

coastwise and deep-water freight rates doubling. Grain, lumber, and flour cargos bound for Great Britain and Russia accounted for much of the increase.<sup>74</sup>

## CHAPTER V

### THE QUEST FOR COASTWIDE UNITY

*The labor movement will repeat its successes oftener and its failures seldomer whenever the workers learn to accept experience as a gift from the past instead of insisting upon purchasing it with their own good coin. Anon.<sup>1</sup>*

From the first West Coast longshore convention in 1902, delegates aimed "to devise ways and means whereby a campaign may be started and carried on for our complete organization, until such a time as we can control all water front and transport work within our jurisdiction."<sup>2</sup> Fostered by the International Longshoremen's & Transportworkers Association, this first effort to bring about coastwide solidarity foundered during the jurisdictional war with sailors. The second attempt by twenty-one locals in 1908 led to the formation of an independent Longshoremen's Union of the Pacific. The following year ILA President T. V. O'Connor brought about reunification of the Pacific Coast with the international by agreeing to district autonomy. Of the major longshore unions on the West Coast only the Bay City Riggers and Stevedores' Union remained outside the ILA.<sup>3</sup>

The solidarity of the West Coast ILA district received its first major test in 1912 at Grays Harbor. On March 14 the Shingle Weavers' Union and IWWs struck mill owners. A week later ILA locals in Aberdeen and Hoquiam demanded better working conditions from the Grays Harbor Stevedore Company. Manager W. R. Jones refused to discuss the men's grievances. The longshoremen walked off the job. Seattle, Tacoma, and Astoria unions provided jobs for Grays Harbor union men.<sup>4</sup> The Pacific Coast district and the ILA conventions levied a 10-cents-an-hour penalty for every man discharging a ship stowed by Grays Harbor Stevedore Company. Fines collected were remitted to the Grays Harbor locals.<sup>5</sup>

Tacoma lumber handler William T. "Paddy" Morris directed the ILA campaign against Grays Harbor Stevedoring. Morris telegraphed the names of ships loaded by the unfair stevedoring company to all West Coast locals so that the penalty could be enforced.<sup>6</sup> On September 4, Jones's replacement, Hugh M. Delanty, suddenly acceded to the demands of locals 38-24 and 38-26. Ninety Aberdeen and Hoquiam union longshoremen regained preference and a basic wage scale of 50 cents an hour. The district had survived its first major trial.<sup>7</sup>

### Wobblies on the Waterfront

Paddy Morris left Grays Harbor frustrated by the methods used by Wobblies. Morris advised delegates to the 1912 district convention to have nothing to do with the radicals. "After abusing the trade labor unions to the utmost, the moment they are in trouble they send committees to our meetings to ask for our assistance, and then go back to their soap boxes and call us fakers and grafters."<sup>8</sup>

During the Grays Harbor strike, IWW presence began to be noticed on Seattle docks. On April 18, Wobblies called a strike at the Virginia Street dock. At precisely 11:00 a.m. five dock truckers and three IWW organizers walked out. The truckers demanded wages equal to the longshore scale. The warehouse boss quickly replaced the strikers.<sup>9</sup> On April 23, IWW organizer E. G. Lewis called a second waterfront strike at Pier 5, but only a few men walked off the job.<sup>10</sup>

In a speech to the membership of Local 38-12 on May 13, ILA President T. V. O'Connor denounced the IWW for fomenting strikes. O'Connor recommended that the Seattle Stevedores and Riggers' Union use sane and conservative methods to win the respect of the community and employers. "Whenever one of the IWW agitators made his appearance in the hall, he should be ejected," added O'Connor, "not through the window because it is too much of a drop, but propel him

forcibly down the stairs." Cheering and applause erupted in the crowded hall. Pacific Coast District President John Kean told the assemblage that "Any man who holds a card in this union and also in the I.W.W. will be requested to drop one or the other."<sup>11</sup> Despite the advice of Morris, O'Connor, and Kean, Wobblies joined Pacific Coast ILA locals during 1912 and 1913. IWWs made their most determined effort to disrupt San Pedro Local 38-18. In Seattle, Local 38-12 union initiated over 300 warehousemen, dock truckers, and nonunion stevedores raising the total membership count to nearly 700. Among the initiates were many Wobblies, their strength clustered among low paid truckers.<sup>12</sup>

### The 1913 Agreement

Wages for nineteen Washington State and four Canadian longshore locals improved during May 1913. A group led by ILA President T. V. O'Connor and officials from the locals negotiated new contracts with representatives of Canadian and Puget Sound shipping associations. By the terms of the two similar agreements the shipping association recognized all of the locals. In addition, employers acceded to the nine-hour workday and 45 cents an hour straight time. Fifty cents would be paid for overtime work from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m., Sundays, holidays, and the noon hour. In exchange for recognition and the new wage scale, Washington and Canadian ILA locals acceded to open-shop working conditions and a special restrictive clause: "Any member of a local who violates any part of this agreement or agitates a stoppage of work under any circumstances, shall be discharged and will be given no future employment." The bosses also insisted on the inclusion of an arbitration clause. In case of a grievance, work would continue while an employer and a union longshoreman sought to resolve the dispute. If the two failed, they would select a disinterested third party to decide the case. Negotiators set December 31, 1914, as the termination date of the contract.<sup>13</sup>

