

national compensation commission staff, discussed with the Joint Executive Committee the idea of a safety code for the Puget Sound area. The federal government preferred a safety code established by mutual agreement to one created by legislation.⁶⁸ Joseph Weber and John Bjorklund of Tacoma Local 38-3 put aside the past problems of dealing with each other. Together Bjorklund and Weber produced a Puget Sound safety code that applied to all stevedore operations aboard ships. The code was voluntary. Any maritime company could adopt or ignore it. On August 2, 1929, Weber, Bjorklund, and Hugh Delanty of the Shipping Federation of the State of Washington signed the first Marine Safety Code. On August 19, 1930, Portland adopted the code and Los Angeles followed on November 6, 1931. By the beginning of 1932 the Pacific Coast Marine Safety Code had been ratified by all steamship lines, waterfront employers, and longshore groups. A Pacific Coast Marine Safety Code Commission was established with local committees formed in each port. As its first order of business, the commission sponsored First Aid courses for everyone working on West Coast waterfronts.⁶⁹



*The Silk Train, 1925, Asahel Curtis Photo,
Washington State Historical Society Museum*

CHAPTER XI THE AWAKENING

We do not expect to organize this coast in a month or a year. As anyone familiar with the Fink Hall condition on this coast knows, the employers are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars a year to put over and maintain their system of Fink Halls.

*— George Soule,
Pacific Coast District ILA Secretary 1927¹*

At the beginning of 1924, 1,600 longshoremen and truckers handled cargo on sixty piers on Elliott Bay. Steamship lines and stevedoring companies employed 1,000 men in company gangs. Another 260 longshoremen and 189 truckers working out of the Waterfront Employers' Association's dispatch hall. A majority of the men at the WEA Employment Bureau belonged to the Federation of Marine Transport Workers' Local 2, but this union disbanded during the winter of 1924-1925. The Riggers and Stevedores kept longshore unionism alive. The 250 ILA men worked primarily for the Port of Seattle and the United States Shipping Board. Times were hard everywhere on the waterfront. For months, there was work for only 500 men a day, leaving over a thousand longshoremen to while away time at the dispatch halls and dock sheds. The situation grew worse when employment agencies referred out-of-work laborers to the front.² In an unprecedented move, Local 38-12 permitted superintendents and foremen to enter the ILA hall to pick gangs and individuals.³

The Seattle Riggers and Stevedores' situation became so desperate the membership laid off Secretary-Dispatcher Ernest "Limo" Ellis and the two janitors. A note hung on the main door of Longshoremen's Hall asking the last person out to turn off the lights and lock the door.⁴ From 1918 until 1933, the membership often elected the British-born Ellis secretary or

president of Local 38-12. "Limo's" rich cockney accent left some members wondering what the secretary was saying, especially when Ellis called out the worklist. When the men complained of his accent, Ellis shouted the alphabet, "Are there any As, Bs, Cs, who want this job?"⁵

Ellis worked harmoniously with George B. Soule, Pacific Coast District ILA secretary-treasurer from 1922 to 1927. An ex-cowboy from Colorado who longshored in Tacoma, Soule had demonstrated organizational ability as a flying squad captain during the 1916 strike. Employers kept Soule on the defensive the first two years of his secretaryship. Confrontations between ILA locals and bosses in Portland and Vancouver, British Columbia resulted in the destruction of the two unions. By 1924 only two Tacoma locals and remnants of nine others existed. When Ellis became a vice president of the ILA in April 1924 the decision was made to take the San Pedro and Seattle fink halls head on. Ellis travelled to San Pedro to reorganize the ILA local, but the Californians demonstrated little interest in resurrecting the union.⁶

