

## MANDARINS

*Ballard stetsons drift  
out to sea,  
return in the flotsam  
of memory.*

*Preventer chain  
and greased falls  
have bloodied and soiled,  
but never our spirits  
to spoil,  
to spoil!  
Strike bound ships  
passed beneath the militant  
gaze of a bridge called  
Harry.*

*Rank and filers organized  
belt tight and coastwide,  
to call back on days  
of tear gas and truncheons!*

*Union books lay  
stowed in the' tween decks  
of our solidarity,  
uncovered by waterfront  
mandarins.*

## CHAPTER VII

### THE RADICAL ERA

*We have started one of the most important fights in the history of labor. This is the first time that labor is demonstrating how effective economic power is and how much more effective our economic power could be if all labor knew how to use it.*

– Seattle Longshoreman Percy May, September 20, 1919.<sup>1</sup>

Seattle longshoremen met the Bolshevik Revolution face-to-face at Pier 4 on December 21, 1917. The Russian steamer *Shilka* docked unannounced with sixty-three Communist sailors aboard. At first United States Naval Intelligence officers, including Frederick Becker, thought the *Shilka* carried rifles, high explosives, and gold for the IWW. United States customs inspectors searched the vessel and found only a cargo of licorice root, peas, and beans. While discharging the cargo, longshoremen invited one of the crew to speak at their hall about the Bolshevik Revolution. The Communist sailor told the longshoremen that instead of three ranks of seamen aboard the ship, now there was only one. Another member of the crew spoke at the IWW Hall, was arrested, and returned to the ship the following day.<sup>2</sup> At the conclusion of the *Shilka's* visit, the Communist seamen carried a Seattle Central Labor Council letter to Russia's proletariat. The message expressed Seattle workers' "friendly attitude toward them in their struggle for democracy."<sup>3</sup> The *Shilka* sailed on January 4, 1918, without incident.

In succeeding months, Seattle labor became increasingly enamored with the idea that the Soviet Union had laid the foundation for a world revolution by workers. Journalist Harvey O'Connor recalled, "The Russian Revolution moved us all, from extreme Left to Right, as no other event did. Capitalism, exploitation, done with. No more war. The working

class in control.”<sup>4</sup> If there was pro-Bolshevik sentiment in Seattle labor circles, it is surprising that no one protested when President Wilson announced on August 3, 1918, that he was sending an armed expeditionary force to Siberia. Comments came from labor when the *Seattle Times* announced on December 4, that the United States Army Quartermaster Corps was loading the *Santa Cruz* with shoes, arms, and ammunition for the American army in Siberia.<sup>5</sup> On December 11, Hulet Wells suggested the Central Labor Council ask Local 38-12 to stop loading military supplies bound for Siberia.<sup>6</sup>

On the day before Christmas, Local 38-12 held a special meeting to discuss the Siberian Question. The membership quickly tabled the whole subject and adjourned. Then District Secretary Marshall Wright spoke. What Secretary Wright said was not recorded, but the men voted to inform the council that they favored American military withdrawal from Russia, but boycotting should start with the factory workers in munition plants, not at the last place before shipment. The membership instructed Olaf Dahlin, High B. O'Donnell, Archie Robertson, Harry Thompson, and Harry T. Williams to draw up a resolution concerning Siberia.<sup>7</sup> After the four presented their statement three days later, the membership voted to cable the resolution to President Wilson in Paris. The men asked Wilson to insist upon the immediate withdrawal of all allied military forces from Russia, “leaving to the Russian people themselves the task of building a true democracy, a task that the Soviet Republic of Russia, as represented by its present leaders, has so splendidly begun.” Local 38-12 instructed the district office to appeal to all longshore locals, seamen’s unions, and the railroad brotherhoods to concur in the resolution. Neither President Wilson nor the other unions responded to the Seattle longshore resolution.<sup>8</sup>

## Wobblies Take Over Local 38-12

Russia was not the main concern of Local 38-12 as the year 1918 ended. In order to forestall any attempt of employers to resurrect fink halls, the longshore union initiated 2,000 waterfront workers.<sup>9</sup> A majority were hand truckers carrying secreted IWW red cards. When the organizing drive ended in December 1918, 2,000 truckers demonstrated that they had taken over the local from 1,500 stevedores. On December 20, truckers James M. Wilson and Leland Gholson won the offices of president and vice-president of the local. Both vowed to establish a single stevedore-trucker list and to levy penalties on “work hogs” who sought overtime.<sup>10</sup> Three days later the United States Army Intelligence Office in Seattle estimated “that fully 75% of the members of the International Longshoremen’s Association, Seattle Branch, are members of the I.W.W. organization.”<sup>11</sup>

David Madison claimed that some of the truckers “did not know one end of the ship from the other.” But they had the votes to transfer each other to the stevedore board, “and by doing this made it impossible for any one to make a living.” “The Truckers would manage some way to have a majority there [at the meeting], and if they failed, then a group would remain until 11:00 and 12:00 o’clock, then adjourn until the next day when the members were working, then they would legislate laws to suit themselves without regard to what the final outcome might be. It was the stevedores own fault. They did not attend many meetings, and when the hold men did, they did not fight for their rights.”<sup>12</sup>

