Seattle longshoremen celebrated the second anniversary of the Soviet Union and the sixty-fourth birthday of Eugene Debs on November 7. Tremendous cheering arose from 2,000 workers assembled in Longshoremen's Hall when J. T. Doran walked from the vestibule to the rostrum to deliver the principal address. Free on bail from the federal penitentiary in Atlanta, Doran delivered an impassioned speech on the workers' revolution in Russia, "the most stupendous event since the fall of feudalism."[115] Doran's speech marked the peak moment of radical influence in Local 38-12. Leftists had achieved job control and dispatch from a single, alphabetized list. There was only one more step to contemplate. When the longshore cooperative stevedore company came into being, the bosses would be driven from the waterfront for all time.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LIST

The men have refused to be picked, that's all there is to it. We have just been waiting but will have to strike now.

– Seattle Longshoreman John Keeler May 6, 1920 [1]

Three weeks after Wobbly spokesman J. T. Doran spoke to Seattle's Stevedores and Riggers' Union, Associated Industries of Washington signalled its intent to smash Local 38-12's closed shop. In a *Post-Intelligencer* advertisement on November 21, 1919, entitled "Sabotage Makes Less Work" the open shop agency blamed radical minorities for driving commerce away from Seattle to other cities. In the space of a few weeks slowdowns had driven up the cost of unloading ships from 47- to 57-cents per ton to $1.13-1/3 a ton. Waterfront workers had held back so that there would be enough work for all. Associated Industries believed the practice had to be reversed. The only way to assure full employment was to increase efficiency which in turn would attract more commerce.[2]

Charles Cutright, Business Agent of Local 38-12, retorted in the *Seattle Union Record* that there was no slowdown on the waterfront. "I have told them," Cutright told a reporter, "that if there was a single instance of anything of the kind, I wanted to know it. In every case I have been told that there has been no cause of complaint, and that the work was being done satisfactorily." Cutright added that employers' foremen had the "full right" to discharge any inefficient longshoreman.[3]

Three days after "Sabotage Makes Less Work" appeared, the Seattle Waterfront Employers' Union transferred management of its labor dispatch hall to Associated Industries. The repainted sign in the window of the Spring Street hiring

hall read: American Association of Craftsmen and Workmen. A Central Organization of Crafts & Guilds in the Skilled Trades. After disposing of its labor bureau, WEU decided to ask the Northwest Waterfront Employers' Union to cancel the contract with the ILA because of the "utter inefficiency of the present longshoremen and truckers." When NWEU Executive Secretary, I. B. McKenzie failed to respond, Seattle employers temporized. Local 38-12's dispatch from an alphabetical list could continue on a trial basis for thirty days.[4]

The 1920 Contract

Representatives of the Northwest Waterfront Employers met with ILA district officials and a conference committee representing the locals on December 15, 1919, to discuss a new contract. The employers informed ILA men that dispatching from a list as well as recognition of checkers' unions had to be deleted. When union negotiators balked, employers handed over a thirty-day notice of cancellation of the old agreement. Attached to the revocation was a new contract offer providing for continuation of the wage scale and the closed shop. Addenda clauses abolished Seattle's list system and removed the checkers as a recognized union.[5] District President Joseph Taylor promised a membership referendum during March 1920 on the employers' proposal. Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia ILA men refused to drop the list system, 2,620 to 1,788, and the membership voted 2,794 to 1,242 to strike for continued recognition of the checkers.[6] At an ILA conference on February 21, 1920, locals qualified their stance on the list issue. The list system was to be considered a local issue, to be fought for by those who wanted to keep it.[7]

A temporary settlement applying only to the Washington State section was signed on April 8 by Seattle Waterfront Employers' Union officials and Taylor and Wright for the ILA district. The new contract would start April 12. Wages and working conditions remained the same as 1919. An

addendum applying specifically to Seattle was also signed, "All men employed on board ship, including sling men, shall be picked by the employers and no list system shall be in operation."[8]

