5 minutes. In a speech on the convention floor Morris demanded that delegates censure Local 38-79 "for conduct unbecoming union men in taking part in the character assassination of the District Secretary without any foundation of fact to back it up."<sup>18</sup> The debate that ensued over Morris' motion became so acrimonious that many representatives feared the convention would split wide open. At the end of the angry exchanges between the two factions, the convention disallowed Morris's motion, 75½ against, 60 in favor, and 20½ abstaining.<sup>19</sup> Tired of continual harassment by Bridges's group, Lewis and Morris declined renomination to their district offices. On July 10, Harry Bridges and Matt Meehan of Portland were elected by membership referendum to the two top positions of the Pacific Coast District ILA.<sup>20</sup>



Local 38-97 greets President Franklin D. Roosevelt at the Union Station on October 26, 1936, during his campaign for reelection. Left to right, Henry Ziegler, Cap Fogelberg, T.A. Thronson, unknowns holding flag and banner, George Noonan, Robert Hardin, George Miller, Martin Grelish, Henry Brown, two members of Teamsters.

(Identified by T.A. Thronson. Richards photo, Magaen collection)

## The Streamline Strike

Since the announcement of the 1934 Award, relations between the West Coast District ILA locals and waterfront employers had not been peaceful. In two years, 561 longshore quickie strikes had taken place over sling-load size and the men's refusal to work with nonunion clerks and checkers. There was also unrest among the seagoing crafts. Two hundred and fifty job actions had taken place.<sup>21</sup> In Tacoma, the Labor Relations Committee resolved grievances without the men resorting to short strikes. George Miller, George Smith, and Paddy Morris represented Local 38-97 while Charles Barker, Edward Kloss, and Fred Tuttle spoke for employers. LRC approved a new agreement stipulating working conditions on March 2, 1935.<sup>22</sup> Four months later the perennial concern of Tacoma longshoremen came before LRC. The committee decided that henceforth the men would be dispatched in rotation. Earnings would be equalized on an annual basis instead of monthly.<sup>23</sup>

During August 1936, the West Coast ILA membership voted 6,357 to 2,083 to open the Award. The men wanted coastwise uniform working conditions, \$1.00 an hour straight time, and \$1.50 overtime.<sup>24</sup> Employers also wanted the Award opened. The bosses were determined to regain control of the hiring hall, the right to preferred gangs, and an end to the six-hour day. And the employers wanted fines levied on longshoremen who participated in job actions.<sup>25</sup> Seagoing unions also had problems with the shipowners. The seamen wanted hiring done at their halls and overtime paid in cash without the option of time off. Negotiations continued until October 29 at midnight, when unions affiliated with the Maritime Federation walked out.<sup>26</sup>

In contrast to 1916 and 1934, employers did not try to keep any ports open. Strikebreakers and armed guards were not employed. Nor did the disputing parties attack each other in the press. Instead, heated confrontations occurred at the bargaining table in San Francisco. The Maritime Federation of the Pacific's district councils directed the strike. In Washington State the council called itself the Joint Northwest Strike Committee. The 1936 JNSC demonstrated such a high degree of solidarity that it was called "the Streamline Strike."<sup>27</sup> Unity was demonstrated not only on picket lines, but on triweekly radio broadcasts.<sup>28</sup>

In Tacoma the docks remained quiet throughout the streamline strike. The Flying Squad was not called out. Picket duty on the barren, wet docks became routine. No citizens' committee appealed for police to open the port. The men recognized that the employers' strategy was to out-wait the unions. The striking marine groups centered their activities at Longshore Hall. The unions dispatched pickets and held joint strike committee meetings. On November 2, representatives from other Tacoma unions met at Longshoremen's Hall to pledge financial and moral support.<sup>29</sup> During the ninety-two days' strike seventy-four unions gave \$9,281 to the cause.<sup>30</sup>

A federal mediator worked hard to bring about compromise, but little progress occurred until mid-December, when the tempo of negotiations increased. One-

by-one the seagoing crafts and longshoremen reached agreement with employers. None signed until all had reached satisfactory settlements. The long strike ended February 2, 1937. Longshoremen returning to work without wage increases, but with union preference in hiring and coastwide working rules. For their part, employers succeeded in getting unions to formally agree not to use job actions.<sup>31</sup>

### The CIO Comes to the West Coast

While Pacific Coast longshoremen and marine workers were fighting employers in two major strikes between 1934 and 1937, momentous changes were taking place in the national labor movement. Workers in the automotive, electric, rubber, and steel industries were organizing, gaining recognition, and collectively bargaining with their employers. At first the campaign to unionize mass production workers proceeded under the umbrella of the American Federation of Labor, but ideological differences between industrial and craft union advocates proved too great to be resolved within the AFL. By 1936 industrial unions under the leadership of John L. Lewis had formed the Committee for Industrial Organization. Lewis and his associates openly criticized the jurisdictional primacy of the AFL's craft unions.

AFL President William Green and the leaders of the Carpenters, Teamsters, Photoengravers, and Metal Trades insisted that new industrial locals be merged with established craft unions. Lewis and his associates refused to split the industrial unions. From the mass production industries came the insistent call for the organization of all workers, skilled and unskilled, into single industry-wide unions. The AFL Executive Committee suspended the CIO during 1936. In 1938 the CIO became a separate and permanent Congress of Industrial Organizations. For the first time in the twentieth century, the United States witnessed two major labor federations, both with millions of members, competing with each other for control of the skilled and unskilled in every section of the country.