The 1914 ILA district convention witnessed the affiliation of the San Francisco Riggers and Stevedores' Union. During February 1915, West Coast employers established a common front. Officials of steamship lines, stevedore companies, and chambers of commerce formed the Federation of Waterfront Employers' Unions in Portland. Captain James S. Gibson of Washington Stevedoring and G. K. Magill of American-Hawaiian Steamship represented the Seattle Waterfront Employers' Union (WEU), the new name of the Puget Sound Shipping Association. Federation delegates kept proceedings secret, but employers released a statement of their general purpose:

Better to meet the increasing and often unreasonable demands of union labor; to forestall by discussion with employers or their representatives such demands; to promote harmony with employees and employers, to the end that greater efficiency without injustice to either employees or employers may be had; to take such united action as may be necessary on legislative matters affecting the shipping interests.<sup>14</sup>

On March 1, 1915, without warning Vancouver, British Columbia bosses reduced wages from 45 cents to 35 cents an hour for longshoremen, and from 40 cents to 35 cents for dock truckers. Then Vancouver shipping lines, stevedore companies, and dock managers locked out union men, replacing them with strikebreakers. Pacific Coast longshoremen believed the bosses wanted to test the temper of the men before making further and more sweeping reduction of wages from one end of the coast to the other. The ILA district executive board announced on March 15 that every local on the coast planned to boycott Vancouver ships.<sup>15</sup>

Victoria, Seattle, and Tacoma longshoremen immediately quit working unfair Vancouver steamers. Local 38-12 went a step further. The Seattle union refused to work any coastwise or Alaska ships until employers accepted men dispatched

from the ILA hall in alphabetical order. Clearly, Seattle longshoremen intended to abolish the steady gang system. Grace, Borderline, and Humboldt, as well as the Port of Seattle, agreed to union terms. The Seattle Waterfront Employers' Union refused. The employer hiring hall could not supply enough men to replace the union workers. Scabherders recruited 100 strikebreakers from the Hotel Liberty, the city-sponsored home for unemployed. Another 300 idle men living at the hotel refused to scab.<sup>16</sup>

Confrontations alternated with mediation sessions. On March 16, longshoremen attacked scabs with fists, bricks, and stones at Smith Cove. The fight resulted in the hospitalization of strikebreaker Claude Barnett and the arrest of strikers Ernest Moody, James Piper, and David Taylor.<sup>17</sup> The next day, Police Chief Louis Lang and Port Warden A. A. Paysse tried to persuade union men to return to work. But after a two-hour session at the longshore hall, Paysse commented, "The men turned a deaf ear to all our propositions, refusing to grant a single one of our requests by a vote which was almost unanimous. They decided to continue the strike with as much vigor as ever."<sup>18</sup>

On March 23, ILA President T. V. O'Connor and United States Conciliation Commissioner Rowland B. Mahany arrived in Seattle to mediate the waterfront dispute. At a session the next day with all interested parties, O'Connor proposed Seattle Local 38-12 and Tacoma Local 38-3 return to work under conditions that prevailed on March 14, the day before the refusal to work Vancouver ships began. Employers and striking ILA unions accepted O'Connor's proposition. In effect, Seattle longshoremen dropped their demand for rotation hiring, and employers agreed to the men returning to work without discrimination.<sup>19</sup> "It was," said a participant, "a victory and a triumph for common sense, that it humiliated no one, visits compulsion on no one, and that it was the ideal way for adjusting such difficulties."<sup>20</sup>

The Puget Sound longshore boycott against Vancouver cargo remained in force. President O'Connor succeeded on April 2 in getting Vancouver employers, longshoremen, and hand truckers to accept a compromise that ended their strike.<sup>21</sup> Three months later, O'Connor found himself mediating another dispute between Seattle longshoremen and waterfront employers. WEU and Seattle Local 38-12 were deadlocked over the closed shop, union jurisdiction claims, and demands for a raise of 5 cents an hour.<sup>22</sup> On July 6, Seattle longshoremen walked off the job at Smith Cove.<sup>23</sup> WEU complained to President O'Connor that this work stoppage violated the existing contract. "Unless some assurances could be given of the ILA's ability to handle the Seattle local," WEU told O'Connor, "it would be folly to enter into an agreement."<sup>24</sup> The ILA President discussed the Smith Cove incident with district and local officers, but he could not get Local 38-12 to moderate its demand for a closed shop. The Seattle situation had to be settled or it could lead to a coastwide strike. Locals had agreed that if there was not unanimous agreement, all would walk out on September 1.<sup>25</sup>

The Eighth Pacific Coast ILA Convention assembled on July 26. The main item on the agenda was the status of Seattle-Tacoma negotiations with employers. A longshore committee composed of L. E. Merritt of Seattle, M. E. Wright of Tacoma, and J. A. Madsen of the district office hand-carried the decision of the convention to the Seattle Waterfront Employers Union. The convention's letter turned down WEU's demand that Seattle and Tacoma locals obey the contract. Delegates claimed that the clause in WEU's agreement providing for hiring of locals 38-3 and 38-12 members did not compare favorably with similar clauses in San Francisco, San Pedro, and San Diego contracts.<sup>26</sup>