Taylor and Wright did not refer this contract to ILA locals for ratification. Instead the district officers notified Washington unions by letter on April 13 that they had signed the settlement. That evening Taylor attended Local 38-12's regular meeting. Negotiation committee members angrily questioned Taylor. Why had he not consulted other negotiators prior to signing the contract? Why had he doubled-crossed Local 38-12? Taylor retorted that the other locals had decided not to defend Seattle's list system.[9]

In the midst of NWEU-ILA negotiations, Local 38-12 delegates to the Central Labor Council predicted that the Longshoremen's Cooperative Association would soon open for business. The cooperative had over 1,200 members and $20,000 in the bank.[10] At the Labor Temple on January 29, 1920, Percy May boasted, "We will beat them and beat them soon and we won't have to have a revolution to do it."[11] The cooperative swung into operation on February 9 with Robert Bridges as business manager. During March and April, Bridges wrote letters to seventeen shipping lines requesting an appointment to discuss doing business with the cooperative. Bridges stressed that ill will existing on the waterfront between shipowners and longshoremen could be ended by eliminating the thirteen "unnecessary" private stevedore companies. Shipowners who contracted directly with the cooperative would be assured "that no suspension of operations will take place" on their vessels. Bridges also guaranteed quicker dispatch of men and greater economy in the handling of cargos.[12]

To insure harmonious relations, Bridges proposed that the steamship lines and the cooperative company create a management board to determine policies and adjust "difficulties."[13] Not one shipping line accepted Bridges's offer. All replied

that they were "satisfied with present arrangements" for loading and unloading ships. A negative reply was expected from the eight steamship companies who were members of the Seattle Waterfront Employers' Union, but the refusal of the other nine surprised Bridges and the longshoremen.[14] Resolutely, Bridges kept up the campaign. In a letter to steamship companies on April 28, Bridges warned that a strike might occur over the list question. Local 38-12 members had recently voted 611 to 275 to walk off the job if stevedore bosses insisted on picking men. Bridges pointed out that indiscriminate selection of men at the piers would lead to bootlegging, smuggling, and cargo purloining.[15]

The Port of Seattle Strike

More trouble was brewing for Local 38-12. Bridges's replacement on the Seattle Port Commission, W. S. Lincoln, joined the Seattle Waterfront Employers' Union during December 1919. At his first meeting Lincoln announced that the Port Commission would shortly be offering employment to any citizen of Seattle, regardless of whether or not they were affiliated with a union.[16] Four months later the Seattle Port Commission hired thirty-five nonunion longshoremen, straining relations with Local 38-12. Then commissioners placed all longshoremen, truckers, and warehousemen on a monthly wage scale. The new pay rate reduced the wages of 500 ILA men an average of $26.40 a month.[17] To Percy May the "arbitrary" actions of the port indicated the commissioners were "anxious for a scrap and they will certainly get it."[18] For the next three days union business agents, port commissioners, waterfront employers, and state mediator E. P. Marsh tried to avert a complete breakdown. Finally, on April 9 Local 38-12 voted overwhelmingly to strike port docks. For the first time longshoremen shut down all public port operations. Local 38-12 Business Agent Charles Cutright declared that ships moving from Port of Seattle piers to private docks would

be considered fair.[19] After a strike of four days, the Port Commission rescinded its order to place the men on a monthly payroll. The commission also agreed to meet officers of Local 38-12 concerning the port hiring nonunion men.[20]

One week after the Port of Seattle strike, Local 38-12 asked employers to meet within thirty days to talk over the April 12 contract. Instead of waiting for a reply or the expiration of the thirty days, the membership demanded restoration of the list by 6:00 a.m. April 30, or no men would be supplied to work ships.[21] For the next five days union longshoremen finished old jobs, but refused to start unloading new vessels. The union did not set up picket lines. Backed by Associated Industries, on May 4 WEU declared for the open shop, commenced recruiting strikebreakers, and started to look for a large hall.[22] The next day James Gibson met Local 38-12 business agents Charles Cutright and Percy May. Cutright and May asked that no action be taken until the men had a chance to rescind their strike vote at the next union meeting. Gibson told the two longshore officials the strike action automatically cancelled the contract. The WEU president concluded the meeting by telling the union representatives that employers would pick men wherever they were available.[23] On May 7, WEU employed Harbormaster A. A. Paysse and M. G. Ringenberg to recruit, register, and dispatch harbor workers from a barge at the foot of Madison Street.[24]

