

# FORTNIGHT IN THE NEWS

## HAVE THE SPOTS CHANGED?

*West Coast Waterfront Has a "New Look"  
And CIO's Tim Flynn Has Reds on the Run*

THERE is no question about it: the maritime industry is scared stiff. The employers are scared—after 14 years of labor strife, they know one more good strike could just about put them out of business and they are knocking themselves out to sustain the uneasy peace of the last four months.

The workers, especially the longshoremen, are scared. They've seen their average paychecks drop from \$65 and \$70 a week to \$20—when there is a paycheck at all.

And Harry Bridges, longtime czar of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, who has long followed the Moscow line, is scared. With the industry shaky in its Munich peace, he is fast losing support of the rank and file of his militant union, most, but not all, of whose members hate the Communists. It is not only just that business is bad. A big, hard-headed Irishman named Tim Flynn has got Bridges on the run. Flynn, who was sent to Northern California personally by CIO President Philip Murray to be CIO regional director in place of 'Arry, is taking labor support away from Bridges so fast the ex-Australian leftist can't believe it.

Scared also are those who love San Francisco and the Coast and know that constantly crippled ports can spell economic paralysis.

The whole situation has given the maritime industry a "new look."

Louis Goldblatt, militant left-wing secretary-treasurer of the CIO International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, couldn't have startled the West Coast waterfront more if he had announced he was going to run for Congress on the Republican ticket. Departing from a prepared talk he was giving before a union-management meeting, he made the startling admission that he knows that the man who pays the check and the man who gets it "have a wide field of mutual interest."

For this ideological unionist, whose consistent preoccupation has been purely with the class war, to make such a statement virtually shocked listeners on both sides of the fence. Management frankly admitted it was the soundest thing said by either side during a recent two-day conference that had been called to promote



Harry Bridges in a happier day

business in the maritime industry.

Coupled with two other major factors, it begins to appear that the West Coast waterfront may really have a "new look." Everyone says so these days—and everyone hopes it lasts.

The new look is a peaceful one, and it may be a "long look," too. In addition to Goldblatt, it revolves around two always controversial figures: Harry Bridges and Frank P. Foise. Since last fall's long waterfront strike, Bridges has been working to promote the industry, just as if he had never heard of his oft-mentioned class war. He has been credited with settling several potential disputes up and down the Coast before they could get beyond the job level, and he has been promoting the welfare of the industry as a whole—in line with Goldblatt's statement.

And Foise has been bounced out of his leadership of the Waterfront Employers Association.

"I've followed Bridges' activities for years," a man who fought him during many of those years said recently. "Until now, he's always been an absolutely ideological unionist. Now Bridges is acting like a business unionist. I don't know why. I don't know what's behind it. But I don't care, either. If he keeps it up, the waterfront here may be saved. If he and

the WEA get to fighting again, they'll both be scuttled."

**Dumb Show.** Between Bridges and the WEA, the West Coast waterfront over a period of years has been brought almost to the scuttling point. Every time there has been a strike during the last, messy 14 years some shippers have withdrawn their business from Coast ports, many never to return. One more good strike could just about be the clincher. Both sides know it.

It was as if a couple of unarmed men were battling in a bare room when suddenly both realized a fanged wolf was battering in the front door. They stopped the fight to concentrate on the wolf.

It's been a good battle so far. In the past the waterfront has been noted for having its disputes go almost invariably to the highest possible level, all too often involving strikes and serious work stoppages. By the time the situation was a complete mess, both sides would enter "negotiations" in the most belligerent spirit possible. Typically, each side would enter the meeting flanked by lawyers, both making demands.

But in the more than four months since the last strike, only one dispute has been carried beyond the job level. Everyt was settled right there without work s

Acme

page except a case in Portland, Oregon, which was cleared up by the area mediator. There isn't a major industry in the US which has had a better labor record during these last four months. Scarcely an observer in California foresaw that statement could ever be made.