One week before the strike deadline, WEU held an important membership meeting. The maritime employers agreed that a strike must be avoided regardless of the closed- or open-shop issue. Business had never been so good. When several

employers expressed concern about the fate of nonunion employees, a provision was inserted in the proposed agreement that nonunion men hired prior to April 1, 1915, would be given a reasonable time to join the ILA.<sup>27</sup>

Two days before the deadline, San Diego, San Pedro, San Francisco, and Tacoma locals ratified settlements with employer associations. Waterfront bosses acceded to hiring only union men when they could be furnished and to raise wages 5 cents an hour in all categories. All agreements terminated December 1, 1915. Thereafter, the pacts remained in force until one party gave sixty days notice of cancellation.<sup>28</sup>

After an all-night discussion, Seattle longshoremen voted on August 30. Two hundred and seventy-one opposed and 101 accepted the employers' terms. A coastwide strike seemed inevitable.<sup>29</sup> The Seattle union did not walk off the job on September 1. Instead Local 38-12 waited for the district executive board to make a decision at its September meeting in Seattle. The board deliberated six days, then sent the following letter:

Mr. Chas. Lancaster,                      Sept. 8, 1915  
Secy. Local 38-12 ILA  
CITY

Dear Sir & Brother:

This is to inform you, and through you Local 38-12, that the Puget Sound, British Columbia, San Francisco, San Pedro and San Diego agreements have been accepted and will go into effect September 12th, 1915. Owing to the fact that Local 38-12 has refused to accept the terms and conditions contained in the Puget Sound agreement, the district Executive Board has decided to grant Local 38-12 a reasonable time in which to accept the agreement previously rejected. In the meantime please be advised that the District will not support Local 38-12 in any action on their part that will have as its object anything but compliance with the will of the district.

Approved by the Executive Board,  
Fraternally submitted, (s) J. A. Madsen<sup>30</sup>

Faced with nonsupport by other ILA locals and the district office, on September 12, Seattle Local 38-12 formally acceded to WEU's proposal. Seattle longshoremen recognized the futility of going out alone.<sup>31</sup>

### The 1916 Pacific Coast District Convention

The acceptance of 50 cents an hour for straight time on September 12, 1915, matched the same pay Seattle Stevedores and Riggers had achieved in 1889. Inflation had cut the value of wages in the intervening twenty-six years. The annual cost of food and fuel for a Seattle family of five in 1914 was \$418.46, in 1915 the cost rose to \$443.72, and in 1916, \$461.42. Hundreds of working people shifted to higher paying shipyard jobs.<sup>32</sup> Others stayed with their trade, but demanded increased pay and better working conditions. Thirty-seven major strikes occurred in Washington State during 1915 and fifty-eight in 1916.<sup>33</sup> Among maritime crafts, 200 halibut fishermen organized the Deep Sea Fishermen's Union of the Pacific and struck on March 12, 1916.<sup>34</sup> Three days later, 500 steamboatmen walked out.<sup>35</sup>

On February 4, 1916, 1,200 Seattle hand truckers organized the United Dock Workers' Union. UDW immediately asked for an ILA charter. The Pacific Coast district office referred UDW's request to Local 38-12. The Stevedores and Riggers' Union hesitated to amalgamate with UDW. Local 38-12 included 925 hold, deck, and dock men compared with 1,200 UDW dockers. If Local 38-12 amalgamated, they would become a minority in their own union. Besides, ILA men competed daily with UDW truckers for jobs moving merchandise from railroad cars to piers. Local 38-12 officers told UDW that the membership had turned down the truckers' request to amalgamate.<sup>36</sup> On May 29, UDW struck for higher wages and to eliminate stevedores, "the middle men who have been exploiting us for years."<sup>37</sup> Thus, 1,900 Seattle truckers,

steamboatmen, and fishermen found themselves picketing docks at the same time.

During the spring of 1916, IWWs conducted a successful membership drive among Seattle waterfront truckers. Wobblly Marine Transport Worker Organizer R. J. "Red" Doran pointed out that there were ten uncoordinated Seattle maritime unions: the Sailors, Cooks and Stewards, Marine Firemen, Oilers and Watertenders, Wireless Operators, Deep Sea Longshoremen, Dock Workers, Steamboatmen, Gasoline Engineers, and Fishermen. According to Doran, strikes were lost because all of the other maritime unions kept working. By organizing into One Big Industrial Union of Marine Transport Workers, Doran said, strikes could be won. "MTW will be able to present such a solid united front to the shipping trust that they will be forced to give us what we demand."<sup>38</sup>

When the ILA district convention assembled in Seattle on May 1, delegates denounced employer resistance to a coastwide closed shop and a higher wage scale. Representatives pointed out that shipping and stevedore company profits had escalated since the outbreak of the European war and the opening of the Panama Canal. The men did not understand why they should not participate in the good economic times. Besides, inflation was eating up a chunk of the money they were making.<sup>39</sup>

