AN INJURY TO ONE: THE POLITICS OF RACIAL EXCLUSION IN THE PORTLAND LOCAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL LONGSHOREMEN'S AND WAREHOUSEMEN'S UNION

by

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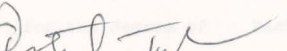
APPROVED: 

Professor Quintard Taylor

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Professor Quintard Taylor

The feud between the San Francisco-based leadership of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) and the union's Local 8 in Portland, Oregon over the refusal of Portland's rank-and-file to ratify African-Americans as members until the early 1960's marks a paradox in labor history. Collision courses were set both between pro- and anti-integration factions within Local 8, and between the larger union, with its large African-American membership, and Portlanders.

After an introductory history of the origins of the ILWU on the West Coast, the "irreconcilable traditions" of racial exclusion and the racially egalitarian stance of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), so very active in the

Northwest, are discussed, setting the background. Through a survey of the available literature and documentary record, and most importantly through interviews with participants in the events both within and outside of the local, this thesis reconstructs as fully as possible the chronology of events in the struggle to integrate Local 8, up to 1968. Last, the affair is discussed as a part of the strange juxtaposition of labor militancy and white supremacist feeling which was manifested in the Pacific Northwest as a whole from the late nineteenth century, and hypotheses are proposed for exactly why the affair was so protracted and emotional.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In doing this research, I had the terrific luck of being able to enlist as my gurus (whether they want that title or not!) Professor Quintard Taylor of U.O. (who directed the thesis) and Ronald Magden of Tacoma. Their work on African-American history in the Pacific Northwest and the region's longshore history, respectively, made their knowledge invaluable to me. Both provided many suggestions along the way, and votes of confidence when the going got weird, which was often. Without them both this never would have happened, and I have to thank them most of all.

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Lyrics from "The Ballad of Harry Bridges" by Woody Guthrie are quoted without permission. I don't think he'd have minded.

This thesis is dedicated to the men and women of Local 8, past, present, and future.

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PREFACE

The opposition of Portland, Oregon's Local 8 of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) to the admission of blacks as members in the face of years of pressure from the ideological leadership of that union is the subject of my thesis. The topic is one that I stumbled across when, in sniffing out possible topics concerning unionism and the black community of Portland, my interest was sparked by a footnote in an article by Quintard Taylor on the migrations of African-Americans from the South to Seattle and Portland in the early 1940's. After discussing at length the battles to integrate fully the Boilermaker's Local 72 in Portland's Kaiser shipyards, Taylor made a brief mention of how the Portland longshoremen barred a black man membership, and then added in a footnote that the local dragged its feet long after the war, not accepting blacks "until 1962, well over ten years after other West Coast locals had been integrated."

Curious about this discrepancy between Portland and other West Coast cities, I began to check out the topic. At the time, I did not know anything at all of the ILWU's history, and did not even know who Harry Bridges was! Upon reading some about the West Coast longshoremen's raw, against-the-grain history, and the great emphasis placed by

the International on fighting racial discrimination, I was incredulous. And I became still more so upon realizing how much of a feud (albeit an invisible one) had been the conflict between a handful of racists in the Portland local and virtually the entire leadership and rank-and-file of the union, including a sizable and vocal left-wing faction of Portlanders.

A major hurdle became immediately evident to me. There is a pronounced lack of written record specifically concerning the matter; the International, though divided on the issue, closed ranks masterfully, and convention proceedings and their newspaper, the Dispatcher, neatly skirted the controversy. It soon became clear that detailed information could only really be gained from interviews with people who had been players in the affair. Despite the scarcity of survivors of the period, narrowed down further by the refusal of some to talk about the subject, I was able to locate a few people who I was lucky enough to become acquainted with, and they were gracious to me to a fault. Realizing that a piece of history being recorded was contingent on their memories, they delivered. It is thanks to these men that I have the ability to make even a crude synthesis, beyond what has been recorded already.

And crude it must be, for my request to the International's archives to be able to view for this research the all-important files of Bridges' correspondence

was denied. This effectively hindered any bid I might have made to treat the subject from the documentary angle. Local 8, because their files are only now being organized and microfilmed, denied my requests for access on these grounds.

The work is divided into four parts. The first deals with both the genesis of the ILWU and its ideology, and more specifically the Portland waterfront leading up to the watershed strike of 1934.

The second part is a brief encapsulation of two strong vectors in Oregon's history which met in opposition in the Local 8 conflict. Of these, the first is the history of acute racism/nativism in the region and the passage of legislation in the mid-nineteenth century excluding blacks from the state. The second is the tradition of labor radicalism in the Pacific Northwest, which presented with particular force in the form of the Industrial Workers of the World, a group which held up equality among all workers as a strong tradition.

The third part is, strictly speaking, a history of the controversy over the exclusion of blacks in Local 8; stitching together material from the available literature and from interviews, I have assembled the most accurate chronology possible of what happened in Portland (with a few details of the racial aspects of the waterfronts of the Bay Area and Seattle, both before and after the advent of the ILWU.) Included in this is a discussion of the highly

controversial anti-discrimination litigation against the local engaged in by a group of black longshoremen in the late sixties, which has not appeared in any accounts thus far.

I conclude with an explanation of the factors which insured that Portland's road to integration was a crooked one, due to the history of race relations (or rather non-relations) in the city and state, as well as social and economic factors. My primary concern here is to address the paradoxical failure of the "radical heritage" of the IWW in Portland to have created a climate in which racial exclusion would have been unthinkable. (My vantage point is none too good; I must disclaim any appearance of anything but conjecture regarding this paradox.) The hidden antagonism between Portland's and San Francisco's organizers, going back to the thirties, will be discussed, as will the peculiar relationship between the IWW and non-IWW members of the ILA in Portland, both of which may well have affected the ideological battle lines. The factors of nepotism and economic flux will also be considered. My interviews revealed that the grievances of black longshoremen in Portland did not stop with the late sixties, but has been continuous into the present in various forms. However, to do this justice would require a separate effort entirely, and one that would be better and more accurately undertaken by the people who have been directly involved with it.

Therefore, I have ended the timeframe of the work at the late sixties, specifically with the 1968 resolution of the issue of promotion of the original group of blacks hired in late 1963. In so doing, I know I risk being accused by some of leaving the most crucial part dangling, but I feel that to continue would get me into the minefields proper.

A primary source, which I drew on heavily, was William Pilcher's work on the Portland longshoremen, written in 1972. This is sure to be a sore spot, as Pilcher was and is incredibly unpopular among Local 8's people for what they consider gross distortions of fact about many things. Though this has been made clear to me, the utility of Pilcher's account cannot be denied. It is the most direct account of the episode that exists. And with no access to the information that would corroborate or disprove his assertions, I had no choice but to use his work as my departure point.

I am distinctly aware of this being no more than a contribution to a history of the subject, but if it helps any who come afterward to avoid having to reinvent the wheel upon exploring the question again, with the aid of a more substantial piece of the documentary record, I can hope for nothing more.

CHAPTER 1\ INTRODUCTION

In the late 1930's, the longshoremen of the all of the West Coast's ports organized, after decades of struggle, and established themselves as one of the United States' most uncompromisingly militant trade unions. Led by an Australian immigrant ex-seaman, Harry Bridges, a tight core of radicals on the San Francisco waterfront became the leadership of a coastwide dock labor (and later warehouse labor) syndicate, the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) that was to emerge, from 1937 on, as one of America's most powerful, and resilient, unions. A union with such a strong class consciousness that controlled the ports in every city on the coast was without precedent. It was, from the start, a source of anxiety for shipping capital, city governments, and less radical unions, especially those of the AFL. And the longshoremen maintained their unity and their radical outlook after every other American union of the same ideological stripe was brought down in the Cold War era.

Within the framework of coastwide unity, however, dissension between groups of longshoremen was not unknown. The autonomy of locals within the larger union was, not surprisingly, a de facto tradition on the coast. This had hampered organization before 1934, and would carry over into

the new era. The long-standing quarrel between the ILWU's leadership in San Francisco and the longshore local in Portland, Oregon, concerning Portland's refusal to admit blacks to membership until 1963, is one such dissent. A feud which put the ILWU's commitment to racial egalitarianism to the test, and into conflict with the autonomy of the Portland local, it is a story which has never been fully told. This is perhaps because of the remnants of bitter feelings which remain on both sides, feelings understandable considering the schism caused between Portlanders and the International. This study has as its aim an exploration of the factors contributing to the Portland local's policy of racial exclusion into the early sixties, and a framing of factors which should have defeated that exclusion, yet failed to do so.

First, a general history of the union's turbulent early years, in which its "Red" reputation was earned, is a necessary preliminary to any understanding of the paradoxical nature of the conflict between Local 8 and the International.

In 1934, the long battles to establish the AFL-affiliated International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) on the West Coast culminated in victory with the federal arbitration of the "Great Strike" of May 9 to July 31. However, the ideological differences between the radical class consciousness held up by the West Coast rank-and-file

and the conservatism of the New York leadership of the ILA led to a bitter split, accompanied by intense red-baiting on the part of the latter's officials in New York directed against the West Coast's "soviet of longshoremen" (as the mayor of Seattle termed the 1934 strikers) in chorus with the waterfront employers of the West Coast.[1]

Longshore work, which in the thirties was truly brutal, backbreaking work accomplished without the aid of most of the mechanized equipment found on docks today, has traditionally been a "gang labor" occupation. A gang, consisting of four to six men, was traditionally formed by a foreman to work unloading or stowing cargo. This made longshore employment prior to 1934 casual in name only. The 1934 strikers' principle demand was control of the hiring process by the union, to end the hated "shape-ups" in which a day's longshore work was hired from among huge crowds of men at the whim of corrupt foremen. (In a shape-up, gangs would be hired depending on (say) whether they would buy shots of moonshine from the foreman's flask, or give him cash or bottles of whisky. Not infrequently, foremen would also be loansharks and hire their debtors first from the

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[1] The West Coast cities' newspapers at first attacked the longshoremen as Reds, but then over the years took a more benign view as it became clear that the ILWU was not going to be crushed out, but was rather becoming something of a civic institution. (William R. Hearst's San Francisco Examiner was, predictably enough, Bridges' longest standing slanderer.)

shape-up!)[2]

On the West Coast, the shape-up varied slightly in form from port to port, but the foremen were the employers' men, and the men on the docks knew precisely that all opposition to rank-and-file organizing came from the employers' organization, the Waterfront Employers' Association (WEA), invariably with strident support from the press and the respective city halls. This was in contrast to the situation on the East Coast waterfronts, where the ILA itself controlled the hiring and administered it in a thoroughly corrupt way.[3]

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[2] Pilcher, William. The Portland Longshoremen: A Dispersed Urban Community. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1972., p.33. "On The Waterfront" must have delighted ILWU men, for it graphically showed the crookedness inherent in the shape-up, which they had left far behind, and which the East Coast's men still suffered under. The speeches of officials and rank-and-file alike given during ILWU conventions contain, well into the fifties, mentions of the hated shape-up of the past.

[3] Nelson, Bruce. Workers on the Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930's. Urbana/Chicago: U. of Illinois Press, 1988., pp.142-144. On the East Coast, by comparison, the New York-based International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), affiliated with the AFL, hired its dues-paying members only. Dues-paying did not exempt longshoremen from having to pay out kickbacks to the union foremen if they wanted to have work. Cargo "diversion" scams were also common. The ILA organized the New York-New Jersey waterfronts into a jigsaw of ethnicity-based clusters of docks, most extensively on the Brooklyn waterfront. Irishmen and Italians dominated certain locals and clusters of docks, Poles, Spaniards, and Croats others, and African-Americans still others.

ILA president Joe Ryan, described by a contemporary as "an old-style Tammany Hall politician who...strayed into the labor business", wore expensive double-breasted suits and was fond of stating that the acronym of his beloved union stood for "I Love America." Any rank-and-file movements on the docks were checked by various underworld figures--including the notorious Irish gangster Owney Madden, of "Prizzi's Honor" fame--who were not above

San Francisco's employers' had run, since 1922, a union called the Blue Book, which was widely perceived among the city's longshoremen as being a collaborationist farce, giving the longshoremen no control over the hiring process. This employer-controlled hiring system, run through what was called by longshoremen a "fink hall", was essentially identical to the ILA racket in New York, in terms of what it meant to the dockworkers elbowing each other in the shape-up. Bridges, Harry Schmidt, Henry Schrimpf, and others who would become the leaders of the 1934 strike were influenced by agitation of the Communist Party against the Blue Book, but saw flaws in the program of the Marine Workers Industrial Union (MWIU), the union which the CP proposed to institute.

The publishers of the Waterfront Worker, a paper which appeared in December, 1932, decrying San Francisco's waterfront working conditions and hiring practices, were apparently a broad coalition which included some Communists touting the MWIU. But soon control of the paper was attained by Bridges' group, the Albion Hall faction (after the headquarters of a German fraternal order where the group held meetings.) In 1933, militancy on the San Francisco docks began to increase, but whether the MWIU or the AFL's

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administering "vigorous treatment" to any who were vocally opposed to the union's skullduggery. (To make certain that he always had an action-ready standing army of henchmen, Ryan used his position as head of the New York State Board of Parole!)