**Two-Way.** Both sides have contributed. The harmony began the minute a three-year contract was signed. It was immediately furthered when Sam Kagel, longtime anti-Communist friend of labor, was unanimously selected and signed for a three-year shot as coastwide arbitrator.

The bosses were concerned only with the dollar, which was flowing away from the West Coast to the East and, to a much greater extent, the Gulf of Mexico. To show that its evidences of good will were really more than token, the employers reorganized.

Shoreside operations had been conducted under the WEA, founded in 1937. Shippers were represented by the one-year-old Pacific American Shipowners Association.

possible not to have WEA and PASA subdivisions under the Pacific Maritime Association, Foise and Bryan were relegated from head men to "consultants." Their successors were to be chosen this fortnight. Whoever they are, it is almost certain they will add another "new look" to the "new look."

The dollar had a large part to play in the workers' "new look," too. Average wages were down from \$65 to about \$20 a week and many of California's 8,500 and the Coast's 15,000 longshoremen were going for uncomfortable long weeks without any paychecks.

**The Skids.** But there was another reason: Harry Bridges was slipping. He had run his ILWU almost without question for 14 years, but when dinner pails stopped having any dinner in them he was becoming increasingly less a hero to his constituents.

Bridges had started slipping last year. During the regular election, he had retained his leadership only by the whole-

The employer group was left baffled and stung and reacted like a wounded animal. Management went immediately on the attack and demanded all union leaders sign anti-Communist affidavits. Bridges was frankly frightened when negotiations ended and he was forced to call a strike—until he saw the blunder the employers had made. The demand for those affidavits was all he needed to unite his union around him. Good union men, no matter how anti-Communist personally, could take only one stand. The employers were trying to tell the union whom they would do business with. The union knew better. It was going to tell the employers whom they would deal with. That, of course, meant Bridges.

**Draw.** In a strike that was almost a freak, it is difficult to say who won, if anyone did. Certainly both sides lost money, but the union got its major provisions—raises and retention of the hiring halls under a union dispatcher. All in all, Bridges looked okay to the boys.



Louis Goldblatt



Tim Flynn



Hugh Bryson

The total membership of the two outfits was 150, and there was considerable interlocking.

WEA for years was run by Frank Foise, PASA by John P. Bryan. Both had been management leaders during the bitterness of the labor strife, when the union wanted to control the industry and the employers wanted basically to break the union. Early this month directors of WEA and PASA got together and set up an overall employer agency called Pacific Maritime Association to take over major functions of both groups.

Observers saw that as significant because it gave the industry a face-saving way to put less reactionary leadership in control. O. W. Pearson, vice-president of Marine Terminals Corporation, LA, was nominated head of the new group. Not a member of the old Foise-Bryan cliques, he was believed a cinch to be retained in that tion.

hat was one step. But to punctuate it, her was taken. Although it was im-

hearted support of his Hawaii sugar workers. Most West Coast locals voted against him, including Local 10, led by Communist-hating Dennis Kearney in Harry's headquarters city of SF. But Bridges squeezed by, and then the strike issue came up.

At first it looked as if a strike were certain. Then it looked equally certain that there would be a settlement. On the day set for final negotiations, both sides were privately confident there would be peace. The employers were willing to make certain concessions, and Bridges was certain to get enough of what he wanted.

But during the middle of the meeting, he was called to the telephone. He came back into the room after scribbling notes on the back of an envelope and made a dozen-odd new demands. Someone (it is presumed it was Hugh Bryson, extremely left-wing head of the cooks and stewards) hadn't been satisfied, and Bridges carried the ball for him.

The new demands broke up the meeting.

But not for long. Their interest in Bridges decreased in direct ratio to the shrinkage in their paychecks. The AFL put the pressure on, too. They're making a serious bid to take the warehousemen away from Bridges. So Bridges, and Goldblatt and the rest of the crowd,\* went to work with management to increase business. They kept their arbitrator "happily unemployed," as he puts it, while doing it.

