

Steam's fleet. When the white stars of the Admiral Line appeared beside the red Maltese flag on the funnel stacks of Pacific Coast Steam's vessels on October 31, 1916, newspapers called Alexander the "monarch of shipping." Twenty-three years before Alexander had been a union longshoreman working Pacific Coast Steam ships in Tacoma.¹¹⁵

CHAPTER VI

THE FINK HALL

Attorney H. P. Melnikow: Q: Do you recall when the rustling card was introduced in the port of Seattle?

Seattle Longshoreman Thomas Wadum A: Yes. 1916.

Q: Did you try to get a rustling card?

A: I did.

Q: Who had charge of it?

A: Lieutenant Baker.

Q: Did you get a rustling card?

A: No

Q: You were refused a rustling card?

A: Yes

Q: Did that mean you could not get any employment in longshore work in Seattle?

A: Yes.¹

When West Coast longshoremen returned to work after the ill-fated 1916 strike, union working conditions had vanished. Operating under the open-shop principle, new stevedoring companies emerged on Puget Sound, the Columbia River, Coos Bay, San Francisco, San Pedro, and San Diego. Created by thirteen sawmill owners and two stevedore companies on September 1, 1916, the Puget Sound Stevedoring Company opened an office at 210 Grand Trunk Dock. Captain A. R. Stewart dispatched lumber handling gangs to the mill towns to replace union longshoremen. The mills paid Puget Sound Stevedoring a flat 10 percent commission based on the total wages earned by the lumber handlers.² If a mill desired to retain ILA men, the workers were to be told that "All work done upon their docks will be strictly on the open shop principle, and that no organization will be recognized as a factor other than for their own benevolent purposes."³

Henry Rothschild declined to buy shares in Puget Sound Stevedoring. Adopting the open shop, Rothschild said, would place his company on organized labor's unfair list in Port

Townsend, Seattle, Tacoma, Aberdeen, Astoria, and Vancouver, British Columbia.⁴ James Griffiths considered Rothschild too close to the ILA. Griffiths wrote to millowner E. A. Ames that if Rothschild joined Puget Sound Stevedoring, he would resign. "I have no confidence in any of that outfit [Rothschild & Company] from past experiences of giving the double cross to anybody they are associated with."⁵

For general cargo work in Seattle, Tacoma, Everett, and Olympia, the Waterfront Employers Union established labor bureaus during the fall of 1916. All bureaus adhered to a standard wage scale and uniform work regulations developed by WEU. Only Rothschild and steam schooner lumber operators refused to observe the WEU wage scale and working rules.⁶

The Seattle hiring hall established in 1908 by International Stevedoring served as the model for the new WEU labor bureau at Post and Columbia streets. One room accommodated men seeking work and another contained staff desks and ledgers. Inserted in the partition between the two rooms was a pay window. WEU appointed Frederick W. Becker head dispatcher. In a pamphlet widely distributed on the waterfront, Becker advocated a longshore work force screened of all ILA and IWW influences.⁷

To sanitize the labor force Becker tried to get rid of 400 Local 38-12 men who worked out of the labor bureau. Becker kept the ILA men sitting in the hall until all nonunion workers had been dispatched.⁸ Some strike veterans, including William Veaux and Arthur Whitehead, were never dispatched. The blacklisted found work in the shipyards, at dock gate line ups, or by moving to another port.⁹

After registering waterfront workers, Becker handed each one a coded card for identification. The worker's name and address appeared in the center. Along the edges of the "rustling card" were numbered squares. Holes punched in particular squares indicated if the longshoreman was a current Local 38-12 member, if he had struck in 1916, or had a police record.

When a man came to work at the labor bureau or reported to a dock foreman, he had to show his card.¹⁰ Union men considered the rustling card "degrading and distasteful to any man with red blood in his veins."¹¹