ILA delegates instructed the district executive board to tell employers that all cargo handling would cease at 6:00 a.m. on June 1 unless bosses agreed to the closed shop, 55 cents an hour straight time, and \$1.00 an hour overtime for general cargo longshoremen. Lumber handlers' pay must rise to 60 cents and \$1.00, and warehousemen to 40 cents and 60 cents. All wage categories must be based on a nine-hour working day.<sup>40</sup> The district executive board sought an alliance with the Sailors' Union of the Pacific, but Furuseth demanded the impossible. Longshoremen must recognize the right of seamen to perform all work within reach of the ship's tackle.<sup>41</sup>

For the first time in West Coast longshore history, thirty-

eight locals planned to hang the hook together. Unlike regional longshore strikes in previous eras, 12,500 cargo handlers stood ready to strike from Bellingham to San Diego. There were 925 in Seattle, 1,100 in Tacoma, 2,000 in Portland, 4,600 in San Francisco, and 1,200 in San Pedro. Joining the large unions were thirty-three smaller locals in California, Oregon, and Washington. The district executive board announced that British Columbia locals would not be asked to join the strike unless employers diverted hot cargo through Canada.<sup>42</sup>

On May 26, the Seattle Waterfront Employers' Union (WEU) requested a meeting with district officers in Seattle to come to an amicable settlement. District Secretary-Treasurer J. A. Madsen responded that the May convention had instructed elected officers to "present the wage scale and working rules to employers and to enforce same June 1st, 6:30 a.m."<sup>43</sup> On the same day, WEU appealed to United States Secretary of Labor William B. Wilson to get the district to honor the sixty days' notice. Wilson telegraphed J.A. Madsen to observe the contract's sixty-day provision. The district officer ignored Wilson's dictum.<sup>44</sup> On May 29, Secretary Wilson appointed Henry M. White mediator between employer associations and the Pacific Coast ILA. Wilson instructed White to make every effort to arbitrate wage issues. White obtained from WEU a promise to negotiate the straight time wage scale.<sup>45</sup> The ILA district executive board told White that only complete acquiescence to a coastwide closed shop and increased wages would bring the men back to work.<sup>46</sup>

### The First Phase of the 1916 Strike

The strike started at 6:00 a.m. on June 1, in all West Coast ports. Peter Barry, Charles Connor, L. E. Merritt, S. C. Smith, and Sam Sadler composed the Seattle Strike Committee. Similar to other ILA unions, Local 38-12 aimed to shut down the port completely. Not a single Seattle union man reported for work on the docks. Pickets wore special green buttons

indicating membership in Local 38-12.<sup>47</sup> Sixteen steamers lay idle at the docks. Shipping line managers expected thirteen more ships in Elliott Bay the following week.<sup>48</sup> In a demonstration of solidarity, the Seattle Central Labor Council called on the other maritime unions to give all possible aid.<sup>49</sup> Seattle Teamster Local 174 voted not to scab on striking longshoremen.<sup>50</sup> When 101 checkers agreed to join the strike, Local 38-12 initiated them into their union.<sup>51</sup> For the first time nearly 3,000 fishermen, steamboatmen, truckers, checkers, and longshoremen found themselves picketing together from Smith Cove to the West Seattle grain elevator.

On the day the strike started Seattle's Waterfront Employers' Union vowed never to grant the closed shop, or accede to the \$1.00 an hour overtime. At the same time Seattle employers became involved in a San Francisco plan to settle the strike. Captain J. H. Bennett, chairman of the Bay City's employers' conference committee, approached Seattle's WEU with the idea of a joint settlement that would apply to the entire coast. WEU responded with the suggestion that coastwide negotiation sessions include a representative from each ILA local and employers' association.<sup>52</sup>

While awaiting developments in San Francisco, Seattle employers conducted a financial subscription campaign. WEU received pledges of \$36,850 from shipping lines, stevedore companies, dock owners, banks, and flour mills.<sup>53</sup> With part of the money employers hired the Pinkerton's National Detective Agency.<sup>54</sup> Another portion of the WEU strike fund went to eastern Washington newspapers for ads appealing to farm workers to come to work on the Seattle waterfront. WEU spent a large sum on quarter-page ads in Seattle newspapers emphasizing ILA bad faith in not giving sixty days' notice.<sup>55</sup>

The sixty-day cancellation clause became the focus of the employers press campaign. On the first day of the strike WEU President James Gibson told the press, "We are going to attempt to demonstrate if an agreement entered into with the longshoremen has any real worth." Gibson added that the

employers' East Waterway hiring hall would be reopened. Gibson asked journalists to quit using the term strikebreakers and call new hires "independents."<sup>56</sup> When only ninety-three men came looking for work the first week, WEU asked Associated Industries of Washington to help recruit "independents."<sup>57</sup>

At midnight June 3, the first waterfront confrontation took place. Although the Milwaukee Railroad was not a WEU member, fifty men suddenly attacked nonunion truckers on the company's dock. The brawl started as a fist fight, but soon turned into a shooting fray. Pistol bullets hit strikebreaker T. C. Hughes of Los Angeles in the knee and arm while striker John Ryan was shot in the leg. On the same day at Pier 14 longshoremen threatened scabs who were discharging the Borderline Company's *Al-Ki*.<sup>58</sup>