In the midst of Local 38-12's strike over the list, the Pacific Coast District ILA annual convention met in Seattle. Twenty-one Seattle delegates tried to persuade twenty-eight men representing locals from Skagway to San Pedro to support their stand on the list system. For the first five days of the convention an acrimonious, running debate occurred over condemnation of President Taylor for using "the power of his office to the detriment of Local 38-12." V. A. Jordan and O. E. Stener accused Taylor of unconstitutional action when the district president failed to submit the April 12 settlement to a membership referendum. Taylor explained that the other

locals did not want to support Seattle on the list question. On the fifth day delegates voted not to censure Taylor, 41 1/3 to 32 2/3.[25]

Seattle black delegates George Brown and Henry Thompson asked the convention to "go on record as favoring the admission of Negro workers to all locals of this district." Brown told delegates that an employer had tried to hire him to split up the union, but he had refused. Thompson declared that employers were using the list issue to pit Seattle Negroes against white workers as they had in San Francisco. Local 38-12 would fight alone, if necessary, to retain the list. "It is the duty," Thompson concluded, "of all progressive unionists to stand with Local 38-12."[26] At the urging of the Seattle union the convention repeated its 1917 policy "favoring the admission of Negro workers to all locals of this District whenever application is properly made."[27]

On the final day of the convention Seattle delegate Ernest Ellis moved that ILA locals not work cargo diverted from Seattle and to donate as much financial aid as possible. A substitute resolution passed "endorsing the principles for which Local 38-12 is contending in the system of hiring men, [and] condemning discrimination on the part of the employers."[28] When Local 38-12 received only hollow support for its stand on the list system, Henry Thompson told delegates: "We are opposed to begging the Locals. If the Local was big enough to ignore the District then they [are] still big enough to go along alone."[29]

The Revolt of the Hatch Bosses

Three hundred Local 38-12 stevedores who opposed the strike held a morning meeting at the Knights of Pythias Hall on May 5. Calling themselves "conservatives," hatch tenders and their supporters made plans to form a new stevedores' union without a list system.[30] Speaking in defense of the conservatives' position, David Madison later remarked that "We

tried to hold meetings in our own headquarters and have the local rescind their order, but owing to the great number of irresponsibles in the organization we found this impossible."[31]

At noon on May 6 African American truckers in Local 38-12 caucused. After their meeting black longshoremen told white members "never mind us, accept this picking system. We will drag along for a time and perhaps arrive at some means whereby we will get a chance. We do not feel that we should be the cause of a strike."[32] At one in the afternoon a special meeting of the membership was held. "No notice of any kind or nature was ever given to the membership of Local 38-12 that said strike vote would be taken." A notice was posted on the bulletin board in the hall a few hours before the session started. Two hundred members appeared at the special meeting. They voted by a bare plurality to call an immediate general strike on the waterfront.[33]

One hundred union hatch bosses had already accepted employer terms and reported to work during the early morning of May 6. They were joined by approximately 300 strikebreakers.[34] Help-wanted ads appeared in newspapers stating that 2,000 workers were needed. The pay would be 90 cents an hour for stevedores and 80 cents an hour for truckers. Applicants were directed to the Spring Street hiring hall or to the Madison Street barge.[35] Publicly, WEU ignored the list system as the cause of the strike. The bosses placed the struggle on a higher plane. "Whether Seattle shall hold and increase her commerce or whether she shall lose commerce to other ports is the real issue at stake in the waterfront strike, which has been met by the Waterfront Employers' Union by the establishment of the open shop and the hiring of men on their merits."[36]