According to retired longshoreman T. A. Thronson, Tacoma Local 38-97 looked with favor on the goals and activities of the CIO during the fledgling union's early years. "Organizing the unorganized," Thronson recalled, "was an ideal unionists believed in. The work of the CIO in the auto and steel industries was received with enthusiasm by the men." Thronson recollected that longshoremen considered the AFL leadership incapable of organizing workers in mass production industries. Thronson remembered when Tacoma longshoremen became disillusioned with the CIO. "When the CIO organizers began raiding existing unions in the Pacific Northwest," Thronson concluded, "then we knew no jurisdiction would be respected."<sup>32</sup>

In the midst of the AFL-CIO struggle, an important jurisdictional dispute broke out on the Pacific Coast between two major AFL affiliates. On November 30, 1936, Harry Bridges announced in Seattle "The ILA is not going to stay on

the waterfront, but is going inland" to organize uptown warehouses.<sup>33</sup> The next day Teamster Dave Beck flew to San Francisco to proclaim a march to the sea.<sup>34</sup> Then Beck conferred with AFL President William Green. Green persuaded the AFL Executive Board to give jurisdictional preference for uptown warehouse organizing to the Teamsters. The board also ordered ILA President Joseph Ryan to tell Bridges to cease organizing uptown. If Bridges did not stop, the Pacific Coast District ILA would be suspended from the AFL. Bridges ignored the Green-Ryan ultimatum. Ryan responded by removing Bridges from the ILA Executive Board and as a salaried ILA organizer for the West Coast.<sup>35</sup>

During 1937 an all-out organizing struggle took place in Seattle and northern California between the forces of Beck and Bridges.<sup>36</sup> An exception to the ILA-Teamster jurisdictional struggle was Tacoma where the two unions observed their long-standing agreement. Teamsters controlled uptown warehouses and Local 38-97 dominated the waterfront. Paddy Morris made certain the close relationship continued in the Tacoma Central Labor Council.<sup>37</sup>

During July 1937, Harry Bridges made a deal with John L. Lewis that had immense repercussions on the West Coast. In return for bringing Pacific Coast longshoremen into the CIO, Lewis appointed Bridges his West Coast CIO Director. On August 11, a rump session of the Pacific Coast District ILA Executive Board conducted a membership referendum on dropping out of the AFL and forming the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) as a CIO affiliate. The longshoremen voted 12,079 in favor of the ILWU and 3,479 against.<sup>38</sup> While this referendum appeared to be a major victory for Bridges and his supporters, T. A. Thronson remembered that the majority consisted of San Pedro, San Francisco, Portland, and Seattle. Twenty-eight locals voted not to leave the ILA. Nonetheless, when the first West Coast ILWU Convention met at Aberdeen, Washington, during April 1938, all former ILA-AFL locals attended except Tacoma, Anacortes, and Port Angeles.<sup>39</sup>

For a month the men of Tacoma Local 38-97 debated whether to switch from the ILA to the ILWU. Finally, on July 27 a motion was made and adopted to stay with the ILA and the Maritime Federation of the Pacific. The local could not see what the CIO had to offer that it did not already have. Local 38-97 suspected John L. Lewis and his top committeemen of trying to create a dictatorship. In a letter to all Pacific Coast longshore locals, Tacoma stated, "We have unity, solidarity, and it extends to all groups. What could justify our tearing it to pieces to join an organization in which we would have no control."<sup>40</sup>

Tacoma longshoremen told the ILWU that it would continue to work under the existing ILA contract with employers in the event of an ILWU strike. It did not take long to test Tacoma. During October 1937, Coos Bay and Portland ILWU longshoremen refused to work five lumber rail cars from an AFL mill. The mill owners diverted their lumber to Tacoma, where Local 38-97 started to load the boards on ships.<sup>41</sup> On November 2 delegations from the CIO timber workers, the AFL mill, and Pete Gill of the SUP spoke to the membership of Local 38-97. After hours of discussion with nothing resolved, and most of the

membership departed, President George Miller called for new business. A motion was made to take a referendum vote to disperse the funds of the local back to individual members. Quickly, Miller adjourned the meeting stating that a quorum was not present.<sup>42</sup>

While disputes between the ILA and ILWU were erupting on the waterfront, another confrontation was taking place in a Seattle courtroom. Remnants of the ILA sued the ILWU for the records, funds, and charter of the Pacific Coast District.<sup>43</sup> The claimants were successful. A reconstituted district executive board named Seattle its new headquarters. William J. Lewis became president and Ray Calkins of Tacoma, secretary-treasurer. The first act of the reorganized district was to publish an official newspaper, *The ILA Longshoreman*. The *ILA Longshoreman* became the main propaganda organ against the ILWU. A typical editorial on September 15, 1937, proclaimed:

*A crisis is confronting the maritime workers of the Pacific Coast, especially the longshoremen. Ever since the 1934 strike, disruptive forces have been at work within our organization. Under the cloak of promoting industrial unionism they have brought dissension within our ranks and have sought, and in some of the ports have succeeded to some extent to alienate us from the rest of the labor movement, especially other transportation and maritime groups.<sup>44</sup>*