Ellis and Soule were more successful in Seattle. During the spring of 1925, 564 longshoremen joined Local 38-12. Most of the new members worked out of the Employment Bureau. By the end of April, the ILA had organized half of Seattle's waterfront workers. There was hope that the union would soon have 100 percent of the men in the union. Job control seemed not far away.⁷ Membership in the Riggers and Stevedores declined precipitously when business agents failed to find enough jobs to keep all of the men busy. Only 300 men paid dues in July. Still, the membership drive revealed that the fink hall was not invincible. Moreover, the old animosity between stevedores and truckers had died with the disbanding of the Marine Transport Workers.⁸

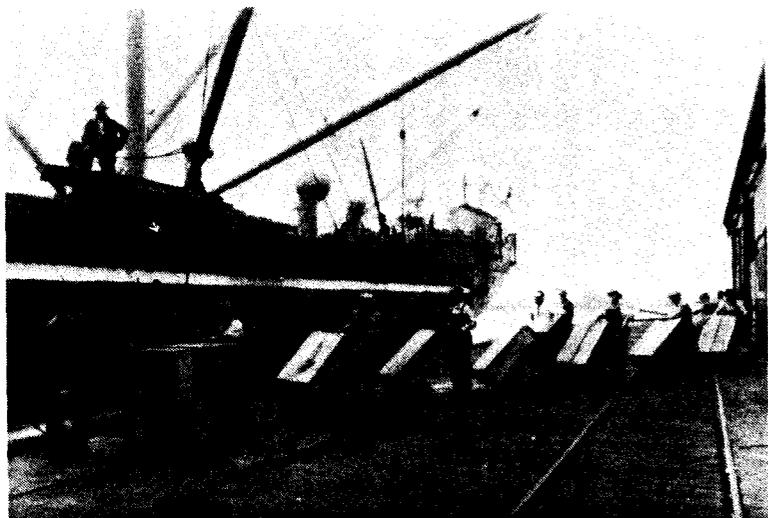
At the April 1926 Pacific Coast District convention, delegates elected Ernest Ellis president for the first of two terms. Ellis and Soule started organizing Vancouver and New Westminister. It was an opportune time. The company union

had reneged on a promised pay raise. New Westminister longshoremen joined Local 38-71 and Vancouver workers received a charter as Local 38-75. During 1926 Ellis and Soule attempted again to reorganize Seattle. The district convention assessed all locals \$1.00 for each member. With this assessment money and \$470 contributed by the North Atlantic District an organizer was hired for four months to win over the men in the Seattle fink hall. The organizer used standard methods, including handbills, posters, and open meetings.⁹ The second Seattle drive failed ignominiously. Only eleven men applied for membership.¹⁰

After the failure of the second Seattle campaign, George Soule concentrated on small Puget Sound ports. The district secretary was looking for a location where an "awakening" could take place. When the public Port of Olympia opened during the summer of 1926, Soule persuaded Charles Brown of the Tacoma Lumber Handlers to take a gang to the capital city. Brown and the Local 38-30 men would help "break in" local waterfront workers. This nucleus became Local 38-72.¹¹ At the same time, the Waterfront Employers of Seattle transferred three gangs to Olympia. The bosses sought, but failed to achieve, control of all stevedore work.¹² When work slackened during the winter, WES transferred their Olympia men to Seattle. At the same time Local 38-72 men began working out of Tacoma union halls. By the spring of 1927 Local 38-72 had disbanded.¹³

During May 1928 Tacoma lumber handler Robert Linney replaced Ellis as district president and John C. Bjorklund took over the district secretaryship from Soule. Known up and down the West Coast for his intelligence and prodigious physical strength, Bjorklund had migrated west from Wisconsin in the early 1900s. He quit shingle weaving in 1911 to join Tacoma Local 38-3. Tacomans elected "Big Jack" their secretary often from 1913 until 1933. Bjorklund believed the salvation of West Coast longshore unionism was to get the San Francisco Blue Book Union to join the Pacific Coast District

ILA. For three years, the district secretary worked towards this goal, but on April 9, 1931, San Francisco longshoremen voted decisively against affiliation.¹⁴



