

CHAPTER VIII

TACOMA REORGANIZES THE NORTHWEST

On January 1, 1911, Local 38-3 initiated John C. Bjorklund. "Big Jack" was the brawniest, and some say, smartest general cargo longshoremen in Tacoma's history. His muscular feats in breaking out cargo in the holds of ships were legendary. So, too, were his bartending skills. On one occasion "Big Jack" leapt across a bar and knocked down four obnoxious patrons. Bjorklund served as a member of the flying squad in the "fight to the finish" strike in 1916. His specialty was going up against the employers' thugs.¹ Jack Bjorklund's life revolved around Local 38-3. As president of the local in the early 1920s, he presided with fairness, dispatch, and "homespun psychology." When he served as one of the business agents in the mid-1920s, he settled on-the-job grievances quickly.² If trouble occurred with an employer, Bjorklund and Dispatcher Ed Harris paid a visit to the office of Harvey Wells. Here, the union men felt a sense of powerlessness. The local could not afford to strike. Employers would simply transfer all the cargo business to Seattle until the union was busted.³

There was another side to Bjorklund's character. For thirty-four years he demonstrated unswerving loyalty to the International Longshoremen's Association.⁴ He refused to join the IWW, OBU, or the Marine Transport Workers in their efforts to replace the ILA Pacific Coast district. Looking back from the vantage point of 1940, he viewed the era from 1924 to 1933 as the time of the "hardest struggle," the era when fink halls dominated the coast.⁵

If there was little Tacoma waterfront workers could do about wages and working conditions in the 1920s, much could be done to keep the men together. On the job, longshoremen had an hour for lunch. During the break they talked. Old-timers voiced memories about glorious days when the union won strikes, stipulated the wage scale, demanded safe working conditions, and controlled all the dock jobs. The younger longshoremen wanted to know how the local could attract more work. They looked with envy at Seattle's growing tonnage, second in the nation according to the annual harbor master reports. From time to time rumors circulated along the waterfront that a new intercoastal shipping line was planning to come to the Pacific Northwest. Would the company choose Tacoma? Seattle? Portland?⁶ General cargo workers and lumber handlers resolved to draw more business to Tacoma by demonstrating greater efficiency. The membership started by making certain everyone carried his end of the work load. If someone could not "cut the mustard," he had to leave the waterfront.⁷

In the downtown hall Tacoma general cargo longshoremen developed in the post-World War I era many procedures that have carried down to this day. "Pick" times were set at 7:00 a.m., 12:00 noon, and 4:00 p.m. Every day up to twenty-four union hatch tenders walked into Local 38-3's hall and went to where groups of men clustered. The hatch tender signalled to a gang and they left for the dock together. There were general cargo men who preferred not to work in a steady gang. Field gangs filled in wherever an opening occurred. Fifteen-man gangs included a hatch tender, double winch driver, or two single winch men, four siderunners, six or seven hold men, and two sling men. If it was a load of logs, two boom men replaced the sling men. On the *Ruth Alexander* and *Dorothy Alexander* two twenty-five-men gangs were necessary. Veteran hatch tenders Frank Birchman and George Mitchell picked the big gangs.⁸



Office of Local 38-3 union hall, 1920. Secretary Jerry Walgamot is standing and George Noonan is seated center.
(Courtesy Morris Thorsen)

The number of hand truckers and warehousemen in Local 38-3 had decreased from 800 during World War I to approximately 100 in 1923. The auto jitney, which pulled a series of four-wheel carts, replaced most of the hand trucking. Electric conveyor belts supplanted a large number of the warehousemen. Further reduction in dock gangs occurred when stronger rigging gear was installed on ships to take cargo aboard direct from scows and rail cars. In the 1920s Local 38-3 allowed wharfingers to hire steady men. Other dock men worked in alphabetical rotation off a list posted in the hall. Two floor men, three jitney drivers, and two checkers accompanied each warehouse group to work.⁹

Every morning and afternoon dozens of casuals lined up outside the hall waiting to be picked. When a worker moved from the street to upstairs in the hall, he became a permit man. Five registered longshoremen sponsored the worker seeking the permit before the union's executive board. When hatch tenders could not fill their gangs, they went to the permit room and chose new men. A permit man could not turn a hatch tender down. Retired longshoreman T. A. Thronson recalled the procedure, "If it was shoveling cow manure on a hot day, and that's what the gang was going to do, you had to take the job and shovel cow manure. There was no choice. He picked you. And that was the way they could determine whether you were a good man or not a good man."¹⁰

At biweekly Local 38-3 meetings the men spoke "their piece." In the meetings everyone had the right to present his views. A young "hotshot" could express an opinion, but he could not take over a meeting. Longshoremen believed a new member ought to keep his mouth shut. The older members guided the meetings. Business agents Bjorklund, Larsen, and Smith spoke often. Their main concern was to keep the local alive. The entire membership recognized that if given an opening, employers would install the open shop. Prudence was necessary, or Local 38-3 would end up busted like all of the other West Coast longshore unions except Local 38-30.¹¹

CONSTITUTION BY-LAWS

AND

RULES OF ORDER

OF

Local No. 38, Series 30

International Longshoremen's Association



TACOMA, WASHINGTON

Adopted March 20, 1924

Section 6. Business Agent. The Business Agent shall pick the men in the hall, superintend the placing of the men, remove those incompetent to do the work, prevent members from working when under the influence of liquor, file charges against members who violate the working rules, and in case of being short-handed use his discretion in regard to picking outsiders to work. He shall report all disputes or trouble with the employers at the following meeting of the Local.

Should any difficulty arise he may use his discretion in settling same and report at the next regular or special meeting.

He shall report the arrival of work, on the blackboard located in the hall, as soon as such word is received.

He shall pick men in the hall at 7:00 a. m., and 5:00 p. m., except in case of emergency. All outsiders must be picked outside the hall.

Section 7. Trustees. The Board of Trustees shall consist of three members in good standing.

They shall examine the books of the Secretary and Treasurer and bring in a written report monthly as to the condition of the wealth of the Local.

They shall also have charge of all the property of the Local unless otherwise provided for.

The Secretary's and Treasurer's books shall be open to them at all times for inspection that they may wish to do so.

Section 8. Executive Board. The Executive Board shall consist of not less than nine members, three of whom shall act as a Board of Trustees

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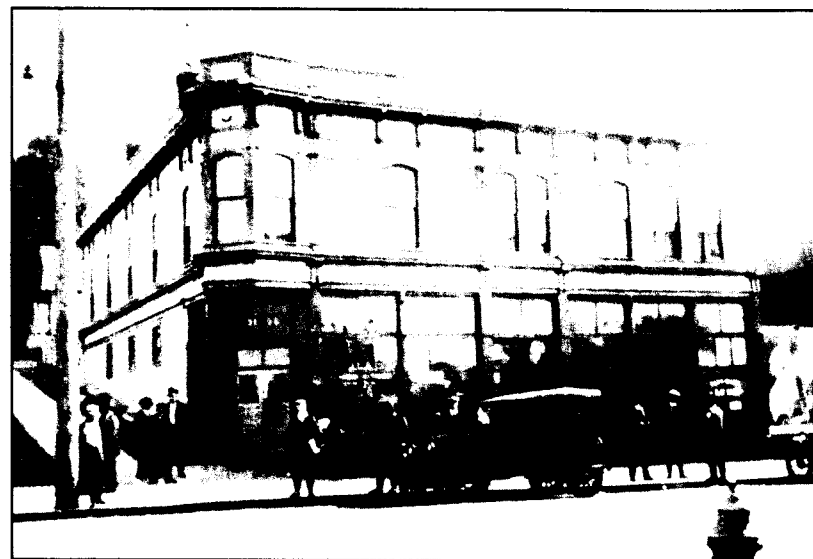
1924 Constitution of Local 38-30, Section 6, provides that the business agent "shall pick the men in the hall" and superintend their placing. (Noonan collection, Tacoma Public Library)