Local 38-12 President Wilson announced on January 10, 1919, that the membership had voted for the single list by a slim majority, 831 to 821.<sup>13</sup> A week later the local put into effect an eight-hour maximum workday. Any member disregarding the list or eight-hour limit would not be dispatched for thirty days.<sup>14</sup> On January 24 fifteen gangs bypassed the hall and reported directly to the docks. Truckers refused to move

the cargo from the point of rest until stevedores returned to the hall and new gangs were dispatched.<sup>15</sup>

In a tumultuous session four days later, a majority of Local 38-12's membership rejected a motion to return to separate stevedore and trucker lists. The executive board supervised the thirty-day suspension of the fifteen gangs that had circumvented the hall.<sup>16</sup> The vote to continue the single list infuriated ILA President T. V. O'Connor. The international president wired Local 38-12 Secretary Harold Graves, "Unless I receive word before Monday, February 3, that action taken by No. 12 with regards to hiring from lists is rescinded, I shall recommend to international executive council that charter of No. 12 will be immediately revoked."<sup>17</sup> The union ignored O'Connor's ultimatum. February 3 came and went, but the ILA president did not cancel Local 38-12's charter.

### The General Strike

There had been discussions in the Seattle Central Labor Council during November 1918 of local participation in a nationwide general strike. Delegates talked about walking out to protest the impending December 6 execution of California labor leader Tom Mooney. The council called for a referendum to find out if locals wanted to participate in the national Mooney strike. Before Seattle unions had finished voting, the governor of California commuted Mooney's sentence to life imprisonment. Agitation for a full pardon continued. A Mooney defense group issued a call for a national congress of labor unions to be held in Chicago during January 1919. Thirty-nine Seattle unions voted to send representatives to the Chicago meeting. Seattle longshoremen elected Dan Hayes as their delegate.<sup>18</sup>

Longshore Local 38-12 had voted in favor of striking for Mooney. In fact, a second motion passed condemning twenty-four members who had voted against participating in the Mooney general strike.<sup>19</sup> The Mooney congress set July 4,

1919, as the national strike date. As the delegates were leaving Chicago, newspapers reported that shipyard unions in Seattle, Tacoma, Anacortes, and Aberdeen were about to strike unless unskilled workers received higher wages. On January 21, 40,000 western Washington shipyard workers walked off the job. The next night Metal Trades Council Chairman A. E. Miller pleaded with Central Labor Council delegates to declare a general strike to demonstrate solidarity. To the cheers of a packed gallery, 250 delegates agreed to poll their membership on whether or not to support striking shipyard workers.<sup>20</sup> Radiating enthusiasm, 107 locals voted in favor and three opposed conducting a general strike to begin February 6.<sup>21</sup>

At first Local 38-12 did not share organized labor's fervor for a general sympathy strike. In spite of the fact that any man who did not vote had to pay \$1.00 fine, only 2,439 out of 3,500 members voted on January 28. The decision to strike passed by a majority of ninety-one votes. The membership also approved an amendment stipulating "All unions [to] put in their demands and that no one go back to work until all demands are granted."<sup>22</sup>

At the Central Labor Council meeting on January 29, Barbers, Millwrights, Meat Cutters, and Waiters' delegates supported the longshore proposal to add each union's demands to the shipyard workers. Representatives from the metal trades heatedly opposed, expanding the general strike to include the demands of the other unions. A majority of the labor council agreed with the metal tradesmen.<sup>23</sup> After hours of debate in Longshoremen's Hall during the evening of February 2, Secretary Harold Graves announced to the press, "If the central body calls the general strike, the longshoremen will go out with the rest of Seattle's organized labor." The longshore union elected truckers O. A. Stener, Leland Gholson, and Henry "Harry" Thompson to serve as delegates to the General Strike Committee.<sup>24</sup>

The day before the general strike the Waterfront Employers' Union formally notified Puget Sound ILA unions that if they

participated on February 6, such action would be considered termination of the contract.<sup>25</sup> That evening Local 38-12 listened to Charles W. Doyle, Business Agent of the Central Labor Council. Doyle read from the General Strike Committee minutes an approved motion that "The C.L.C. recommends to all affiliated local unions that in the event of a General Strike, that all standards be preserved, and that there will be no settlement of the strike when called until all organizations return to work with at least as favorable conditions as those enjoyed previous to the strike." Local 38-12 then reaffirmed its decision to strike. The men had made their choice. It was more important to be a part of Seattle's labor movement than to honor the agreement with waterfront employers.<sup>26</sup>

During this meeting on the eve of the strike, Local 38-12 discussed Tacoma Local 38-3's decision not to participate in the general strike. Afraid that employers would divert Seattle's maritime trade to Tacoma, the Seattle union dispatched a delegation to confer with City of Destiny general cargo workers. Chairman of the Seattle committee was Walter Burdette, a charter member of the 1886 Tacoma longshore union. Second-in-command was David Madison who had recently transferred from Tacoma. After an all-night debate the Tacoma local decided to support the general strike.<sup>27</sup>