ILA would be the union favored by the majority of the men remained an open question. Then, in mid-1933, Congress passed the National Industrial Recovery Act, granting unions the right to organize, without fear of blackballing and reprisals. All over the country, unions sprang up in a myriad of trades. In the Pacific Coast ports, the legislation was a sign for the ILA to make a fresh bid for control of the docks. Despite the fact that the AFL was, according to Moscow, a "social fascist" union, many CP people saw great opportunity in the resurrection of the ILA, which, despite hostility from the employers, was drawing large numbers of longshoremen.[4]

Needless to say, when the subrosa radicalism on the West Coast waterfront exploded into the streets and won the union, a split with the ILA was completely inevitable. Though the rank-and-file insurgency on the West Coast chose

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[4] Nelson, Workers on the Waterfront, pp.77-78. It is interesting to observe the shifts-in-line that transpired in the twenties with the CP-USA's stance on whether or not to deal with the AFL. Before the twenties, the Soviets had approved of Western Communists using direct action tactics, and a disregard of specific economic demands, which were the methods of syndicalist agitation such as that of the Wobblies. Then in the post-war, red-scare early twenties, with Lenin suddenly terming refusal to work within parliamentary and "reactionary" trade-union frameworks an "infantile disorder", the CP began to denounce such hardcore (and mayhem prone) tactics in favor of working within the AFL. This meant a focus on the struggle for the ILA on the West Coast. Stalin, however, forced a change of tack in the late twenties, and the Comintern began to denounce the AFL yet again. Arguably, such uncertainty and subservience to Moscow explains why the Communists never were themselves taken as seriously as their ideas were (as interpreted by winch operator-theoretician Bridges and others involved in Albion Hall.)

the ILA-AFL over the Communist-led MWIU as its vehicle to demand recognition, the disdain for the ILA, as spoken for by Joe Ryan, was shared by virtually all West Coast longshoremen, and when Ryan came West to attempt to bring the 1934 strike under control by cutting a secretive deal with the employers, but was booed out of every rank-and-file assembly on the coast in trying to ratify it.[5] The resolution of the 1934 strike, arbitrated between Bridges and the employers'association by the Roosevelt-appointed National Longshoremen's Board, was more than just an instrument of recognition of a right to organize. The hiring process changed from being solely executed by the company foremen to being a decision of local joint port labor relations committees (JPLRC's), in turn subordinate to the coastwide Joint Coast Labor Relations Committee (JCLRC) in San Francisco. In each port, such a body would exist, comprised of representatives of both the employers and the union, who would agree on a roster of "registered" longshoremen. The longshoremen's hiring hall, a reality at last after 1934, together with the above proved to be a satisfactory system for both groups, and both have remained essentially unchanged.[6]

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[5] Ibid.

[6] Pilcher, The Portland Longshoremen, pp.56-57. While the hiring and dispatch system developed by the West Coast longshoremen is far too complex to be discussed in the present study, the above information is crucial to understanding that the exclusionist policies of the Portland local were only possible with the

The ILWU, which joined the CIO at its founding in 1937, possessed an agenda for economic direct action that drew in varying degrees as much from the traditions of the anarchist-syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and the philosophically somewhat kindred Australian maritime workers movements as from the strict party line of the Communists. Their position was really a unique militancy that was shaped by the specific challenges of organizing on the San Francisco docks. Though denying many times over the years (and not a few under oath) any adherence to the Communist party line, Bridges never denied his commitment to socialism. Alone among the unions expelled by the CIO in 1949, the ILWU survived and prospered. Still, ILWU thinking was marked by a pragmatism borne of streetfighting which dictated that employers, though by both syndicalist and Communist doctrine, class enemies, ultimately had to be treated as partners if the union was to have staying

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collaborative stance of local maritime capital, as manifested by the Portland Labor Relations Committee raising no objection to the hiring of white longshoremen only.

The hiring system has always reflected a pronounced egalitarianism in its administration, and is considered absolutely central to what the union stands for. Though it did undergo some slight recodification following the anti-closed shop Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, the system of a core group of registered longshoremen having access to the most immediate longshore work has survived. It is an institution that is greater than the sum of its parts in the eyes of ILWU members, and this is exactly why Bridges' meddling with Local 8's hiring system was seen as such a serious threat by the Portlanders.

power.[7]

A succession of rapid, impromptu strikes by longshoremen in the wake of the initial victory served notice repeatedly to the employers that the union was aware of its newfound power, and was determined to use it. ILWU control was exerted in everything from increasing pay scales to reducing the amount of cargo to be hoisted in a single sling load. Too, there was in 1936 the coastwide "March Inland" to organize warehouse workers, which culminated in a 67-day joint strike. Early January, 1937, saw the joining of warehouse workers with the longshoremen, nearly doubling the union's membership. The warehouse campaign brought a direct conflict with the Teamsters of Seattle's Dave Beck and, of course, Joe Ryan, the most ardent AFL opponents of

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[7] Kimeldorf, Howard. Reds or Rackets?: The Making of Radical and Conservative Unions on the Waterfront. Berkeley: U. of California Press, 1988. pp.57-59. This was due chiefly to the West Coast's industrywide organization of maritime capital, the Waterfront Employers' Association (later Pacific Maritime Association), which formed in San Francisco in 1914, and operated branches in the Northwest's ports and San Pedro. A formidable united front against the trade union struggle was thus part of the picture from very early on, and its efficacy was proven by the broken waterfront strikes of 1916, 1919, and 1922-23. (Kimeldorf theorizes that "One Big Union" of employers on the West Coast, as opposed to the feuding among shippers on the East Coast, led to the divergent paths of unionism on the respective coasts.)

It cannot be denied that Bridges was public enemy number one in the eyes of many shipping magnates on the coast. However, after World War II, peace came to the waterfronts as Bridges negotiated a post-strike contract with generous terms for the longshoremen and then informally pledged an effort not to call strikes. The ILWU did not strike from 1948 until 1971. This greatly impressed the employers, several of whom took the stand as character witnesses for the defense when Bridges was being tried for being an undesirable (read Red) in 1949.

the drive. There were ferocious clashes between "goon squads" of both sides, and a deep enmity between the Teamster-ILA axis and Bridges' union was born, which would manifest itself over the years in the context of the larger battles between the AFL versus the CIO.[8]

As a counterpoint to the background given above, and as final prelude to discussing the Local 8 controversy and the reasons for it, there remains to be mentioned the role that Portland played in the coastwide organization prior to the strike. The historiography of the West Coast longshoremen's struggle for the union is very centered on the role of San Francisco and Bridges. This is understandable; not only did Bridges and his associates in the Bay Area become the nucleus of the International, but Bridges was definitely the farthest-left figure of his stature on the American labor scene, and he was the target for the union's enemies long after the street battles were over.

Portland's Matt Meehan, though, by his own account anyway, was an active organizer up and down the coast in the year or so before the walkout of '34. Influenced by Wobbly rhetoric on the docks, like many of the Northwest's longshoremen, he argued for the establishment of the ILA while not getting any support from them financially, riding

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[8] International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, The ILWU Story: Two Decades of Militant Unionism. San Francisco, ILWU Information Department, 1955. pp.26-34. Nelson, Workers on the Waterfront, pp.223-249. This chapter, "AFL versus CIO", explains in detail the stake of the ILWU in that very complex face-off.

in boxcars from town to town completely broke, speaking in union halls from San Diego to Bellingham, and staying a step ahead of the cops. He was even active in organizing the unemployed in the Portland area to keep them from scabbing against the '34 strike. Meehan is best remembered for leading a group of longshoremen into the chamber of the Portland City Council during the strike, and flinging the bloody shirt of a longshoreman who had been shot through the jaw by police onto the table in front of Mayor Joseph Carson, Jr., and saying, by one famous account, "The blood is on your hands, Joe."[9]

In a 1971 interview with David Hardy of Reed College, Meehan displayed no small amount of bitterness that Bridges and his "underground group" had become the dominant force in the union when "we were a going organization before (and) all they did--the party and that underground stuff--was to call the rest of us sellout artists. If they'd had their way, if people had listened to the party, we wouldn't have an organization today...they hadn't done a goddamn thing until the last minute when they saw that this was going to come off, to be a success of a fight."[10]

There is, in this same interview, evidence that disdain for Bridges had deep roots in the Portland local as the

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[9] The ILWU Story, pp.14-15. Carson was known thereafter to Portland longshoremen as "Bloody Shirt" Carson.

[10] Hardy, David. "The 1934 Portland Longshoremen's Strike". Senior thesis: Reed College, Portland., pp.190-191.

result of an incident which, though Meehan does not date it, probably occurred in 1934, right before the strike. Bridges, with incredible recklessness, visited Portland and spoke to the gathered Portland men in the union hall, and attacked Meehan and several of his lieutenants in their own hall for being "phonies" bent on compromising the coastwide union effort! (Exactly on what grounds Bridges thought this, Meehan did not specify.) When Bridges concluded his speech, the mood in the hall turned very ugly. One of the most respected trade unionists in the Northwest had been personally attacked by a man who, though himself commanding some respect at the time, had clearly stepped out of bounds. Only Meehan's quick invitation to Bridges to negotiate a truce over coffee at a nearby diner saved the Australian from getting his head kicked in.[11]

Though later Meehan went on to become an ally of Bridges in the ILWU, holding many officer positions in the International, it seems very likely that in the Portland longshore community there remained a memory of the San Francisco leader's high-handed behavior. The dealings between Portland and San Francisco prior to 1934 were certainly not a power struggle. San Francisco's key position in the framework of coastwide organization was a natural result of the predominance of the Bay Area in the coast's maritime industrial framework, not the result of a coup of

[11] Ibid., pp.193-194.

any kind. And certainly the Portland men were eager for a coastwide union, as Meehan's organization efforts prior to 1934 indicate. Yet quite probably, the legacy of Matt Meehan's unsung organization drive, and Bridges' attack on Meehan in his own union hall, was some bitterness toward the International despite an outward projection of loyalty and pride in their union.

Meehan's feeling of resentment against San Francisco's radicals--including Bridges--who had been Blue Book men until the last minute, then had become the International's leadership, was likely not merely his alone. And not for the last time had Bridges seen the hostility of the Portlanders toward what they perceived as the imposition of the International's high-handed authority. Retired longtime Local 8 man (and several-time local president) G. Johnny Parks recalls that from the beginning a certain friction marked Bridges' visits to what the latter called "the mysterious river."[12]

Each July 5, in ports large and small the length of the West Coast, no cargo moves. That day is a "stop-work day" observed by ILWU locals to commemorate "Bloody Thursday" in 1934, when two striking longshoremen were gunned down by police in San Francisco's Embarcadero. (There were deaths, too, in San Pedro and Seattle around the same time, two in each city, during the intense police-scab-picket clashes

[12] G. Johnny Parks interview.

that occurred when attempts were made to open those cities' ports.) Woody Guthrie, in the "Ballad of Harry Bridges", written in 1939, memorialized the fallen strikers:

> What a bloody old day was Bloody Thursday
> What a bloody case of low disgrace
> For every man that the police killed there
> Ten thousand rise to take their place

Portland saw no deaths during the strike, though there was no shortage of injuries, and several men were shot by police at close range. But Bloody Thursday is observed each year. By the Front Street seawall downtown, all of the longshoremen and their families gather to hear speeches addressing the aspirations and ideals that informed the strike, and sustained it through so much violence.

The 1934 strike, both coastwide and specifically in Portland, has been exhaustively chronicled, re-chronicled, and analyzed, and thus need not be detailed here. There can be no better summation than to call it one of the great successes of the class struggle in the United States. The arbitration and settlement that recognized the ILA on the West Coast was due far more to the conciliatory approach of the federal government in the era of the New Deal than to the street battles. But it stands alone among U.S. strikes in that a truly radical union was able to establish itself in the face of very violent opposition--by fighting back.[13]

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[13] The definitive description of the strike is in Nelson's Workers on the Waterfront. The details of the struggle in Portland are best covered in Robert David Hardy's "The 1934 Portland

There is a near-mythic significance ascribed to the strike in the minds of the longshoremen of the West Coast. Though it is a piece of history becoming increasingly remote, the drama of the strike provides an identity to the union. The remembrance of martyrs still serves to remind longshoremen of the extreme violence through which the union was born, and, perhaps, the extent to which the employers are still their adversaries. The men of '34, very few now, are and always have been revered by younger longshoremen as a generation of lions. Bridges, revered as the longshoremen's Spartacus, won for the presidency of the union time and again, and the endorsements for his candidacy at ILWU conventions show the great respect that he commanded among so many of the union's men. In Portland, as in San Pedro, Honolulu and Anacortes, the observance of Bloody Thursday is a sure sign that the ILWU is a confraternity as much as a union.