Loading Herring 1929, Washington State Historical Society Museum

Meanwhile, Bjorklund had persuaded Tacoma Lumber Handlers' President Paddy Morris to rebuild Washington State longshore unions. During June 1929, longshoremen and truckers working out of the Everett fink hall objected to the local management committee imposing an age limit and requiring men to pass a physical examination. Frank Foisie travelled to Everett to resolve the grievance. Foisie addressed the men in the 'tween decks of a ship. Morris recalled that "After he [Foisie] had talked to the men I found it considerably easier to organize them. I think I should have sent Mr. Foisie a letter of thanks." Three hundred and sixty-three Everett longshoremen became charter members of ILA Local 38-76.¹⁵

A month after the success in Everett, Grays Harbor longshoremen invited Bjorklund and Morris to Aberdeen. Stevedore Boss Frank Hill of Twin Harbors Stevedore Company was blatantly discriminating against union lumber handlers. When Hill discovered an ILA member, he ordered his fore-

man to replace the employee immediately. Morris succeeded in signing up 400 Grays Harbor longshoremen.¹⁶ On September 28, 1929, the men celebrated the birth of the new union with a banquet and endless speeches. In the months that followed, the Aberdeen-Hoquiam longshore union competed with the Communists' Marine Workers' League for the allegiance of dock workers.¹⁷

While the ILA tried to rebuild coastwide solidarity in the 1920s, major changes occurred among maritime employers. To increase profits, Luckenbach, Matson, McCormick, and Norton Lilly purchased stevedoring gear and hired their own steady longshoremen. Bloedel-Donovan Mill Company incorporated the Bellingham Contracting and Stevedoring and several Grays Harbor mills created Twin Harbors Stevedoring. By 1929 seventeen Puget Sound stevedore companies competed keenly for cargo handling contracts. In the Pacific Northwest, Rothschild & Company provided lists of experienced longshoremen to the new stevedoring firms. Most of the men recommended by Rothschild to Bellingham, Anacortes, Everett, Seattle, Tacoma, and Grays Harbor mill managers were ex-ILA members.¹⁸ E. A. Ames of Puget Sound Stevedoring thought the labor situation "excellent." There had been no longshore strikes in 1925 or 1926 because the creation of new cargo handling firms had increased the fragmentation of union longshoremen. Gangs employed by one company no longer associated with men working for another.¹⁹

In Seattle, the older stevedoring companies, Griffiths & Sprague, International, and Washington continued to use preferred gangs from the Employment Bureau. Fay S. Miller, North Coast, Puget Sound, Rothschild, Seaboard, Seattle, and Western telephoned the employer's dispatch hall when they needed extras to supplement their steady gangs. On January 1, 1925, the Waterfront Employers' Association became the Waterfront Employers of Seattle (WES). It was tacit recognition that the outports were going their own way. William C.

Dawson attributed the decline of membership in WES to the fact that there had not been a big ruckus with the ILA for five years.²⁰

The Great Depression

Indications of serious economic trouble in the maritime industry appeared during May 1929. A rate war broke out between West Coast steamship lines over sugar and salt. By the end of May shipping charge reductions ranging from 30 to 40 percent had taken place on all commodities.²¹ On September 1, the States Steamship Company of Portland, Oregon, cut Hong Kong to New York freight charges in half for silk and rubber. The cut resulted in a full-scale rate war between trans-Pacific carriers.²² During early October, grain suddenly stopped moving from Seattle terminals to ships. Argentina had captured the European market by selling below the American grain price.²³ In mid-October Japan put into effect a lumber tariff that discriminated against American forest products in favor of Russia's maritime province. The United States Tariff Commission began proceedings to increase rates on Japanese imports.²⁴

The *Seattle Times* reported on October 21, 1929, that the American stock market had lost 2 billion dollars in value that day.²⁵ As stock prices plunged, President Hoover assured the nation that the business structure was sound. The wild downward spiral continued.²⁶ Between October 22 and 30, 43,490,540 shares were traded.²⁷ The stock market crash caused unemployment to skyrocket. The number looking for work jumped from 492,000 in October 1929 to 4,065,000 in January 1930.²⁸