At 10:00 a.m. February 6, outward activity in Seattle suddenly ceased. Richard Haverty was a twenty-year-old casual longshoreman at the time. Since streetcars were not running, Haverty walked eight miles to the hall to attend a meeting on the second day of the strike. On the way to and from the waterfront he noticed restaurants, theaters, barber shops, saloons, and laundries were closed. No newsboys hawked papers on street corners. Only a garbage wagon and a hearse passed Haverty. He saw strike permits stuck to the isinglass windshields. He noticed no women at the milk stations. Nor did he see any of the volunteer labor guards patrolling the vacant streets. He passed improvised cafeterias set up by the Cooks and Waiters' Union. After listening to

news of the strike Haverty ate a bowl of stew at Longshoremen's Hall. On his way home Haverty thought about the "monotonous quiet" that seemed to have conquered the city.<sup>28</sup>

The general strike idled twenty-three docks. ILA watchmen volunteered to patrol the vacant piers. Gangways had been pulled aboard the five berthed ships loaded with 150,000 tons of cargo. Only the Colman dock remained open. Hundreds of travelers streamed to the piers to board mosquito boats bound for other Puget Sound ports. Any boat would do to get out of the strike zone.<sup>29</sup>

The General Strike Committee referred all maritime exemption requests to Local 38-12's executive committee. The union approved the unloading of United States mails, bonded baggage, perishables, and scows leaking oil. The working longshoremen donated their pay to the sick fund. During the strike Longshoremen's Hall served as the largest soup kitchen in the city. Each day union culinary workers served over 1,000 bowls of mulligan stew.<sup>30</sup>

The federal government was not shocked into negotiating as the General Strike Committee had hoped. On Saturday, February 8, strike enthusiasm faltered. At the behest of international representatives, the printing trades and Teamsters voted to return to work. Several of the streetcars started operating. On Sunday all locals except Cooks, Waiters, Garment Workers, and Longshoremen decided to end the general strike. The General Strike Executive Committee instructed delegates to ask their locals to stay out until Tuesday, February 11.<sup>31</sup> Longshore representatives implored Teamsters not to return to work until Tuesday.<sup>32</sup> The strike ended quietly at noon February 11 with most locals returning to work as a unit. Wanting to be last, longshoremen reported to the docks at 1:00 p.m.<sup>33</sup>

### This Is Revolution

Both federal officials and Seattle's business community considered the strike the prelude to revolution. United States Attorney Robert Saunders wired U. S. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer on February 4, 1919, "Intention of strike is revolution led by extreme element openly advocating overthrow of government." On the same day Immigration Commissioner Henry M. White deported thirty-six Seattle Wobblies on the Red Special train bound for Ellis Island. None were members of Local 38-12.<sup>34</sup>

The day after the general strike began a group of businessmen met with Judge Thomas Burke in the Chamber of Commerce building. Judge Burke began with an impassioned address entitled: "This is revolution." Something had to be done to stop it. Twenty-eight men present agreed with Burke. Together they formed Associated Industries of Seattle. The businessmen elected Frank Waterhouse president. Waterhouse announced that Associated Industries would put into operation the American Plan of open shops. The older Seattle unions recognized Associated Industries as the successor of the Citizens' Alliance. All that had really changed was the adoption of a patriotic name.<sup>35</sup>

Upon returning to work after the general strike, union longshoremen found open-shop working conditions installed everywhere except at Port Commission docks and the United States Hall. The Waterfront Employers' Union posted on all private piers on February 11.

#### NOTICE

We will not discriminate against the union men who have gone out on strike, but as they have broken their contract we will only select the stevedores and truckers employed on the piers in accordance with their efficiency.<sup>36</sup>

Union waterfront workers accepted the new rules without a major hassle. The local suspended its policy prohibiting ILA men from working with nonunion longshoremen and truckers. And the local closed its membership book. Not even overseas veterans could apply.<sup>37</sup> On March 4, citizenship replaced efficiency as the employers' primary consideration for hiring. WEU posted on various docks and pay windows:

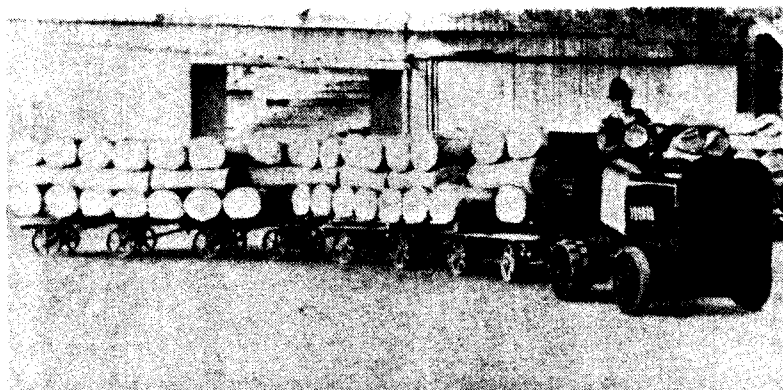
#### NOTICE

American citizens, or those having declared their intention to become such, who have been regularly employed on the Seattle Waterfront, will be given first consideration.