After the Milwaukee Dock and Borderline episodes, WEU asked Seattle Mayor Hiram Gill to declare an emergency on the waterfront. Mayor Gill said that if necessary he would appoint 150 special deputies. Waterfront employers offered to recruit, arm, and pay the deputies. Captain Gibson promised Gill that independents would be housed and fed on ships and in dock warehouses. Under no circumstances would the new men cross Railroad Avenue to go uptown.<sup>59</sup>

Not all employers opposed waterfront unions. Seattle's two largest Far East shippers, Toyo Kisen Kaisha Steamship and Frank Waterhouse's charter company, acceded on June 3 to longshore and trucker wage and closed shop demands.<sup>60</sup> After meeting on June 5 with Charles Connor and S. C. Smith of Local 38-12, and Gordon J. Kelly and J. A. Madsen from the district office, Port President Robert Bridges announced "Work on the public terminals [is] to be performed exclusively by members of the International Longshoremen's Association and to be paid at the rates requested in their new wage scale."<sup>61</sup> On June 8, Rothschild and the West Seattle Elevator Company signed and returned agreements to the district's main office in Seattle.<sup>62</sup>

One week after the strike began, federal mediator Henry M. White requested a meeting in San Francisco of the ILA district executive board, the Waterfront Employers' Unions' conference committee, and individual ship owners. The bosses insisted that employer associations in San Diego, San Pedro, Columbia River, and Puget Sound negotiate separate agreements.<sup>63</sup> The ILA District Executive Board emphatically opposed any compromise of the district convention's demands. Alterations could only come from "the men who carry the hooks."<sup>64</sup> The conference continued with the understanding that regional employer associations would negotiate local contracts, and that a majority vote of the ILA membership would have to ratify the agreements. After intense negotiations, a truce was signed at 2:00 a.m. on June 9. Longshoremen agreed to return to work at the scale of wages submitted to employers on May 1, 1916. The tentative agreement would be submitted to a coastwide referendum of ILA men. If union men approved, Henry White would open negotiations on June 26 for a permanent settlement between the two parties.<sup>65</sup> After fourteen years of travail, it appeared the Pacific Coast District ILA had achieved the elusive coastwide closed shop.

Later in the morning of June 9, Secretary-Treasurer Madsen telegraphed Seattle Stevedores and Riggers' Local 38-12: "We win first and best round." In the same telegram Madsen urged the union to give United Dock Workers a square deal.<sup>66</sup> On June 10, Local 38-12 membership voted overwhelmingly to assist dock truckers, steamboatmen, and checkers in obtaining ILA charters. UDW received auxiliary status, becoming Local 38-12A. For their loyalty, checkers, weighers, and spotters obtained a charter as Local 38-36. Steamboatmen became ILA Local 38-60. In the flush of victory, longshoremen and truckers pledged financial aid to Local 38-60 in its struggle against mosquito fleet operators.<sup>67</sup>



## The Second Phase of the Strike

On June 10 union longshoremen, dock workers, and checkers returned to work on all West Coast waterfronts except San Pedro, the port for the City of Los Angeles. Waterfront employers acceded to the nine hour day, a longshore scale of 55 cents an hour straight time, and \$1.00 an hour for overtime. Truckers and warehousemen received 40 cents and 60 cents. During the week following the agreement San Francisco employers continued to hire nonunion waterfront workers. Then on June 16 a scab lumber handler shot and killed Oakland ILA longshoreman Lewis A. Morey. Two days later another strikebreaker mortally wounded San Francisco stevedore Thomas Olsen. On June 20 the Pacific Coast ILA executive board called on Bay City employers "to live up to the terms of the agreement by discharging and dispersing all strikebreakers in their employ by June 21, 1916, at 5 p.m."<sup>68</sup> Employers argued, and Henry White confirmed, that the June 9 agreement did not specify the discharge of "independents." Somehow the clause stipulating "The Waterfront Employers' Union will immediately discharge all non-union longshoremen" had been dropped from the final draft without union negotiators noticing.<sup>69</sup>

The San Francisco Riggers and Stevedores' Union walked out again on June 21. The district executive board ordered other West Coast longshore locals to strike the next morning in support of Local 38-33.<sup>70</sup> Picket lines resumed at all ports. In Seattle, university students and imported black strikebreakers began working behind locked dock gates. By June 21, WEU had hired 400 "independents."<sup>71</sup> Even so, employers could not overcome the cargo backlog. Sixty thousand tons of merchandise sat on docks. Freight lay in piles on streets leading to the waterfront. Doors on stuffed warehouses stood ajar. The United States Department of Labor's Mediation and Conciliation Service could not get the two sides to resume negotiations.<sup>72</sup>

Seattle's Waterfront Employers' Union, Employers' Association of Washington, and Chamber of Commerce held a joint meeting on June 22 to protest the renewal of the strike by Seattle ILA locals. Chamber of Commerce President Thomas Burke presented, and the group adopted, a resolution declaring, "The principle of the closed shop is clearly subversive of individual liberty. Under such conditions the labor union becomes an intolerable tyranny and the rest of the people become helpless slaves." Judge Burke led the group to Mayor Gill's office to present his resolution. Gill refused to be drawn into a closed-shop controversy. Such action would bring all of organized labor to the assistance of the longshoremen. The Mayor repeated his promise to appoint 150 armed deputies to patrol the waterfront.<sup>73</sup>