The Lumber Handlers

From 1915 until 1927, the business agent at Local 38-30 was Charles L. Brown. Then Steven "Curly" Reay took over until 1934. Like most lumber handlers, Brown and Reay were beached seamen. Consequently, they knew how to work with ships' officers and crews. The primary job of the Old Town BA was to pick the men in the hall at 7:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. The business agent was empowered by the membership to resolve grievances or shut down the job. He reported all problems at the next regular meeting of the local.¹² Since 1909, the Lumber Handlers' business agent had kept the tally on every man's earnings. He dispatched men with the lowest earnings first.¹³ For the years 1927, 1928, and 1929, 90 percent of the 201 men were within 10 percent of the average income, \$1,386.¹⁴

Across the street from Lumber Handlers' Hall, Puget Sound Stevedoring Superintendent Albert Anderson had his office in the Oak Saloon. On the street in front of the tavern, Anderson selected men from unpicked Local 38-30 gangs and casuals to work steam schooners. Anderson chose with the understanding that Local 38-30 men would be first. When Anderson finished picking, Foreman "Young Jack" Bjorklund did Anderson's paper work and accompanied lumber handlers to the ships.¹⁵

One hundred and fifty men in Local 38-30 were divided into ten gangs. Another fifty Lumber Handlers preferred to work as "fill ins" for the regular gangs. Old Town longshoremen usually worked a sixteen-hour shift. If the vessel needed quick dispatch, night relief gangs replaced the "7-11 gangs." With seamen working one hatch, steam schooners normally took three days to load.



Hall of Lumber Handlers Local 38-30 in Old Town, 1920s.

(ILWU Local 23 archives)

Stowing five-hatch freighters at the St. Paul mill or Port of Tacoma docks usually occupied a week. All of the Local 38-30 hatch tenders had years of experience. Two, Julius Johnson and Pete Peterson, had been hatch tenders since the 1890s.¹⁶ Of the 200 members, 23 percent had belonged at least since 1909.¹⁷ Half were of Scandinavian ancestry.¹⁸

The standard sling load of lumber in Tacoma was 1,000 board feet. The four starboard and port hatch stevedores received loads alternately. If it was dimension lumber, the men worked individually. If the sticks were twelve feet or longer, partners picked up the lumber and packed it to a place where they fitted the piece snugly. If it was a heavy timber, four men carried the beam. In the early 1920s much of the Oriental cargo was oversize lumber. Often referred to as Japanese squares, the circumference ranged from 6 by 6 inches to 24 by 24 inches. The length of the squares ranged from 40 to 100 feet. If the lumber was larger, rollers, buggies, or dollies were used. When the handlers had stowed away the sling load, they took a "breathing spell" until the winch man lowered the next pile.¹⁹

From time to time, waterfront workers talked of merging locals 38-3 and 38-30. A two-thirds favorable vote of the membership in both locals was necessary to amalgamate. Three times a referendum was held during the 1920s.²⁰ In every case, general cargo men voted by a narrow margin to amalgamate. Each time lumber handlers voted overwhelmingly against combining. The results reflected the intense pride Old Town men had in their union. Not one ship had returned because of poor loading. The men liked working lumber. It was clean cargo. But times were changing. The newer ships were combination freighters, carrying both general cargo and lumber. The days of the steam schooner, sailing ship, and Local 38-30 were numbered.²¹

First Attempts at Organizing the Coast

From 1917 until 1936 four Tacoma Local 38-3 men held the Pacific Coast District office of secretary-treasurer.²² Marshall E. Wright served the first five years, a time remembered for the One Big Union movement. George B. Soule served from 1922 to May 1927, the nadir of Pacific Coast district fortunes. During 1926 district membership hit bottom, 1,300 men, 7 percent of the 18,000 longshoremen on the coast. Of the district membership more than half were members of locals 38-3 and 38-30. The remainder were divided among nine small locals in California, Oregon, and Washington.²³ On the job, union men wore ILA buttons on the inside of their coats.²⁴ Beginning in 1923, discussions about recruiting dominated the proceedings of Pacific Coast District ILA conventions. The 1923 and 1926 district conventions passed \$1.00-a-member assessments to pay for organizing campaigns.²⁵ To enhance the 1926 effort, Secretary Soule made an appeal for financial assistance that netted \$470 from eastern ILA locals.²⁶ The district assessment and eastern donations paid for an organizer to recruit men working out of the Seattle fink hall. The campaign failed miserably. Only eleven men joined Local 38-12.²⁷

The first opening occurred at the new Port of Olympia. To insure a good start, Soule talked Charles L. Brown and a dozen members of locals 38-12 and 38-30 into moving to Olympia to establish a union. On July 9, Soule installed the Local 38-72 charter. The Seattle employers responded by opening a fink hall in Olympia. During the winter work turned slack. The ILA men transferred to Seattle and Tacoma. Local 38-72 quietly disbanded.²⁸ Soule turned to British Columbia where Organizer Albert Hill had recruited enough men to form two unions. In August 1926 Soule installed the Local 38-71 charter in New Westminster and another for Local 38-75 in Vancouver. Internal factionalism emerged in both unions, which was promptly exploited by the employers' associations. Both Canadian locals perished within two years.²⁹

During May 1928 Jack Bjorklund replaced Soule as district secretary. Bjorklund had already served in 1924 as ILA international vice president for the Pacific Coast. District President-Elect Robert Linney of Local 38-30 and Bjorklund moved ILA headquarters from Seattle to Tacoma's Labor Temple. The new officers persuaded Local 38-30 President Paddy Morris to try to organize Everett, where conditions appeared to be ripe. The fink hall had announced all longshoremen would be fired when they reached forty-five years of age. All new men would have to pass physical examinations. The Everett waterfront workers also complained that the dispatcher picked outsiders over regular workers. When the employers sent Industrial Relations Manager Frank Foisie to reason with the disgruntled longshoremen, Morris appeared on the scene. "Just about the time I arrived in Everett Mr. Foisie arrived, and I believe that Mr. Foisie had a meeting in the tweendecks of the ship there and talked to the men. After he had talked to the men I found it considerably easier to organize them. I think I should have send Mr. Foisie a letter of thanks." During July 1929, Morris, with the assistance of Arne Jones, persuaded 178 Everett longshoremen to form Local 38-76.³⁰

During August 1929, Grays Harbor longshoremen requested an organizer. Working conditions were bad and getting worse. Manager Frank Hill of the Twin Harbors Stevedore Company blatantly discriminated against ILA men. When Hill discovered a union member, he immediately dispatched another man to replace the unionist. Thereafter, the fired union longshoreman could not find dock work in Aberdeen or Hoquiam.³¹ Recognizing that the men were afraid to talk about organizing openly, Morris and an ever enlarging number of Grays Harbor longshoremen recruited quietly for weeks. On September 17, Bjorklund and Morris installed the charter of Local 38-77. Four hundred Grays Harbor men were present for the occasion. The new local barely survived attempts by Hill to undermine it. Moreover, the Communist Marine Workers' League made itself felt. A handbill urged all longshoremen to "Smash the Corrupt I.L.A." The MWL invited the men to attend a meeting on October 24, to establish a Communist union of Seamen, Longshoremen and Harbor Workers. Fifty people appeared at the meeting, but most were from out of town. The Communist attempt to start an Aberdeen maritime union fizzled. Local 38-77 survived the struggles with Hill and the Communists only to be hard-pressed by the collapse of the American economic system.³²