### The Shepard Line Beef

In the midst of the ILA-ILWU propaganda war, a major controversy arose between members of the Maritime Federation over the Shepard Line freighter *Timber Rush*. Shepard had signed a West Coast agreement with the AFL Sailors' Union of the Pacific to sail the company's ships. During the winter of 1937-1938, the *Timber Rush* laid over on the East Coast. The SUP crew was paid off. As the recognized bargaining agent, the Sailors' Union expected to be called back in the spring, but instead Shepard hired a CIO National Maritime Union (NMU) crew. In an election held by the NLRB without notifying the Sailors' Union or placing their name on the ballot, the NLRB awarded NMU sole bargaining rights. When the *Timber Rush* stopped in Seattle, ILWU longshore and warehouse gangs crashed the Sailors' picket lines when urged to do so by Harry Bridges.<sup>45</sup>

The *Timber Rush* moved to Tacoma where, in the absence of SUP pickets, ILA gangs worked the vessel the first day. On the second day, SUP pickets appeared and chased NMU men off the ship. Tacoma Local 38-97 refused to go through the Sailors' line, claiming it was unsafe. "We don't know how tough those pickets are," a longshore spokesman told the *Tacoma Times*, "but we don't feel like risking broken arms or broken necks to find out."<sup>46</sup> When ordered to work the *Timber Rush* by government arbitrator M. E. Bollen, Tacoma longshoremen denied the right of the employers to ask for arbitration. The matter should be settled in the Tacoma Labor Relations

Committee, not in an arbitration hearing.<sup>47</sup> After the *Timber Rush* had been tied up ten days, the waterfront employers closed the port of Tacoma.<sup>48</sup>

The Tacoma Central Labor Council responded to management's closure of the port by declaring all cargo diverted from Tacoma as hot and unfair. In addition, the Masters, Mates, and Pilots, Marine Firemen, the Seattle ILA Checkers, and the ILA Walking Bosses announced their support of the Sailors and Local 38-97.<sup>49</sup> Crews on five ships promptly walked out and checkers refused to tally diverted cargo. With this strong support, the SUP gave employers an ultimatum: All ships will be struck unless Tacoma reopens at 5:00 p.m. May 12. After a marathon session between the SUP and employers, a ten-day truce was agreed to May 13. The docks of Tacoma reopened. The *Timber Rush* sailed without loading. Thereafter, Shepard Line vessels calling at the port carried SUP crews.<sup>50</sup>

The *Timber Rush* controversy ended two weeks before the annual meeting of the Maritime Federation in San Francisco. The convention started with appeals for unity and a call for setting aside rivalries in the interest of a united

## Notice Is Given By Workers

Union Demands That Port of Tacoma Be Opened by 5 P. M., or Else

Retaliating for the closure of the Port of Tacoma to all cargo shipping 13 days ago, the Sailors' Union of the Pacific Thursday held over the Waterfront Employers association of Seattle a threat to close Seattle's port unless Tacoma's port is opened by 5 p. m. Thursday.

The Pacific Northwest's mar-

## Ban Laid In Labor Dispute

Shipping Stopped In City as Result of Picketing of Timber Rush

The port of Tacoma was declared "closed" by the Waterfront Employers' association shortly after 8 a. m. Saturday, when Tacoma longshoremen again declined to pass through a picket line of the Sailors' Union of the Pacific to load the Shepard freighter *Timber Rush*, only freighter left in port.

The drastic action was the climax

The Waterfront Employers closed the port of Tacoma when Tacoma longshoremen refused to cross the Sailors' Union picket line in the Shepard Line beef. The threat of the Sailors to shut down Seattle with pickets ended the standoff, and the employers reopened the port after thirteen days.

(Tacoma News Tribune, April 30 and May 12, 1938, Tacoma Public Library)

front toward employers.<sup>51</sup> But on the first day a majority of the Credentials Committee recommended against seating Tacoma ILA delegates Andy Larsen, George Soule, and T. A. Thronson. Soule had expected trouble. The old Flying Squad leader came prepared. "No. They aren't going to dump us," Soule told a friendly Marine Engineer. Soule showed the mariner seven handguns in his suitcase. "If they monkey with us," Soule vowed, "they'll think it's the Chinese Fourth of July."<sup>52</sup>

On the second day of the federation convention, delegates friendly to Tacoma insisted the full assembly listen to the minority report of the Credentials Committee before voting on whether or not to seat the Tacomans. Among the representatives supporting the minority report to seat Tacoma were Marine Fireman J. J. Quinn, C. P. French of the Marine Engineers, and Carl Tillman of the Sailors' Union. Quinn told the convention, "It comes as a surprise to me that we will attempt not to seat these men for no reason whatsoever — for no reason only that they failed to go CIO."<sup>53</sup> French declared, "These men are Union longshoremen and I don't give a damn whether they are CIO or AFL."<sup>54</sup> Carl Tillman summed up the position of the pro-Tacoma delegates, "I say this in conclusion that anyone who votes against seating these men representing the industry in Tacoma because they are workers, are voting to destroy the very thing that those workers have fought for in the Maritime Federation."<sup>55</sup>

The opposition to seating Tacoma delegates was led by ILWU representatives Roy Donnelly of San Pedro, H. J. Bodine of Portland, and Harry Bridges of San Francisco. Donnelly pointed out, "I believe that the Tacoma local was absolutely right and had the right to vote in the election that we took to vote for the CIO, but if they wanted solidarity — if the Tacoma local really wanted solidarity — they should have gone along with the majority. That is Unionism."<sup>56</sup> Bodine posed a question, "Why didn't the Tacoma local officers go with the majority into the CIO?" He answered himself, "Because they are not being paid by the rank and file they claim to represent. They are Joe Ryan's pie cards and the reason they don't work for the establishment of an ILWU local in Tacoma is they knew there is no 'pie card' for them in our organization."<sup>57</sup>