The depression hit Puget Sound waterfronts during February 1930. Membership in the Everett and Grays Harbor ILA locals fell to less than a dozen men in each union. The men could not afford to pay dues.²⁹ In Seattle the drop in longshore earnings during February averaged 20 percent, \$30.00 per

man.³⁰ Tonnage figures graphically illustrate the effect of the great depression on Seattle's cargo trade:

1928	8,916,069
1929	9,164,475
1930	8,361,479
1931	7,287,354
1932	5,897,747
1933	5,547,121 ³¹

Three times during 1930, longshoremen and truckers working out of the Employment Bureau insisted at Joint Organization meetings that Ringenberg be instructed to divide the jobs more evenly so that everyone could make enough to eat. Ringenberg could not get waterfront employers to cooperate.³² On October 8, ILA District Secretary John Bjorklund and Local 38-12 Secretary Ernest Ellis met with a fink hall delegation. The discussion revealed widespread disenchantment with Joint Organization. The men were particularly upset that company gangs and key truckers received most of the work, to the detriment of the hall gangs.³³ For the next two months, Paddy Morris worked with Local 38-12's Ernest Ellis, George Horr, and Robert Juarez to organize the Employment Bureau and Pacific Lighterage. By April 1931, 432 out of 622 registered men from the employers' hall had been initiated into the union.³⁴ Of the fifteen committeemen on the Joint Organization's executive committee, nine had joined Local 38-12. At Pacific Lighterage, "Blackie" Juarez successfully recruited over fifty men.³⁵ Among the new members were Shelvy Daffron, James Dean, Einer Eck, S. I. Frost, Ed Morton, E. L. Ridley, Thomas Stensen, William Veaux, Ed Waalen, Thomas Wadum, Art Whitehead, and James J. Whitney. All were to play a prominent part in the struggle to return the Seattle waterfront to union control.

Although Local 38-12 now contained a majority of Seattle men working on the waterfront, the membership realized that

economic conditions precluded a demand for recognition. Besides, 500 new members from the fink hall and Pacific Lighterage needed to get acquainted with the original members of Local 38-12. During May 1931, the union enlarged its executive committee to include seven longshoremen and four truckers from the Employment Bureau, eight Port of Seattle workers, three Admiral Line stevedores, two Pacific Lighterage hold men, and one man from Alaska Steamship.³⁶

The Joint Executive Committee became grievance sessions. Committeemen complained of too many dock operators allowing unregistered truckers to be picked at line ups, unsanitary drinking buckets, and drunken foremen. Ringenberg called on waterfront companies again, asking operators not to hire at dock gates, but backsliding continued.³⁷ Discussion of everyday waterfront problems quickly subsided when WES President E. A. Quigle announced an impending wage reduction for all Puget Sound ports. Quigle told committeemen that the steamship lines were crying for stevedore companies and dock operators to reduce costs.³⁸ On October 12, 1931, Local 38-12 President George Horr and fourteen joint executive committeemen signed a letter promising the bosses increased efficiency in lieu of a wage cut. The bosses were told that any action the fourteen committeemen took had the sanction of the ILA local. Employers rejected the communication. "Discussions in our meetings must be between you as committeemen representing the men and we representing the employers, and not dictated to by any outside influence."³⁹

In early December 1931, Local 38-12 members circulated a leaflet among unorganized waterfront workers calling for unity of action. Continued disorganization meant accepting wages below the standards of health and decency. To assure that a minority would not gain control of Local 38-12 again, the constitution had been amended to provide for a referendum by postal ballot on all strikes, boycotts, and financial decisions. The handbill informed nonunion men that Local 38-12 planned to join the Marine Council, the latest coastwide effort to

achieve unity among waterfront unions. This council employed an expert counsellor to give technical advice, prepare briefs, and collect fact and figures concerning changes in West Coast wage scales and working conditions.⁴⁰