Nonetheless, confraternities are not immune to quarrels within, and the ILWU has been subjected to many episodes of such turmoil. The attacks from without have never been hard to detect, as evidenced by the barrage of red-baiting to which the West Coast longshoremen were subjected to through the end of the fifties, most conspicuously the federal government's attempts to decapitate the ILWU by deporting Bridges to Australia. However, less obvious were internal

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Longshoremen's Strike", and in Roger Buchanan's Dock Strike.

feuds, of which one of the most pronounced was the furor over the steadfast refusal of the longshoremen of Portland to have African-American workers in their ranks.

"An injury to one is an injury to all", was the old labor slogan used extensively by the IWW, and adopted by the West Coast longshoremen as the new union's motto. To the framers of International policy such as Bridges, Henry Schmidt, Bob Robertson, and Louis Goldblatt, and many of the rank-and-file of the union, this meant an end to such racial schisms as had plagued the open-shop docks when strikes had occurred, as well as the exclusion of minorities that had characterized previous waterfront and maritime unionism on the West Coast.[14]

Resolutions siding with the fight against racial discrimination were part of the ILWU conventions beginning with the fourth in 1941. These were Bridges' attempts to defeat discrimination in the locals.[15] One from the convention of 1949 is typical, stating that, "Our union stands to pledged to join with other defenders of democracy

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[14] Foner, Phillip S. Organized Labor and the Black Worker 1619-1981. New York: International Publishers, 1981., p.283. It was in large part from the ILWU's strong stand against racial discrimination that the union and its leadership were endlessly accused of being Communists. The expulsion of the ILWU, along with other left-wing trade unions from the CIO in 1949, had much to do with the International's stance on race; not coincidentally, the UAW, plagued by deep racial schisms, was behind the CIO's move.

[15] Rubin, Lester. The Negro in the Longshore Industry. Philadelphia: Industrial Research Unit, The Wharton School, U. of Pennsylvania, 1974., p.143.

and representatives of the Negro people and other minority groups in launching a renewed fight for the purpose of upholding the rights guaranteed the people by the Bill of Rights and the Constitution of the United States." The resolution also went on to point out that, "The fight against discrimination is first of all the fight to organize the unorganized, and the struggle against discrimination in employment."[16] In the International-published book The ILWU Story (1955), the fact that "the ILWU banned racial discrimination and segregation twenty years before the United States Supreme Court found the courage to do so" is given as a probable reason for the government's ardent harassment of Bridges.[17]

The ILWU's organization of dockworkers and agricultural workers in Hawaii in the late forties had been a dramatic proof of the union's stance against racial discrimination and was boasted of as such by the International. Chinese, Japanese, Samoan, Portuguese, Filipino, and native Hawaiian labor all joined the union ranks. More than just a multi-racial organization drive, the fights for the ILWU in the islands broke apart, to a great extent, an entire racial hierarchy from plantations to docks that had been preserved

[16] ILWU 1949 Biennial Convention Proceedings, p.348.

[17] The ILWU Story, pp.62-63.

by prejudices between groups.[18] Although the initial drive was effected principally by whites--notably Jack Hall, International Secretary-Treasurer Louis Goldblatt, and Portland's Meehan--the non-white groups quickly began to produce their own leadership, and a new era began in Hawaii, one which was marked by a sense of class solidarity among previously divided peoples.

San Pedro and San Francisco were locals within the union that contained large African-American memberships. San Francisco in particular, the ideological epicenter of the ILWU, proved the most committed to combatting racial discrimination. With black members in key officer positions in San Francisco from the union's inception, the doctrine of equality had more teeth there than elsewhere. However, Seattle and Tacoma also had waterfronts that were integrated before the thirties.

But Portland's local maintained its reticence in the face of pressure, even to the point of almost leaving the International and striking an alliance with the ILA, and Teamsters, or possibly going it alone as an independent port. Had such come to pass, the coastwide unity of the

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[18] Ward, Estolv. Louis Goldblatt: Working Class Leader in the ILWU, 1935-1977. Berkeley: Bancroft Library Regional Oral History Office, U. of California Special Publications, 1980., pp.384-88. With the establishment of locals in the Hawaiian islands, the ILWU became arguably the most racially diverse labor organization in the capitalist world. (The classic work on the Hawaii organization drives is Sanford Zalburg's A Spark is Struck: Jack Hall and the ILWU in Hawaii, from Univ. of Hawaii Press, 1979.)

ILWU would have been broken in fact, and the break would have had serious ramifications for organized labor (not to mention organized crime) in the United States.

Local 8 did not quit Bridges. Yet emotions ran so high over the issue that in a quite literal sense a schism did occur. On more than one occasion in the late sixties, Bridges was greeted at the Portland hall by vicious booing and heckling when addressing the membership concerning the local's racial composition, forcing him to leave.[19] And even today, though a large framed picture of Bridges hangs over the podium at the Front Avenue hall of Local 8, and blacks are well established in all of the ILWU locals in Portland, the history of discord stands.

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[19] Linell Hill interviews.

CHAPTER 2\ IRRECONCILABLE TRADITIONS

The exclusion of blacks from the Portland local must be viewed in terms of two regional historical trends. These are the systematic legal exclusion (in policy if not in absolute fact) of African-Americans from the state of Oregon until well into this century, as established in the charter of the Territory and then in the constitution of the state; and the strong tradition of labor militancy which emerged with the Industrial Workers of the World in the early twentieth century. With the controversy over Local 8's integration, these two tendencies clashed head-on.

"We are in a new world, under most favorable circumstances, and we wish to avoid most of the evils that have so afflicted the United States and other countries." These were the words of Peter H. Burnett, head of the 1844 legislative committee of the Oregon territorial provisional government at Champoeg, in proposing the prototype of the "Black Laws" which would become part of the Oregon constitution.[20] Burnett's law, which originally provided for whippings of any blacks who refused to leave the Territory in two years, was overturned the next year. But as statehood approached, increasingly many immigrants

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[20] Taylor, Quintard. "History of Blacks in the Pacific Northwest", Dissertation, U. of Minnesota, 1977., p.62.

came from the states of the so-called "Old Northwest": Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, or border states such as Tennessee, Kentucky, and Missouri. In the 1850's these latter states were on the frontline of the venomous debate-turned-shooting-war over the issue of whether to allow slavery. Many whites had left the border states and headed for the Old Northwest, where they wielded enough political to put laws on the books barring free African-Americans (with slavery already being prohibited by the Northwest Ordinance of 1787.)

Thus, many new Oregonians were rather race-conscious white men extremely sensitive to the problems of slavery, looking for an expedient way to avoid the same issue arising in the Willamette Valley. No blacks meant no blacks to be enslaved. The stance of these "Free Soil" Democrats was the prevailing political sentiment in the Territory. Now, "in a new world", where the racial image of the state could be easily shaped, exclusion of blacks was codified at the time of statehood, making Oregon unique in the nation in this regard.[21]

Although the law permitted blacks already living in Oregon to remain, the "Black Laws", which stayed on the books until 1926, reflected racist views of many of the earliest settlers that certainly were passed down through generations. Even as disapproval for the "Black Laws" was

[21] Ibid., pp.58-76.

growing, so was the political and social strength of the Ku Klux Klan in the state. And while the influence of groups such as the Klan per se was probably never great among Portland longshoremen, the group, comprised so heavily of native Oregonians certainly contained men whose view of blacks was in the "Oregon tradition." (Immigrant Scandinavians in the group probably embraced this as well, just as immigrant Europeans elsewhere in the West had earlier joined with native white workers to denounce the Chinese.)

In the Pacific Northwest, radical unionism had made peace early on with racist agitation. The earliest organization of labor in the Pacific Northwest, the Knights of Labor, had as a significant focus keeping Chinese workers out of the region in the 1880's. In 1888, the Knights struck the Roslyn, Washington coalfields after the Northern Pacific Railroad, a subsidiary of which owned the mines, brought in some fifty black workers who would work for longer and less than whites.[22] W. Thomas White, writing on the factor of race in the Northwest railroad workforce, chronicles, as well, anxiety among white workers in that industry over the recruitment of Japanese and southern and eastern Europeans. The line that the region was a "white man's country" (and a northwestern European white man's

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[22] Schwantes, Carlos A. Radical Heritage: Labor, Socialism, and Reform in Washington and British Columbia, 1885-1917. Seattle: U. of Washington Press, 1979. p.30.

country at that) was used early in the twentieth century by AFL officials to galvanize support for their efforts.[23] Oregon, as expressly the whitest part of this working-class "white man's country", was very fertile ground for this rhetoric. And with the AFL standing behind the ILA, the establishment of an ILA local in Portland to be comprised entirely of whites must have seemed to many longshoremen not contradictory, but a matter of course.

But although historically Portland and Oregon have a less violent history of labor conflict than California, Washington, and British Columbia, this does not necessarily signify a past marked by a conservatism of labor. The nature of longshore work in the city brought about the presence of a radicalizing influence very early on. This was the "One Big Union" doctrine of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), which was strong in Portland, as elsewhere in the region. And it existed as part of an international movement that decried racism among workers.

On the city's docks in the early years of the twentieth century was a large overlap between work on the docks and work in the timber camps. The casual nature of employment in both industries led to many men who crossed back and forth between the two, as well as the third occupation of shipping out to sea which has always shared a broad

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[23] White, W. Thomas. "Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Railroad Work Force: The Case of the Far Northwest, 1883-1918". Western Historical Quarterly. July, 1985. pp.265-283.

interface with longshore work. Because so much cargo shipped from Portland was in the form of unprocessed logs, the know-how and ability of woodsworkers translated well to the waterfront, and old-timers interviewed by Kimeldorf indicated that in the twenties, about a third of Portland's longshoremen were former loggers.[24] From the woods came the syndicalist gospel: a vindictive class-consciousness, a commitment to direct action and agitation against employers not necessarily predicated on specific demands, and, at its fringes, the whispers of "sabotage" and "anarchy" that gave the Wobblies such an Achilles' heel in the contemporary press.[25]

The IWW, in many of its various other local incarnations, had a history of putting the issue of race front and center, condemning discrimination and naming it as a ploy of capital to keep labor divided and impotent. The western IWW paper, the Industrial Worker, claimed in an item

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[24] Kimeldorf, Reds or Rackets?, p.25.

[25] The national infrastructure of the IWW was wrecked in 1919 following the imprisonment of the main leaders on charges of sedition: the Wobblies had strongly denounced World War I as a war of imperialism. It seems likely that the IWW as a strong presence had evaporated even in the Northwest by the end of the twenties, but, as will be seen, the Wobblies remained a cohesive group in Portland through the 1922 strike. The union (if it can be called such) still has a national office in Chicago, and chapters in a few US and Canadian cities (including Seattle and Vancouver, B.C.)

The Communist Party's exacting doctrines never really were welded onto the thinking of Portland's workers. Pilcher wrote that though the CP and socialist groups had had "some influence" on the docks in Portland, "the ideological orientation has been derived almost directly from that of the IWW..." (The Portland Longshoremen, p.5.)

in 1912 that, "The only Negro we fight is he who employs labor."[26] And this was supported time and again by the movement's refusal to set up auxiliary locals, even in the Deep South. In South Africa, a group of American IWW seamen formed the Industrial Worker's Union of South Africa and, in 1910-11, led a campaign to bring a biracial general strike, which, though unsuccessful, did spark the first-ever strike in South Africa's history in which both blacks and whites participated, a trainmen's strike in Johannesburg.[27]

In the early part of the century, the IWW organized a great many black workers in Southern timber camps and on the waterfronts of the East Coast. The Marine Transport Workers' Industrial Union, formed by the IWW in 1913, was the first union in the country to organize white and black dockworkers, and as a trade union too! The success of the MTWIU was most spectacular in Philadelphia, where the local struck for recognition in 1913, opposed by the ILA, the AFL, and even the Philadelphia Socialist Party, though supported by Philadelphia's African Methodist Episcopal Church. (One local black minister put it bluntly: "The IWW at least protects the colored man, which is more than I can say for

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[26] Industrial Worker, 9/19/12, quoted in Foner, Organized Labor and the Black Worker, p.111.

[27] Ibid.

the laws of this country.")[28]

African-American dockworkers were joined in the strike by Italians, Poles, Slavs, and other white ethnic groups, many foreign-born. Solidarity between black and white workers saw the strike through, and the MTW won their recognition and collective bargaining rights. Strikes over the next several years by longshoremen and boatmen shored up union gains, and by 1916 the wage for a longshoreman had been raised from the pre-MTW rate of $1.25 per day to $4 per day, for both black and white workers. The local alternated monthly between appointing a black chairman and a white, and the local's commitment to racial unity was visible every day in black and white workers in gangs together.[29] The Wobblies also formed Marine Transport Workers locals in Baltimore, New Orleans, and Galveston, and each of these ports had a predominantly black longshore work force.