Members of the I.W.W., Anarchists, Bolshevists, or any man who does not support the principles of the American Government will not be employed.<sup>38</sup>

A Local 38-12 spokesman responded that their constitution had always required American citizenship. He admitted IWWs had bored into the local, but no one knew of any anarchists or even how to define a Bolshevist.<sup>39</sup>

The union turned inward, trying to settle internal friction. A petition circulated among the membership to reinstitute Riggers and Stevedores' Local 38-12 and Truckers and Warehousemen's Local 38-22. The effort to undo amalgamation failed. Between January and March 1919, for the first and only time in Seattle longshore history, the local had three presidents. James Wilson resigned on January 28.<sup>40</sup> His successor, Leland Gholson, gave up after six meetings. Finally, stevedore Frederick Paulson volunteered to serve until June 1919.<sup>41</sup>



*Percy May on jitney, 1919, Port of Seattle*

On March 26, Roy L. Hays resigned as trucker business agent and was succeeded by Percy May. Two days later a petition circulated to remove May from office for inefficiency. The recall failed.<sup>42</sup> After Wilson and Gholsen retired from their positions, Percy May emerged as spokesman for truckers. A one-time carpenter who turned to waterfront work in 1916, Percy May had been delegate to the Central Labor Council since January 1918. For the next twenty-two months, May led successive efforts by Local 38-12 to establish a longshore cooperative stevedore company, a federation of "progressive" unions, and One Big Union composed of all West Coast transportation locals.

Since January 28, 1919, May had served on a Local 38-12 committee with eleven other truckers and twelve stevedores to study the Rochdale system as a model for establishing a Seattle cooperative stevedore company. Because cooperatives were not profit oriented, Local 38-12 hoped to underbid Seattle's eleven private stevedoring firms. By April 8 1,166 members had pledged to purchase shares in the cooperative.<sup>43</sup> Captain Gibson of Washington Stevedoring labelled advocates of the cooperative association "the radical class" because they sought "absolute control" of all the docks.<sup>44</sup>

When Congress failed to appropriate operating funds, Seattle's federal longshore hiring hall closed on March 22.

Three weeks before the United States Hall's last dispatch, the Waterfront Employers' of Seattle had reopened the old Smith Cove hiring hall and boarding house. WEU renamed the building the U. S. Truckers' and Stevedores' Club. Within a week, Local 38-12 asked, and the Central Labor Council concurred, in placing the new club on the unfair list.<sup>45</sup> WEU also opened a new labor bureau on Spring Street that doubled as a central pay office. In Tacoma Local 38-3 brought enough political pressure to bear to thwart an employer attempt to reestablish the fink hall, but WEU opened a central pay office in Tacoma's Perkins Building.<sup>46</sup> On March 21, WEU offered to retain Howland in Seattle and J. C. Bjorklund in Tacoma as hiring hall managers under WEU supervision. Locals 38-3 and 38-12 rejected WEU's proposal.<sup>47</sup>

WEU recruited a number of maritime companies into paying off at their offices. The pay window was used as a means of inducing waterfront worker to patronize their hall. Quickly, union members assigned to the business agents the duty of picking up their earnings. WEU refused to pay the men's wages to the union official. When Local 38-12's lawyer started legal proceedings, WEU backed down.<sup>48</sup>

### **Federal Order Number Eight**

The struggle continued. On March 26, 1919, Local 38-12 notified WEU that union gangs would no longer work alongside finks. The first test of this decision occurred at the Great Northern railroad docks on April 6. Three hundred ILA stevedores and truckers refused to work with the same number of nonunion men on Nippon Yusen Kaisha ships. When the union gangs walked off the job, Boss Stevedore James Griffiths invoked the old war cry, "We'll fight 'em to the finish."<sup>49</sup>

Griffiths received assistance from Great Northern Dock Superintendent Walter F. Stokes. Stokes insisted on following United States Railroad Administration Order Number Eight which specified no discrimination between union and non-

union men. Issued on February 21, 1918, the order had been ignored for fourteen months on Puget Sound docks. Now, Stokes decided to enforce the rule. In order to work, Stokes said, ILA and nonunion men must take their chance in a line up at the gate. The dock superintendent also banned union business agents from talking to men working on railroad docks. Local 38-12 responded by moving union headquarters to the edge of the Great Northern docks for the duration of the dispute. As many as 700 men milled around the main gate. Police patrolled the area, but neither side tried to provoke the other.<sup>50</sup>

Griffiths & Sprague also held stevedoring contracts for working Mitsui ships. On April 8, two Mitsui vessels anchored at Port of Seattle's Smith Cove Terminal. Percy May requested that Griffiths and Stokes confer with Port Commissioner W. T. Christensen. At the meeting May told the stevedore boss and railroad dock superintendent that union men would not work Mitsui ships any longer unless Griffiths fired the finks at the Great Northern docks. Christensen told Griffiths non-union men would not be allowed to work on Port of Seattle docks. The Port Commissioner added that the Japanese ships should go elsewhere if their stevedore bosses wanted to use nonunion labor.<sup>51</sup>