The Great Depression

The news of the stock market crash on Black Thursday, October 24, 1929, was received in Tacoma with mixed opinions. The *Ledger* described the situation as "terrifying" while the *News Tribune* confidently expected Wall Street to bounce back and start a new climb. Both newspapers headlined President Hoover's October 25 statement that the economic system was fundamentally sound and would right itself.³³ The Tacoma waterfront reflected the downturn of the economy. Tonnage handled in 1930 dropped 1,446,470 tons below 1929. And in 1931, tonnage decreased 707,702 tons below 1930. Similar to other West Coast harbors, the port experienced highest shrinkage in import tonnage, declining from 3,117,545 tons during 1930 to 2,352,371 in 1931. Unlike other ports, Tacoma's export Tonnage during the same years rose 57,472 tons.³⁴

The Great Depression checked the ILA district organizing drive. Regression set in quickly. In 1930, many of the new men in Everett quit paying dues. Still, Local 38-76 was a thorn in the employers' side. On March 17 the union forced Everett employers to sign a ninety-day experimental agreement.³⁵ Everywhere, men on the docks witnessed a precipitous decline in their monthly and annual incomes. Many of the men left the Tacoma waterfront for fishing and sailing jobs. Significantly, locals 38-3 and 38-30 initiated only nine men during 1931, 1932, and 1933.³⁶ During the three years, wages for the 160 Lumber Handlers averaged less than \$60 a month.³⁷

As the economic downswing accelerated, hatch tenders responded by picking the most pliant men. On the vessels, foremen sped up the work of gangs. At the same time sawmills increased the size of lumber sling loads from 1,000 to 2,400 board feet. In the hold Local 38-30 men working in pairs carried six, eight, twelve, and sometimes sixteen pieces at the same time. Time between loads was gone. "There (was) absolutely no breathing spell at all," declared Paddy Morris. Lumber loading productivity doubled in the early 1930s compared to what it had been in the 1920s.³⁸ The situation was equally onerous for the general cargo workers. "Big Ed" Harris testified in 1934 that "They (the bosses) would drive all they could get out of them. The men could not stand it for any length of time. They could only stand two or three shifts a week, even if they could stand that."³⁹

During the worst of the depression, the effort to achieve a coastwide longshore organization continued. On February 22, 1931, District Secretary Bjorklund and part-time organizer Paddy Morris met thirteen longshoremen in the Portland home of Conrad Negstad, a close friend since the 1916 strike. The Rose City men were frustrated at the high-handed actions of the fink hall managers, but they were afraid that they would be persecuted if the employers learned that they had formed a union. Bjorklund recalled at the 1931 district convention, "There were a number of oldtime longshoremen who were willing to take a chance . . . If the employers did discriminate against them they did not have a great deal to lose."⁴⁰ For a month the Portland longshoremen

recruited other waterfront workers. By the time the charter was installed on March 22, 1931, 300 men had joined.⁴¹

With the argument that it would lead the San Francisco Blue Book Union into the ILA, California labor officials persuaded ILA President Joseph Ryan to give permission in 1928 for the Blue Book to join the California State Federation of Labor and the San Francisco Central Labor Council. For the next three years Bjorklund tried to persuade the longshore company union to affiliate. At Bjorklund's insistence, the Blue Book held a referendum on April 9, 1931, on whether or not to join the Pacific Coast District ILA. The Bay City longshoremen turned down the invitation to join the district, 1,036 to 88.⁴² Ryan had AFL President William Green notify the state federation and the city labor council to unseat the Blue Book. Bjorklund told the Blue Book executive board they were a bunch of free loaders.⁴³

The Wage Cuts

During 1931 the Great Depression raced full tilt toward the bottom of the economic abyss.⁴⁴ By the fall of 1931 rumors abounded of an impending wage reduction everywhere on the coast. In early October, Seattle employers appealed to the fink hall longshoremen serving on the Joint Executive Committee to think of ways to reduce costs without reducing base wages.⁴⁵ At the same time the fink hall committeemen were meeting with Paddy Morris and representatives of locals 38-3, 38-12, and 38-76. Everyone agreed to ask their employers to meet with a Seattle-Everett-Tacoma longshore delegation to settle the wage question.⁴⁶ On October 12 the fifteen longshoremen serving on the Joint Executive Committee asked waterfront employers to attend a Puget Sound negotiating session. When the bosses rejected the triport proposal, the ILA men walked out. Alone, the employers posted throughout the Puget Sound region a 5-cents-an-hour wage cut, effective January 1, 1932.⁴⁷

In Tacoma, locals 38-3 and 38-30 insisted on alterations in working conditions before they would accede to a 5-cents-an-hour reduction. The general cargo men and lumber handlers asked for the formation of a joint committee of longshoremen and waterfront employers of Tacoma. On January 1, 1932, the joint committee issued "Wage Scale Rules and Working Conditions on the Tacoma Waterfront." The agreement would continue until either the employers or the longshoremen gave thirty days notice. In return for accepting the 5-cents cut, the union received travel time to docks outside of Commencement Bay.⁴⁸

When work turned very slack in May 1932, Local 38-3 membership put into effect a rule that any man working four hours during the day could not take a new job in the evening. Another rule provided that no man could work more than thirty-six hours a week.⁴⁹ The new regulations did not ease the situation of the men making the least money. Dispatcher Harris suggested hatch tenders select 50 percent of the men. The other 50 percent would be men with the lowest earnings.⁵⁰ Within a month Harvey Wells told Harris that the employers did not

FOREWORD

The Waterfront Employers of Tacoma pledge that the men are entitled to the security of knowing that the employers recognize the principle that the Tacoma wages and conditions shall be equal to those of the principal ports of the Pacific Coast.

This does not mean that the men of this port are entitled to pick out the highest wages and the most desirable conditions in the other ports on this coast and add them to the most desirable wages and conditions here, as some would interpret it. Fairly and honestly interpreted, it means that by and large, or taking all things into consideration, the men in Tacoma are to enjoy wages and conditions comparable to those of the principal ports of the Pacific Coast.

It seems wholly proper to remind the men that coupled with the security they enjoy under this pledge, is their corresponding obligation to give the Tacoma employers as good service as that rendered by the men in the principal ports of the Pacific Coast. This obligation is inescapable. Further, the employers may expect and are promised the co-operation of the men in preventing pilfering, cargo destruction and loading on the job. Where there are such abuses, the men will assist in eliminating from the waterfront those responsible.

The Waterfront Employers of Tacoma desire to express to the men their appreciation of the efficient service rendered by the majority of them for many years past; and feel quite assured that the good feeling and understanding between men and management will continue and be increased in the future.

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The Tacoma Wage Scale, Rules and Working Conditions, as herein defined, were determined upon by a joint committee of employers and employees.

JOINT COMMITTEE

Employers	Employees
W. C. Dawson	George Soule
T. C. Greene	D. Sims
Roland Clapp	R. Jensen
James Baker	Al. Manthei

There will be no change in these rules and working conditions except on thirty days notice in writing to the chairman of the employees' or employers' committee.