It was in New Orleans that the Wobblies scored arguably their most astonishing coup in terms of forging racial unity among dockworkers. The Dock and Cotton Council of New Orleans organized, under the direction of the charismatic white Wobbly leader Covington Hall, organized all of the patchwork of Jim Crow craft unions into a biracial waterfront trade union in the first decade of the twentieth

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[28] Ibid., pp.112-13.

[29] Ibid.

century. This organization, in which all gangs and officer positions in the union were governed by a strict principle of half black, half white, contained a stunning breadth of membership. Ex-slaves and former sharecroppers from various parts of the South, as well as native New Orleanian African-Americans worked alongside white dockworkers many of whom were recent immigrants--mostly German and Irish, some Portuguese and Italian. In October, 1907, the Council called a general strike which quickly paralyzed everything on the levee. Some 10,000 men struck, demanding better wages and an end to work speedups, particularly among cotton handlers on the docks. Though the strike ended in twenty days, the employers had been scared, and half-and-half lasted for a few years longer before being dismantled.[30]

Some radical longshoremen in Portland, such as Matt Meehan, were, by the thirties, realizing that a more

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[30] Rosenberg, Daniel. New Orleans Dockworkers: Race, Labor, and Unionism, 1829-1923. Albany: SUNY Press, 1988., pp.115-135. However, the mobilization throughout the South to completely marginalize blacks was ultimately victorious against the union effort, and also the increasingly large number of black workers compared to white made 'half-and-half', ironically, discriminatory to blacks. Rosenberg notes that solidarity "had developed between two ostensible 'halves' that were not at all equal in society." In other words, the unity between African-American workers and whites had been a matter of survival for both, but for the whites, marginalized though they might be, it was less so. Whites, especially in the so-called "nadir"-era segregationist South, could be bought out of believing too strongly in the heresy of racial equality on the docks. And so, the ILA made inroads into New Orleans and the rest of the Gulf by building segregated locals that employers found no objection to, and which were bitterly opposed by black labor leaders, some of whom supported the ILWU's ill-fated bid for organization in the Gulf in 1937.

practical set of tactics were needed to organize the docks than the class-antagonist refusal to negotiate that had hurt the IWW. Yet at the point of convergence between the radical movements among longshoremen in San Francisco and those of Portland in 1934, there was already a long tradition of leftist thinking among at least some of Portland's longshoremen, with the IWW having laid in the framework for this. And that ideas of racial equality were held by Portland's IWW men is strongly suggested by the fact of activism on behalf of black ILA members by Wobblies in the Seattle and Tacoma locals beginning during World War I. Pitts notes that many blacks were elected to important committees in Seattle, "mainly due to the co-operation of members of the IWW."[31] Indeed, it will be shown that among Portland longshoremen, Wobblies and those men influenced by them did hold tight to racial equality as a principle.

No doubt it would be an oversimplification to cast the entire clash over Local 8's integration in terms of racial exclusion's adherents versus the IWW's class-consciousness. There were also factors such as the emotional issue of respect for local autonomy, which will be discussed in the conclusion. But the conflicting traditions of exclusion and

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[31] Pitts, Robert B. "Organized Labor and the Negro in Seattle", Master's thesis, U. of Washington, 1941., p.42. Few of Seattle's African-American longshoremen actually joined the IWW, because holding a red card was a sure-fire way to lose a job, and, as Pitts points out, as a group their position on the waterfront was precarious enough without such radical affiliations.

radicalism in Oregon were central to the stances of right and left factions within the local regarding the issue.

CHAPTER 3\ PORTLAND: SECTARIAN DIVIDES AND THE "WHITE SHOP"

> We checked back into the records of longshore employment as far back as 1886. We found that not a single Negro had worked on the waterfront in all that time. So we figure that if they weren't willing to work with us when we were having our troubles, why should we let them come in now and get in on the gravy?
> --retired Portland longshoreman, interviewed in 1965. [32]

In 1953, at the biennial convention of the ILWU, John Walker, a delegate from ILWU Local 10 in San Francisco, spoke regarding his opinion of James Fantz, at that point under consideration for the union office of President Pro-Tem. "Brother Fantz", said Walker,"can rest assured that Local 10, where there are practically 2,000 Negroes, will find me going back and fighting to the very inch of my life to convince those Negroes not to...hold any prejudice against Brother Fantz because of the local that Brother Fantz comes from."[33]

Walker was referring to Portland's Local 8, which had never allowed a black man membership. This fact, well known

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[32] Larrowe, Charles P. Harry Bridges: The Rise and Fall of Radical Labor in the US. Westport, Conn.: Lawrence Hill, 1977., p.367.

[33] ILWU Biennial Convention Proceedings, 1953, p.505. Walker was apparently (and perhaps surprisingly) a good friend of G. Johnny Parks, a Local 8 man who, as sometime president of the local, opposed Bridges efforts to integrate Local 8 on the grounds of local autonomy. (Parks interview.)

in the rank-and-file of the other West Coast longshore locals, was a cause for alarm to the men who had led the ILWU since its inception, and were trying determinedly to shape an ideology of racial equality within the union. Despite this, the leaders of the union were not to act decisively until the early sixties to integrate Local 8, leaving an avowedly racist local as a part of the ILWU during its most radical years.

For Portland to have been the offending local in the union should have been no surprise, for at the time it was a city in which "white trade only" signs could still be seen on the front windows of restaurants and stores. Home to almost all of the African-Americans living in the state, Portland still had no more than a 2.1% black population in 1960, an increase from the early fifties.[34]

Strife between African-American workers and organized labor in Portland was, by the beginning of the fifties, nothing new. Due to the concentration of black workers in the shipyards, the segregation of black members of the Boilermaker's union into a separate (and decidedly unequal) auxiliary had been vigorously protested in the forties (albeit with little effect until the Federal government intervened.)[35] The Portland NAACP was also vocally

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[34] Pilcher, The Portland Longshoremen, p.68.

[35] Smith, Alonzo and Quintard Taylor, "Racial Discrimination in the Workplace: A Study of Two West Coast Cities". Journal of Ethnic Studies. Spring, 1980. pp.35-54.

concerned about the inferior positions available to blacks in various other unions; A "Report on the Negro in Portland" in a City Club of Portland bulletin in 1957 found that a number of Portland locals of national unions were actively discriminatory against African-American workers, singling out the railroad worker's locals as particular as being "the heaviest offenders".[36] Local 8, however, had never had any blacks among its ranks, "auxiliary" or otherwise, and thus no blacks save gangs of travelling "casual" workers from the Bay Area and San Pedro ILWU locals, and occasionally from various Gulf ports, had ever worked the docks in Portland by the close of the fifties.[37] At the national conventions of the ILWU from the late forties and through the fifties, the issue of Portland's "lily-white" docks had come up in discussions on the floor. To those in the Portland local who favored integration, this was bitter medicine. But the local contained a small but vocal faction of right-wingers who adamantly opposed the International, considering the problem to be one for the Portland membership alone to decide. It is true that, as in other ILWU locals, the rank-and-file of Local 8 contained men of very pronounced left-

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[36] Committee report: "Report on the Negro in Portland: A Progress Report 1945-57". City Club of Portland Bulletin. v.37, no.46. p.364.

[37] Ex-longshoreman from Local 8 (anonymous by request); telephone interview, 4/16/91.

wing views.[38] Their efforts to bring blacks into the local were blocked in the forties, however, and the issue lay dormant until the International stepped up its efforts to force a solution in the early sixties.

Ironically, the specific policy of exclusion was inherited by dockworkers from the waterfront employers, and from the city government as well. In Portland, unlike Seattle and San Francisco, white longshoremen had never faced blacks recruited as scab labor in the strikes prior up to and including the strikes of 1934 and 1936.[39] As policy, the waterfront employers in Portland would not hire blacks as strikebreakers; a letter from a would-be worker applying to the Portland Waterfront Employers' Union during the 1922 longshore strike was answered by a form letter

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[38] Larrowe, Harry Bridges, p.344-345. It was the policy of the ILWU to provide "sanctuary" for workers whose politics had met (or might meet) with persecution in other unions. This was reflected in contracts with the employers' associations which provided for no discrimination in hiring based on politics. From the beginning this included communists of every stripe, anarchists, radical Catholic trade unionists, and many men who had fought for the Spanish Republic in the Abraham Lincoln brigades.

[39] Pilcher, The Portland Longshoremen, pp.68-69. Pilcher is clear on this point, though Kimeldorf in Reds or Rackets? contradicts him, saying that the 1922 strike did see blacks strikebreaking in Portland (p.145). Kimeldorf gives no source for this. In his book on the 1934 longshore strike in Portland, Dock Strike, Buchanan devotes the first chapter ('Background') to a discussion of the strikes in Portland up to '34, and in his account of the 1922 strike makes no mention of any of the numerous strikebreakers having been blacks.

Finally, an ex-longshoreman (who requested anonymity) told me that in 1916 blacks had been brought in by the employers to break a strike in the summer of that year. However, a survey of the Portland newspapers from late June, 1916, when the strike occurred, revealed no mention of blacks having been involved.

which read, "...we employ white labor only."[40]

There is evidence that the city's Chamber of Commerce at one point (most probably in 1922) warned employers not to bring in blacks to break a strike.[41] The Waterfront Employers Union, as mentioned previously, was comprised of essentially the same core of employers in every major West Coast port, and had not encountered hostility towards recruitment of black strikebreakers elsewhere--or at least not enough to have made the practice non-viable.

Through the twenties and thirties, as a result of the employers' stance, the docks were worked, even during the strikes, by a tight crew of roughneck workers of largely Midwestern Euro-American background with a strong contingent of Scandinavian and German men, both direct immigrants and

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[40] WEU correspondence, 5/8/22, quoted in Pilcher, The Portland Longshoremen, p.68.

[41] Larrowe, Harry Bridges, p.367. The old-timer went on to say, "Well, if Negroes aren't good enough for the Chamber of Commerce, they're not good enough for us either!" Truly never-say-die class consciousness!

Would it be reasonable to assume that the Portland Chamber of Commerce was under the influence of the Ku Klux Klan at the time of the 1922 strike in Portland? Considering the apparent zenith of Klan power in Oregon in the early twenties, and considering their relationship with the various fraternal orders in the city such as the Scottish Rite Masonic Temple, I think so. However, even if the Klan were not, per se, involved in the decision, it is possible that the Chamber foresaw tension involving police and blacks. The Klan did have a large following among Portland's policemen in the twenties, and it is quite possible that police assigned to protect dock areas worked by black strikebreakers would have refused this task. (See Toy, Eckard V., "The Ku Klux Klan in Oregon", Master's thesis, U. of Oregon, 1959.)

first generation.[42] Later, following World War II, a number of whites who had worked in the shipyards entered the local in Portland, and became, by one assessment, the backbone of a dissident but muscular effort to keep the docks not only white, but free of Communists.[43]

As in Seattle and San Francisco, blacks as well as whites who scabbed would have had cause to fear for their lives during labor disputes. It is also very possible, considering the abovementioned stance of the Chamber of Commerce, that the risk to blacks might have been compounded in Portland by the police standing aside to let pickets assault black strikebreakers. However, blacks having worked at all on the waterfront in Portland would certainly have provided incentive for bringing them into the local when it formed in 1937, lest they be a ready pool of strikebreakers, bitter about past exclusion. The irony is apparent--where blacks were brought in as scab labor, initial racial friction was present, yet eventually resolved in favor of unity, but where blacks were excluded by the employers, as in Portland, the union followed suit. Elsewhere, the blacks who were involved in the 1934 strike thoroughly validated the presence of blacks in the ILWU, and if racial prejudice

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[42] Pilcher, The Portland Longshoremen, pp.33-34. G. Johnny Parks remembers large numbers of Irish-Americans (who were numerous in the early Bay Area ILWU locals) in Local 8, in addition to many Scandinavians. (Parks interview.)

[43] Kimeldorf, Reds or Rackets?, p.145.

was not eliminated entirely among white ILWU men, racial exclusion as a policy was dead in those cities.[44]

In Seattle, blacks were on the docks as strikebreakers during the longshore strike of June, 1916, when the Pacific Coast District Council of the International Longshoremen's Association struck the West Coast and more than 21,000 men walked off the job. In Seattle, between three and four hundred of some fourteen hundred strikebreakers were blacks, recruited from Kansas City, New Orleans, and St.Louis. They were quartered round-the-clock at a warehouse on the waterfront, fed at company expense, and protected from strikers by armed guards who ringed the docks. (However, violence did occur when the strikebreakers attempted to leave the dock areas, and the instigation of this violence was predictably blamed on the IWW faction within the ILA pickets by the Seattle press.)[45]

The federally-mandated end of the strike with the nation's entrance into World War I brought no real victory to the ILA, but many blacks were brought in to the union

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[44] Rubin, The Negro in the Longshore Industry, p.142. San Pedro and Long Beach have a history of racism not much better than Portland's. However, this was never marked by complete exclusion. Kimeldorf, in Reds or Rackets? (p.145), reports that during World War II and after, there was constant harassment of blacks. In one incident, two white longshoremen refused to form a gang with three blacks. However, Local 13 officers demanded that the white men apologize or face expulsion, which certainly shows more of an active commitment to Bridges' line than was ever seen in Portland.