Like Bodine, Bridges claimed that officers in the Tacoma local were in the pay of Joe Ryan. The ILWU president also alleged that the Tacomans were collaborating with shipowners to break up the Maritime Federation. Bridges concluded his remarks:

*Tacoma has only two percent of the Longshoremen on the Pacific Coast and what you are discussing here is whether or not you will seat an organization that represents less than two percent of the longshoremen on the coast as against an organization that represents ninety-eight percent, what you are discussing here if you seat them, you are going to ask for, and get, antagonism. It is a bum way to get this unity.*<sup>58</sup>

After Bridges spoke, a vote was taken on the minority report to seat Tacoma representatives. This convention voted 69 to 15 against seating ILA Local 38-97. Immediately, delegates from the Sailors' Union, the Masters, Mates, and Pilots, as well as three Marine Firemen, walked out of the meeting with the Tacoma delegation. From this time, the Maritime Federation existed as a paper organization.<sup>59</sup>

Back home in Tacoma a special meeting of Local 38-97 cancelled subscriptions to the *Voice of the Federation* and the *CIO Herald*. The men also sent a telegram to Larsen, Soule, and Thronson expressing confidence in their judgment in signing a mutual aid pact with the seceding marine unions.<sup>60</sup>

### **Tacoma Longshoremen and the National Labor Relations Board**

One of the thorny problems created by the split of the West Coast longshoremen into the ILWU-CIO and the ILA-AFL concerned who was the legitimate collective bargaining agent for the waterfront workers. At first, Waterfront Employers' Association of the Pacific Coast refused to deal with the ILWU because they had signed the annual contract with the ILA. Bridges appealed the owners' decision to the National Labor Relations Board, a new federal agency viewed as the Supreme Court for employee-employer disputes. During June 1938, the NLRB ruled in favor of the ILWU because the CIO affiliate's membership accounted for a majority of the longshoremen. NLRB also declared that the exception ports, Tacoma, Anacortes, and Port Angeles, must be included in any ILWU contract.<sup>61</sup> Angered by the NLRB decision, Tacoma longshoremen cut off all remaining ties with the ILWU and hired lawyers to get the decision reversed.<sup>62</sup>

On August 10, 1938, Bridges sent a letter to Anacortes, Port Angeles, and Tacoma informing the ILA locals that the ILWU Negotiating Committee was bargaining for them. Bridges requested that the three locals send a record of the earnings of the men for the first six months of 1937 and 1938.<sup>63</sup> Speaking for the ILA locals, Ray Calkins told a federal official, "I don't see why any group of men, more or less isolated from the rest of the coast, should be forced to have someone else bargain for them."<sup>64</sup> The employers would not negotiate with the ILA locals, lest the ILWU sue or start a work stoppage. The Pacific Coast District ILA Executive Board passed a resolution vowing to strike if employers did not settle by September 30, 1938. The strike failed to materialize.<sup>65</sup> The ILWU negotiating team successfully concluded a settlement with the waterfront bosses. A proviso was inserted that ILWU workers would not have preferential hiring in Tacoma or other ILA ports until a majority of longshoremen in the ILA ports joined the ILWU.<sup>66</sup>

On February 21, 1939, Harry Bridges composed two letters designed to bring recalcitrant Tacoma longshoremen into the ILWU by the time of its April convention. Bridges wrote Frank Foisie, manager of the Waterfront Employers' Association of the Pacific Coast, that employer meetings with Local 38-97

officials were direct violations of the September 1938 agreement. The ILWU president planned to file a charge with the NLRB concerning the infractions. According to Bridges, the Tacoma Labor Relations Committee included Matt Meehan, Burt Nelson, and himself. "All matters dealing with the port of Tacoma should be taken up with this committee."<sup>67</sup>

Bridges also wrote the CIO Hall in Tacoma asking for, and receiving, permission to hold an open meeting for longshoremen on March 3. On the day before the meeting, Bridges invited Local 38-97 to send fraternal delegates to the upcoming ILWU convention. The Tacoma local turned down the invitation, 188 to 149.<sup>68</sup> On March 3, the *Tacoma News Tribune* carried on page one a statement by Bridges calling for a coastwide pay raise for longshoremen.<sup>69</sup> At the CIO Hall meeting, Bridges told 200 Tacomans that he intended to establish an ILWU local in the City of Destiny.<sup>70</sup>

On February 21, Local 38-97 approved a request by ILWU President Bridges to address the membership at its March 7 regular meeting. That same night Tacoma longshoremen tabled for one year a motion to hold a referendum on joining the CIO.<sup>71</sup> On March 6, ILWU Organizer Burt Nelson addressed ILA longshoremen on Tacoma radio station KMO. Nelson told the men that the coastwide agreement specified that the Tacoma Labor Relations Committee and the dispatcher must be selected by the ILWU. Nelson concluded, "We have had enough disunity in labor ranks in Tacoma and elsewhere. It is time union rank and file members did something. Tacoma longshoremen — wake up! You are being fooled."<sup>72</sup>

According to Tacoma longshoreman George Mitchell, the March 7 meeting of Local 38-97 was "a passing parade of historic figures." Jack Bjorklund and Paddy Morris spoke about the years of financial and moral assistance given by the ILA to the West Coast. Harry Lundeberg of the Sailors' Union guaranteed 100 percent support to Tacoma longshoremen. Then Harry Bridges and ILWU men from Seattle spoke on the benefits of belonging to their union. For two hours the men listened as each speaker addressed the issue of whether or not Tacoma longshoremen should join the ILWU. When the session was over, no one made a motion to join the ILWU.<sup>73</sup>