Griffiths replied that the cargo assigned to the Mitsui *Tokufuku Maru* belonged to the Russian Railway Commission. The ship must be fully loaded and on its way February 10. To send the steamer away with the small cargo aboard would have disastrous results on future dealings with the Russians. Griffiths appealed to the full Port Commission on April 9, but the three commissioners turned down the stevedore boss.<sup>52</sup> That same day L. C. Gilman, United States Railroad Administration district director in Seattle, issued instructions to agents at the Great Northern, Union Pacific, and the Milwaukee & St. Paul docks to comply in letter and spirit with Order Number Eight.<sup>53</sup>

The next day Gilman met with ILA district officers. The

railroad official agreed to telegraph the longshore demand for a closed shop to his superior, Regional Director R. H. Aishton. Aishton turned down the ILA.<sup>54</sup> Local 38-12 responded by asking the Central Labor Council to endorse a forty-eight hour general sympathy strike against the railroad administration.<sup>55</sup> At the same time Local 38-12's publicity committee distributed on the waterfront and uptown 30,000 copies of a leaflet entitled "A Call to Arms." The pamphlet opened with a strident appeal to organized labor: "The gauntlet has been thrown down by the organized employers, the first gun for the open shop in Seattle and eventually the whole country, was fired at the G. N. Docks and the I.L.A. were selected as the first victims." Next to be choked to death will be Seattle's metal trades, Teamsters, and smaller unions. "A Call To Arms" concluded by alerting workers that "In the very near future, you will be called upon to stand by the I.L.A., the same as we have stood by you in the late strike."<sup>56</sup>

Port Commission President Robert Bridges reiterated that public body's support for Local 38-12. Bridges directed employers who used port facilities to hire only longshore gangs from the union hall. "We must first have experienced and efficient workers, and, second, these men must be permitted to organize so that they can maintain themselves here and become more efficient through experience." Bridges rejected the railroad administration's Order Number Eight. If continued, Bridges forecast, the regulation would lead to the disorganization of the Port's experienced terminal labor force.<sup>57</sup>

Two days after the publication of "A Call To Arms" ILA District Secretary Marshall Wright and Percy May appeared before the Central Labor Council. The longshoremen sought council endorsement of a mass meeting of unions to discuss a forty-eight-hour sympathy strike for Local 38-12. The council agreed to supervise a referendum ballot of the 130 affiliates to ascertain the sentiment of the membership. The council tentatively set aside Sunday morning, May 4, for the mass

meeting. In the meantime, longshore delegations vowed to call on unions to urge a large and favorable turnout.<sup>58</sup>

The waterfront employers' publicity committee placed in the April 18 *Post-Intelligencer* a full-page ad juxtaposing the ILA's "A Call To Arms" with a column headed "The Facts." WEU stressed to "Mr. and Mrs. Citizen" that out-of-control alien radicals in Local 38-12 had caused the present trouble on the waterfront. "A certain class of men will not work, and they do not propose to allow any one else to work. The movement is Bolsheviki in its nature." WEU served notice that in the future only American citizens would be hired. Preference would be given to returning service men.<sup>59</sup>

Walter D. Hines, Director General of the Railroad Administration, arrived on April 21 in Seattle to conduct a hearing on the longshore-railroad dispute. Hines listened first to ILA district officials and representatives from Seattle and Tacoma locals. The longshoremen asked the director general to extend to all ILA locals in the nation the same employment benefits achieved by the railroad brotherhoods. Hines told the union men he would take their recommendations under advisement, but he also wanted to talk with dock superintendents before rendering a decision.<sup>60</sup>

That afternoon Robert Bridges handed Director Hines a note. Bridges's memorandum pointed out that the government should not let the dispute with Seattle longshoremen continue. On April 20 the Paris Peace Conference had promised economic aid to Russia. Peace must return to the waterfront so that the railroads and the Port of Seattle could participate in supplying agricultural and industrial equipment to Russia.<sup>61</sup> This was Robert Bridges's last official act on behalf of Seattle union longshoremen. On July 30, 1919, Bridges suddenly resigned as port commissioner. The passing of Bridges from the Port Commission ended the close relationship between the Port and organized labor. Both Christensen and Lippy favored leasing more of the Port facilities to private businesses. Bridges's replacement, former Port Auditor W. S. Lincoln,

proved to be friendly with waterfront employers.<sup>62</sup> After Bridges left, Port Secretary Hamilton Higday maintained direct contact with Local 38-12.