[45] Pitts, "Organized Labor and the Negro in Seattle", pp.39-40.

following the strike. This did not end discrimination against black longshoremen, as some whites still refused to work with blacks and quit. But Seattle's waterfront, through wartime boom and post-war bust, through the time of the ILA halls and the so-called "fink hall" era in the twenties and thirties, was never an exclusively whites-only workplace after 1916. Thus, African-Americans, Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, and Mexicans joined with whites in the coastwide 1934 strike, and this cemented the place of African-Americans in the Seattle ILWU (Local 19) when that organization replaced ILA Local 38-12. A large amount of IWW influence had been at work in Seattle, especially prior to and during World War I, which probably contributed to the initial acceptance of blacks. Most likely, though, this acceptance was a function of pragmatism, not radicalism; exclusion of blacks would have been foolhardy in light of the number of black strikebreakers in 1916's unrest.[46]

In San Francisco, the ILA local, during its fitful existence, had managed to attract only a bare handful of African-Americans before 1934, but when the longshore strike occurred that year, several hundred blacks who had been recruited to scab refused to, and joined the pickets. Perhaps most importantly, many blacks were among the strikers who battled it out with the cops and National Guard

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[46] Ibid., 52-55. Also Magden, Ronald E. A History of Seattle Waterfront Workers: 1884-1934. Seattle: ILWU Local 19, 1991., p.88.

on the Embarcadero and Rincon Hill. With the coming of the ILWU, black longshoremen in the Bay Area were heavily represented in the ranks of all the locals. Two blacks served on the 1934 strike committee in San Francisco, fifteen in 1936-37, and that year, three blacks were elected to the executive board, and an anti-discrimination committee was established for Local 10. By the end of World War II, the San Francisco longshoremen were nearly one-third black.[47]

Bridges, as the shaper of the ideology of the International as a whole, was on well-defined home ground in San Francisco and the Bay Area, and so his commitment to racial equality naturally exerted an influence on the locals there. This is well illustrated by an incident in 1945 when Bridges, at a meeting in which the cutbacks in labor pending with the war's end were being discussed, was confronted by a white worker asking what was to be done with the "excessive number of blacks" on the San Francisco waterfront. Bridges replied that it was his personal belief that if work ever slowed to the point that only two longshoremen were left with work, one should be black. Cleophas Williams, one of the black longshoremen in attendance at that meeting, later reflected that Bridges' statement

was very shocking to me because there was no

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[47] U.S. Census of Population: 1950, Vol. II, Characteristics of the Population, part 2, California volume, Table 77. Also Kimeldorf, Reds or Rackets?, p.146.

> political gain for him by making this statement. There was no gain even among blacks at that particular time because many of the blacks were still on probation, so they couldn't vote. I considered it a statement of conviction. I was shocked. I had read and been exposed to some of the left-wing forces, but I had never heard anyone put his neck on the chopping block by making a public statement of this kind.[48]

Portland's radical longshoremen, unlike their counterparts in Seattle and the Bay Area, had the long history of legally codified racial prejudice to surmount in any campaign to bring black workers to the waterfront. Though the exclusion laws were off the books by 1926, the strength of the Klan in Oregon politics in the twenties is testimony that the old mentality was alive in Oregon in the form of a vehement nativism. This was displayed in anti-Catholic and anti-Asian sentiment as well as anti-black. Any radical ferment occurring on the Portland docks was to do so with these social currents active in the background, and the feud within the Portland local over black membership was to be marked by a vocalization of this nativism even within the framework of trade unionism that was the ILWU.

Portland's IWW leanings were to take some bizarre turns, which are worth examining, for they shed light on the nature of factional dispute in Portland with the coming of the ILWU. Wobblies were active in organizing waterfront strikes on the whole West Coast in 1916 and 1917, which were broken by the employers' united front. A strike in 1919

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[48] Quoted in Kimeldorf, Reds or Rackets?, p.148.

established the ILA on the coast very briefly, establishing locals with hiring halls. However, there was a union membership of only 250 men in Portland, while an additional group of some 800 men were effectively in the shape-up, dispatched out of the hall only after the union men were. Many IWW men were in the latter group, but none in the ILA.[49]

The reason for this, which was unique to Portland, is not clear; however, there appears to have been a tacit agreement between the employers and the ILA men--a minority of the longshoremen--to have recognition of the union and preferential hiring of ILA men in exchange for keeping the Wobblies out. A pervasive practice of nepotism in hiring into the union made this a reality. The Wobblies decried the Portland ILA as illegitimate, and in 1922, when the employers decided to break the union by forcing a strike, the "One Big Union" men showed their disdain by scabbing. Matt Meehan: "...the Wobblies broke the 1922 strike. They broke it, they finked...(but) I wouldn't call them finks, not in my book...they're good trade unionists." (Meehan went on to explain how the ILA men always gave Wobblies the worst jobs on dispatch from their hall prior to the strike, and so what caused their scabbing was "the way they were

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[49] Pilcher, The Portland Longshoremen, pp.31-32.

treated by the union men.")[50]

Not all of the Wobblies were strikebreakers; some favored the strike as a means of gaining access to the union if the outcome was favorable.[51] However, the strikebreaking IWW men were very good at it, able to teach less knowledgeable scabs the tricks of the trade, and so were perceived by the pickets as having broken the back of the strike.[52] In any event, after the defeat of the ILA, the employers in Portland, as in the other ports on the coast (except Tacoma, where a nominally "independent" ILA local existed) set up a "fink hall", which gave them full control over hiring. At this point, the beginnings of the ideological rift in the Portland local emerge.

Portland's employers now hired the Wobblies first, and the ILA men last. There was much pointing of fingers and accusations of "scab" among the longshoremen, and violence at one point broke out when ex-ILA and IWW men were

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[50] Hardy, "The 1934 Portland Longshoremen's Strike", pp.188-189. Rather strangely, the Portland Telegraph blamed the 1922 strike on the IWW, claiming it was instigated by outside Wobbly agitators and not by native Portlanders, and that it had no specific demands, but was just intended to sabotage the port's operation. The only apparent explanation is that by blaming the strike on the IWW, when only a few Wobblies were on the picket lines, they would be "bad-jacketed" (to use the COINTELPRO jargon) not only in the eyes of the striking ILA men (because many of the IWW men were scabbing on the strike), but in the eyes of the public too! (See Portland Telegraph, 8/17/22, 10/16/22, and 10/20/22.)

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid.

dispatched to work the same ship.[53] (A split in the employers' ranks brought about the creation of a second hiring hall, further complicating matters.) The schism between those longshoremen identified as IWW and those not existed, if we are to believe Pilcher, even after the coming of the ILWU.

Somewhere along the line, the Wobbly doctrine of no-compromise strike tactics rather than concrete demands must have evolved among the IWW men in Portland into a commitment to something at least close to the synthesis of CP and syndicalist ideals being forged by Bridges and the Albion Hall men in San Francisco. The abovementioned disagreement over tactics between Bridges and Meehan notwithstanding, Portland did join with the rest of the West Coast in a consensus vote on the need for coastwide unity in demanding recognition of the ILA. Exactly how this understanding between groups with such differing formulations of radical outlook occurred cannot be pinpointed. But it must have occurred, for by Pilcher's account, it was chiefly "former members of the IWW" who had sufficient credibility with the rank and file to have led the walkout on the morning of May 9, 1934, when Bridges gave the word.

With the IWW men (as Pilcher would have it) as the prime movers in the 1934 strike, the bitter feelings between the strikers of 1922 and the Wobblies remained not only

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[53] Pilcher, The Portland Longshoremen, p.32.

through the dozen years leading up to the resurrection of the union but also shaped the formation of factions within Local 8. These factions, the players in the internal debate over racial integration, well-defined through the end of the fifties, when the local began to see power shift away from the older generation.[54]

The left-wing faction in the local was present and militant on the racial integration issue from the start. In the early forties, one of Local 8's more radical men, Rosco Craycraft, proposed during a meeting that blacks be brought into the local. Craycraft's proposal sparked an argument, which turned into an ugly brawl that quickly ended the meeting.[55]

In 1937, militant African-American longshoremen in the Gulf Coast ports of Galveston, New Orleans and Mobile, saw in the triumph of the West Coast's longshoremen a means of destroying the chokehold of the ILA, with its policies of establishing separate auxiliary locals to appease the segregationist powers-that-be in the various cities. Bridges, ever the evangelist, obliged with a contingent of

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[54] Ibid., p.55. Pilcher here mentions the left-wing faction as having been originally "the IWW group".

[55] Ronald Magden, personal communication, based on communication between Magden and the late Rosco Craycraft. Craycraft was, incidentally, well known in Portland labor circles for a January, 1939 incident in which he prevented a gang that he was supervising from unloading cargo from a German freighter that was flying the swastika. The skipper backed down and replaced the Nazi flag with an American. (Portland Labor New Dealer, 1/20/39.)

about a dozen men to spread the word on the South's docks.[56] This was a direct affront to employers and ILA officials alike, and, angered at the audacity of Californian "Reds" preaching biracial unionism on their turf, they lashed out violently. Disaster struck in the form of beatings at the hands of police and employer's thugs in New Orleans as the ILWU men tried to speak in a union hall; ILWU vice-president Bob Robertson's back was broken and several ribs smashed, and several other men were badly hurt.[57] The ILWU, though managing to get enough support from New Orleans longshoremen to petition the National Labor Relations Board for an election against the ILA, lost, due to

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[56] The Gulf Coast ports, with huge majorities of African-Americans in their ranks, had seen the ILA cater to the bald racism of the employers and shunt blacks to segregated auxiliary locals. Although the official policy of the ILA was to not exclude on the basis of race, they certainly were not given to challenging segregation wherever that was the norm. (African-Americans have always made up the overwhelming majority of longshoremen in Gulf and Southeastern ports since before the Civil War. Cargo handling in these ports was originally done by gangs of slaves.) The advent of the ILA in the South went hand-in-hand with erosion of the once-formidable power of African-American controlled unionism, especially in New Orleans. For a discussion of the ILA in the Gulf, as well as the ILWU's attempt in 1937 to gain a foothold there (though minus the brutality which greeted it) see Northrup, Herbert R., "The New Orleans Longshoremen", Political Science Quarterly, (12/42), pp.533-540.

[57] ILWU Biennial Convention Proceedings, 1943, pp.175-76. There was to emerge in the long term from the debacle a large migration of black longshoremen to the West Coast, particularly San Francisco, with the onset of the war. (Shipping from Southern ports fell off sharply due to German submarines in the Gulf of Mexico, and, as importantly, the word was out that the docks of the West Coast, and the Bay Area in particular, offered a relative haven from racial discrimination.) See Kimeldorf, Reds or Rackets?, 144-45.

misunderstandings about the nature of the West Coast's "decasualization" among the black rank-and-file. Allegedly, these men were under the impression that the ILWU hiring system would endanger their jobs rather than guarantee them.[58] However, a number of black dockworkers came to the West Coast in 1937, to work there and see firsthand how the hiring hall system worked.[59]

One of these men came to Portland in 1937, and went to see the local's executive board with the intention of asking for permission to work on the docks as a temporary while observing the operation of the dispatch system, attending meetings, and so on. The matter should have been routine; after all, Bridges had sent the man up for specifically these reasons. But it was not to be. James Fantz, who was on the executive board of Local 8 at that time, remembers what occurred. After making the man wait in the hall until every other item on the agenda was discussed, the local's president, Hap Murray, told him to come in. And after hearing from the man what his request was, Murray told him

> well, you know, we've never had any blacks around here, but in Seattle now, they've always had blacks. And he dug in his pocket and said, I'd be willing to donate so much to send you on up to Seattle, and all the others did the same, and they just passed the hat, and he had his ticket money

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[58] Northrup, "The New Orleans Longshoremen", p.540.

[59] James Fantz interview.

for Seattle. Of course, I was embarrassed no end![60]

In December of 1943, the left-wing members of Local 8 attempted to integrate the union by bringing a black man, Harry Mills, a former nightclub bartender who had been working as a "temporary" on the docks for about a year. (The increasing amount of military cargo going to the Pacific Theater brought some hiring of temporaries, but no blacks besides Mills were hired.) It was a simple strategy: with one black voted into membership, the way would be paved for others. Mills was generally well-liked and was viewed as a competent worker, and so confident were those pushing for Mills' acceptance that few of them even showed up at the meeting at which the vote was to be taken.