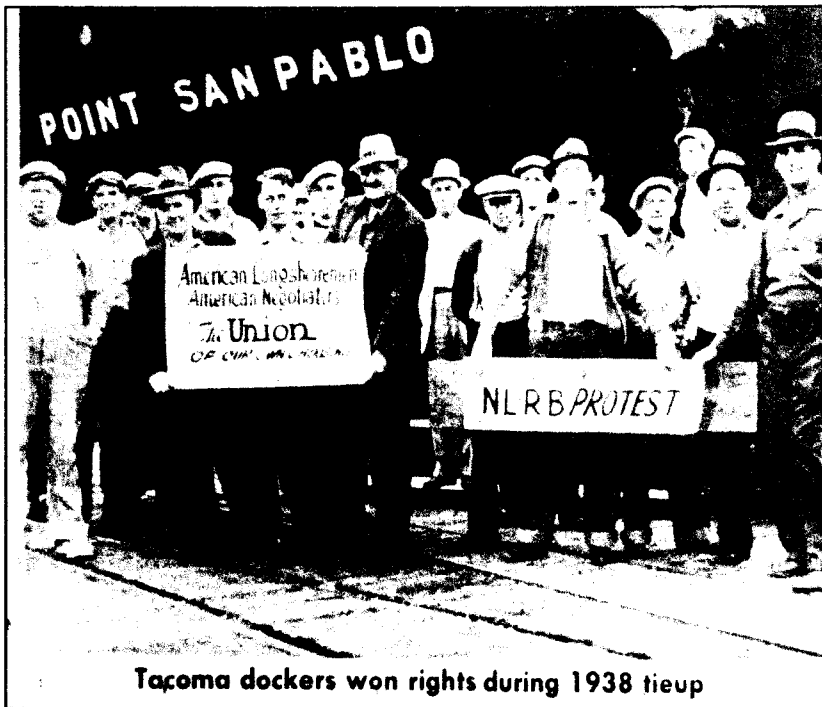
The ILWU Tacoma Labor Relations Committee never held a session. Nor was an ILWU dispatcher for Tacoma appointed. Fearful of becoming directly involved in the dispute between the two rival unions, employers chose to arbitrate the issue.<sup>74</sup> On April 11, 1939, Arbitrator Wayne L. Morse rendered a decision. Morse pointed out that the 1938 ILWU-Waterfront Employers' Association agreement specifically named Tacoma, Port Angeles, and Anacortes as exceptions to the contract. "In the second place the arbitrator cannot ignore the fact, as pointed out by counsel for the employers, that the hiring hall at Tacoma has always been a union hall maintained by the longshoremen of Tacoma and not a joint hall." ILWU control of dispatching extended only to the joint hiring halls in Seattle, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Portland.<sup>75</sup>

Tacoma was not without a small core of ILWU supporters. Although they had been out-voted in the decision to stay with the ILA, the pro-ILWU men continued to look for ways to convince their brothers that the ILWU was the better organization. In February 1940, they began attending ILWU organizing meetings. Among 38-97 men who favored ILWU-CIO affiliation were Steerman Anderson, Harry Clements, Bob Jensen, Bill Ohlancamp, Fred Sellers, and Ernie Tanner. On March 14, Jensen, Clements, and Tanner met with Bridges and Meehan on how to bring Local 38-97 into the ILWU. Tanner suggested inviting Tacoma to the negotiations with employers, but Bridges turned down that idea. "That's out. The ILWU doesn't sit in with the ILA in any negotiations." Nothing came of this organizing meeting.<sup>76</sup> The one-year moratorium on voting to consider ILWU affiliation came up again on May 21. The motion to hold a referendum on the question lost.<sup>77</sup>

On June 3 and 4, 1940, the Pacific Coast District ILA held its annual convention in Tacoma. The major topic was wages. In his keynote address, George Miller told delegates, "I believe that the time is ripe for the I.L.A. to once more take a lead in seeking wage increases."<sup>78</sup> The convention recommended a pay scale of \$1.10 straight time and \$1.65 overtime.<sup>79</sup> When the district negotiating committee attempted to get the waterfront employers to bargain, they were told that was impossible. The bosses said they could not breach the June 21, 1938, NLRB decision awarding the ILWU exclusive bargaining for all West Coast longshoremen.<sup>80</sup> At 11:00 a.m. on August 30, 1940, the word went out to Tacoma longshoremen to assemble in the hall to hear a report from the ILA negotiating committee. The negotiators relayed the employers' negative response. At 1:15 p.m. 552 Tacoma longshoremen passed a motion: "That we hang the hook in protest of the action of the National Labor Relations Board." The men had struck again.<sup>81</sup>

Pickets appeared on the docks carrying signs proclaiming "American Longshoremen. American Negotiators." Obviously, the placards taunted the Australian Bridges. Tacoma waterfront employers reiterated that they could only deal with the ILWU. At the same time, the bosses sent for Wayne Morse to get the men back to work. On September 5, Morse ordered Local 38-97 to return to the job, but the Tacomans refused to recognize Morse's jurisdiction.<sup>82</sup> Reacting swiftly, Tacoma called upon AFL maritime unions to support them by tying up ships from Seattle to San Francisco. The ILA strategy was partially successful as AFL seafaring unions, particularly the Sailors, Marine Firemen, and Masters, Mates, and Pilots, came to the assistance of Tacoma.<sup>83</sup> Pressing their cause, Tacoma longshoremen called for port-by-port labor agreements, something waterfront employers strongly wanted.<sup>84</sup> In turn, Harry Bridges repeated his charge that the ILA and management were in collusion:<sup>85</sup>