On the day business groups called on Mayor Gill, Port Commission President Robert Bridges announced that no armed guards would be allowed on Port piers. Stevedore Boss James Griffiths, who had three steamers waiting to unload at Smith Cove, declared that independents would not work at public terminals without armed protection.<sup>74</sup> Although a WEU member, Frank Waterhouse, who had time-sensitive munitions contracts, quickly agreed again to the union shop and the new wage scale.<sup>75</sup> Local 38-12 officers assured all Seattle shipping agents that strikers would not interfere with any nonunion longshoremen working at Port of Seattle docks.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, Alaska Steamship, American-Hawaiian, and Pacific Alaska Navigation reneged on contracts to use Port facilities. Robert Bridges remarked that this action was another example of the hostile attitude of the shipping trust toward the public Port of Seattle.<sup>77</sup>

From June 23 through June 27, WEU "Open Letters" appeared in Seattle's three major daily newspapers addressed to "Thinking People," "Longshoremen," and "Organized Labor." The first advertisement warned the public that unless the strike ended the entire waterborne commerce of the Pacific



Coast was "IN GRAVE DANGER OF BEING DIVERTED." Years would be necessary to rebuild trans-Pacific, Alaska, and coastwise traffic. The second "Open Letter" intimated that the rank and file were cats' paws. WEU suggested that ILA leaders did not want arms and ammunition shipped to Russia. "Does it not occur to you that some body may be anxious to have those shipments stopped?" The last ad scolded the Washington State Federation of Labor for endorsing the dishonest act of the longshoremen's association. To allow one labor union to openly and flagrantly violate its agreement certainly would cause others to do the same. "The federation should purge itself of this stain upon its reputation by rescinding its action at an early date."<sup>78</sup>

The *Socialist World* and *Pacific Coast Longshoreman* published the strikers' response to WEU newspaper pronouncements. In the Socialist paper Local 38-12's press committee denied that the general membership was being duped by district leaders in the pay of the Central Powers. Rank-and-file delegates to the last district convention had stipulated the terms. District officers must follow the convention's instructions. The union's open letter concluded, "Our demands are not unreasonable; we certainly are entitled to a small share of the enormous profits which we help you to reap; it rests with you to have this trouble brought to a speedy end."<sup>79</sup>

The *Pacific Coast Longshoreman* decried the fact that Seattle citizens were not given a chance to hear the union's side of the story. Who were the longshoremen fighting? Professional gunmen led by ex-Police Chief Charles W. "Wappy" Wappenstein, "a filthy, lecherous brute." Seventy percent of the Seattle longshoremen were married with families and homes. The union men wanted to earn a fair wage in order to raise their children adequately.<sup>80</sup>

On the evening of July 2, Local 38-12 Strike Committee Chairman David Madison and President Martin Meyers explained to a mass meeting of 1,000 people at the Dreamland

Dance Pavilion why Seattle longshoremen struck. Madison recalled Seattle's open-shop era from 1908 to 1914. To read ship arrival blackboards and to get paid after a job, longshoremen were practically forced to frequent rapacious saloons. By the hundreds, men had flocked to the front at all times of day and night to lineup for work. Sometimes stevedore bosses hired only a half dozen men. "The Danish Consul" added that in the old days a floater who had just rolled off the brakebeam of a boxcar stood as good a chance of getting work as a tax-paying citizen with a family.<sup>81</sup>

President Meyers told the audience that all the longshoremen wanted was a five-cents-an-hour raise. The union's object in asking for \$1.00-an-hour overtime was to eliminate that onerous work as far as possible. Meyers denied that German secret service agents fomented the strike. That covert insinuation, Meyers said, had been answered before employers asked the question. Since 1914, hundreds of union longshoremen had loaded war munitions and materiel for Russia at Port of Seattle docks without a single incident.<sup>82</sup>

### The Strike Reaches the Crisis Point

For 127 days the Seattle waterfront resembled a battleground. Nonunion men went uptown looking for fights. Union longshoremen beat up scabs on docks and ships. There were fist fights, knife cuttings, dock bombings, pier fires, shooting duels, and murders. Spies infiltrated each other's organizations. Gunfire strafed both the Waterfront Employers' Union office and the ILA halls. Arrests were frequent, but few were sentenced.<sup>83</sup> When the fighting was at its worst, the acting police court judge was Thomas B. MacMahon, who usually served as Local 38-12's attorney. During July, police arrested twenty strikers, but Judge MacMahon found only one guilty of trespassing. During the same month, police apprehended six nonunion workers carrying concealed weapons. MacMahon fined two of the gunmen \$100 each and sentenced them to

thirty days in jail. After MacMahon left the bench in August, he resumed representing Local 38-12 men charged with trespassing and rioting.<sup>84</sup>