However, those opposed to integration had "assembled every segregationist they could find" and filibustered hard when the vote came. "We are not opposed to Harry Mills.", stated the local's vice-president after the vote, "We are fighting the Negro race! We cannot open our doors to the Negro people after having kept them closed all of this time." The left-wing, angered at the refusal, wanted to organize and force the issue, but now it was Mills' turn to

[60] Fantz interview. Fantz suggested that the ILWU delegation, including vice-president Bob Robertson, had been on the lookout to "make personal contact" with blacks in the Gulf Coast ports willing to travel to Portland with the intention of easing the process of integration of the Portland local. This would indicate that the ILWU's leadership had taken an interest in the integration of Portland from the very start.

refuse; unwilling to be the focal point of such controversy, he left the waterfront and reportedly moved to California soon afterwards.[61] James Fantz: "I talked to Mills and others talked to him and said, you know, we have a job to do here, but he wasn't having any of it."[62]

With this incident, race became a truly contested issue in the local, and an exception to the rule of employing class and working class having nothing in common had been forged; city fathers, employers and a dominant faction of men in the local had agreed, in practice, on a "white shop" policy for the waterfront. The ideological parameters of the quarrel, and its highly politicized nature, were quite apparent after 1943; as one of the leaders of the right-wing group of Local 8 declared then, "when the local voted to keep out the niggers they should have voted to kick out the commies also--and maybe they will."[63]

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24 Pilcher, The Portland Longshoremen, pp.69-70; Portland People's Observer, 12/21/43. That Bridges was in close contact with the Portland left-wing during the Mills incident is a strong possibility. Kimeldorf in Reds or Rackets? quotes a December 20, 1943, letter from Bridges to the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice in which he promised to take "immediate and drastic steps...to correct this situation."(p.145) James Fantz also indicated to me that the Mills stratagem was known to Bridges, and that he was sorely disappointed in the outcome.

For whatever reason, the People's Observer never mentioned the strife between Portland blacks and Local 8 again.

62 Fantz interview.

63 Kimeldorf, Reds or Rackets?, pp.146-47. This quote was apparently culled from a letter written by Matt Meehan to Harry Bridges on January 1, 1944; this is indicative yet again of a personal interest of Bridges' in what was transpiring between pro-

There can be no doubt that this emerging sentiment was greeted in San Francisco with disgust and displeasure. An incident, recalled by longtime Portland radical and ILWU Dispatcher regional correspondent Julia G. Ruuttila, that occurred following the war aggravated the developing rift (or, to use the longshore term, a "beef".) Around 1949, a Portland longshoreman went to San Francisco to work, and, as provided for in by-laws of the union, a man from San Francisco was thus made eligible for a slot on the Portland waterfront. In an aggressive move against Portland's policies, Bridges sent up a black longshoreman of San Francisco's Local 10 to work on the Portland docks. Soon after beginning work, though, the man went out early one morning with a gang to a job, and en route was turned on and thrown off a pier into the Willamette River. Though he was able to swim and thus survived, he was shortly back in San Francisco.[64] It is not difficult to imagine Bridges livid over this, not to mention the black members of the ILWU up and down the coast.

The tables could be turned on Portlanders in the Bay Area. James Fantz went to San Francisco at one point in the early fifties along with other Portland longshoremen during a lull in Portland's dock activity. Shortly after arrival,

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and anti- integration factions in Portland.

[64] Julia G. Ruuttila, interviewed by Sandy Polishuk, 2/22/91. The truth of the alleged incident is contested by G. Johnny Parks. (Parks correspondence.)

he was dispatched from the hall to join a gang in Oakland to work on a night shift packing a freighter, and, as he remembers, the mood towards him in the hold was unfriendly, for he was not only the only white man on the gang, but was known to be from Portland. As he climbed into the hold, he overheard this being discussed by the black longshoremen in angry tones. He had fears of the winchman dropping a load on his head or receiving a beating, until the mood changed abruptly when a black longshoreman who knew Fantz let it be known to the rest that he was a "Bridges man"; i.e., not one of the racists.[65]

Similarly, G. Johnny Parks, another retired Portland longshoreman, recalls being invited to a membership meeting by the president of Local 10 in San Francisco when he was president of Local 8. When introduced, he stepped up to the podium and "was booed and yelled at for five minutes solid." Once he could speak, he was loudly heckled by blacks in the crowd, and at one point a black longshoreman brandishing a sword ran toward the podium! (Someone tripped him and he was thrown out of the meeting.) Soon a black longshoreman (the abovementioned John Walker, who defended James Fantz at the 1953 ILWU convention), a friend of Parks', came up to the podium and whispered to Parks that there was a cab waiting for him outside the hall. When Parks told him that he was not finished, Walker replied,"We've got to get you

[65] Fantz interview.

out of here now, or you're not leaving!" Parks left, but order had been completely wrecked by his presence and the meeting had to be adjourned early.[66]

James Fantz recalls that, "Whenever we (the Portland delegation) would go to a caucus or a convention in San Francisco, Seattle, San Diego, first thing they'd do would be to start beating on Portland for being such a racist outfit."[67] The large numbers of African-American longshoremen in the ILWU seem not to have been hesitant to get on the microphone to voice discontent at coastwide conventions. At the 1957 convention, Jesse Jones, a black longshoreman from Los Angeles, spoke of the need to "break down in many of these shops that we have here among us this discrimination." Jones then astonished Bridges (and no doubt many other whites present) with his assertion that, "We have locals which are just as bad as any local that you will find in Georgia or Mississippi." Bridges' response: "That's a pretty strong statement, Brother."[68] At no point

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[66] Parks interview. Afterwards, Parks apologized to Local 10's president for having caused such disorder, to which the latter replied that he should have known better than to invite Parks.

Parks had friendships with a number of black longshoremen from the Bay Area who discerned that his opposition to the International's efforts to bring blacks "in the back door" to Local 8 was a legitimate defense of his local's autonomy. It is likely, too, that these men understood that it made no sense to scapegoat one man, even the local's president, for the sentiments of the Portland rank-and-file.

[67] Fantz interview.

[68] ILWU 1957 Biennial Convention Proceedings, p.213.

in the official published records of the ILWU, either convention proceedings or the Dispatcher, is Portland ever named as being in defiance of the International. However, that there was dissatisfaction with the position of blacks in certain locals did make it into the record, and the leadership's patience must have been wearing thin by the close of the fifties.[69] Although occasionally black longshoremen would come to Portland as "travellers" during the decade the abovementioned practice of "passing the hat" for a trip to Tacoma, Seattle, or even Vancouver, B.C. became a Local 8 trademark.[70]

In the late fifties, Portland longshoremen blocked the International when its organizers came from San Francisco and signed up workers handling grain on the docks, eventually getting a majority. An election was scheduled to be held by the National Labor Relations Board which would have likely brought the grain handlers into the Columbia River ILWU district, if not into Local 8. This never

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[69] Larrowe in Harry Bridges makes reference (p.367) to speeches made by delegates from Portland at conventions that were very much in a "states' rights" vein; acknowledging a problem, perhaps, but warning the International away from trying to interfere. My conjecture is that a standing resentment of San Francisco, as well as racial attitudes, informed this. But, it warrants footnote status here both because the dialogue of such feuding did not make it into the officially published accounts, and because the complete minutes of the conventions (in the International's San Francisco archives) have been placed "off-limits" to me by the International. Also, Larrowe does not make any citations regarding this.

[70] Hill interviews. The practice having been common in Portland was also mentioned by Parks.

happened, because longshoremen in Local 8, upon finding out that some of the grain handlers were black, voted to tell the NLRB to not hold the election, and the NLRB backed down.[71] How much or little threat was implicit in this cannot be determined, but it is clear that at the decade's end, proponents of the tradition of an all-white waterfront were a voting majority in the local. Bridges must have been incensed as never before, as Portland's policies were now at direct odds with not only ILWU theory, but practice as well. The local was threatening the growth of the union organization in the port of Portland.

Beginning in 1956, there was local mobilization within the African-American community of Portland, notably efforts of the Portland Urban League and Portland NAACP, to effect a change in the local's policy.[72] Responding to specific requests by these groups, Russell Peyton, holding the position of Oregon's state representative for civil rights at the time, began to apply pressure to the local to integrate, but the opposition was fierce, and he can recall heckling and not-too-subtle threats of violence directed at him from longshoremen when he twice spoke to the general

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[71] Larrowe, Harry Bridges, p.368. G. Johnny Parks, a member of the executive board of Local 8 in the fifties, denies that there was any such occurrence, and that none of the grain handlers in Portland were black at the time that Local 8 gained jurisdiction over their jobs. (Parks correspondence.)

[72] Russell Peyton interview. Also Rubin, The Negro in the Longshore Industry, p.144.

membership urging the integration of the local. So his next step was to call Harry Bridges. Bridges came to Portland sometime in 1959, spoke to the rank-and-file, and was unceremoniously booed out of the hall.[73]

James Fantz recalls that, "By the late fifties, early sixties, people (within the local) were starting to give up hope" on integration.[74] But in March, 1963, the annual report of the Portland chapter of the National Urban League specifically mentioned the exclusionist policy of Local 8 as being one of the main challenges to economic justice for black Portlanders.[75] In July, 1963, even the national NAACP spoke out in opposition to Local 8, with the chairman of the organization's labor and industries committee, the Reverend T.X. Graham, threatening the local with unspecified "direct action" if blacks were not soon employed on the Portland docks.[76]

The International stepped in decisively that summer to bring about change. This was, as suggested above, recognized by all concerned as a last resort measure. Unity among the West Coast's longshoremen has always carried a strong respect for the autonomy of individual locals. This

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[73] Peyton interview.

[74] Fantz interview.

[75] Portland Oregonian, 3/18/63.

[76] Portland Oregonian, 7/25/63.

has held true since the earliest days of exploration of coastwide unity, and was, of course, an obstacle to be surmounted following the 1922 debacle in which isolation of locals led to their serial destruction by the united employers. Nonetheless, the tradition has always been acknowledged by the ILWU. The ILWU Story of 1955 declared that, "Locals have complete autonomy in their affairs save for those matters for which the membership has delegated authority to the international union. No one can tell the local unions what policies to vote up or vote down...Of course, local constitutions must conform to the democratic pattern of the international constitution."[77] This rather ambivalent statement reflects the grounds for both the stances of Bridges and of Portland regarding integration. Rubin mentions Bridges respect for the local's autonomy as reflected in a letter to a Portland black community organization in the fifties; he expressed frustration, but said, in effect, that his hands were tied.[78]

Bridges' good working relationship with the head of the Pacific Maritime Association, Paul St. Sure, enabled him to ask for and get the replacement of two officers of the Portland PMA who had been advocates of the all-white

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[77] The ILWU Story, p.78.

[78] Rubin, The Negro in the Longshore Industry, p.144.

waterfront.[79] This was a step forward, but the true breakthrough was to come as a direct result of a contract with the PMA that had raised the wrath of many in the rank-and-file against Bridges: the Modernization and Mechanization Act.[80]

Pilcher refers to the "coercive power" that Bridges wielded from the controversial agreement. By this he is referring to provisions within that agreement which caused the shift in jurisdiction from the local level to the

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[79] Larrowe, Harry Bridges, p.368.

[80] "M and M", as it was termed, was essentially the realization of the provision of the NLB arbitration of the 1934 strike which gave all shipowners and dock managers the right "to introduce labor saving devices and to institute such methods of discharging and unloading cargo as he considers best suited to the conduct of his business, provided such methods of discharging and loading are not inimical to the safety or health of the employees." (NLB award, p.9; quoted in Magden, History of Seattle Waterfront Workers, p.233.)

In 1934, in light of the great gains of the strike, this had seemed unimportant in the arbitration. But by the late fifties, the advent of forklifts, a minor revolution in longshore work, was being compounded by technological advances like containerized cargo stowage that, if employed, would dramatically decrease the number of longshoremen needed on the entire coast. The Modernization and Modernization agreement was as inevitable as it was unpopular among union men, and laid down a set of agreements for the continuation of employer support of the ILWU's pension plans, medical programs, and a guarantee of 35 hours per week of work, or payment thereof, for all then-current union men. The amount of new hiring into any given local was now to be part of a more expressly coastwide blueprint than before, to be determined by both the International and PMA. The extension of the International's authority over the promotion of 'B- men to membership was controversial for its impinging on the long tradition of local autonomy, and this was most strongly felt in Portland. So Bridges was walking a high wire already in Portland as he moved to integrate Local 8. (The definitive account of the specific provisions, as well as some of the agony over the agreements, of M and M is Louis Goldblatt's Men and Machines, of 1963, from which this synopsis is drawn.)

International of power to promote 'B'-men to 'A', or full-member, status. This gave the International leverage to integrate the wayward Portland local, for now Bridges and his cadre could directly influence which men were to be brought up to the level of full membership, and which would not. This was to be the International's weapon against elements in Local 8 that opposed integration.[81]

In 1960-61 blacks came on as "identified casual" workers, the lowest and least secure level of working status, but one which traditionally led to 'B' and then 'A' status. (Many of these men were brought in through the longshoremen's customary practice of giving temporary work to men from other trades whose unions were on strike.) With these men on the waterfront, the days of ardent racial exclusion had passed, and so had any potential grounds for complaint by the International; this was the view of Local 8, but the International was not willing to accept it, taking the line that only after blacks were 'A'-men, voting

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[81] The system of progression to full membership in the union is fairly complex and in Pilcher's work, The Portland Longshoremen, is described in great detail (pp.51-66). It is, briefly, a three-tiered system comprised of 'A'-men, 'B'-men, and 'Y'-men (or "identified casuals"). The point of entry can either be 'Y' or 'B' status, most often the latter. Preference for jobs dispatched always goes to 'A'-men, whose pay is, however, no higher than that of 'B'-men or casuals.

