

The Great West Coast Marine Strike

PART 4

(By SAM DARCY)

June 16th Fakers' Agreement Repudiated By Rank and File—General Strike Move

On June 16, for the second time in the course of the strike, all capitalist papers carried tremendous headlines that the strike was settled, that it had been settled in an agreement between Ryan and the fakers in the Teamsters and other unions, the Mayors of San Francisco, and the shipowners. This agreement was a complete sellout. It referred the question of hours and wages to arbitration. It created joint hiring halls between the shipowners and the I.L.A., specifying that the I.L.A. end would be controlled, not by elected representatives of the rank and file, but by the officials. It carried a sentence which speaks about the fact that the agreement was made between the "responsible" I.L.A. heads and the shipowners. On June 17, all the newspapers carried pictures of the labor fakers shaking hands with the shipowners, and congratulating each other on the conclusion of the strike. But June 17, however, a mass meeting was called in San Francisco and this was followed by mass meetings in Portland and Tacoma, and after that other ports. The San Francisco mass meeting, which was the best attended longshoremen's meeting in the entire strike, was from beginning to end a tremendous demonstration against Ryan and the fakers before the militants. Ryan was howled out, and in the end had to plead "that your International President should be allowed at least three minutes to plead his case."

* Red Leadership, Hailed.

Finally, the close to three thousand men gathered in the hall allowed him the three minutes, but he was interrupted constantly, and finally had to quit. As against that, Harry Bridges, accepted leader of the militants, and branded in the press as an outstanding Red, and an alien (an Australian by birth) was warmly received with a splendid ovation, and every proposal he made in the name of the strike committee, was carried. This included a rank-and-file negotiations committee—the final link completing the original plan for Strike Committee leadership. Under the impetus of this momentum, 1,900 seamen, under I.S.C. auspices, held a meeting that night, and repudiated the policies of their leaders and voted for a united front with the Marine Workers' Industrial Union. The next day the I.S.C. fakers declared the meeting unconstitutional because it was not limited only to paid up members, and demanded the unseating of the Marine Workers' Industrial Union in the Central Strike Committee. The M.W.I.U. representatives offered "not to stand in the way of unity" and would withdraw. This was an error which the fakers took advantage of, and expelled the M.W.I.U. On June 17, a paid-up membership meeting of the I.S.C. again reversed the fakers and voted for a united front with the M.W.I.U. The I.S.C. fakers were able, because of the weakness of the militants, to frustrate the efforts of the membership towards a united front. Most of our difficulties in this connection were due to our failure to organize a strongly effective I.S.C. opposition.

* Northwest Militant.

That same day news came that Portland, Tacoma, and Everett had followed in the same spirit as San Francisco. In Los Angeles, because of the weakness of the militant group, it was voted by a small majority to accept the Ryan plan. This, however, is ineffective because they did not have the two-thirds majority as required by the West Coast constitution, and because the rest of the Coast outweighed them. Ryan, however, still at the service of the shipowners, immediately rushed to San Pedro where the weakest link might be broken. In Seattle, however, Ryan had previously made a break with the Alaska ships. He was able to confuse the workers into concluding a sep-

arate agreement with them. The weakness of the militant group made it possible for him to get away with it. However, subsequently, a considerable reaction took place, and following the Ryan fiasco of June 16, the Alaska men again came out.

Hobbs, former reactionary president of the San Francisco local of the I.L.A. and now expelled, tried to form a separate union, but he did not even succeed in getting the signatures of ten longshoremen in order to get recognition as a minority union under the provisions of the N.R.A. In the meantime, the shipowners were losing in the San Francisco port alone \$109,000 daily, according to their own statement. In addition, \$700,000 was lost daily in other business which is interconnected. How long the shipowners would hold out under this terrible loss was hard to tell. They were doing their best to mobilize sentiment by spreading rumors that "this is really a strike to seize governmental power." As against this, the strikers' ranks were still solid. In San Francisco only 6 or 8 longshoremen were scabbing out of about 4,000. There were many more scabs than these, but they were imported from else-

where. As many as 170 ships were tied up in the harbor, giving testimony to the effectiveness of the strike. Whether the men would win or not depended on whether the strike movement would spread and rise in militancy. The Communist Party therefore marshalled all its forces and had careful plans for winning the workers to go on a General Strike. The I.L.A. strike committee issued the call asking other locals to respond. The Machinists Local 68, the Painters Local No. 1158 and a few others answered the call in the next few days, and in the next week or so the rest of the locals were to vote on the question. The referendum went over the heads of the Central Labor Council, which ruled the question out of order in successive meetings, and quickly adjourned for fear the fakers would not be able to hold the ranks in the face of the demand of the rank and file.