DEFINITIONS

Longshore Work consists of loading and unloading vessels to and from first place of rest.

Dock Work consists of cargo handling on dock, car or scow, not in conjunction with ship's sling.

WAGES

- (1) The base hourly wages are:
- | | Longshore | Dock |
|---------------|-----------|------|
| Straight time | \$.85 | .75 |
| Overtime | 1.25 | 1.10 |
- (2) 10c per hour above base wages is paid on the following commodities when in lots of 30 tons or over:
- Creosote and creosoted products.
 - Sacks weighing 125 pounds or more, loading ship only (truckers excepted).
 - Logs, piles and lumber that have been submerged when loaded from the water.

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was instructed to send the required thirty-days' termination notice of the agreement to ILA locals 38-3 and 38-30.⁵³

In early December 1932, Seattle members of the Marine Workers Industrial Union (MWIU) distributed a mimeographed leaflet on the Tacoma waterfront. The sheet attacked ILA President Joseph Ryan and District Secretary Bjorklund for playing into the hands of the employers by accepting the wage cut. The *Tacoma Labor Advocate* took the authors of the handbill to task. "They are master hands at scuttling established conditions and then they rally in the fink halls to curse the only union on the coast worth a cent."⁵⁴ The Tacoma locals had instructed negotiators to ask for a tripart employer-employee meeting to discuss adoption of New York work conditions, and to set October 1 as the expiration date of the new wage scale. The bosses refused, stating that such a meeting would be tantamount to recognizing the ILA.⁵⁵ On December 27, employers posted the reduction notice on all Puget Sound dock gates.⁵⁶

Tacoma waterfront employers decided on March 31, 1933, to stop the practice of rotating the men on the basis of the \$6.00 rule. Manager Wells told Dispatcher Ed Harris to expect hatch tenders to pick anyone they wanted beginning April 3.⁵⁷ Harris replied the next day that the union would continue the existing system of dispatching while the local's Grievance Committee considered the "sudden change in policy."⁵⁸ On April 5 employers met with the Local 38-3 executive board. Ed Harris presented a plan that the bosses and the executive board both approved. Harris proposed that twenty gangs be organized with fifteen men in each gang instead of the standard ten. It would be up to the hatch tender to rotate the men. On the next job, those not hired would receive first chance at the work.⁵⁹ Local 38-3 membership and the waterfront employers approved Harris's plan for a sixty-day trial on April 12.⁶⁰ The plan was discarded at the end of the trial period, and the union went back to ten-man regular gangs and picking field gangs on the basis of the \$6.00 rule.⁶¹

Regeneration

The adoption of the fifteen-man gang system coincided with the first upturn in Tacoma's shipping business since the depression had hit full force during June 1931. In the month of April 1933, at least four, and as many as seven, ships arrived each day. The upsurge continued throughout the summer, reaching its apex on August 13, when eleven freighters sailed into Commencement Bay.⁶² Lumber accounted for a large part of the increased trade, a fact especially gratifying to Lumber Handlers.⁶³

Change was in the air. Nationally, Franklin D. Roosevelt entered the White House on March 4. One hundred and four days later Congress enacted the National Industrial Recovery Act to combat the economic depression by shortening hours of labor, increasing wages, and eliminating unfair trade practices. Section 7-A provided workers the right to choose their own representatives to bargain with employers. West Coast longshoremen did not wait for the passage

In the "Wage Scale, Rules and Working Conditions on the Tacoma Waterfront," published by the Waterfront Employers of Tacoma in January 1932, top of page three, is the statement that the document was arrived at by collective bargaining. (Markholt Collection)

like the 50 percent rule. Local 38-3 then proposed that no one be dispatched from the hall until everyone had made \$6.00. Employers Fred Tuttle and Sam Stocking objected to this regulation. The two bosses sent Wells to the ILA hall at pick time to help the dispatcher make certain hatch tenders and foremen distributed the work evenly.⁵¹

On November 21, 1932, Puget Sound waterfront employers met in Seattle to discuss longshore wages. The New York ILA had already settled for 75 cents straight time and \$1.10 overtime, a cut of 10 cents from the current scale. San Francisco shipowners informed their Puget Sound agents that they had offered the New York scale to Bay City longshoremen. The San Francisco employers expected Puget Sound and the Columbia River to follow the same pattern.⁵² Puget Sound bosses lamented the Bay City reduction. The men would not strike, but they would slow down. E. A. Quigle of International Stevedoring thought the San Francisco employers had opened the gates wide for the ILA to organize the whole Pacific Coast. Harvey Wells concurred. The ILA would make "good ammunition" out of the wage cut. No longer could West Coast waterfront employers proclaim that they paid higher than the East Coast. Wells

of NIRA. In May 1933, William J. Lewis, Lee Holman, Fred West, Julius G. White and others formed a committee to organize waterfront workers in San Francisco. Within two months 2,000 joined, making Local 38-79 the largest ILA unit on the West Coast. During July, San Pedro Local 38-82 initiated 1,700.⁶⁴ Quickly, Paddy Morris helped waterfront workers organize Anacortes, Port Angeles, Port Ludlow, and Port Townsend. At the same time Portland ILA men formed new locals in Longview, Rainier, Astoria, and St. Helens. By the end of August, 10,000 West Coast longshoremen belonged to twenty-three ILA locals.⁶⁵

Seizing the moment, Local 38-3 sent an ultimatum on August 23 to Harvey Wells. The letter notified employers that unless the old wage scale of 90 cents and \$1.35 was restored by October 1, "We shall be prepared to hang the hook, not only in this Port, but all Pacific Coast Ports as well."⁶⁶ Five days later, the Washington Stevedore Association and the Waterfront Employers of Seattle discussed the "Tacoma power move." If Tacoma received a pay raise, all West Coast ILA locals would seek higher wages, recognition, and the closed shop.⁶⁷ In a conference with Local 38-3's executive board on September 21, eight Tacoma waterfront employers asked the union to withdraw its ultimatum. Speaking for the longshoremen, George Miller said that the men were now willing to withdraw the letter and await developments in Washington, D. C.⁶⁸

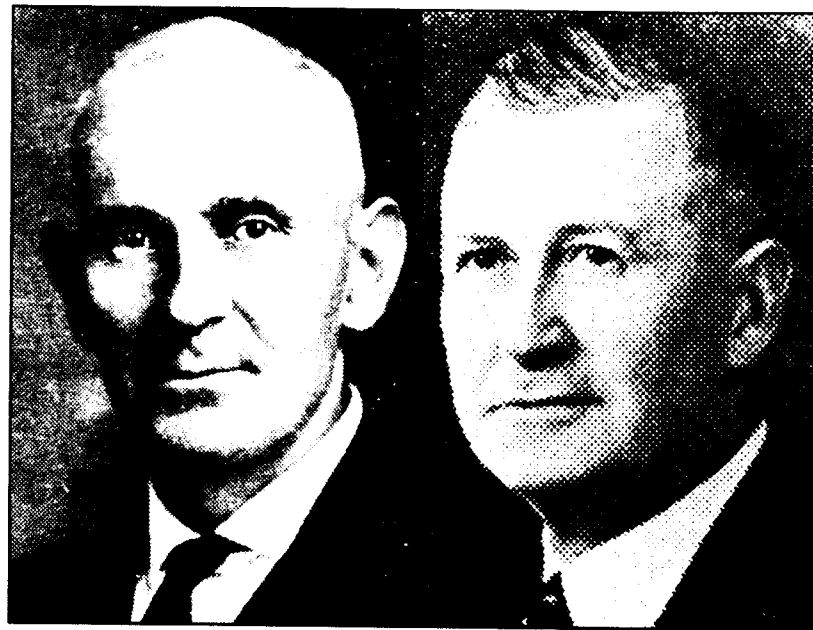
As the ILA recruiting drive reached its climax in the Pacific Northwest, MWIU West Coast Organizer Harry Jackson opened an office in Seattle's Howard Building on First Avenue. Jackson told the Seattle *Voice of Action* that he intended to organize employed and unemployed seamen and longshoremen into the MWIU.⁶⁹ A month later the MWIU viewed an employers' statement that Joint Organization men were free to join the ILA as an attempt to "behead the growing support to militant industrial unionism." MWIU warned Seattle longshoremen that Bjorklund and Morris had betrayed the closed shop in Tacoma. "Conditions there are exactly the same as in Seattle or any other open shop town. There is the same speed up. The men are kept divided into two locals to prevent effective struggle. The wage cut last fall was put over there as easily as in any fink hall town."⁷⁰