The crisis over wages reached a climax on December 17. For the first time in the ten-year history of Joint Organization, fourteen committeemen walked out of a Joint Executive Committee meeting. On December 29, Puget Sound employers posted a notice cutting wages 5 cents an hour and eliminating penalty pay on creosote products, logs, and bone tankage. Seattle Local 38-12 and nonunion men held a mass protest meeting, but reported to work the next day.⁴¹

On January 11 and 12, 1932, Employment Bureau longshoremen elected fourteen new members to the Joint Executive Committee.⁴² The men realized that they had no chance of standing up against the employers when economic conditions were so bad. Internally, Local 38-12 endured another round of hard times. Membership shrank as most of the men initiated during 1931 dropped out. In February 1932, the local laid off both janitors and cut the secretary's salary to \$20.00 a week.⁴³ Month after month, the work situation grew worse. Although 124 Employment Bureau men abandoned the waterfront and were deregistered in 1932, longshore earnings fell to half the 1931 level.⁴⁴ In November came the bad news that New York longshoremen had settled for 75 cents an hour straight time and \$1.10 overtime. A month later, San Francisco adopted a pay scale of 75 cents and \$1.15.⁴⁵

The leaders of the Waterfront Employers of Seattle considered the San Francisco wage reduction short-sighted. President E. A. Quigle believed that action would cost West Coast shipowners, dock managers, and stevedore companies the good will of longshoremen. The men would not strike, but production certainly would suffer. WES members Dean Ballard and Harrison A. Shook agreed with Tacoma Manager Harvey Wells that San Francisco had opened the gates to coastwide organizing by the ILA. No longer would the men believe

employers could deliver better pay and working conditions than the ILA.⁴⁶

The Joint Executive Committee considered the question of a second wage cut at December 1932 meeting. The committeemen refused to accept any responsibility for the reduction. The men asserted their productivity record exceeded San Francisco and New York. Therefore, they should receive more pay. Employers said they planned to increase earnings by eliminating twenty drunks from the registration list. At the insistence of the committeemen, JEC appointed a review committee to find ways to stop hiring outsiders at dock gates, provide for more even distribution of the work, and eliminate preferred gangs and key truckers. The review committee met later, but employers refused to adopt a position paper prepared by the committeemen.⁴⁷

On Friday, February 24, 1933, activity on the Seattle waterfront hit bottom. The hiring halls did not dispatch a single man.⁴⁸ Business picked up in March, stabilized in April, and shot up dramatically in May. At the May 26 Joint Executive Committee meeting, the men asked when the 10 cent wage cut would be restored. Employers refused to discuss pay.⁴⁹ At the WES luncheon meeting the next day, members expressed relief that they would not have to meet with committeemen again until September.⁵⁰

West Coast Longshoremen And The New Deal

In 1933 President Franklin D. Roosevelt predicted that the American people would survive the Great Depression and achieve unparalleled economic growth and social well-being. On June 16, Congress enacted the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) to combat the depression by shortening the hours of labor, increasing wages, and eliminating unfair trade practices. Section 7-A of NIRA provided workers the right to choose their own representatives to bargain with employers.

During the spring of 1933, thousands of West Coast

longshoremen joined remnants of old ILA unions in Seattle, Grays Harbor, Everett, and Portland. New locals emerged in Anacortes, Longview, Rainier, Astoria, St. Helens, San Pedro, and San Francisco. ILA District Organizer Paddy Morris recalled that the different ports on the Pacific Coast unionized without an organizer's assistance. "It was a spontaneous movement on the part of the men into the I.L.A., especially in San Francisco where they quit the Blue Book by the hundreds each day." By the end of August, 10,000 West Coast longshoremen belonged to twenty-three ILA locals.⁵¹