Local 38-12 suddenly found itself in trouble again with the international. The Northwest Waterfront Employers' Union, the United States Shipping Board, and the "conservative" faction sent separate wires to T. V. O'Connor demanding Local 38-12 members go back to work.[37] On May 10, O'Connor wired District Secretary Marshall Wright to "Instruct Local

Thirty-eight Twelve unless they return to work immediately their charter will be revoked and new charter will be issued to any group of men who will carry out agreement with the understanding that men who were responsible for stoppage of work must be barred from membership. Wire immediate answer."[38]

On May 10, O'Connor's ultimatum was handed by Wright to Jesse Branham, Local 38-12 Secretary. At a special meeting the next day Branham read O'Connor's telegram. The 200 who attended passed a motion to continue the strike for another ten days and to inform "members who had returned to work [to] quit within twenty-four hours or stand expelled from the local."[39] On May 14, Local 38-12's 2,000 stevedores and truckers assembled. With very little discussion the membership accepted O'Connor's terms by an overwhelming majority. The men immediately called off the strike and went looking for work.[40] At Port of Seattle docks, union men were turned away. Traffic Manager Einar A. Pedersen had hired 150 conservatives full time.[41]

The vote to call off the strike was too late. On May 12 O'Connor had received a telegram from Taylor and Wright stating that Local 38-12 had voted to stay out for ten more days and to expel any member who continued to work.[42] O'Connor took the information to the May 17 ILA Executive Council session. The council revoked Local 38-12's charter.[43] On May 25 the ILA Executive Council ordered charters issued to Seattle locals 38-11 Truckers, Car Loaders, and Warehouse Workers and to 38-16, General Longshore Workers.[44]

Members of Local 38-12 learned of their charter revocation on May 19 from an attorney engaged by Marshall Wright to close the local's hall and seize its property.[45] Describing themselves as "loyalists" a group retained attorneys John F. Dore and Homer E. Turner to stop the international and the district from seizing Local 38-12's assets and organizing new longshore unions. Dore and Turner obtained a temporary injunction on May 17 on the grounds that without the union the

men would be without jobs.[46] During the hearing, 190 members of Local 38-12 signed petitions supporting the revocation of the charter. Conservatives were "so thoroughly disgusted with the actions of the minority, and the radical views and expressions of the minority, that the said majority rarely attended the meetings of the Local Union."[47]

Three hundred and eighteen loyalists signed affidavits asking Superior Court Judge J. T. Ronald to enjoin the ILA from withdrawing the charter. Loyalists swore that a minority of the local, who held personal grievances against the majority, had misled ILA President O'Connor into taking "arbitrary and wrongful action." Although the ILA constitution provided for a trial, none had been held. It had been the custom for years to call strikes without the permission of the ILA president or executive council. Traditionally, the only penalty was the refusal of the international to give financial aid; not expulsion. In essence, loyalists accused the conservatives of trying to "wreck and destroy Local 38-12."[48]

Judge J. T. Ronald of Seattle's Superior Court issued an injunction on June 28, 1920, permanently restraining the international from revoking Local 38-12's charter. Ronald's ruling was based upon the plea that revocation would deprive the men of the opportunity to work. Judge Ronald did grant the international permission to proceed to organize new Seattle locals.[49]

In the midst of the legal struggle, the district ILA hired Arthur W. Curtis to recruit memberships in locals 38-11 and 38-16. Captain Gibson and other employers assured Curtis that if he could get 700 of the "best stevedores" together, employers would recognize Local 38-16 and give them all the work. By promising men that they would receive steady work, Curtis signed up 510 stevedores. When Local 38-16 started to dispatch men they were told that they would have to be registered and dispatched by the fink hall.[50]

Local 38-12 loyalists made a final bid to control hiring on the waterfront. On June 7, 1920, the Seattle Longshoremen's