A longshoreman's attaining local registration is not contingent on the approval of a local's membership, but through the port JPLRC, and then through the coastwide LRC in San Francisco. A registered longshoreman who is not a union member pays no dues, only a share of the hiring hall expenses, and is not entitled to attend union functions. (Parks correspondence.) The local does vote on prospective union members, however.

members of the union, would integration be accomplished.

The International's strategy for achieving this end was refusing to promote a block of some hundred 'B'-men to 'A'. This was resented greatly in Portland, for many of the 'B'-men were close kin to 'A'-men, who were determined to see them join the union. So the local cut around the International's rule and gave 'B'-men full 'A' status as a bloc, including work privileges, though the International did not recognize these men as such, and was not pleased with what seemed a subterfuge.[82]

The Vietnam War, though opposed by many resolutions of the ILWU even in the early sixties, was the catalyst for the next phase in the integration of the Portland local. With increasing amounts of military supplies being shipped to Southeast Asia, Local 8 found itself in need of more men, and announced, in 1963, that it would be hiring three hundred men to the 'B' list. Bridges was reportedly in favor of forcing the local to hire only blacks.[83] But

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[82] Pilcher, The Portland Longshoremen, pp.75-76. G. Johnny Parks, then president of the union, was responsible, in the early sixties, for defying Bridges personally on the issue of promotion at a meeting of Local 8. Bridges, in town specifically to confront the local's officers, told Parks not to swear in a group of 'B' men since no blacks had been brought into the union or even the 'B' list, but Parks did so before an approving membership. Bridges then got on the microphone, visibly extremely upset, and declared that none of the men would ever be registered by the International (which was met by the standard booing.) Local 8 registered the new members with the Portland JPLRC against the demands of Bridges. (Parks interview.)

[83] Ruuttila, interview by Polishuk, 2/22/91.

Louis Goldblatt, the union's secretary-treasurer took a more even-handed approach.

Goldblatt came to Portland with an eye to working with local chapters of black community organizations such as the Urban League and NAACP, trying to insure that the word got out to the black community that the hiring process would not shut them out, as in the past. Right away, the membership of Local 8 clashed with Goldblatt over the International's plan to hire on a "first-come, first-served" basis, circumventing the 'Y'-to-'B' progression that was customary.[84]

The compromise was finally reached between Goldblatt and the membership to admit the current list of around a hundred 'Y' men, including eleven black men, though several of the blacks in this group were older than forty, the maximum age for hiring. Goldblatt agreed to let the local "bring up" a few white 'Y'-men who were members' sons under the age of twenty-one, the minimum age. In addition, two-hundred men would be hired "first-come, first-served", regardless of race.[85]

Local 8 notified the Portland chapter of the National Urban League in early September, 1963, of the intention of the local to hire blacks. On September 12, at the Urban League's monthly meeting, Dr. Walter C. Reynolds spoke of

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[84] Larrowe, Harry Bridges, p.368.

[85] Ibid.

the development as a breakthrough for the city's African-American community, and urged "a mass of applications".[86] Some blacks, mostly formerly waiters, seamen, and hospital workers, began work on the Portland docks on February 7, 1964, with the rest of a total of forty-six beginning in the next two weeks.[87] Pilcher's claim that all the blacks who applied were accepted cannot be substantiated, but the era of strict exclusion ended.[88]

All of the three hundred new longshoremen, black and white, were initially 'B'-men, a status best characterized as "apprentice" longshoreman, all of whom could expect to attain membership in the course of a few years. The events that led to the first accusations of discrimination following the entrance of blacks is impossible to reconstruct with accuracy; however, such charges did result when some blacks perceived that they were being given no consideration for membership, and were being evaluated unfairly to determine their fitness for promotion to the 'A' roster. And when, by 1968, only a handful of blacks had

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[86] Portland Oregonian, 9/13/63.

[87] Hill interviews; Complaint document for Linell Hill et al. (for data on number of blacks hired in 1964 and number of blacks in group of 'Y' men prior to 1964 hiring), p.4.

[88] Larrowe, Harry Bridges, p.368. (Strangely, Goldblatt, in his two-volume interviewed memoir by Estolv Ward, makes no mention of the Local 8 affair, in which he was the International's frontline representative.)

attained 'A' status, a group of twenty-five of them filed a class action suit against Local 8.

This suit, Linell Hill et al. vs. ILWU Local 8 and Pacific Maritime Association, was the source of a resurgence of bitterness over the race issue, especially with the International unequivocally siding with the grievances. Charging that both the local and the Portland branch of the PMA (as the West Coast employers' association was known after 1948) had, in violation of Title 7 of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, conspired in discriminating against bids for full membership on the basis of race and color, the suit alleged that all of the 1964 'B' men should have achieved 'A' status by March 1967. The PMA in Portland were alleged to have been complicitous in discrimination only to the degree that they were, technically speaking, guilty of following the discriminatory practices of Local 8 by agreeing to hire the men proposed for membership in meetings of the Labor Relations Committee. As mentioned earlier, Bridges recognized in 1963 that some PMA officials in the city were opposed to having blacks work the docks.)

Primarily, though, the litigants attacked the local for having, in 1964, initiated a "point system" which allowed for routine discrimination on the basis of "adverse work reports" given by "prejudiced gang bosses", which decreased the number of points that a 'B' man would have. Discriminatory because of its creation of

"classifications...and distinctions which do not substantially relate to job performance", the point system had allegedly been used to keep blacks from becoming members of the union. In combination with the point system, the local had initiated a system of numbering the 'B' men in an order for which they would be considered for full membership. Only three blacks were assigned numbers in the first one hundred, though 15% of the original 'B' registrants in 1964 were blacks.[89]

The litigation pending against the union angered many whites. These men, who had previously had no problem with the entrance of blacks into the membership, were angered over what they perceived to be impudence and a demand for special treatment on the part of the black plaintiffs in the suit. They felt that no prejudice had been part of the advancement equation following the 1963 opening of the local's books, and that blacks were not being discriminated against. G. Johnny Parks remembers that,"they hadn't been on the job but a few months when they started talking about being discriminated against and taking legal action...the way I saw it and still see it, anyone who is taken into this union and then sues it, is an enemy of mine."[90] The

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[89] Complaint document of Linell Hill et al., pp. 5-7.

[90] Parks interview. Parks' view of the matter, probably very typical of many whites in the local at the time, was that given the extraordinary benefits of ILWU membership, suit was not just unnecessary, but heretical and mean-spirited.

climate of anxiety on the waterfront over the possibility of layoffs, albeit well-pensioned ones, occurring as a result of mechanization probably added to this outrage. There were also more tangible agitators: Local 8's attorney, Frank Pozzi, himself an ex-longshoreman much respected within the local made frequent speeches before the membership citing the expenses of the suit to the union which were reportedly quite incendiary, and stirred up sentiment in the rank-and-file against the black plaintiffs.[91] However, many white longshoremen who were quiet about the issue publicly or even were seemingly against the blacks' grievances secretly helped them out with deciphering the ILWU grievance protocols. These included a number of older union men, some officers in Local 8, who did not want it disclosed that they were offering their help. But their assistance, offered in the spirit of shaping a more democratic local, was crucial to that end.[92]

Bridges and the International took the side of the plaintiffs in the suit, and at one point apparently threatened to void Local 8's charter if the black 'B' men were not immediately admitted to the local.[93] High feelings over the International's stance on the affair

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[91] Hill interviews.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid.

reportedly raised the possibility of Portland seeking to split from the International and joining the ILA-Teamster fold.[94] The unity of the coast was, it seems, strained severely, but did not break.

The black longshoremen within the local, even during the court battles never presented a united front against Local 8; some of the blacks hired in 1964 did achieve membership and did not sue the union. (On the other hand, the complaint document of Linell Hill et al. states that although nine black longshoremen had been accorded 'A' status, union membership had been unprecedentedly denied them for their solidarity with the other plaintiffs in the suit. This meant in effect that these men were recognized as 'A' men by the International, and thus had to be dispatched and paid as such, they were forbidden to attend meetings of Local 8.)[95]

In late 1968, United States District Court Judge Gus Solomon found agreement with the plaintiffs in Linell Hill et al., and the black 'B'-men were soon brought into the

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[94] Larrowe in Harry Bridges (p.368) indicates that the Teamster/ILA axis was to have been the recourse of would-be secessionists in the Portland local, but neither offers any sources for such information, plausible though it is. Apparently, though, secession was being threatened very openly, but with the intention being to have Portland become an independent port. Bridges reportedly was not too concerned with the prospect, merely stating that he would divert all shipping away from Portland and thus effortlessly smash the port. (Hill interviews.)

The veracity of all of these accounts has been denounced by G. Johnny Parks. (Parks correspondence.)

[95] Complaint document, p.7.

union, according to the terms of the settlement as recorded in the consent decree. Allegedly there were also other specifics in the agreement, such as a policy of hiring a black for every one retiring from or quitting the local, and an affirmation of future good faith efforts by the LRC to bring blacks up to higher and better-paid positions on the waterfront such as walking boss, and opening up the clerks' local of the regional ILWU to blacks.

Above all, Solomon's judgement that the local had, with the PMA, in fact been in violation of the Civil Rights Act's Title VII made the consent decree something of value. It would have added real muscle to future claims of race discrimination brought against the local. But then, in an extremely bizarre move ostensibly aimed at eliminating resentment between plaintiffs and defendants, Solomon locked the consent decree in his private wall safe. It has not been seen since.[96] This spelled disaster for the collective interests of African-American longshoremen in Portland, for further charges of racial discrimination would be made much more difficult without the document giving a foundation to their grievances. Many appeals were made to Solomon to release the document by various black longshoremen and civil rights attorneys, but to no avail.[97]

The front page headline of the ILWU's biweekly

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[96] Meyer and Hill interviews.

[97] Hill interviews.

Dispatcher of August 23, 1968, read "Registration Formula Set in Portland". (This was the first time that the Dispatcher had ever put in ink the discord over the issue of racism in Portland.) The local ILWU-PMA labor relations committee agreed on August 15, 1968, to a plan whereby the entire 1963 'B' roster of Local 8 was to be promoted to 'A' status by March of the following year. In addition, pertaining to the hiring of a group of some fifty men to be hired to 'B' status in 1969, the minutes of the labor relations committee were quoted as expressing a commitment to

> ...positive action to assist men who are disadvantaged culturally or economically, so that one half of this group will come from minority and underprivileged groups.[98]

The Dispatcher article concluded by saying that

> In view of the fact that the 1963 'B' list contained a number of minority-group persons, including many Negroes, who have been or soon will be promoted to full 'A' registration, it is felt that completion of the recently developed joint registration program should bring to an end a long history of complaints about the racial composition of the Portland local.[99]

In the same paragraph, the print voice of the ILWU had acknowledged three decades of controversy and pronounced the problem a thing of history. Such was not entirely to be the case. Yet, despite some continued friction on the waterfront, the longstanding feud between Portland and the

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[98] ILWU Dispatcher, 8/23/68.

[99] Ibid.

International was resolved at this juncture. Incidents of racial discrimination were still alleged by blacks in the local, and fresh legal efforts were launched to redress these. However, the presence of Afro-Americans working with whites on the docks as full members of Local 8 was now a reality, and if there was some discontentment, there was at least no violence.

The International had achieved its goal by what many of Portland's white longshoremen considered to be a clear-cut trashing of time-honored union tradition and protocol. The legacy of resentment and anger at Bridges and the International for violating their autonomy was to linger, though relations between the International and "the mysterious river" were to become, on the surface, much improved following integration.

CHAPTER 4\ CONCLUSIONS

The internecine feud between the Portland longshoremen and the International represents a unique irony in the history of a highly maverick union, a group that was from its inception extremely vocal in its denunciations of racial discrimination as a tool of capital to cripple class struggle. If, as has been alleged, the Portland local almost abandoned an International that it viewed as meddling is testament to the determination of a group of racists within the local to exclude blacks. Important as the issue of autonomy undoubtedly was to so many Portlanders, it seems unlikely that this principle alone would have been responsible for such a strong reaction.