When Hines arrived in Washington, D. C., he telegraphed Gilman to continue negotiations with Local 38-12 and to report ILA terms to Regional Director R. H. Aishton. On April 29, Gilman wired the ILA's demand for a closed shop to Aishton. The regional director advised Gilman not to hire waterfront employers' workers anymore, but to go through the ILA hall. Gilman intimated to ILA officials that when nonunion men finished the ships they were working, they would be permanently relieved. Gilman promised that in the future men would be called only from ILA longshore and checker halls. The longshore committee then interviewed James Griffiths who agreed that all of his future jobs would be worked by "100 percent ILA men."<sup>63</sup>

Although Local 38-12 appeared to have regained control of hiring on the railroad docks, the union did not cancel the May 4 mass meeting.<sup>64</sup> On that day representatives of forty-six unions met at the Labor Temple. Delegates organized the Federated Unions of Seattle to bring about standardization of working agreements with one common expiration date. Delegates to the May 4 meeting promised assistance to longshoremen if the railroad administration insisted on enforcing Federal Order Number Eight. The federation agreed that other unions with grievances against employers should bring their demands to the next meeting on May 11. If all grievances were not resolved quickly, a vote of the combined membership would be taken to call a mass strike no later than June 1. All unions would stay out until employers agreed to every demand.<sup>65</sup>

On the morning of May 8, railroad dock superintendent Stokes called Longshoremen's Hall for thirty men. The union refused to send stevedores and truckers until Stokes summarily discharged the last thirty-five finks. Percy May told Stokes that the only nonunion men the local would continue to work



with were war veterans. Stokes refused to dismiss any of the nonunion men. Hours later, Gilman met a delegation from the ILA district convention, then in session in Seattle. One delegate reported to the convention that Gilman evaded questions and held back all of the time.<sup>66</sup>

Percy May told the district convention that "Gilman had the power to issue orders to the Great Northern that would put things on a satisfactory basis, but the district director was too good a friend of the employing class, the Chamber of Commerce of Seattle, and the Waterfront Employers to give the ILA a square deal."<sup>67</sup> The district convention voted unanimously to hold a referendum on a coastwide sympathy strike in support of Local 38-12. If approved by the membership, the strike would be called immediately from Prince Rupert, Canada, to San Diego.<sup>68</sup>

Local 38-12 also sought support from the Federated Unions of Seattle. At their regular evening meeting on May 8, the men voted to ask the new federation to take a mass strike vote at once.<sup>69</sup> Representatives from only forty locals appeared at the second meeting of the Federated Unions. Eight locals had dropped out. Conservative labor leaders had circulated a statement among Seattle unions asserting the federated-union idea duplicated the function of the Central Labor Council.<sup>70</sup>

The controversy over the Federated Unions reached a climax at the May 21 Central Labor Council meeting. Eight advocates alternated with eight opponents in a debate over a resolution to declare the federation a dual union. Speakers in favor of the resolution argued that Federated Unions of Seattle was a secret move by the IWW to gain control of the local labor movement. Speaking against the resolution, Percy May denounced detractors of the federated union movement "as pie-card artists and stand-patters who were afraid to lose their meal tickets." After two hours of debate the labor council voted 100 to 43 in favor of the resolution.<sup>71</sup> A week later the Metal Trades Council dealt the Federated Unions its death blow by refusing to become a member.<sup>72</sup>

Without waiting for the results of the ILA coastwide referendum, Local 38-12 voted on May 17 to return to work on the Great Northern dock. The local's dispatcher sent sixty-five men the next day to work with fifty nonunion dockworkers.<sup>73</sup> Percy May consoled himself with the thought that at Great Northern and Union Pacific docks the closed shop was practically in effect. "Just to satisfy some of the officials we are letting a few of the men in uniform to work without cards, but we will line those boys up before very long."<sup>74</sup>

### The One Big Union

In the midst of the campaign to organize the Federated Unions, western Canadians arrived in Seattle talking about their dream of One Big Union. On April 16, 1919, William A. Pritchard of Vancouver ILA Local 38-52 spoke at a Local 38-12 meeting on the potentials of forming a West Coast OBU along industrial lines.<sup>75</sup> Local 38-52 President Jack J. Kavanagh keynoted the Pacific Coast District ILA Convention in Seattle on May 5. Kavanagh said that OBU aimed to organize all western Canadian transportation workers into one union with blanket agreements, common contract ending dates, and universal transfer cards.<sup>76</sup> Two Local 38-12 delegates spoke in favor of OBU. J. H. Johnson told the convention that 75 percent of the Seattle ILA favored joining the One Big Union.<sup>77</sup> Harry Shepherd, a charter member of the 1900 Seattle stevedore local, said he preferred OBU because the AFL craft system caused too much antagonism between workers.<sup>78</sup>

Everett Local 38-8 presented a resolution to hold a referendum to determine if the Pacific Coast district should drop out of the ILA and organize an industrial Marine Transport Workers' Union. The resolution also provided that MTW affiliate with the One Big Union. On a roll call vote the Everett resolution passed with only San Diego delegate Otto Olson

dissenting.<sup>79</sup> The OBU candidate for district president, Joseph Taylor of Victoria Local 38-46, won the election over E. B. O'Grady of Anacortes Local 38-15.<sup>80</sup> During June 1919, the ILA district executive board submitted the OBU referendum to the membership. The men voted 1,806 to 369 in favor of joining OBU. Since less than one-third of the total membership bothered to cast ballots, the executive board suspended action until the next convention.<sup>81</sup>