West Coast waterfront employers believed that the ILA organizing drive had peaked during the summer of 1933. San Francisco bosses reported to Seattle that attendance at Local 38-79 meetings had dropped from 1,700 in July to 250 in September.⁷¹ On October 10, Matson terminated four ILA men for inefficiency. Local 38-79 claimed the men were discharged for refusing to show their blue books. When Matson officials declined to discuss the firings, 400 ILA and nonunion longshoremen walked out on the shipping line. ILA President Joseph Ryan threatened to strike all Matson vessels on the East Coast. Jack Bjorklund notified Puget Sound bosses that Tacoma longshoremen would not work Matson ships unless the company agreed to arbitrate the firings. George Creel of the regional NRA office succeeded in getting Matson to put the four union men back to work. Bay City longshoremen celebrated by publicly burning their blue books. The Matson "beef" turned out to be the incident that spurred the last blue book men into the ILA.⁷²

The NRA Shipping Code

As the Pacific Coast ILA reconstituted itself, district members became increasingly involved in developing Section 7-B of NIRA. This clause authorized industries to voluntarily prepare operational codes that would stimulate economic recovery and at the same time recognize the needs of working people. Within days after the legislation had been enacted, Tacoma locals 38-3 and 38-30 had drafted a longshore labor code. The men knew it was a long shot. There was nothing in the NRA statute to compel the industry to adopt a code, or even listen to ILA recommendations. On July 2, 1933, a special Pacific Coast district conference adopted the Tacoma proposal. The final draft of the Pacific Coast ILA code called for \$1.00 an hour straight time, \$1.50 overtime, a six-hour day, and union control of the dispatch halls. ILA district membership overwhelmingly approved the referendum. Jack Bjorklund presented the ILA code four weeks later to the Marine Council to gain that group's support.⁷³

NRA officials delayed the shipping code hearing in Washington, D. C. until a settlement had been reached between the North Atlantic steamship lines and the ILA. On November 1, the New York scale rose 10 cents to 85 cents an hour for the first forty-four hours and \$1.20 for overtime. Ryan expressed hope that this contract would be adopted on the Gulf and Pacific coasts.⁷⁴ San Francisco Local 38-79 asked for more than the New York 10-cent wage raise. Bay City



William T. (Paddy) Morris (left) and John C. (Jack) Bjorklund, Tacoma longshoremen active in reorganizing Pacific Coast longshoremen in ILA locals during the early 1930s.
(Tacoma Labor Advocate, Washington State Historical Society)

shipowners urged their Puget Sound agents to quickly get an agreement on a 10-cents increase across the board without any changes in the working rules.⁷⁵ Longshoremen on the Seattle joint employer-employee committee refused the raise. The joint committeemen told the bosses that they must have union recognition and the same pay as the rest of the West Coast, 90 cents straight time and \$1.35 overtime. One by one committeemen resigned, telling the bosses that Local 38-12 had appointed a committee to negotiate with the Joint Organization. The much-touted thirteen-year-old decasualization plan was dead.⁷⁶

When the West Coast ILA delegation arrived in Washington, D. C., during October 1933, they were surprised to learn that the American Steamship Owners' Association had already submitted a NRA code proposal. The shipowners recommended that the maritime code stipulate a forty-eight-hour week and the Gulf wage scale, the lowest pay rate in the industry. In their presentations before NRA, Gulf Coast ILA locals asked for the new North Atlantic scale. Pacific Coast unions wanted the code to specify \$1.00 and \$1.50 overtime based on a thirty-four hour week.⁷⁷ The ILA men were equally perturbed when Dr. Boris Stern of the Department of Labor's Statistics Bureau recommended NRA create a federal decasualization board based on Seattle's Joint Organization. For Tacoma and Galveston, Texas, Stern recommended the government take over the ILA halls "and reorganize them along the lines of procedure outlined for the other ports."⁷⁸ The National Recovery Administration accepted for study briefs prepared by the longshoremen, shipowners, and Dr. Stern with the understanding that the industry would have the final say on the code. Two weeks after the NRA hearing, the Pacific Coast District held a special convention in Portland, Oregon. The delegates "adamantly" opposed both employer- and government- controlled hiring halls. The Portland Convention mandated a coastwide strike vote be taken unless by December 10 a conference committee composed of representatives from the Pacific Coast Waterfront Employers met with District 38 ILA.⁷⁹ No reply was received from Portland and San Pedro bosses. Seattle and San Francisco employers declined to meet, while Tacoma employers acceded to a session with locals 38-3 and 38-30 on December 11. In the meantime, President Ryan requested that instead of a strike ballot, the men vote on who should represent them in collective bargaining. A coastwide referendum revealed that 90 percent of the men favored the ILA as their bargaining representative.⁸⁰

While the Tacoma waterfront employers' decision to negotiate was being delivered to Bjorklund's office, a wage scale of 85 cents an hour straight time and \$1.25 overtime was pasted on Harvey Wells's office window. Paddy Morris wrote Wells the next day that the Tacoma employers' offer was similar to many other proposals along the coast, all of which had been arbitrarily set. The acting district secretary informed Wells that while the men would not turn down the raise, they were determined to uphold their right to collectively bargain as guaranteed by NIRA.⁸¹

Slowness in Washington, D. C. on the code hearings caused frustration and resentment on the West Coast. Longshoremen in Tacoma clamored for prompt action.⁸² On January 22, 1934, locals 38-3 and 30-30 held a joint session. A motion passed unanimously that in the event the shipping code was not signed by February 5, the district secretary would ask all locals to take a strike vote. At another joint session of the Tacoma unions on February 6, San Francisco Local 38-79 members Eugene Dietrich and Harry Bridges discussed the code and shifting the date of the annual district convention from May 7 to February 25. Acting District Secretary Morris called on all locals to hold a membership referendum on the date and place of the convention, and "Whether or not they are in favor of taking a strike vote to enforce our demands regarding hours, wages and working conditions." The membership voted overwhelmingly for holding the convention in San Francisco on February 25 and to instruct delegates on the strike issue.⁸³