In addition to their two-day meeting last fortnight to talk over how they can operate together more effectively—and attractively to customers with goods to be shipped—they joined in a statement protesting quick court action under the Taft-Hartley Law on the legality of the union dispatcher-run hiring halls. Both sides argued a speedy decision could just upset the situation for no good reason, in view of the threatened modification or repeal of T-H. And they joined in protesting the Army's retaining 300 civil service

\* Paul Schuerr, Germain Bulcke, Lincoln Fairley, etc.

longshoremen to handle Army cargo. It upset the normal employment pattern and disrupted the industry.

Bridges himself stumped for more efficient crew practices and appealed to Midwestern and Eastern businessmen to bring their cargo to the West Coast. It was the same Bridges who in the past has stumped only for his union demands, and the devil take the industry. Or was it the same Bridges?

No one had the answer. Was Bridges following a new Communist line, or had he in desperation abandoned his fellow traveling? Answers varied:

¶ A former arbitrator: "In his early days Bridges used the Communists—and they used him. But I am convinced he is not a Commie. He has parted from the party line too many times."

¶ Another former arbitrator: "For years I thought all that talk of Harry Bridges being a Communist was baloney. But then when he made the switch from pacifist to interventionist when Russia declared war on Germany, I became convinced he is. He was a Communist then and he is today."

¶ A labor relations expert: "It doesn't make any difference whether Harry Bridges was a Communist or not. He's pretty consistently followed the party line, and that's what counts. Right now he's acting different than ever before. I don't know what's behind it, but everyone's got his fingers crossed."

An official observer: "We'll know more about this after a year."

**Solution.** Employers, workers and observers agree that during that year one thing must happen: West Coast shipping must be made attractive to prospective customers. One observer closely connected with the industry summed it up in three points: employers must get in and make a constant effort to sell West Coast shipping competitively; longshoremen have got to produce more results for the price paid; and rail-to-ship handling charges must be made to conform with those in the rest of the country. Some elements in the industry argue that the shipper will have to absorb them if the West is to compete with the Gulf and the East. If business doesn't come in and the industry slumps, every metropolitan family in the state will feel the result.

Either the new PMA can throw a monkey-wrench into the machinery and doom California shipping, or the ILWU can. Harry Bridges knows that if he were to do it, it might well be his finish. One reason—and one reason he is on the down-grade anyway—is a 6-foot 2-inch, 212-pound labor trouble shooter named Tim Flynn.

Last fall the national CIO went on an internal Red hunt which occasionally was as vigorous as anything the American Legion might try. When the country's Reds were denouncing the Marshall Plan and whooping it up for Henry Wallace, the CIO went firmly on record in favor of the Marshall Plan and President Tru-



Mayor Elmer Robinson knows he has nothing Hollywood would be interested in. But please, boys, the Mayor recently asked photographers, don't take any more pictures of me with my mouth open.

Just to do all possible in a good cause, the Mayor's office has recently been equipped with a new gadget. Just before hizzoner poses with a beautiful blonde from Bakersfield, a secretary pulls down a white curtain neatly recessed in the ceiling. As a result, in pictures like the above, the mayor's features show clear—if not pretty—against a bright new beyond.

man. National headquarters told its regional and plant locals to get in line.

Harry Bridges, as regional CIO director for Northern California as well as ILWU head, thumbed his nose at the national. He was against lend-lease to Europe and completely for Wallace. His puppet council supported him. Defiantly he pumped for his program.

**Booted.** CIO national president Philip Murray saw red. He kicked Bridges out of his job as regional director and ordered 45-year-old Tim Flynn out of Milwaukee to take over. According to an inside report, the Murray lieutenant who recommended Flynn said, "He's the only man I know with the physical guts to take over that job."

Flynn, a soft-spoken man with strong features and an athlete's figure beginning to go paunchy; took over. Shortly this serious, wavy-haired labor "boss" was seen by workers throughout his territory as he began organizing them into a political entity.