The history of racist legislation in Oregon has been discussed earlier; the results of these laws were, in Portland, a small and marginalized African-American population prior to the "Great Migration" of Southern black workers to the Pacific Northwest at the beginning of World War II. In Portland, the absence of blacks as strikebreakers, for which the employers and city government were directly responsible, led to the reality of no blacks being among the men who were on the frontline during the violent bid for recognition in 1934 that, for all practical purposes, defined the group of longshoremen as a

brotherhood. According to Pilcher, this "made the waterfront a congenial place for people of extreme right-wing convictions", and though there was a sizable faction of men who wanted integration to occur, there is every reason to believe that the factional divide was a deep one.[100]

Pilcher, the main chronicler of Local 8's factionalism, seems, politically, to have been representative of the members of the local, who, approving of the acceptance of blacks, felt strongly that no extra privileging be given in terms of the promotion of black 'B' men over whites of the same status. He defends adamantly the right of the union in administering the point system in order to determine promotion in an ordered way, and argues that the right of the local to administer their own system of hiring and promotion was compromised by the actions of the International regarding Portland's integration. He argues that many Portland longshoremen who were not, perhaps, vehement racists thought that "complete loss of local autonomy and their democratic organization" loomed large when Bridges increased his coercion of the union to bring in more and more blacks even after they had "atoned for the sins of the past" by hiring the 1964 'B' men.[101] There was also a tide of feeling against some of the black 'B' men identifying as blacks first and longshoremen second,

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[100] Pilcher, The Portland Longshoremen, p.69.

[101] Ibid., p.76.

as manifested in the lawsuit against the union.[102]

There is embedded at the center of the paradox the internal feuding between factions of men. The existence of a group of men leaning to the right can be explained in numerous ways. The most obvious anchoring of anti-black feeling is, as mentioned above, the received attitudes about blacks just not belonging on the docks which were reinforced by policies of the local employers. Thus, the issue of racial exclusion formed a point of concurrence between Portland's shipping capital and at least a strong faction of Local 8's men. The exclusion of the Wobblies during the brief period of post-World War I ILA recognition seems to have been the antecedent of such an unlikely collaboration between the classes.

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[102] Pilcher, The Portland Longshoremen, p.69, pp.74-75. Pilcher mentions the "diffidence" of some of the blacks toward whites as being against the longshore code of behavior, which dictates a rough, take-no-shit attitude, and as a result these men were slow in being promoted. He also attributes the rapidity of promotion of the original black 'B' men to the tendency of some to identify themselves first as members of the black community rather than primarily as union longshoremen. "Those who identified most strongly as members of the longshore group per se tended to be those who attained 'A' status, while those who identified most strongly with the black community had been those most frequently passed over for promotion."(pp.73-74)

It is rather ironic, then, that some of the plaintiffs in Linell Hill et al. were 'A' men, who definitely acted as "race men" when they saw discrimination against other blacks, threw in their lot with the plaintiffs, and were allegedly refused membership (though did not lose their jobs) as a result! And it hardly needs to be pointed out that Pilcher's association of "diffidence" with precisely those blacks who refused to be discriminated against is a disjointed one to say the least. (See Complaint document, p.7, item 2, for the charge of denial of membership.)

The reality of Portland's defiance of the International, throwing down the gauntlet before Bridges time and again, may well have brought men from other locals who simply disliked having to work with blacks, though this cannot be determined from any evidence. There is evidence that brazen anti-Communism was the twin of racism among the right-wingers. Kimeldorf's assessment of the influence of white Southern shipyard workers entering the union following the war with racist and politically right-leaning mentalities in tow is credible as well. He contends that white "war babies", whom he also terms "rednecks" and "Okies", formed the backbone of racism in ILWU locals after the war. In other words, the same racist elements that established segregation in the shipyards became active opponents of Bridges' egalitarianism. Though the entrance of such men into locals elsewhere may have brought previously unknown racial animosity, however, their entrance into the Portland local merely shored up existing racial prejudice and anti-Communism.[103]

The left were the heirs to a radical tradition, that of the IWW, that was strong in Portland even after the national

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[103] Kimeldorf, Reds or Rackets?, p.146. In 1943, the International, concerned over the possibility of many new men entering the union unaware of its radical traditions, set up a mandatory education program for all new members. In San Francisco, new entrants into San Francisco's Local 10 were required to take classes at the city's (rather Marxist) California Labor School, which insured that the "International's local" would remain very left-leaning. The nature of the mandatory education for new members in other places is not clear.

figureheads of that movement were brought down in 1919. That longshoremen were, in the Northwest, part of the same matrix of employment as woodsworkers guaranteed that a unique syndicalist consciousness arrived on the riverside docks, raw and undiluted, shortly after the turn of the century. Yet Portland, however much the stomping grounds of Wobblies talking radical rhetoric about racial unity, was too thoroughly white (if not avowedly white supremacist) a city, even by the forties, to have made the symbolic acceptance of even one black possible. This homogeneity of race was a result of exclusion legislation, in large part, and this exclusion of blacks was such a tradition to many of Portland's longshoremen that it could not easily be assailed even by the union to which they owed such hard-fought allegiance. The syndicalist impulse in Portland, existing as it did without the immediate need to address race in the same breath as the need for the union, either must have failed to deal with race entirely, or did so yet failed to make it stick. With the longshore group having a racial mix no more diverse than that of a high country timber camp, racial unity was, to most of Portland's longshoremen, just something that was talked about. Violence was ignited by the initial suggestion that blacks be accepted into the local; clearly, the sentiment of many of the initial group of "'34 men" was against a class-consciousness that involved an integrated union.

Despite all of this, the left-wing group within Local 8 were doing nothing more or less than pressing the line of Harry Bridges and the International, which all of the longshoremen should logically have embraced. The spirit of local autonomy was strong in Portland as elsewhere, but equally important, as testified to by the emotion-filled speeches of Bloody Thursdays, was the unity of all the coast's longshoremen that had been won at the cost of lives. If, as was the case, the prejudice against color was originally the policy of the city fathers of Portland and the employers, the logical result of ILWU militancy should have been to bring in every non-white able-bodied man in the area to snub the bosses!

Two other strong reasons exist for Portland's exclusion of blacks, and they are closely intertwined. These are nepotism affecting the hiring process and the fitful nature of hiring for longshore work generally. Although on the surface the ILWU decried nepotism as part of the old and abandoned corruption of the ILA and the AFL, the incredibly lucrative wages and benefits which came with membership in the union insured that "looking out for kin" by union men was to die hard. The fifties saw the crystallization of tight-knit gangs of men with very few new members entering. Men from Local 8 would often travel to other ports, most often the Bay Area, when shipping volume would slow down. Those that did have the luck to enter the union were likely

to be sons, sons-in-law, or nephews of longshoremen, obviously precluding the entrance of blacks. Pilcher, in fact, credits nepotism as having been "the main factor excluding Negroes from waterfront employment."[104]

Tied closely to this is the fact that the need for longshoremen varied over time. The ILWU was founded in the Depression, and few men were brought in until 1944, when the shipyards began laying workers off. The question of simple labor demand would seem, then, to have dictated the possibility of Portland bringing in blacks--and indeed, the union was hiring. Portland took in 557 men between July 1944 and July 1945, mostly former Portland longshoremen who had worked in the shipyards during the war, or other ports. Local 10 in San Francisco hired 6,600, Seattle 3,100, and San Pedro 2,600. In San Francisco, though, nearly half of the new men were African-American former shipyard workers, in San Pedro about one-fifth were blacks, and there was a smaller number in Seattle.[105] In Portland, of course, all were whites. When this is considered in light of the large number of blacks discharged from the Kaiser yards around this time, as well as the Harry Mills incident, racial discrimination becomes evident. To Portland blacks who were facing a new job hunt after the Kaiser layoffs, the high wages of a longshoreman must have looked very appealing, but

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[104] Pilcher, The Portland Longshoremen, p.71.

[105] Kimeldorf, Reds or Rackets?, p.146.

the door was shut and bolted.

G. Johnny Parks, the Local 8 man who opposed Bridges' crusade to bring in "a quota of blacks", reports that the view of Local 8 was that blacks were to be taken into the local only "through the front door", i.e., by being dispatched on a casual basis. This was not accomplished until 1960-61, just before the International increased the pressure on Local 8's to hire black 'B' men. Nepotism and the fluctuating need for casuals on the docks no doubt played roles in keeping the local white, but Portland blacks were no doubt extremely wary of coming to the union hall having heard of the treatment of travelling blacks from other locals. During 1961-64, the Oregon Bureau of Labor prepared a report on the Portland local's policies, in which it was reported that "...Local 8...did have an unwritten policy and system that kept Negroes from being employed as longshoremen...it was established at this time that Local 8 of Portland...was the only ILWU union (sic) on the West Coast who openly made it known that they did not want Negro longshoremen."[106] The indication is clearly that little led blacks to believe that they were wanted at either the front or back door of the hiring hall.

The previously mentioned interview with Matt Meehan reveals an angry distrust between Portland and San Francisco

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[106] Quoted in Rubin, The Negro in the Longshore Industry, p.145, from an unpublished document.

that predates the issue of racial integration, and which indicates that that issue was to be debated within previously established channels of antagonism between the longshoremen of both cities which had laid dormant following the unity of 1934. The precise combination of racial prejudice, defense of local autonomy, economic self-interest, and nepotism that shaped Portland's "states' rights" stance on integration cannot be determined, but it is true to say that both were in evidence.

The history of exclusion and the eventual integration (strife filled as it was) of blacks into Local 8 is relevant to the position of Portland's black longshoremen today. Their numbers have declined from close to fifty members in the early seventies to around thirty today.[107] Linell Hill, whose suit against the local brought so much discord, sees elements within the union even today that would favor a return to an all-white waterfront. It is Hill's contention that black longshoremen are an "endangered species" in Portland. (Whether or not this is true is hard to tell from the point of view of an outsider. Since the overall number of longshoremen in Portland has declined sharply since the sixties, what black longshoremen perceive as discrimination against hiring blacks must also be seen in terms of an across the board scaling-down which has to do in large part with the increased mechanization of the industry.)

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[107] Ibid.

The mercurial variations in world trade have always had striking impacts on the expansion and constriction of the longshore industry, which is responsible for the expansions and constrictions of the longshore local rosters. In Portland, this had the effect of tightening down the number of new recruits into the union immediately following its establishment in 1937, then opening up briefly during the war, then tightening down again after 1945. The fluctuations of the industry from year to year can be seen in this listing of cargo tonnage leaving Portland and Seattle over a twenty year period staring in 1949:

Gross Tonnage of Cargo Shipped from Ports of Seattle and Portland, 1949-69.

Year	Seattle	Portland
1949	11,310,736	12,366,985
1950	11,906,751	11,550,142
1951	12,023,020	13,850,129
1952	12,609,202	13,707,663
1953	11,850,811	12,423,759
1954	11,587,360	12,638,774
1955	12,481,242	12,592,827
1956	13,651,636	13,788,529
1957	14,609,094	13,221,125
1958	11,856,004	11,605,479
1959	13,066,964	13,481,664
1960	13,391,467	13,549,332
1961	12,650,377	14,058,068
1962	13,933,935	13,775,992
1963	13,505,596	15,449,714
1964	13,798,836	15,211,980
1965	14,747,754	16,726,210
1966	14,846,806	15,590,726
1967	14,209,270	15,238,054
1968	16,035,706	15,560,470
1969	18,353,074	15,173,165

(Source: US Army Corps of Engineers. Waterborne Commerce of US., 1950, 1955, 1960, 1965, 1969.)

With the cross-currents of a forecast of rising Pacific Rim trade and the decline of the Northwest's timber industry, how the longshore industry will emerge in the region is not clear. Portland's black longshoremen, like the local and International that they are a part of, are going to need a clear-cut boom period in order to bring up new men in this decade. The hard-fought integration of the local may be seen as a completed process, but unless more African-American longshoremen come in, this is not the case. Tellingly, the first coalition of the West Coast's African-American longshoremen was begun in the early nineties by men from Portland. Their group, the Black Coalition of Minority Longshoremen, held an inaugural meeting on July 13, 1991, and is, in 1992, engaged in meeting with black longshoremen from the Puget Sound area (the Tacoma-based Black Longshoremen's Association, or Brotherhood) and California. Explicitly a part of their program is to ensure that the benefits of union membership are always to be open to blacks. However, large-scale economic factors will be the deciding force in creating such an opening. And if this fails to occur, and scaling down of the longshore workforce looms, racial fissures will inevitably threaten to tear open.

The ILWU, during the time that blacks were kept off the Portland docks, was the most radical union in the United States, with constant threats of deportation aimed at

Bridges, and the House Un-American Activities Committee taking a very keen interest in the union's leadership. With a constitution that forbade racial discrimination, and a heavily non-white membership, the International was still unable to bring its authority to bear on the Portland local without causing great resentment and hostility. Exclusion was defended by Portlanders by invoking the tradition of autonomy of locals, and when that autonomy was brushed aside by the International, a deep set of scars was the result. That such vehemence existed against integration demonstrates that where radical rhetoric ("An injury to one is an injury to all") once co-existed with the practice of white supremacy, there is really no iron law against it happening again. If the hard times come again to the waterfront, the unity of longshoremen may be put strongly to the test, this time in a quintessentially nineties context, that of countercharges of discrimination and reverse discrimination, and sensitivity to racial quotas, perceived or real. It must be hoped that Local 8, which has wrestled long and hard with the issue, can demonstrate a continued consciousness of racial unity even in the face of killing-frost times on the waterfront.

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