Dealing with labor bureaus was not the only concern of the ILA. IWW organizer J. T. "Red" Doran had succeeded in recruiting over 100 workers into the Seattle Branch of Maritime Transport Workers' Local 380.¹² At noon on Sunday, November 5, 1916, Doran assisted Captain Chauncey Wiman of the steamer *Verona* in counting 250 IWWs ticketed to Everett. The Wobblies sailed from Colman Dock to "The City of Smokestacks" to speak at Hewitt and Wetmore avenues. Among Wobblies boarding the *Verona* were Seattle Local 38-12 members John J. Black, Charles D. McLennan, Frank Miller, Harry Parker, George Reese, Ed Roth, Balboos Said, David Stevens, C. B. Thomas, Edward Truitt, and Herbert Wilson. Carl Jacobson, the nonunion ringleader of the October 2, riot in Seattle, also boarded the *Verona*. At Everett's City Dock, deputies assembled at 1:00 p.m. Several hundred Everett citizens, including Ed Morton, a future leader of Local 38-12, gathered to watch from a hillside overlooking the harbor.¹³

No one ever confessed to firing the first shot, but in fifteen minutes five IWWs were killed or dying and thirty-one wounded. On the dock, two deputies lay mortally wounded and twenty injured. Among the men hit by bullets on the *Verona* were longshoremen Ed Roth, Harry Parker, and Edward Truitt.¹⁴ Snohomish County authorities charged seventy-four IWWs with murder including Local 38-12 members Roth, Said, and Black. The union longshoremen had been identified in the police line up by the spy, George Reese. Defense lawyers succeeded in getting the case transferred to Seattle, where charges were dismissed after the first defendant was acquitted.¹⁵

The Everett Massacre, government raids on the IWW hall, and attendant publicity heightened interest in the Wobblies. Red Doran became a popular speaker at Puget Sound union

meetings. On November 22, Doran delivered a special address to the Seattle Central Labor Council.¹⁶ He spoke again on January 15, 1917, to an enthusiastic crowd of waterfront workers at Local 38-12's hall.¹⁷ Two days later Doran debated Tacoma Local 38-3 officers on industrial versus craft unionism at the IWW Hall. On all three occasions Doran used his famous chart to demonstrate that the 1916 strike could have been won if maritime unions had been organized into one big industrial union. Seventeen waterfront workers joined the IWW as a result of Doran's three presentations.¹⁸ On February 20, enough longshoremen had joined the IWW to justify the creation of Marine Transport Workers' Seattle Washington Industrial Union Local 510.¹⁹

The Beginning of World War I

On January 31, 1917, the German government announced that its submarines would sink on sight all ships within specified war zones. After three United States ships were torpedoed with loss of American lives, President Wilson asked Congress to declare war on Germany. The Seattle labor movement split over supporting American entrance into the war. A majority of the Central Labor Council gave wholehearted support to the war of democracy against autocracy. Hulet Wells, a city employee, and Sam Sadler, a machinist turned longshoreman, led the antiwar minority in the council. Wells and Sadler belonged to the Socialist Party and the National League Against Militarism. Both were convincing speakers who spent hours on street corners trying to persuade the citizenry to oppose involvement in the European war. During the first six months of 1918 Sadler served as President of Local 38-12. In May 1918, police arrested Wells and Sadler and two other union activists for passing out "NO CONSCRIPTION" handbills on uptown Seattle streets.²⁰ The Seattle Central Labor Council appointed a committee to "insure a fair and impartial trial for the accused."²¹ Sadler and Wells

were found guilty of "seditious conspiracy" and sentenced to two years at McNeil Island.²²

After American entrance into World War I, labor bureau and ILA men found ample opportunity to work. Cargo handled in Seattle during 1917 amounted to 3,986,792 tons and in 1918, 3,782,729 tons.²³ The United States Navy and Coast Guard restricted access to the docks by establishing check points. Union longshoremen were required to carry passes issued by the United States Navy. Employers countersigned nonunion workers' passes. During the war longshoremen of German or Austrian birth could not work on the waterfront. Several were quietly deported to the Middle West.²⁴

One month after World War I started, WEU posted a deep-water longshore wage scale of 55 cents an hour for straight time and 75 cents overtime. WEU granted dock truckers working with deep-water men 44 cents straight time and 60 cents overtime.²⁵ WEU Secretary Dawson said that the new pay scale recognized the loyalty of the men who had worked faithfully since the 1916 strike.²⁶ Three days after the pay raise, the ILA district convention opened in Tacoma. The cockiness displayed at the 1916 convention had vanished. Instead, delegates considered ways of raising a war chest in case of a future strike.²⁷ H. E. Dugan told delegates that Local 38-12's business agent had succeeded in getting men to rejoin who had not paid dues since the strike had ended.²⁸ Leland Gholson reported that Local 38-12A had been seriously handicapped because of Becker's partiality for nonunion men. "However," he added, "the Port Commission of Seattle furnished considerable work for our members, which was instrumental in holding the local together until the early part of March, when the Local commenced getting on its feet once more."²⁹