Henry E. "Harry" Wright of Tacoma Local 38-3 became the leading OBU exponent in Washington State. After working for years as a railroad yardman, Wright turned to longshoring in 1918. During June 1919 the Tacoma union sent Wright and three other delegates to the Washington State Federation of Labor convention in Bellingham. Wright introduced Resolution 44 calling for each local affiliated with the state federation to vote upon organizing into one big union. If a majority of the rank and file voted in favor of industrial unionism, the State Federation would call a special conference not less than sixty days after the count of the ballots to outline the form of organization.<sup>82</sup> The state federation's Resolutions Committee nonconcurred in the resolution, but on the last day of the convention, delegates overrode the committee's recommendation. The presence of twenty-seven delegates from Seattle Local 38-12, two from Bellingham Local 38-25, and 106 Seattle Local 38A1 Shipyard Riggers, Laborers and Fasteners insured the victory of the OBU measure.<sup>83</sup>

During the summer of 1919, Harry Wright wrote letters to newspapers, spoke to labor councils, union locals, and at street rallies. His major theme was the economic power of workers. "At the point of production is where he is robbed and at the point of production is where he is going to get all that is coming to him and not through any legislation."<sup>84</sup> To critics who assailed OBU as IWW dual unionism, Wright retorted that a Washington State OBU would not secede from the AFL. Rather, OBU aimed to scientifically reform the labor movement from within. Wright envisioned an organization "with

agreements expiring at the same time, with jurisdictional squabbles eliminated, a universal transfer system of cards from industry to industry and from craft to craft as much as possible for people who are qualified to change."<sup>85</sup>

In a letter to all unions on August 22, 1919, the ILA district executive board recommended locals pay per capita tax on a nominal membership of ten to the international and that the remainder be paid direct to the district office at 20 cents a member. With the redirected money Joseph Taylor and Marshall Wright promised to put on an aggressive organization campaign throughout the district. While presenting this scheme to Local 38-12, Marshall Wright appealed to the radicals, "I had a red card before I ever joined the I.L.A. and I will have a red card when I am through with the I.L.A."<sup>86</sup> Local 38-12 Assistant Secretary James A. Madsen spoke against withholding the per capita tax from the international. "I told them that neither Mr. O'Connor, nor any member of the Executive Council, would stand for this ten-member scheme . . . and that it would simply mean that our charter would be called for and other charters issued."<sup>87</sup>

A Seattle membership referendum on Taylor and Wright's proposition resulted in 90 percent of the men balloting to continue paying per capita on the entire membership to the international. According to Secretary Madsen, Local 38-12's rejection "created animosity against them insofar as the District Officers were concerned and they lost no opportunity to show this animosity."<sup>88</sup>

ILA President T. V. O'Connor stopped paying Taylor's salary on July 26, 1919, because the district president was out boosting the One Big Union. Taylor said O'Connor fired him because he would not "come to heel like a good dog."<sup>89</sup> The district assumed Taylor's salary by terminating two organizers. During August 1919, Taylor persisted in his efforts to be independent of the international. "Are we going to allow the policies of the district to be dictated by President T. V.

O'Connor," Taylor wrote to the locals, "or are we going to map out our own policies."<sup>90</sup>

AFL Secretary Frank Morrison demanded on August 2, that the Washington State Federation of Labor cancel the statewide OBU referendum. The federation executive board complied. On August 13, Local 38-12 introduced a motion at the Seattle Central Labor Council demanding that the body proceed with the OBU referendum regardless of Secretary Morrison and the state federation's action.<sup>91</sup> Harry Wright labeled state federation officials "pie cards who have not worked for so long that they do not know what work looks like."<sup>92</sup> On August 20, Wright introduced a motion at the Tacoma Central Labor Council calling for the formation of an OBU committee composed of the Everett, Seattle, and Tacoma labor councils and other interested groups. This special committee would raise funds to defray organizing expenses for promoting the OBU referendum. After lengthy and heated exchanges, the Tacoma council approved Wright's motion, 35 to 16.<sup>93</sup>

Although Harry Wright succeeded in Tacoma, the Seattle Central Labor Council dealt a fatal blow to his dreams of a Washington State OBU. During the evening of August 20, the labor council sustained by a wide margin the Washington State Federation of Labor Executive Council's order to withdraw the OBU referendum.<sup>94</sup> After the Seattle council's negative vote, the OBU movement lost momentum. Like the federated union plan, OBU had failed to generate enough votes to move the Seattle Central Labor Council into the industrial unionism camp.