The 1934 Pacific Coast District Convention

Eighteen years after the 1916 strike, West Coast longshoremen gathered in San Francisco to consider going out again as a unit. In attendance on February 25 were five Tacoma veterans of the lost strike, Jack Bjorklund, Andy Larsen, and George Smith from Local 38-3; and Paddy Morris and Reinhardt Schmidt of Local 38-30.⁸⁴ The convention elected seven men, including Jack Bjorklund and George Miller, to negotiate with waterfront employers. To demonstrate to everyone they meant business, the fifty-four delegates wired President Roosevelt and three other federal officials: "We have today passed resolutions giving the shipowners and operators until March 7, 1934 to meet with us."⁸⁵ After considerable delay, Thomas G. Plant, chairman of the San Francisco Water Front Employers, sent word that they would discuss only Bay City issues with the ILA committee on March 5.⁸⁶

In preparation for the meeting with employers, the San Francisco delegation presented, and the convention approved, a resolution reiterating ILA wage terms and declaring that district recognition as a unit was nonnegotiable. "If favorable consideration is not given to these demands by March 7, a date shall be set not later than 10 days after the convention, to take a strike vote by the Pacific Coast District."⁸⁷ Paddy Morris stepped down from the rostrum to speak. "You want to be sure that you do this one thing and that is that you get every damned member in the local to vote and if you think that the time has come to strike, try and educate your fellow member to that effect also. FOR IF WE DO TAKE A STRIKE VOTE, FOR GOD'S SAKE MAKE IT A BIG REPRESENTATIVE VOTE. DO THE JOB WELL AND NOT HALF-HEARTEDLY."⁸⁸

When the negotiators for the ILA and waterfront employers met, Jack Bjorklund spoke first. The district secretary told the bosses that the coast was 100 percent organized and desired to bargain collectively. Employer spokesman

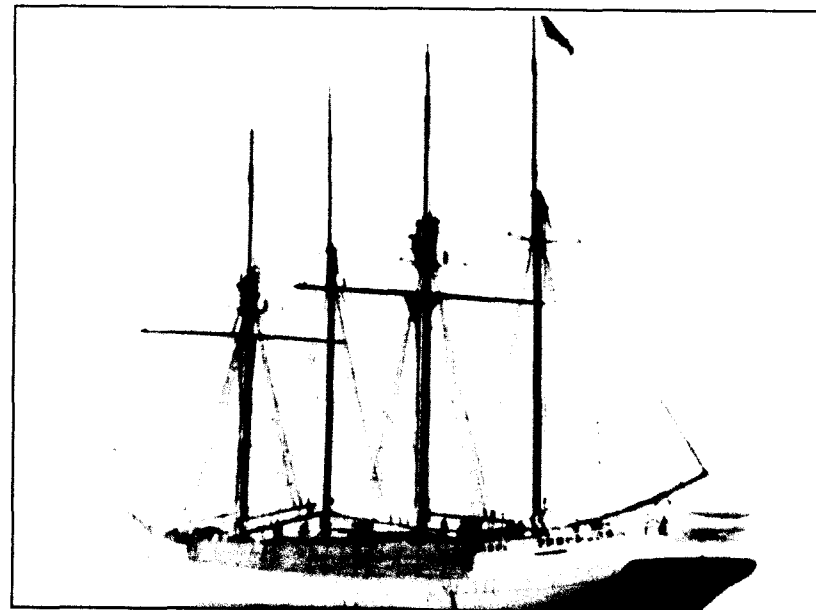
Thomas Plant claimed he could deal only for San Francisco. Bjorklund responded that every time northern longshoremen tried to make any advances in wages, changes of hours or working conditions they were told "that was entirely a matter for San Francisco to decide." When Bjorklund demanded district recognition and a coastwide closed shop, Plant told the ILA secretary "that was absolutely out of the question." Bjorklund then informed the employers of the convention's March 7 deadline.⁸⁹

In his review of the negotiations session George Miller told the convention that the employers spent a half hour talking about radicalism. The bosses claimed that sixteen convention delegates were Communists. Bjorklund assured the employers that the ILA could take care of any Communists in its ranks. "I finally told them that I had been jumped on from hell and back again by the employers and communists, and that, personally, I was fed up on it and that if they did not want to do business with our organization sponsored by the American Federation of Labor, that it was time to quit."⁹⁰

After the report of the negotiations committee, the convention adjourned. On March 7 the district board held another session with the employers. The bosses again refused to accede to ILA demands.⁹¹ Bjorklund instructed locals to poll the membership on calling a strike. West Coast ILA longshoremen authorized a strike, 6,696 to 633. When he announced the vote, Bjorklund advised the locals to select strike committees and not to attempt individual settlements.⁹²

As the threat of a coastwide strike moved toward reality, Tacoma general cargo men and lumber handlers took a major step. On March 30, Tacoma locals 38-3 and 38-30 amalgamated into ILA Local 38-97.⁹³ There was no need for two distinct locals anymore, Paddy Morris recalled later, "because the work was thrown in together."⁹⁴ All-purpose freighters now carried lumber out of Tacoma along with general cargo. The forty-four-year rivalry between Old Town and New Tacoma men ended when 185 lumber handlers moved their safe and clock to Commerce Street on April 1.⁹⁵ Of the 665 longshoremen in Local 38-97, 256 were veterans of the ill-fated 1916 strike. Nine of the twenty-five men on the strike executive committee were 1916 men.⁹⁶ A press committee and flying squad were organized. Arrangements were made for exchanging minutes with other locals.⁹⁷ Seattle became the Puget Sound strategy center when Bjorklund moved the district secretary's office to the Arcade Building. Longshoremen began calling on other Tacoma unions to keep them informed on the status of negotiations. Tacoma Teamster Local 313 voted on April 17 to support longshoremen financially "when needed."⁹⁸

As March 23 approached with no progress in negotiations, President Roosevelt asked the ILA district executive board to delay the strike. Roosevelt promised to appoint a fact finding board to investigate and recommend a solution. The ILA board complied.⁹⁹ The president named as mediators regional labor board chairmen Charles A. Reynolds of Seattle, J. L. Leonard of Los Angeles, and Dr. Henry Grady of San Francisco. On April 1,



Barkentine Commodore bound for Hawaii on her next to last trip with a load of lumber from the Deliance Mill. This was the first vessel loaded by a gang from Local 37-97 after the merger of the Tacoma locals March 30, 1934.
(Hi-Gloss Photo Service collection)

the President's board recommended representation elections, jointly operated hiring halls, and an arbitration panel. The San Francisco employers rejected the mediators' proposal. They insisted that they would deal only with Bay area longshoremen. On April 3, San Francisco employers proposed to recognize Local 38-79 and to jointly operate the dispatching hall. As for the other ports, each should negotiate its own agreement.¹⁰⁰ The ILA District Executive Board accepted the employer proposal "with reluctance but in the spirit of peace."¹⁰¹ For three days, District ILA bargainers tried to get the San Francisco employers to enter into a settlement that would apply to the entire coast. On April 7, the President's mediation board ruled that the ILA's insistence on a coastwide settlement was contrary to the April 3 agreement. On April 9 the San Francisco local endorsed the action of the district executive board and elected a committee of five to negotiate with five employers. District officers turned over bargaining to Local 38-79 and returned to their home ports.¹⁰²

For twenty days Local 38-79 and the employers bargained, but little was accomplished. On April 29, Local 38-79 voted to discontinue negotiations on May 7 if no progress was made. The next day San Francisco union officials notified employers of the membership's decision. Bargaining teams met from May 2 through 5, but nothing substantial was achieved. On May 6, the ILA refused the employers' request for national mediation. The following day ILA District President Bill Lewis instructed Secretary Jack Bjorklund to have locals poll the membership immediately on whether or not to strike. That evening