*The Tacoma ILA strike, which has the ardent support of the shipowners, the Chamber of Commerce in Tacoma, the reactionary AFL and business forces, is a strike to smash the most powerful weapon the longshoremen have ever developed — economic strength and conditions and democratic industrial unionism.<sup>86</sup>*



Tacoma dockers won rights during 1938 tieup

On August 30, 1940, Tacoma longshoremen learned the NLRB had ruled that the ILWU was their bargaining agent. After a noon stop-work meeting authorized the action, pickets appeared at one o'clock to shut down the port. Left to right, William Potter, unknown, Al Boyle, Denver Johnson, Claude Bjorklund, Morrie Arnestad, Chris Roth, Walter Larson, Nick Nelson, Gaston Bisheray, Lyle Ames, Lloyd Hunt, Ted Edwards, Victor Anderson, Silas Babcock, Henry Brown. (Identified by T.A. Thronson and Frank E. Reichl, Tacoma News Tribune, Tacoma Public Library)

After eleven days on strike John Bottinger, managing editor of the *Post-Intelligencer* and a son-in-law of President Roosevelt, telephoned the ILA district office. Bottinger promised that the NLRB would change its position as soon as a new pro-AFL man was appointed to the board. T. A. Thronson recalled the situation:

*So then we got to go back and tell our men. Can you imagine our men? We can't tell them this story. We can just say, "We have information from high sources that the thing for us to do is go back to work and then a hearing will be held and an election will be held and that's the best we can offer you."<sup>87</sup>*

Local 38-97 assembled on September 12. Thronson, Paddy Morris, and Harry Lundeberg of the Sailors' Union mounted the podium to explain the situation. It was a short meeting. The men voted to return to work with the understanding that an election would be held to determine Tacoma's bargaining rights.<sup>88</sup> The NLRB set January 9, 1941, for hearings to begin in Tacoma.

Attorneys Les Sulgrove represented Local 38-97 and Ben Margolis the ILWU. Sulgrove argued the ILWU had sacrificed gains in working conditions that Tacoma had enjoyed before Bridges took over. Further, in the past Tacoma had bargained effectively on its own. Margolis stressed the gains made by ILWU in its coastwide collective bargaining agreements. The ILWU lawyer also sought to prove that during the 1920s Tacoma had not enjoyed collective bargaining, but had been dictated to by employers. In his summation, Sulgrove captured the main points of the Tacoma position:

*The ILWU and its leadership is distrusted intensely in these parts. That the distrust of the leadership of the ILWU is based upon the ground that the leadership is reported to be influenced by the Communist Party. It is a matter of public and common knowledge that Mr. Bridges is reputed to be a Communist. That the matter has appeared in the public prints, statements have been made and that these are generally believed in this locality to be true. That as such he is under threat of deportation which in itself deprives him of the ability to bargain effectively. That the history of the contracts which have been negotiated since 1938 in the opinion of the witnesses establish that there has been a loss of conditions for the longshoremen and other associates which they attribute to other accompanying reasons. I think that is all.<sup>89</sup>*



*This cartoon drawn by Ralph Chapin for the Tacoma Labor Advocate reflected the distrust of many unionists for New Deal bureaucrats who interfered with traditional union freedom.*

*(1943 Labor Day edition, Tacoma Labor Advocate)*



The hearings ended on February 17, and the case then referred to the NLRB in Washington, D. C. In the meantime President Roosevelt filled the all-important seat on the board with Harry A. Millis, a noted labor economist. Tacoma was awarded the right to bargain separately. The only formality left before negotiations with employers was an official NLRB election to certify the ILA as the men's choice. In the lobby of the Carlton Hotel on July 1 and 2, 1941, 578 registered longshoremen filed past the ballot boxes. Five hundred twenty-three marked ILA, fifty marked ILWU, and five marked Neither. The battle was over. Tacoma longshoremen were again masters of their fate.<sup>90</sup>

**Counting of Ballots**

At the close of the voting the ballot boxes will be sealed and will remain in the custody of the agent in charge of the election. The ballots will be counted and tabulated by the agent in charge of the election and the authorized observers, at a place to be selected by him and as soon as conveniently possible after the close of voting.

**SAMPLE OF BALLOT** A sample of the official ballot is printed below:

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
**National Labor Relations Board**  
 NINETEENTH REGION  
 407 United States Court House  
 Seattle, Washington

**Official Ballot**

To determine the exclusive representation for Collective Bargaining of LONGSHOREMEN—Port of Tacoma, Washington:

1. This is a SECRET BALLOT. DO NOT SIGN your name.
2. Make your choice by marking "X" in ONE SQUARE ONLY.
3. If you want your ballot, return it to the Agent in charge of the election and obtain a new one.
4. Fold your ballot to conceal the "X" you have made and deposit it personally in the ballot box.

|   |   |                                     |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| If you desire to be represented by—                         | If you desire to be represented by—                               | If you desire to be represented by— |
| International Longshoremen's Association<br>Local No. 38-97 | International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, District 1 | NEITHER                             |
| Marked with the A. F. of L.<br>Mark an "X" in square below  | Marked with the C. I. O.<br>Mark an "X" in square below           | Mark an "X" in square below         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                         | <input type="checkbox"/>  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |

**THIS IS A SECRET BALLOT AND MUST NOT BE SIGNED.**

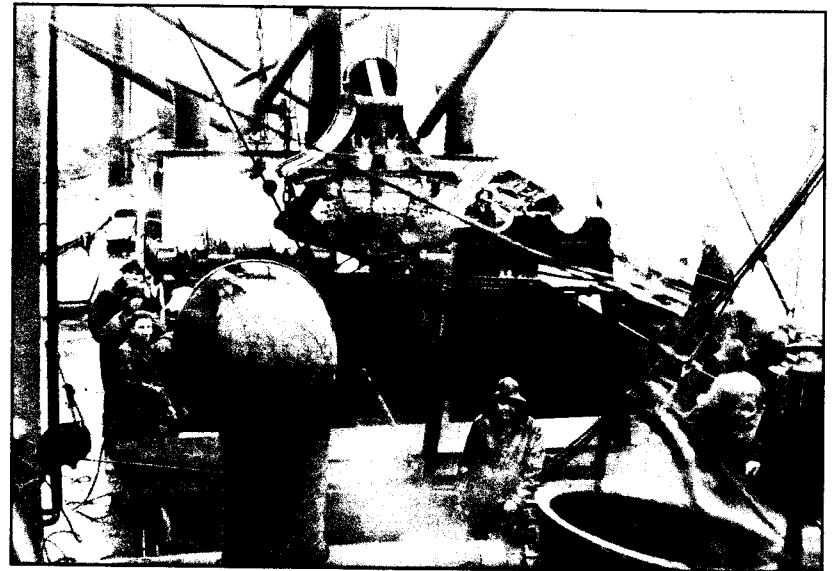
NINETEENTH REGION, NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS BOARD,  
 THOMAS F. GRAHAM, Jr., Regional Director,  
 407 U. S. Court House,  
 Seattle, Washington

Handbill urging Tacoma longshoremen to vote AFL and free the local from NLRB ruling of August 1940, and results of the NLRB election July 1-2, 1941, a ten-to-one vote to remain AFL. Fred Zinn, the artist who drew the "I.L.A. Bulletin," was a member of Local 38-97 and a dues-paying Wobbly.

(Noonan collection, Tacoma Public Library)

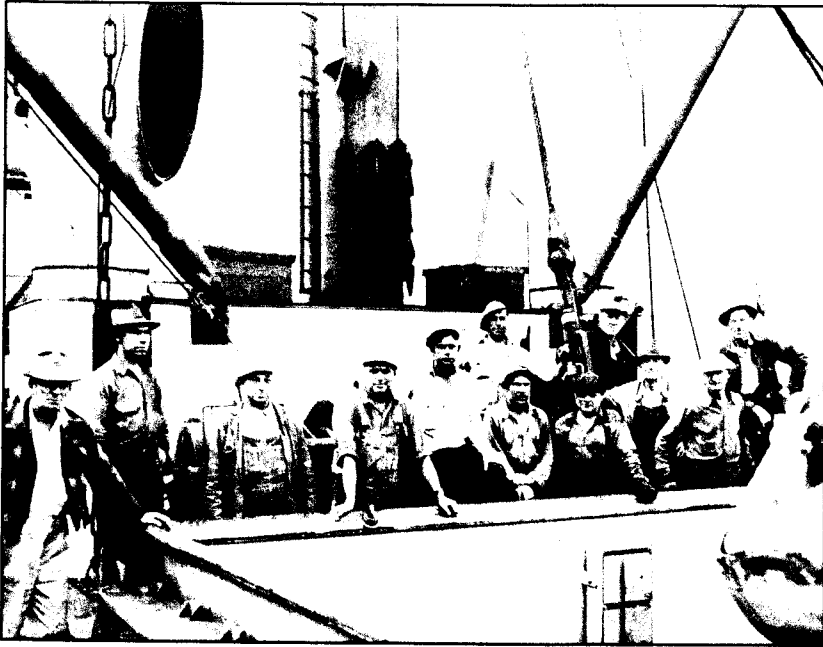


The 1941 Pacific Coast ILA convention in Port Angeles June 23-24 was attended by delegates from Tacoma, Portland, San Francisco, Anacortes, and Port Angeles. (ILWU Local 23 archives)



Earl Greenway's gang unloading copper ore at the Tacoma Smelter, 1940s, with Ernie Tanner driving winch. The smelter's clam shell took out the square of the hatch, and four longshoremen shoveled out the wings into three-ton buckets (right foreground). (Richards photo, Magden collection)





George Mitchell's gang discharging salt, 1940s. Left to right, foreman Oscar Hanson, \_\_\_\_\_ Henry, Tony Septoski, unknown, R.D. Kelly, John Slavich, Albert Engstrom, Martin Fredrickson, unknown, unknown, George Mitchell.  
(Identified by T.A. Thronson and Frank E. Reichl. Courtesy George Mitchell)