A Seattle organizing committee composed of George Horr, Einer Eck, Arthur Whitehead, "Baldy" Lyons, Ed Morton, J. C. Peterson, and Gordon S. "Buck" Wiley approached prospective members individually. The majority joined, feeling they had nothing to lose. Others turned down the ILA men. "They told us they would like to join," recalled Buck Wiley, "but they knew which side their bread was buttered on. They didn't want to quit the fink hall and then have nothing."⁵² In the last three months of 1933, 118 joined.⁵³ During the first four months of 1934, the local initiated another sixty men.⁵⁴

At the same time West Coast longshoremen joined the ILA, the Communist Party-inspired Marine Workers Industrial Union conducted a parallel drive. NWIU had its greatest success in San Francisco. Its popular news sheet, *The Waterfront Worker*, publicized longshore job grievances. One of the longshore contributors was an ex-seaman from Australia named Harry Bridges. NWIU had little success in Seattle. In early 1934 less than twenty-five Queen City longshoremen joined. The number of NWIU men in Everett, Tacoma, and Portland was even fewer.⁵⁵

On August 25, 1933, Tacoma Local 38-3 seized the initiative. The general cargo men directed Secretary Edgar Harris to give thirty-days written notice to the Tacoma Waterfront Employers' Association Manager Harvey Wells. If employers did not reinstitute the old wage scale of 90 cents an hour straight time and \$1.35 overtime by October 1, Tacoma

men were "prepared to hang the hook, not only in this Port, but all Pacific Coast Ports as well."⁵⁶

Wells went to W. C. Dawson who called a joint meeting of the Washington Stevedore Association and the Waterfront Employers of Seattle on August 28. The consensus was that longshoremen were "feeling their power" and "aiming to clean our house for us." The men would not be joining the ILA if several Puget Sound employers had not hired at pier gates, bumped gangs for favorites, chiseled on time, and sped up the work. The men now questioned the good faith of all employers. WES approved a motion to deny offending employers the right to secure men from the dispatching hall.⁵⁷

A majority of stevedore bosses at the August 23 session viewed the future pessimistically. They foresaw NRA favoring a national system in which all ports must deal with the ILA. Western Washington waterfront employers believed the Tacoma ILA's bid for increased wages marked the first step in a force program. If Tacoma received a pay raise, all West Coast ILA locals would seek higher wages, recognition, and the closed shop. To stop the ILA, employers must act in concert, or there would be trouble.⁵⁸

The Shipping Code

As the Pacific Coast ILA reconstituted itself, district members became 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. Tacoma Local 38-3 drafted a longshore code that other Puget Sound ILA locals revised. The district secretary then sent the proposed code to the membership for acceptance, modification, or rejection. The main features of the referendum called for \$1.00 an hour straight time, \$1.50 overtime, a six-hour day, and union control of dispatch halls. The rank and file overwhelmingly approved the referendum. Jack Bjorklund pre-

sented the code on July 30 to the Marine Council to gain outside support. California and Washington State Ferryboatmen, as well as Seattle Masters, Mates and Pilots supported the code.⁵⁹ William Craft, Ed Morton, and E. L. Ridley represented Local 38-12.⁶⁰

In the midst of the code preparation an incident occurred in San Francisco that angered union longshoremen up and down the coast. On October 10 four San Francisco ILA men were fired for refusing to show their blue books. Bjorklund told Harvey Wells on October 16 that no Matson ships would be worked in Puget Sound ports until Matson rehired the San Francisco ILA men. ILA President Joseph Ryan also warned that North Atlantic longshoremen working Matson ships would walk out unless the men were reinstated. At the request of NRA regional administrator George Creel, Matson rehired the four men. Bay City longshoremen celebrated by publicly burning their blue books. This crucial event pushed the last undecided San Francisco longshoremen into the ILA.⁶¹