The most celebrated case was the third degree assault charge against union longshoreman A. J. Wilson. At 9:00 a.m. on June 28, Wilson passed himself off as a scab at the employers' barge and joined five other nonunion longshoremen being chauffeured to the Great Northern docks. As the car passed pickets outside the gate, Wilson reached over and shut off the engine. "Here's a car full of scabs!" Wilson shouted. The driver and an armed guard got the car restarted before the pickets closed in. Wilson was arrested. When he appeared in court at 4:00 p.m., Judge MacMahon set bail at \$50.00. Two weeks later, Wilson appeared in court with MacMahon as his attorney. The case was continued until eventually it was dismissed.<sup>85</sup>

The chief of the employers' agent provocateurs during the strike was George Reese, a Pinkerton undercover man who joined both Local 38-12 and the IWW's Marine Transport Workers. During the strike, Reese became captain of the union's flying squadron and the local's delegate to the Seattle Central Labor Council. According to Reese, he was employed to "look for everybody who was pulling the rough stuff, such as threatening to burn or attempting to burn warehouses, and shooting up non-union workers, and beating them and so forth." According to Local 38-12 Secretary J. M. Wilson, Reese tried to get \$10.00 from the union to buy dynamite to blow up a city dock. Percy May told of an occasion when Reese gave him a bottle of phosphorous with instructions to start a fire at Pier 5. Reese's double role went undetected during the strike.<sup>86</sup>

To end violence on its docks Alaska Steamship obtained a temporary injunction on July 13. Federal Judge Jeremiah Neterer forbade Local 38-12 officers and "all local subsidiaries" from interfering with either Alaska Steam's employees or

property.<sup>87</sup> The injunction had little lasting effect. On August 17, an arsonist threw a phosphorus bomb on Alaska Steam's dock. There were no arrests.<sup>88</sup>

At the urging of the Waterfront Workers' Federation, the San Francisco Riggers and Stevedores' Union surrendered on July 14. The Bay City men agreed to return to work under open-shop conditions, but with a promise from employers to adjust wages and working conditions. The district executive board agreed to submit the July 14 agreement to a coastwide referendum. Before the vote, Joseph Jervis, chairman of Local 38-12A's Strike Committee, wired Local 38-33:

All locals protest against a traitorous policy, as represented by the newspapers, of the San Francisco local, longshoremen's association and the Waterfront Federation. All Puget Sound locals will refuse to accept any such settlement. The only agreement the Puget Sound locals will consider is the mandate of the Seattle convention.<sup>89</sup>

On July 17, Seattle and Tacoma longshoremen unanimously turned down the latest San Francisco agreement. Three Seattle locals cast 1,604 ballots against the proposal and 759 Tacomans also said no. Two San Pedro locals voted 504 to 10 against the agreement. Astoria, Eureka, Marshfield, and San Diego voted by large majorities to accept the terms set by the San Francisco employers. Two Portland locals voted to stay out and one to go back to work.<sup>90</sup>

### Fruitless Negotiations

Through the remainder of July, Special Mediator Henry M. White and Mayor Gill tried to find a basis for ending the strike in the Puget Sound area. White invited labor and business leaders not involved directly in the strike to attend a conference. On July 22, Acting ILA District Secretary Marshall

Wright declared such a meeting impossible. White admitted, "If one side, or neither, will [not] submit to a mediation conference I can do nothing."<sup>91</sup> On August 1, United States Conciliator William Blackman arrived in Seattle to assist White. As Washington State Commissioner of Labor in 1902, Blackman had mediated a long Seattle-Tacoma dock strike against Pacific Coast Steamship Company. Blackman and White succeeded on August 10 in getting longshoremen and their allies to allow five labor leaders to negotiate on their behalf.<sup>92</sup>

WEU President Gibson declared that labor representatives on the conciliation committee were too biased. Gibson added that the only way to end the strike was for union longshoremen to return to work as individuals. White and Blackman turned to Thomas Burke to get the Chamber of Commerce to appoint five businessmen to the conciliation committee. Burke told the federal mediators, "The Chamber will welcome an opportunity to exert its good offices to that end."<sup>93</sup>

In the meantime the Seattle Central Labor Council sent out an emergency call for affiliates to assess their membership to aid ILA locals. Boilermakers, Bakery Salesmen, Carpenters, Coal Miners, Cooks, Garment Workers, Hoisting Engineers, Printers, Teamsters, and Waitresses contributed cash to the longshore cause. Waitresses went a step further. They volunteered to walk the picket line.<sup>94</sup>

Violence erupted anew on August 18. James Murphy of Local 38-12 was arrested for fire-bombing Pier 2. A jury convicted Murphy and a judge sentenced him to five years in prison.<sup>95</sup> On September 6, scab Charles H. Spencer stabbed to death union longshoreman Harry Ragan.<sup>96</sup> The next day strikebreakers beat to death Local 38-12 member Joseph Goldsby.<sup>97</sup> On September 12, 2,500 Seattle unionists marched in Ragan and Goldsby's funeral procession to Mount Pleasant Cemetery. Dewey's Band played funeral dirges and "The Stevedore's Song."<sup>98</sup> At a Central Labor Council meeting on September 13, Andrew Furuseth defended the San Francisco

longshore settlement. Furuseth advised Seattle strikers to use their heads instead of their feet in resolving disputes with employers. Longshore delegates chased Furuseth from the hall yelling "Quitter! Coward!"<sup>99</sup> The next night, 400 longshoremen threw bricks at the Grand Trunk Dock gates. As police arrived, someone yelled, "Look at the big bulls. Bring on the whole department, we're all here." Chief Beckingham and his men arrested seventy-two strikers who refused to disperse. Longshoremen rioted all night in the city jail.<sup>100</sup>