* Open Shop Fight.

The attitude of the bourgeois press regarding the situation at that moment is shown by the leading editorial in the San Francisco News of June 18:

"At the outset of the strike many believed that the men

were making a mistake and letting themselves in for a quick and decisive defeat. Few realized the solidarity that they have since demonstrated through their success in enlisting the sympathy of the teamsters and of other marine workers and in almost completely tying up this port.

"It appeared then that with thousands out of work the men had chosen a time to strike that would play into the hands of employer extremists who would welcome an opportunity to dispose of unionism once and for all.

"Events have proven otherwise. Every thoughtful citizen of San Francisco has been impressed with the sincerity and depth of the men's determination and sense of grievance.

"But this does not alter our conviction that they must act now to profit from their initial advantage.

"A war to the finish might easily grow into the worst disaster for San Francisco since the fire of 1906. It would mean lost lives and broken families, and defeat would deal a blow to the cause of unionism from which it would take years to recover."

The victory of the strike would be a tremendous advance for the whole working class. It would establish the right of militant leaders to function within the A. F. of L. It would make impossible the elimination of the militants from the industry. It would give courage to the whole working class of the West to fight for demands similar to those of the longshoremen, and above all, it would establish for the first time in the history of the United States, absolute solidarity between longshoremen and seamen, and a large measure of solidarity with the rest of the working class.

* Great Mass Meeting.

On June 19, the end of the sixth week of the maritime strike, in the Civic Auditorium in San Francisco, and under the joint auspices of all striking unions, a gigantic mass meeting took place. After a stubborn fight the Marine Workers' Industrial Union was included in the conduct of the meeting. Comrade Harry Jackson, who spoke, was warmly received. Also, all the other strikers who got the greatest ovation were those who had been labelled and are known throughout the city and among the strikers as the "Red leaders." Ryan asked to speak, but was refused. Those speakers not known as "Reds" were well-received but not in the same thunderous spirit, and at least one faker who wriggled his way on to the speaker's list was received with boos.

Mayor Rossi, in his speech, spoke for everyone supporting the A. F. of L. This was received with tremendous boos all over the hall. The political significance of this lay in the maturing understanding of the masses who began to understand the role of the officialdom of the A. F. of L. despite the fact that this strike was technically being led by the A. F. of L. affiliate.

* International Longshoremen's Association.

The hall was jammed, every seat having been taken and most of the aisles crowded. There were between eighteen and twenty thousand people present. The height of the meeting was reached when John Delaney, the best known militant on the waterfront, and called a Communist leader in all the press, which also gave publicity to his record as a Communist activist, called for a general strike. This brought the whole audience to its feet in a thunderous demonstration.

This meeting slowed the strike at this date had not yet reached the height of its militancy, and the movement towards a general strike was possibly too slowly, yet undoubtedly, moving forward.

(To be continued in next issue.)

Funds Are Needed for Defense

Court Schedule for Cases Being Handled By

EMERGENCY COMMITTEE FOR DEFENSE OF
WORKERS' CIVIL RIGHTS
1629 Telegraph Ave., Oakland.

AUGUST R. STEPHENS: Sept. 14, 9 a. m. Trial in Judge Wood's Court, 5th and Broadway, for "Assault with a deadly weapon"—a felony carrying a sentence of one to ten years.

STEVE CONNORS & JOHNSON: Aug. 25, 9 a. m. Hearing for an appeal in Judge Wood's Court, 5th and Broadway, on charge of breaking the infamous anti-picketing ordinance, No. 282.

FRANK JAMES & ORTEZ: Aug. 25, 9 a. m. Hearing for an appeal in Judge Wood's Court, 5th and Broadway, on charge of "Disturbing the peace."

KAY, PARENT & CARRIE: Sept. 15. Hearing for new trial in Police Court, City Hall, on charges of "Vagrancy."

SANDUSKY: Aug. 30, 9:30 a. m. Date set for new trial on charge of "Failure to move on." First trial—jury failed to agree. Police Court, City Hall.

ANDREW BARTULEVICH [Richmond]: Set for Sept. 5.

VERNON LYONS [Richmond]: No hearing as yet.

DO NOT FORGET that TUESDAY and FRIDAY from 11 to 3 o'clock are regular visiting days at the Alameda County Jail, 5th and Washington. A five-minute special pass can be obtained other days, if necessary. STEPHENS IS IN JAIL UNTIL JUDGE WOOD ISSUES THE BAIL BOND, on properly available.

SAN FRANCISCO EMERGENCY DEFENSE COMMITTEE is located at 1005 Market Street, Room 409, San Francisco.

WESTERN WORKER,
37 Grove St.,
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