Given the turmoil of the era, it is remarkable that 1919 contract negotiations between the ILA district executive board and Puget Sound locals with the Waterfront Employers' Union of Seattle reached a settlement without a breakdown. During the early bargaining in August the ILA sought to have longshoremen, checkers, and truckers paid the same hourly wage.<sup>95</sup> The bosses argued that longshoring and checking took

special skills while trucking did not. Employers offered, and the ILA tentatively accepted on August 12, an increase for longshoremen and checkers to 90 cents an hour straight time and \$1.35 overtime. Truckers received 80 cents and \$1.20. The agreement provided for cancellation when either party gave the other thirty days' written notice.<sup>96</sup>

During ILA-WEU negotiations Local 38-12 insisted that Seattle men be dispatched from their hall alphabetically. Employers argued for their historic right to pick anyone they wanted in Longshoremen's Hall.<sup>97</sup> During the past year, WEU foremen had bypassed 300 black longshoremen and truckers. Only two black gangs had been picked regularly by straw bosses. A majority of the membership insisted on rotary dispatch so that blacks would get an even break.<sup>98</sup> WEU grudgingly accepted Seattle's list system. As the employers signed the August 12 contract, they told ILA bargainers, "If it [the list] proved as obnoxious as anticipated, they would give notice of cancellation."<sup>99</sup> For their part, Puget Sound locals ratified the agreement with heavy majorities.<sup>100</sup>

On the day the Puget Sound agreement was signed shipping lines and stevedore companies in Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, Astoria, Victoria, and Vancouver created the Northwest Waterfront Employers' Union. Two weeks later NWEU and the ILA district office extended the terms of the Puget Sound agreement to cover Portland, Astoria, Victoria, and Vancouver. For the first time in Northwest history a standard agreement covering Washington and Oregon had been signed that recognized the ILA and granted the closed shop. In exchange, Pacific Northwest longshore unions agreed not to strike and to accept the principle of arbitration. In each port, complaint committees composed of one employer and one ILA committeeman "shall hear, decide, and compose, if possible, all disputes and questions in controversy. Should they be unable to agree, the dispute shall be referred to a third party, mutually satisfactory to both parties, whose

decision shall be final.”<sup>101</sup> This settlement appeared to resolve every outstanding issue except for Seattle’s perennial concern, rotary dispatch.

### The *Delight*

Less than one month after the NWEU-ILA settlement, a federal government action jeopardized the newest Pacific Northwest agreement. The United States Shipping Board agreed to transport 6,240 cases of arms and ammunitions from Seattle to Vladivostok for the use of Admiral Kolchak against Reds.<sup>102</sup> At their September 16 meeting Seattle union longshoremen resolved not to load arms or ammunition bound for any port in Russia. Any member violating the ban would be removed from the work list for thirty days. The membership directed Secretary Jesse Branham to send copies of the motion to the waterfront employers, the Central Labor Council, and every longshore local on the West Coast.<sup>103</sup> On September 17, longshore delegates asked the council for financial and moral support in the campaign to keep American rifles out of Russia. Amid bursts of cheering by delegates, a motion to grant full support to Local 38-12 carried.<sup>104</sup> The next day a longshore gang on Pier 5 began to truck unmarked cases to the steamer *Delight*. One of the men asked a customs officer to open two boxes. Inside were rifles. The union men refused to handle any more rifle cases, but agreed to load locomotives, knocked-down boxcars, and railway wheels.<sup>105</sup>

Supported by the Central Labor Council, Local 38-12 sent another telegram to President Wilson on September 24.<sup>106</sup> The longshore union declared it would not handle the forty-seven carloads of rifles for the “murderous Kolchak operating against the liberty loving Russians in Siberia. We ask you, sir, if this is not a proper action to take in view of the clause in the league covenant respecting the rights of labor.”<sup>107</sup> The next day longshoremen began passing out 30,000 handbills demanding American withdrawal from Russia. The labor council prom-

ised to give the full weight of its protection to anyone arrested for distributing the circular.<sup>108</sup>

On Pier 5 a fifteen-day stalemate ensued. Finally, International Stevedoring Company formally ordered Local 38-12 on October 9 to dispatch sixteen truckers to move the rifles to the *Delight’s* tackle and twenty-four stevedores to stow the rifles. Work must begin on October 10 at 8:00 a.m. Otherwise, the employer’s letter concluded, “We will assume that no ILA men are available.”<sup>109</sup> At a special meeting of Local 38-12 that evening, longshoremen notified the Waterfront Employers’ Union that “We have no men available for handling munitions destined for Russia.”<sup>110</sup>

On the same day, the Seattle Waterfront Employers’ Union decided to bring the rifle issue before Associated Industries of Seattle. “It is not a personal fight,” Captain Gibson declared, “but an issue involving the interests of the country.”<sup>111</sup> Not receiving enthusiastic support from Associated Industries, waterfront employers decided “to quietly load the rifles and ignore the stand of the ILA.” Foremen told representatives of Local 38-12 that refusal to load the rifles would not be considered a violation of the August 23 agreement.<sup>112</sup>

International Stevedoring hired twenty-five uniformed ex-servicemen from an employment agency on October 11 to report for work on the *Delight*. When told to load rifles, Fred Fish, V. W. Van Wooler, and Harvey Thompson quit. Hundreds of union men cheered and waved as the three men emerged from the dock house.<sup>113</sup> A dozen mounted police officers milled with the crowd in front of Pier 5. One officer bent over his horse and told a longshoreman, “Don’t you fellows let those birds stampede you into trouble. I want to get home to the kids and if anything starts I’ll have to work overtime.”<sup>114</sup> The dock remained quiet. On October 18, the *Delight* sailed for Vladivostok with a full cargo of munitions and supplies. The crisis was over.