WEU granted a second wage increase on June 9 to demonstrate its "high regard for the quality of work accomplished by waterfront workers." This time deep-water longshore and truckers' wage scales advanced five cents in all categories

across the board.³⁰ Two days after deep-water men received their second pay raise 100 men struck the coaster *President*. The strikers demanded pay parity with deep-water men before they would turn to on the *President*. Employers responded that coastwise wage scales could not be changed. Increased labor costs lessened shipping's competitive edge over railroads. Nevertheless, nine hours later coastwise longshoremen returned to work with a new wage scale of 55 cents an hour straight time and 82-1/2 cents overtime. That evening a mass meeting of 1,000 union and nonunion truckers, longshoremen, and checkers from Tacoma and Everett gathered with Seattle workers at Pier D. The men demanded San Francisco's scale of 75 cents an hour for straight time and \$1.25 overtime.³¹

Since 1914, a pattern had emerged for Pacific Coast waterfront pay increases. San Francisco, followed by San Pedro and Portland, set the wage pace for deep-water and coastwise longshoremen. Consistently, Seattle and Tacoma received pay raises last. When San Francisco longshoremen received the eight-hour day in 1917, the shorter workday quickly became a vital part of Puget Sound longshore demands.³²

The National Adjustment Commission

Since its inception during September 1916, the United States Shipping Board had purchased and built merchant vessels as part of America's military preparedness campaign. The shipping board realized that "The waterfront was the neck of the bottle through which all the fighting power of the United States—men and material—must pass."³³ To achieve maximum waterfront productivity the shipping board created on August 1, 1917, the National Adjustment Commission (NAC). In turn, NAC established regional adjustment boards at major ports. If a local board could not settle a dispute, an appeal could be made to NAC headquarters. All NAC boards included

one shipping company executive, an appropriate government person, and a member of the ILA.³⁴

NAC assembled representatives of waterfront employer associations and the ILA in Washington, D. C. on August 2 to review national and regional board policies. WEU Secretary William C. Dawson and ILA District President James A. Madsen attended. In separate sessions with NAC, first Dawson and then Madsen, agreed that waterfront work would continue uninterrupted while the commission deliberated on their grievances. The ILA district, as well as West Coast shipping lines and stevedore companies, signed separate pledges to accept NAC decisions as final.³⁵

Events on Puget Sound did not proceed according to the National Adjustment Commission's plan. When NAC attempted to establish a Seattle hiring hall, the Waterfront Employers' Union refused to work with an ILA representative. Instead, WEU proposed that one of the labor bureau men serve on the local commission. WEU did not explain how the man from the bureau would be selected or to whom he would be responsible.³⁶

On September 19, Dock Truckers' and Warehousemen's Local 38-12A became ILA Local 38-22. That night at the Central Labor Council the new Seattle union cosponsored with Riggers and Stevedores' Local 38-12 a resolution calling for abolishment of the waterfront scab hall. In speaking for passage of the resolution at a weekly council meeting, Local 38-22 Secretary James M. Wilson declared the employers' hall was "a refuge for slackers, enemy aliens, and traitors." Furthermore, WEU did not have a city license to operate an employment agency. After passing the longshore-trucker resolution, the council instructed its municipal affairs committee to check on whether or not the fink hall had a license.³⁷ On October 22, Seattle locals 38-12 and 38-22 mailed formal requests to WEU asking for the eight-hour workday, pay for standby time, a raise in wages, and elimination of the Seattle labor bureau.³⁸ WEU answered ILA demands the next day

with notices posted on dock gates. "As we have no agreement with the International Longshoremen's Association, we are not prepared to discuss these matters with them."³⁹

Since no written reply to their demands had been received in the district office by noon on October 25, Seattle locals 38-12 and 38-22 served notice on WEU that an immediate appeal would be made to the National Adjustment Commission. On November 7, NAC Chairman Raymond B. Stevens wired WEU and all Puget Sound waterfront unions that an impartial investigator, Dr. Carleton H. Parker of the University of Washington, had been hired to survey wages and working conditions and report back to the commission. NAC invited WEU and Puget Sound unions to send delegations to Washington, D. C. on December 17 to hear the Parker Report. District President Madsen, Local 38-3 President John Bjorklund, and William T. Morris of Local 38-30 attended NAC's session concerning the Parker Report.⁴⁰