On September 20, Local 38-12 asked the Central Labor Council to poll all transportation unions to find out if they would declare a sympathy strike for the longshoremen. The council referred the request to its strike and grievance committees.<sup>101</sup> On September 27, the committees recommended to the council that all affiliated unions be polled concerning a citywide strike in support of the longshoremen. Each local's decision would be kept secret until all unions had voted.<sup>102</sup>

Although union pickets appeared as cocky as ever, employers controlled most of the waterfront. By September 21, 850 strikebreakers worked on private docks. The backlog had disappeared. Ships arrived and departed on schedule. Both Mitsui and Waterhouse informed Local 38-12 that beginning September 22, they would be hiring nonunion men. Of the major employers, only the Port of Seattle and Rothschild & Company stood steadfast with longshoremen and dock workers.<sup>103</sup> WEU hired Naval Intelligence Lieutenant Frederick W. Becker to organize the nonunion men into a permanent work force. Becker opened a scab hiring hall on a barge at the foot of Madison Street.<sup>104</sup>

Members of the Waterfront Employers' Union signed a private agreement among themselves on September 26 to abide by a uniform wage scale and specific working conditions. Steamship agents, dock managers, and stevedore bosses stipulated that employers retained the privilege of selecting and discharging workers. The nine-hour day remained in effect. General cargo longshoremen and lumber handlers pay

would be 50 cents an hour, and 75 cents an hour for overtime. Dock men would receive 40 cents straight and 60 cents overtime. When working with high explosives, wages would be doubled.<sup>105</sup>

On October 1, Blackman invited employers, unions, and several members of the conciliation committee to a conference at Longshore Hall. That afternoon, union and employer representatives signed a tentative agreement. Terms were not announced. Only Blackman was empowered to talk with the press. Up and down Puget Sound, locals met in special sessions to vote on calling off the strike. After five hours' discussion, 80 percent of Seattle's longshoremen voted to end the strike if there would be no discrimination against ILA men.<sup>106</sup>

The next afternoon a major riot occurred at the foot of Seneca Street. Fifty strikers attacked a nonunion group going to the Grand Trunk Dock to be paid off in Gibson's office. Four independents were hospitalized and seven union men arrested. Captain Gibson preferred charges against Patrolman R. L. Robertson for failure to do his duty. In his defense Robertson told Chief Beckingham that he tried to stop the riot, but he was the only policeman there. Robertson said that he had arrested the riot ringleader, Carl Jacobson. Later, police discovered Jacobson was a nonunion longshoreman.<sup>107</sup>

Because of the Seneca Street confrontation, Gibson reneged on the October 1 agreement. The Waterfront Employers' Union president told the *Post-Intelligencer* that he would present a list of 1,000 names to be deputized by the sheriff. "The small element of irreconcilables in the longshoremen's union who can use and listen to no argument except that of physical force must be dealt with."<sup>108</sup>

## The End of the Strike

On October 4, Puget Sound longshore strike committees consulted with District Secretary J. A. Madsen and ILA President T. V. O'Connor. Later Madsen told the press, "We have called the strike off for the purpose of permitting the employers to carry out the terms of the settlement mutually agreed upon and the nature of which we are pledged not to divulge." Gibson said only that the terms were satisfactory. Blackman remained sphinx-like. Tacoma held out until October 18. Portland and the smaller lumber locals remained on the picket line even longer.<sup>109</sup> From the longshore point of view, the lost strike dashed hopes that a coastwide organization would achieve job control on the docks.

For years longshoremen searched for the main cause of their defeat. In his report to the 1917 ILA convention, T. V. O'Connor blamed the loss on the defection of San Francisco Local 38-33 on July 15.<sup>110</sup> J. A. Madsen believed "a cocksure attitude" on the part of longshoremen had caused the defeat.<sup>111</sup> IWW organizer J. T. Doran thought the reason for failure was not the fighting spirit of the men, but district executive board mismanagement. Doran expressed the hope "that the lost strike would serve as a lesson to the craft unions of the utter impossibility of success under craft lines."<sup>112</sup> Whatever the reason, the defeat ended the second quest for coastwide unity. It would be eighteen years before West Coast longshoremen would try again.

The 1916 strike finished off one of the major enemies of the union longshoremen. Since 1913 Pacific Steam's eastern board of directors had become increasingly dissatisfied with the low return on their investment. Dividends had dropped to .025 percent that year. In 1916 the line operated at a loss.<sup>113</sup> The entrance of six new shipping lines into the West Coast freight and passenger business between 1912 and 1914, coupled with the 1916 longshore strike, led to divestiture.<sup>114</sup> Admiral Line owner Hubert F. Alexander purchased most of Pacific