## CHAPTER X IN THE LION'S MOUTH

1. Letter from William J. Lewis and W. T. Morris to All Maritime Unions on the Pacific Coast. January 17, 1935.
2. PI, April 15, 1935. ST, April 14 and 15, 1935. *Seattle Star*, April 15, 1935.
3. (Seattle) *Waterfront Worker*, October 15, November 15, December 15, 1934; January 15, February 15, and March 15, 1935.
4. VA, February 22, 1935.
5. *Proceedings of the 1935 Maritime Federation of the Pacific Coast Convention*, April 15, 1935, p. 15. Hereafter cited as MFPC. Bridges carried with him proxies from the bargemen, ship clerks, and scalers. See ST, April 14, 1935.
6. MFPC 1935, p. 15.
7. TLA, May 3, 1935.
8. PCDILA 1935, p. 67.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
10. PCDILA 1936, p. 48.
11. TNT, June 24, 1935.
12. *Ibid.*, June 25, 1935.
13. TLA, June 28, 1935.
14. ILA 1935, p. 19.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 258.
17. TLA, August 2, 1935. At the 1935 ILA convention, Hardin was elected a vice president of the ILA.
18. PCDILA 1936, p. 124.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
20. *Pacific Coast Longshoreman*, July 20, 1936. Hereafter cited as PCL.
21. Gregory Harrison, *Maritime Strikes on the Pacific Coast*, pp. 10-14.
22. *Tacoma Labor Relations Committee Minutes*, March 2, 1935. Hereafter cited as TLRC. The Tacoma agreement is practically identical to one signed the same day with Seattle Local 38-12.
23. *Ibid.*, June 11, 1935.
24. *Proceedings of the 1938 International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union*, p. 104.
25. Coast Committee for the Shipowners' Letter to All Shippers, September 1, 1936.
26. ST, October 30, 1936.
27. *Minutes of the Washington District Council 1 Acting as the Joint Northwest Strike Committee*, December 18, 1936.
28. *Ibid.*, December 30, 1936.
29. PCL, November 9, 1936.
30. Local 23 ILWU Archives.
31. PCDILA 1937, p. 92.
32. T. A. Thronson Interview.
33. ST, December 1, 1936.
34. Interview with Dave Beck.

35. Bernstein, pp. 582-583.
36. NLRB, San Francisco, California, Testimony of Harry Bridges, February 11, 1941, p. 6.
37. NLRB, Testimony of W. T. Morris, January 17, 1941, p. 8.
38. *Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union*, p. 104. Hereafter cited as ILWU.
39. T. A. Thronson Interview.
40. Letter from Local 38-97 to All Pacific Coast Maritime Groups, July 28, 1937.
41. TLA, November 5, 1937.
42. Letter to the Editor of the *Voice of the Federation*, November 6, 1937.
43. TLA, October 22, 1937.
44. *ILA Longshoreman*, September 15, 1937.
45. ST, April 13, 1938.
46. TT, April 22, 1938.
47. *Decision and Award of Arbitrator M. E. Bollen*, April 26, 1938.
48. TLA, April 29, 1938.
49. *ILA 38-78 Bulletin*, May 19, 1938.
50. TLA, May 20, 1938.
51. MFPC 1938, pp. 1-2.
52. T. A. Thronson Interview.
53. MFPC 1938, p. 10.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 17.
58. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
59. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
60. *National Labor Board Hearings*, Testimony of Steven Reay, January 17, 1941, unpagged. Hereafter cited as NLRB.
61. ST, June 10, 1938.
62. *Local 38-97 Minute Book I*, June 21, 1938. Hereafter cited as MBI.
63. Letter from H. R. Bridges to Tacoma, Anacortes, and Port Angeles Longshore Locals, August 10, 1938.
64. NLRB, Testimony of Ray Calkins, unpagged.
65. MBI, September 20, 1938.
66. WES, September 16, 1938.
67. Letter from Harry Bridges to F. P. Foisie, February 21, 1939. Copy in PMA's TLRC Files.
68. NLRB, Testimony of Steven Reay, January 17, 1941, unpagged.
69. TNT, March 3, 1933.
70. *Ibid.*, March 6, 1939.
71. MBI, February 21, 1939.
72. Burt Nelson Files.
73. George Mitchell Interview.
74. Letter from M. G. Ringenberg to F. P. Foisie, March 4, 1939, in PMA's TLRC Files.
75. *Arbitrator's Award in the Matter of a Controversy Between International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, District No. 1, Complainants, and Waterfront Employers Association, Respondents. Involving Alleged Rights of the Union in the Ports of Tacoma, Port Angeles, and Anacortes*. April 11, 1939, Eugene, Oregon.
76. Mary Deaton, *The Hungry Port*, pp. 204-206. Hereafter cited as Deaton. Ms. Deaton had access to a verbatim transcript of the meeting.
77. MBI, May 21, 1940.
78. PCDILA 1940, pp. 1.
79. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
80. WES, September 3, 1940.
81. MBI, August 30, 1940.
82. *Arbitrator's Award. In the Matter of a Controversy Between Waterfront Employers' Association of the Pacific Coast, Complainant, and International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, District No. 1, ILWU 1-19 and the I. L. A. Locals of Tacoma, Port Angeles and Anacortes, Respondents*, September 5, 1940.
83. TNT, September 11, 1940.
84. *Ibid.*, September 12, 1940.
85. *Ibid.*, September 14, 1940.
86. Deaton, *The Hungry Port*, p. 212. Bridges' press release was not reported in the Tacoma newspapers.
87. T. A. Thronson Interview.
88. MBI, September 12, 1940.
89. *United States of America before the National Labor Relations Board Nineteenth Region in the Matter of Shipowners Association of the Pacific Coast, Waterfront Employers' Association of the Pacific Coast, Waterfront Employers of Washington, and International Longshoremen's Association Affiliated with the A. F. of L. Local No. 38-83, Local No. 38-86 and Local 38-97. Consolidated Cases No. XIX-R-568, No. XIX-R-569, and No. XIX-R-570. Brief of Petitioners by John Geisness and L. B. Sulgrove*.
90. TLA, July 4, 1941.