After listening to Parker's findings, NAC recommended continuation of Puget Sound rustling cards and labor bureaus. Samuel Gompers angrily demanded NAC reconsider. The AFL president told NAC that fink halls were un-American and bred rebellion among workers. Moreover, if NAC did not eliminate rustling cards immediately, Gompers said he would take the matter up directly with President Wilson.⁴¹ On December 18, NAC issued new regulations for Puget Sound that prohibited rustling cards and closed employer halls effective July 1, 1918. NAC recommended all waterfront workers be hired at dock gates. Longshore and trucker wages would remain the same until Carleton Parker finished his cost-of-living study of Puget Sound longshoremen.⁴²

The Seattle Waterfront Employers' Union immediately appealed the July 1 closure of their labor bureaus. NAC told the waterfront employers they could have a hearing in Washington, D. C. on June 25, 1918.⁴³ For their part, Puget Sound ILA locals objected vehemently to NAC's statement that men shape up on the docks. ILA leaders cautioned

patience. Walkouts would complicate Dr. Parker's wage study. However, at Local 38-22's April 7 meeting a motion passed calling for a membership referendum on the question, "Shall we hang the hook?"⁴⁴

On April 18, WEU posted a new wage scale on all docks. Henceforth, longshoremen would be paid 65 cents an hour for the first eight hours and \$1.00 an hour overtime. Dock truckers would receive 60 cents an hour for the first nine hours and 90 cents an hour thereafter.⁴⁵ Four days later, representatives from seven Puget Sound ILA locals signed a statement objecting to, and refusing to accept as final, a wage scale and working rules that satisfied no one but employers.⁴⁶

The ILA and WEU received a new wage scale from Henry M. White, chairman of the Puget Sound Adjustment Commission on May 9. The White Award granted longshoremen the eight-hour day, wages of 70 cents an hour for coastal vessels, and 80 cents for working deep-water ships. Dock truckers received 65 cents an hour straight time. White stipulated a flat 35 cents an hour overtime for the three categories. White also included standby pay and a minimum two-hours wages for short jobs. The Award did not provide for ILA recognition, nor union hiring preference.⁴⁷

The ILA Pacific Coast District Convention during May 1918 approved NAC's wage scale pending an appeal to Washington, D. C. to pay truckers the same as coastwise longshoremen. WEU accepted NAC's wage scale on May 14 and cancelled their appeal concerning the closure of the labor bureaus. On August 4, J. B. Densmore, head of the United States Employment Service, announced that all Puget Sound labor bureaus would be federalized. Dispatch at government hiring halls would be done by men acceptable to both WEU and the ILA.⁴⁸

The next day Dock Truckers' and Warehousemen's Local 38-22 amalgamated with Riggers and Stevedores' Local 38-12. At the merger meeting 1,500 men supported a motion to

defer all action concerning the Seattle fink hall until T. V. O'Connor arrived. The men knew O'Connor had been appointed director of the Stevedores and Marine Workers' Division of the United States Employment Service. O'Connor now held the power to take over employer hiring halls.⁴⁹ On August 30, 1918, O'Connor spoke in executive session to Local 38-12 about his negotiations with WEU. The Seattle local instructed the ILA president not to settle for anything less than abolition of the fink halls, and not to accept labor bureau men into the ILA.⁵⁰ In the latter part of August, O'Connor announced that the rustling card would be abolished immediately and on September 15 the federal government would formally take over WEU labor bureaus.⁵¹

In discussions with O'Connor, WEU insisted on the retention of Murray Holland, who had replaced Frederick Becker as dispatcher of the employers' labor bureau. However, O'Connor appointed Robert Howland, business agent of Checkers' Local 38-36, as manager and Thomas W. Mason of Local 38-12 as assistant dispatcher of the United States Hall.⁵² Howland and Mason replaced Holland at 10:30 a.m. September 16, 1918. Howland announced that experience would be the primary factor in dispatching waterfront workers.⁵³