Local 38-79 voted to cease negotiations and strike. On May 8 at 8:00 a.m. San Francisco, Tacoma, Portland, San Diego, Everett, and Aberdeen reported overwhelming majorities to walk out.¹⁰³ That afternoon, President Ryan, Senator Robert F. Wagner, chairman of the National Labor Board, and Bill Lewis sent wires to Bjorklund. Senator Wagner asked that the strike be deferred.¹⁰⁴ President Ryan ordered that the strike be cancelled.¹⁰⁵ Lewis sent a cryptic telegram to the district secretary: "IMPOSSIBLE TO DEFER TOMORROWS ACTION STOP THIS IS THE SENTIMENT OF THE ENTIRE COAST."¹⁰⁶

The United States Postal Service delivered letters on May 6 and 7 to every registered longshoremen in the Puget Sound area. The missive notified each man that if he did not report for work on May 9, he would be deregistered.¹⁰⁷ During the evening of May 8 the last two large ILA locals, Seattle and San Pedro, met to decide whether or not to strike. At 8:00 p.m. Local 38-12 President Pete Erickson called Seattle longshoremen to order. A preliminary ballot indicated 60 percent opposed to hanging the hook. After hours of discussion Jack Bjorklund entered the hall with a telegram announcing that San Pedro had voted to strike. Erickson ordered a second vote. A majority of Seattle longshoremen voted to walk out.¹⁰⁸ There was no turning back.

CHAPTER VIII TACOMA REORGANIZES THE NORTHWEST

1. T. A. Thronson Interview. John Bjorklund moved from Marinette, Wisconsin, to Tacoma during 1900. He was active in the Shingle Weavers' Union in the early 1900s.
2. George Mitchell Interview.
3. PCDILA 1940, pp. 2-3.
4. TNT, June 14, 1945.
5. PCDILA 1940, pp. 2-3.
6. TLA, Labor Day Editions, 1924 and 1928. TLA, December 30, 1927.
7. T. A. Thronson Interview. Papers of Martin Frederickson.
8. T. A. Thronson Interview. Harvey Wells Files. *Plan and Procedure for the Selection of Men in the Port of Tacoma*, April 12, 1933.
9. C. C. Doyle Interview.
10. T. A. Thronson Interview.
11. Ibid., TLA, July 8, 1921. Reichl Files.
12. *Constitution, By Laws and Rules of Order of Longshore Local 38 Series 30 ILA*, adopted March 20, 1924. Otilie Markholt collection.
13. NLB, Testimony of W. T. Morris, p. 1736.
14. Frank Foisie, *Longshore Earnings*, pp. 5-46.
15. Nels Arneson and Morris Thorsen Interviews. NLB, Testimony of W. T. Morris, p. 1735. TLA, Labor Day Edition, 1928. "Young Jack" Bjorklund was not related to Local 38-3's Jack Bjorklund.
16. Morris Thorsen Interview. Peterson and Wessels were the last of the 1886 men. Wessels worked in the hold until 1924 when he retired in ill-health.
17. The length of service of the membership of Local 38-30 was arrived at by comparing the Application for Charter in the Longshoremen's Union of the Pacific, September 1, 1909, with the January-August 1930 payroll of Local 38-30.
18. Boris Stern, *Cargo Handling and Longshore Labor Conditions*, p. 94.
19. NLB, Testimony of W. T. Morris, p. 1736.
20. TLA, December 28, 1928.
21. Morris Thorsen Interview.
22. See Otilie Markholt's List of Officers of Local 38, Pacific Coast District, ILA 1910-1937 in Ronald Magden and Arthur Martinson's, *The Working Waterfront*, pp. 160-161.
23. The nine ILA locals were located in Ballard, Eagle Harbor, and two unions in Seattle, Washington; Bandon and Coos Bay, Oregon; San Diego and San Francisco, California; and Victoria, British Columbia.
24. NLB, Testimony of W. T. Morris, p. 1736.
25. PCDILA 1923, pp. 7 and 20. PCDILA 1926, p. 6.
26. PCDILA 1927, pp. 136-137.
27. *Seattle Local 38-12 Minute Book 2*, July 6, 1926.
28. PCDILA 1927, p. 137.
29. ILA 1927, pp. 137-140.
30. NLB, Testimony of W. T. Morris, pp. 1748-1749.

31. Ibid., pp. 1738-1740. TLA, October 4, 1929.
32. TLA, October 25, 1929. Otilie Markholt details the Grays Harbor organizing campaign in *Reorganization of the Pacific Coast Longshoremen, 1929-1933*. Paper Delivered at the 1988 Pacific Northwest Labor History Conference. Hereafter cited as Markholt, *Reorganization*.
33. TDL, October 24, 25, and 26, 1929. TNT, October 24, 25, 26, and 29, 1929.
34. *Tacoma Harbor Annuals* for the years 1930, 1931, and 1932.
35. *Waterfront Employers of Seattle Minutes*, March 10 and 17, 1930. Hereafter cited as WES.
36. Reichl File.
37. WES, May 23, 1932.
38. NLB, Testimony of W. T. Morris, pp. 1738-1740.
39. NLB, Testimony of E. L. Harris, pp. 1721-1722.
40. PCDILA 1931, p. 11.
41. *Portland Minute Book 3*, March 22, 1931. See also Markholt, *Reorganization*, pp. 3-4.
42. PCDILA 1931, pp. 68-69.
43. PCDILA 1932, p. 5.
44. *Tacoma Harbor Annual 1932*.
45. *Seattle Joint Executive Committee Minutes*, September 25, 1931. Hereafter cited as JEC.
46. PCDILA 1932, p. 5.
47. Letter from Local 38-12 to the Waterfront Employers' Association of the Port of Seattle, October 12, 1931, in JEC.
48. *Wage Scale Rules and Working Conditions on the Tacoma Waterfront*.
49. WES, May 9, 1932.
50. Ibid., September 12, 1932.
51. Ibid., October 17, 1932. T.A. Thronsen swears that Wells was never in the ILA Hall at pick time.
52. Ibid., November 28, 1932.
53. Ibid., December 12, 1932.
54. TLA, December 2, 1932.
55. WES, January 9, 1933.
56. Ibid., January 3, 1933.
57. Letter from Harvey Wells to ILA Local 38-3, March 31, 1933.
58. Letter from Ed Harris to Harvey Wells, April 2, 1933.
59. WES, April 10, 1933.
60. Harvey Wells File, *Plan and Procedure for the Selection of Men in the Port of Tacoma*, April 12, 1933.
61. T. A. Thronson Interview.
62. TDL, Arrival and Departure Notices, June 1931-September 1933.
63. TLA, Labor Day Edition, 1933.
64. Markholt, *Reorganization*, pp. 7-10.
65. Letter from J. C. Bjorklund to Matt Meehan, August 4, 1933.
66. Letter from Ed Harris to Harvey Wells, August 23, 1933.
67. WES, August 28, 1933.
68. *Minutes of a Special Meeting between Tacoma Waterfront Employers and the Local 38-3 Executive Board*, September 21, 1933.
69. *Voice of Action*, September 4, 1933. Hereafter cited as VA. Courtesy of Otilie Markholt.
70. Ibid., October 2, 1933.
71. WES, September 18, 1933.
72. Markholt, *The New Deal on the Waterfront*, pp. 10-12.
73. Letter from J. C. Bjorklund to Matt Meehan, July 18, 1933. Clyde W. Deal of the Ferryboatmen's Union spearheaded the formation of the Marine Council of the Pacific. In addition to the Ferryboatmen and ten ILA locals, the council included the Seattle Masters, Mates and Pilots. This meeting marked the first occasion since 1916 that California locals had met with Pacific Northwest unions. See Otilie Markholt, *The New Deal on the Waterfront*, p. 8. At the July 1933, Marine Council session Frank Larsen and Martin Frederickson represented Local 38-30. Local 38-3 sent Harry Barker, George Miller, and George Smith.
74. *New York Times*, November 1, 1933.
75. WES, November 13, 1933.
76. JEC, November 15, 1933.
77. TLA, November 3, 1933.
78. *Memorandum to William H. Davis, Administrator of the Shipping Code, from Boris Stern*, November 10, 1933.
79. TLA, December 1, 1933.
80. Letter from W. T. Morris, PCDILA Secretary Pro Tem, to all Affiliated Locals, December 12, 1933.
81. Letter from W. T. Morris to Harvey Wells, December 12, 1933.
82. TLA, January 5, 1934.
83. Letter from W. T. Morris to all Affiliated Locals, January 9, 1934.
84. The twenty-seventh annual convention of the Pacific Coast district ILA has become enshrouded in a great deal of mythology. In his *American Labor Struggles*, (1936) p. 331, Samuel Yellen wrote that the meeting was a "rank-and-file" convention, "to which paid officers of the union could not qualify as delegates." Jerry Brecher in *Strike* (1972) p. 150, said it was a convention "from which paid officers were excluded as delegates." As district 38 delegates, Secretary Bjorklund cast one-half vote and Acting District President Dewey Bennett also cast a half-vote. See roll call vote p. 95. Sidney Lens stated in *The Labor Wars* (1973) p. 290 "With Bridges' permission these men (paid officers) were allowed in the meeting hall but excluded from the deliberations of the ten-day convention." Nowhere in the proceedings of the convention is there a statement to this effect. Secretary Bjorklund spoke twenty-four times on issues before the convention. In comparison, Harry Bridges addressed the convention twenty-three times. For Bjorklund statements see pp. 1A, 2A, 8A, 9A, 10A, 11A, 12A, 13A, 15A, 1, 2, 29, 32, 34, 113, 115, 116, 118, 134-135, 137, 139, 140, 141, and 148-149. For Bridges see pp. 47, 48, 73, 74, 75, 76, 89, 98, 108, 109, 121, 123, 125, 128, 131, 133, 138, 141-142, 146, 148, 150, and 154. Bruce Nelson's "Workers on the Waterfront," p. 125 suggests that "the momentum was