William Craft of Seattle, Matt Meehan of Portland, and A. H. Peterson of San Pedro travelled to Washington, D. C. with the district's recommendations for inclusion in Section B of the shipping code. When the ILA men arrived in the nation's capital, they discovered that maritime employers had already submitted their version through the American Steamship Owners' Association. The steamship association stipulated a forty-eight-hour workweek and the Gulf Coast wage scale, the lowest pay rate in the nation. Although employers alone had the power to adopt a code, NRA accepted for study briefs presented by West Coast longshore union representatives.⁶²

Code hearings were postponed until after North Atlantic steamship lines and President Ryan negotiated an agreement. On November 1, 1933, Ryan announced that wages would rise to 85 cents an hour for the first forty-four hours and \$1.20 for overtime. Ryan hoped that this contract would be adopted on the Gulf and Pacific coasts.⁶³ The New York wage settlement did heighten expectations on the West Coast. Negotiations

began between San Francisco employers and remnants of the Blue Book Union, but did not result in quick agreement. San Francisco employers urged Puget Sound ports on November 10 to effect an increase of 10 cents straight and overtime without any changes in working rules.⁶⁴

When the Seattle joint employer-employee committee met on November 15, longshoremen rejected an across the board 10 cents an hour raise. The men insisted on ILA recognition first. A longshore spokesman told employers that five men had been elected by Local 38-12 to represent the membership on the joint executive committee. The union would defer to the employers' desire to continue with Joint Organization rather than working with a business agent. When employers refused to grant recognition or meet with the new ILA representatives, longshore committeemen resigned. The bosses ended the November 15 meeting by unilaterally instituting 85 cents an hour straight time and \$1.25 overtime.⁶⁵

During mid-November, the NRA board listened to code proposals from shipowners, ILA representatives, and the Department of Labor. DOL statistician Boris Stern recommended NRA create a National Decasualization Board modeled on the Seattle experience. NDB would choose port employment directors to decasualize the longshore work force. All longshoremen would be registered and assigned to permanent gangs. Employers would be required to obtain longshore labor through the government employment office. Casuals would not be dispatched except in an emergency. For the ports of Tacoma and Galveston, Texas, Stern recommended the local decasualization boards take over the unions' dispatch halls.⁶⁶

Employers did not accept Stern's plan. Instead the bosses postponed action on the stevedore section of the shipping code. Bjorklund called another meeting of ILA men in Portland during the week of November 20 to discuss the Washington D. C. hearing. Local 38-12 instructed delegates E. L. Ridley, William "Steamboat Bill" Veaux, and Frank Whepley to vote for nothing but ILA recognition and union dispatch of all

waterfront workers.⁶⁷ At the Portland meeting, delegates resolved to oppose Stern's government-supervised fink hall. Representatives insisted longshore hiring be done only through each local's hall.⁶⁸

From January 31 until February 3, 1934, NRA held a second hearing on the seventh draft of the shipping code. This latest proposal was not acceptable to the shipping industry. Frustrated by slowness in Washington, D. C., Pacific Coast longshoremen clamored for a strike vote. On February 1, Harry Bridges and Eugene Dietrich of San Francisco Local 38-79 spoke to Local 38-12. After describing the problems facing Local 38-79, Bridges and Dietrich spoke in favor of the coastwide referendum that moved the ILA convention from May 7 to February 25, 1934.⁶⁹ When fifty-four delegates assembled in San Francisco on February 25, they immediately named a negotiating committee to meet with the employers. Thomas G. Plant, chairman of the San Francisco Water Front Employers, delayed negotiations with longshore representatives. Finally, acting chairman Paddy Morris stepped down from the podium to address delegates about "dillying and dallying." Morris recommended that the convention give the employers an ultimatum. "Unless they agree to meet with us as a district, that there will be no more meetings with them as local employers. And if they refuse to do that on Monday, you can then decide God damned quick what you want to do. And then you can go back to your Local with something material and substantial. If you don't do that, you won't have any Locals, I am afraid."⁷⁰