Blue Jays

WEU considered the federal takeover of their labor bureau "most unsatisfactory." In Dawson's view, Manager Howland totally disregarded labor bureau workers. Howland dispatched only ILA men, argued Dawson, leaving "independents" sitting in the hall.⁵⁴ During the week Howland took charge, labor bureau longshoremen organized the Smith Cove Social Club. Another 200 "independents" established the Northwest Stevedores and Truckers' Association (NSTA). NSTA President G. H. McCloud stated that his group would work for \$1.00 an hour based on an eight-hour day. NSTA men vowed not to work overtime. NSTA hoped to recruit 700 members, but only

American citizens need apply. McCloud assured employers that NSTA would never affiliate with Local 38-12 or the AFL.⁵⁵

On the waterfront NSTA longshoremen wore a hat button adorned with paintings of a large eagle and an American flag. Soon everyone on the docks called NSTA men Blue Jays. To counteract NSTA's membership drive, union longshoremen inaugurated a campaign of their own on September 20. Each Local 38-12 member acted as an organizing committee of one to bring in three candidates. Three longshoremen and three truckers served as the candidate investigating committee. During the recruiting campaign the local reduced its initiation fee from \$10.00 to \$1.00.⁵⁶ Local 38-12's membership books were opened to all waterfront workers, irrespective of creed, color, or previous affiliation.⁵⁷

Led by Foreman Frank Jenkins, during the week of September 27- October 4, 1918, eighty-five African Americans and Hispanics became members of Local 38-12. The blacks and Hispanics all worked at Pier 89, where dock men transferred the contents of five-gallon Oriental oil cans to tank railroad cars. Jenkins believed minorities could achieve greater security and higher pay within organized labor than outside on their own. Another group of black nonunion longshoremen, who worked steady at Alaska Steam, did not join the local at this time.⁵⁸

Local 38-12's organizing drive proved a spectacular success. During the last week of September, 744 men joined Local 38-12. By the end of 1918, the membership had swollen to 3,500, the highest number of union longshoremen Seattle ever attained.⁵⁹ Knowing they had the numerical edge, members of Local 38-12 warned waterfront employers to stop hiring Blue Jays. If WEU continued to hire NSTA scabs, ILA men would walk off the job. Grace and Alaska Steamship companies ignored the union's ultimatum. The two shipping companies had steady gangs and used NSTAs as extras. During early November an influenza epidemic caused an

acute shortage of Seattle waterfront workers. Grace and Alaska Steam attempted to mix their steady men with NSTA and ILA gangs. The union men did not want to break their no-strike pledge to NAC, but they hated the idea of working with nonunion gangs. Three times during the first eight days of November union gangs walked off the jobs as individuals rather than work alongside NSTA men.⁶⁰

There was one day that peace reigned supreme between ILA and NSTA men. At 11:45 p.m. on November 10, 1918, an engineer at the Seattle Times Building pulled a lever and four long blasts of the Times siren split the quiet night. Hundreds of Seattle factory whistles responded. Fireworks criss-crossed the sky. Everyone knew the Great War was over.⁶¹ The next morning, shipyard officials and waterfront employers told 20,000 workers they could have the day off. The Ames yard men marched over to Skinner & Eddy, then Duthie's. The loud din of men beating on their dinner buckets brought long-shoremen out of the holds of ships. Like a rolling snowball, the cheering mass headed for Yesler's Square and Second Avenue. At Times Square, the workmen linked up with thousands of office workers. Bands played patriotic music. Confetti fell on the milling crowd. Boys rolled restaurant garbage cans up and down the streets. Automobile drivers tied cans on the back of their cars, honked horns, and backfired engines. Men, women, and children gathered on sidewalks to watch the headless, tailless parade march up and down Second Avenue. The city became delirious with joy. The greatest demonstration in the city's history had taken place without a single speech.⁶²

Shortly before the announcement of the Armistice, the ILA district executive board, waterfront employers, and up-town businessmen sought to head off postwar disputes. Established on November 8, by twenty business and twenty labor leaders, the Seattle Industrial Conciliation Committee sought to settle grievances before strikes occurred. The Industrial Conciliation Committee proposed the establishment of a Puget Sound Court of Adjustment and Conciliation to work

with waterfront employers and workers. This court would be composed of three ILA members, three WEU representatives, and presided over by a NAC official. The court's jurisdiction would include all disputes concerning wages and working conditions.⁶³