on the side of the militants. This became especially clear at a historic coastwide union convention that met in San Francisco in late February and early March 1934." Bridges was defeated when he ran for temporary chairman of the convention. See p. 8A. At the end of the convention the Albion Hall candidate for district president, Henry Schmidt lost to one of the leaders in reorganizing San Francisco, William Lewis, 43-1/7 to 15 3/4. See p. 151. Charles P. Larrowe asserted in his *Harry Bridges*, p. 23 that "Bridges and other militants decided on a move that was sheer heresy to the old-timers, the creation of a federation of all unions in the industry to give them more power when they met with the employers." Two Generations of maritime workers, including Larrowe's old timers, had tried to form coastwide waterfront federations since 1902. See Ronald Magden, *A History of Seattle Waterfront Workers*, Chapter Seven, *Quest for Coastwide Unity*.

85. Local 38-30 also elected Virgil Ward as a delegate to the 1934 convention.
86. PCDILA 1934, p. 1.
87. *Ibid.*, pp. 119-120.
88. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
89. *Ibid.*, pp. 134-135.
90. *Ibid.*, pp. 137-138.
91. *Ibid.*
92. Letter from J. C. Bjorklund to All Affiliated Locals, March 19, 1934.
93. Letter from Walter Freer, president of Local 38-97, to Harvey Wells, March 31, 1934.
94. N.L.B., Testimony of W. T. Morris, p. 1736.
95. Eight lumber handlers quit longshoring rather than accept amalgamation. See Old Town Amalgamation List, 1934. Courtesy of Morris Thorsen.
96. Reichl Files. Robert Hardin stated that nine or ten of the 1916 Tacoma strike committee still lived in Tacoma. See Hardin's speech at the 1935 ILA Convention, p. 31.
97. T. A. Thronson Interview.
98. *Teamster Local 313 Minutes*, April 17, 1934.
99. Telegram from President Franklin D. Roosevelt to William J. Lewis, March 22, 1934. Telegram from William J. Lewis to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, March 22, 1934.
100. Report of Henry F. Grady, C. A. Reynolds, and J. L. Leonard to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, April 25, 1934, pp. 1-3. Hereafter cited as PB.
101. Markholt, *Unionism*, Volume III.
102. Letter from William Lewis to All Pacific Coast Locals, April 11, 1934.
103. ST, May 8 and 9, 1934.
104. Telegram from Robert F. Wagner to J. C. Bjorklund, 4:08 p.m. May 8, 1934.
105. Telegram from John (sic) P. Ryan, 3:57 p.m. May 8, 1934.
106. Telegram from W. J. Lewis to J. C. Bjorklund, 5:28 p.m. May 8, 1934.
107. T. A. Thronson Interview.
108. Dewey Duggan and Gordon S. Wylie Interviews.

CHAPTER IX

TACOMA LONGSHOREMEN AND THE 1934 MARITIME STRIKE

At 8:00 a.m. on May 9, 1934, work at Tacoma docks came to a "dead standstill." From Pier 2 to the smelter the waterfront had become "extremely quiet." Employers had decided "to close up and let the strike pursue its course."¹ Large groups of longshoremen peacefully picketed three idle ships in the harbor. Another 300 men assembled at the hall at 2:30 p.m. to hear reports on the closures at other West Coast ports. ILA strategy aimed to shut down all docks for as long as it took to achieve recognition, union hiring halls, and a coastwide agreement. The employers concentrated on keeping open San Pedro, San Francisco, Portland, and Seattle.² Tacoma Waterfront Employers' President Sam Stocking told the *News Tribune* that in Washington State only Tacoma would suffer. Cargo would be diverted to Seattle where "unquestionably" efforts would be made to load ships. Stocking did not understand why the men walked out. They had a closed shop, good wages "and practically everything they've asked for since the strike of 1916."³

The Tacoma Longshore Press Committee, composed of Robert Hardin, Paddy Morris, Ernest Tanner, and T. A. Thronson issued a statement on the first day of the strike: "All we're asking for is a fair shake and if we get that we will be satisfied. We also wish to impress on the minds of the public that we don't like strikes, but we are forced to fight for what we believe are our just dues . . . They [the employers] refused point blank to give us any consideration in regards to hours and wages, thus breaking the agreement they made with our organization and the President's board."⁴

Tacoma newspapers ignored the longshore press release.⁵ To present their message to the general public, Tacoma dock workers took to the airwaves. Throughout the strike, KVI radio offered time on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings to present "Longshoremen on the Air." As program host, T. A. Thronson stressed that the efficiency of Tacoma longshoremen had brought millions of dollars of business to the community. "If by any chance the union should be broken, its members will be scattered over the country, inexperienced men will take their places, ships will be diverted elsewhere, and grass will grow on the Tacoma docks."⁶

During the first month of the strike Tacoma papers emphasized the impact on lumber mill and industrial plant workers. The *News Tribune* claimed 700 Tacomans and 16,000 Pacific Northwest workers were laid off during the first week.⁷ The weekly *Tacoma Labor Advocate* issued an EXTRA on the third