This convention listened to Paddy Morris. Delegates instructed the convention negotiating committee to demand: Either recognize the ILA district as the official collective bargaining agent or the convention will institute a strike vote referendum. Negotiating team chairman Jack Bjorklund reported to the convention that the employers were willing to talk about wages and working conditions, but not about ILA district recognition or the union shop. Delegates gave the

bosses until March 7 to accede to the demands, or a strike vote would be taken by the membership. If the rank and file voted to walk out, the strike would begin in all Pacific Coast ports at 6 a.m. on March 23.⁷¹

The resolution passed by a resounding AYE and the convention adjourned. The district executive board continued to negotiate for three days after the convention adjourned, but there was no progress. The West Coast ILA strike referendum carried 6,616 to 590. Seattle Local 38-12 cast 990 votes to strike and 92 against. Only Anacortes voted against hitting the bricks.⁷² As March 23 approached with no progress in negotiations, President Roosevelt requested that the ILA district executive board delay the strike while he appointed a fact-finding body. The ILA board complied and waited. Regional Labor Board Chairmen Charles A. Reynolds of Seattle, J. L. Leonard of Los Angeles, and Dr. Henry Grady of San Francisco were named as fact-finders. After four days of hearings, President Roosevelt's special board proposed joint management of dispatch halls, arbitration of wages and hours, and port-by-port elections to determine who would represent the longshoremen.⁷³

The Waterfront Employers' Union of San Francisco presented on April 3 an offer to recognize ILA Local 38-79, jointly operate the dispatch hall, and create a Port Labor Board of two employers and two employees. The labor boards could be transformed into arbitration panels with the appointment of an umpire. Reluctantly, the ILA district board accepted the April 3 WEU offer.⁷⁴ ILA negotiators tried to get the employers to enter into a settlement that would cover the entire coast, but the bosses would not budge. The President's mediation panel ruled on April 7 that a coastwide settlement was contrary to the April 3 agreement. As negotiations on wages and hours began between Local 38-79 and the Bay area WEU, district negotiators returned home.⁷⁵

In Seattle Judge Reynolds went before Local 38-12's membership on April 10 to explain the upcoming representation

election.⁷⁶ Two weeks later, five-man slates from Pacific Lighterage's Dock Council, Alaska Steamship, and Local 38-12 were placed on the ballot. The winner would represent longshoremen in discussions on differences with employers. The Seattle election took place on April 28, but Reynolds did not reveal the results.⁷⁷ Instead he returned to San Francisco where negotiations had broken down over Local 38-79 insistence that any wage settlement must be binding on all West Coast ports.⁷⁸

On April 29, San Francisco Local 38-79 voted to discontinue negotiations May 7 if there was no progress. Bargaining continued, but nothing was accomplished. On May 7 District President Lewis asked all locals to take strike votes. Local 38-79 immediately broke off negotiations and voted to walk out. A last effort to stop the strike was made by the President's special board on May 9. Grady, Leonard, and Reynolds urged the submission of all points in dispute to arbitration. Neither the employers nor ILA negotiators would agree to arbitration.⁷⁹

On May 8 San Francisco, Tacoma, Portland, San Diego, Everett, and Aberdeen reported overwhelming majorities to walk out. Only Seattle and San Pedro had not voted. At 8 p.m. Local 38-12 President "Pete" Erickson called 1,500 men to order in a big garage on Western Avenue. A preliminary ballot indicated 60 percent opposed hanging the hook. Dewey Bennett, William Craft, Ed Harris, T. A. Thronson, William Veaux, and Paddy Morris spoke in favor of striking. As the meeting continued and men began to leave, Erickson ordered the doors locked. Finally, Jack Bjorklund entered the hall with a telegram announcing that San Pedro had voted to join the strike. At 12:30 a.m. Erickson ordered a second vote. A majority of Seattle longshoremen voted to walk out. According to Dewey Duggan, the men had arrived at the conclusion that they had nothing to lose and everything to gain.⁸⁰