At the November 15, meeting Local 38-12 debated the conciliation court proposal. Members hostile to the idea claimed bosses would use the court as a cover while they fostered NSTA and the Smith Cove Social Club. Speakers in favor of the court pointed out that the balance of power would be in the hands of NAC, the agency that had ended rustling cards and closed the fink hall. After four hours deliberation, Local 38-12 members tabled the court proposal until the entire membership could meet on Sunday, November 17.⁶⁴ On that Sunday, the men overwhelmingly turned down the conciliation committee, until guaranteed recognition and a closed shop.⁶⁵

Seizing the initiative, NSTA sent a communication to NAC on November 19, stating that formation of the Puget Sound Court of Adjustment and Conciliation was imperative. NSTA recommended that the court be composed of ten members, three to be appointed by WEU, three from NSTA, three from the ILA, and the chairman to be appointed by President Woodrow Wilson or NAC. NSTA proposed that appeals from the local court could be made by one or more of the parties to NAC in Washington, D. C. NSTA also recommended an efficiency subcommittee composed of one member each from WEU, NSTA, and the ILA. This committee would administer rules and regulations to obtain the desired production output.⁶⁶

On the waterfront, friction between NSTA and Local 38-12 men continued. On November 19, NSTA gangs began unloading the Grace ship *Daca* at the Port of Seattle's Lander Street pier. Union truckers and warehousemen refused to touch freight handled by Blue Jays. WEU appealed to Port Manager Hamilton Higday to order Local 38-12 men to move

the freight, but the port refused. At 5:00 p. m. the *Daca* pulled away from the pier, fully reloaded by NSTA.⁶⁷ W. R. Grace & Company could not find a private pier in Seattle where NSTA truckers and warehousemen could unload the vessel. The *Daca* hove to near the Lander Street pier, Grace attorneys threatened to sue the Port of Seattle for \$1,000 a day damages until the ship was unloaded.⁶⁸ At the Port Commission meeting on November 20, newly elected Commissioner T. S. Lippy demanded to know why the Port did not employ NSTA men. Higday responded, "Because our dealings with the ILA have always been very pleasant, and I do not think that we should pull chestnuts out of the fire for the Waterfront Employers' Association." Commissioners Bridges and Remsberg waited for Lippy to respond, but the new commissioner remained silent.⁶⁹

For two months the membership of the Seattle longshore union discussed the Industrial Conciliation Committee proposal. Longshoremen accepted the court concept and its composition. However, the union men refused the committee's recommendation that Blue Jays be given sixty days to join Local 38-12. The union decided to hold a membership referendum on the entire proposal. On November 29 the men voted 320 in favor and 1,009 against accepting the conciliation committee plan. The union instructed its negotiating committee to prepare a counterproposal to be discussed at the December 6 union meeting.⁷⁰ At the December meeting, the membership agreed to the conciliation court proposal, the wage scale, and the working conditions. But the men insisted that the bosses' preferred list be replaced with the local's regular stevedore and truckers' lists and the Blue Jays must be discharged immediately.⁷¹

By December, the Smith Cove Social Club had disbanded and NSTA's hall was empty. Blue Jays had either made peace with union longshoremen or gone into nonunion industries.⁷² Longshoremen had fought a thirteen-year struggle to gain

adequate wages, recognition of their union, control of waterfront hiring, and the eight-hour day. Waterfront employers had fought equally hard to maintain control of wages, hiring, and firing. As the postwar era began, the question was whether union longshoremen could maintain the closed shop and the eight-hour day or would the waterfront return to traditional employer control?

On January 14, 1919, the Waterfront Employers' Union met with ILA district and Puget Sound local officers, as well as representatives from NAC and the Industrial Conciliation Committee, to formally sign a closed-shop agreement. The settlement provided that the final court of appeal on wages and working conditions would be the Seattle Industrial Conciliation Committee. Retired Judge George Donworth accepted the position of presiding officer. Ten WEU and ten ILA members agreed to serve with Judge Donworth. The agreement provided that under no circumstances would work stop in case of a dispute. Each Puget Sound port would establish a complaint committee to handle grievances. To cancel the January 14 agreement either party had to give the other fifteen days advance written notice.⁷³