Bridges still had the ILWU and his clique had control of the state and local councils. But by election time Flynn had weaned about 70% of the CIO membership in California's four major industrial counties\* away from those councils.

The California National CIO Political Action Committee was formed, and the national CIO forbade the rebel CIO state council to use the once-potent words, Political Action Committee, or letters PAC, in their pro-Wallace campaigning.

\* SF. LA. Alameda. Contra Costa.

Then, as regional CIO director and under the CNPAC, Flynn took the "story to local union meetings. We told them the real facts, giving it to them straight."

The first payoff came on election day. Instead of a million votes in California, Henry Wallace got less than 200,000—and this was supposed to be one of his big states. Then, the Bridges-supported Third Party lost all of its Congressional races. Flynn's group supported 14 and had ten elected. The four who lost were the only four of the 14 who also had Third Party support. "The whole thing was a clear indication of what was in the voters' minds," Flynn says.

Bridges, who has never been to call on his successor as regional director, suffered another setback when he appeared before a union meeting shortly after the election to discuss the progress of the strike. Digressing, he started to explain that the Third Party had really helped the country by forcing President Truman to liberalize the Democratic Party platform. The longshoremen, who had read that line in the *Daily Worker*, soundly booed him. Bridges has been booed by his own membership three or four times since on other issues. He's no longer the white knight.

**Grass Roots.** Flynn's constant attention to organizing union committees on local levels to take control away from Communist sympathizers has practically stripped the state and some local councils of all support during the last few weeks. Recently the 2,700 members of the San Pedro ILWU local voted to stop paying a

per capita support tax to the LA and state councils, and suspended its blanket membership subscriptions to the Red-backed *Labor Herald*. SF's 6,300 Local 10 members have similar action on file as a special order of business.

After cutting off council support, the LA CIO rank and file went a step farther. They forced council officers to resign and put the council in the hands of a three-man national committee until new officers can be elected later. If the new officers follow CIO regional policy—as advocated in Southern California by Flynn's counterpart, Irwin D. Shetler—it is predicted the longshoremen will cough up again. SF is likely to follow suit.

Flynn undermined the left wing councils by direct attack. He pointed out to union members that the "state and local councils have never once criticized the Soviet Union's international policies. It isn't that they aren't interested in international affairs. They have criticized the conduct of many foreign countries and of their own country. But never Russia's."

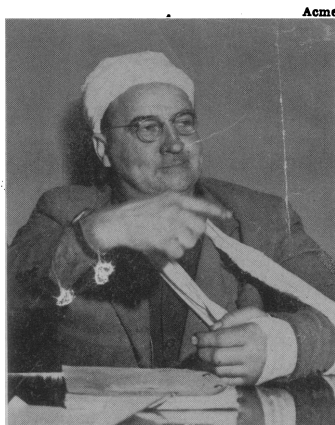
Flynn was disappointed when the recent waterfront strike was called. He thought he had Bridges on the run and wanted to keep him there. He knew the strike could help Bridges. But now he feels he again has the Bridges faction on the defense. He's in a fight, but it's not his first.

**Comer.** Flynn, who joined the labor movement in 1923 as a member of the Stewards Union of the Great Lakes, was a shop steward for an AFL textile union when the CIO was formed. His union was one of those which seceded. Rising in union ranks, he shifted to the steel industry as an organizer in 1940, operating in Pennsylvania and Alabama. After a period as a CIO legislative representative in Washington in 1942, he was regional director in Texas for three years, just about his longest assignment. From there he went to the Northeast as national CIO representative, and then to the telephone workers' organizing committee in 1947.

Early in January, 1948, Murray assigned him at the special request of the auto workers' Walter Reuther to direct an Allis-Chalmers reorganizing campaign. It was when he was winding up that assignment that Murray shot him to SF.

No one who has watched Harry Bridges and the ILWU doubts that in the past they have been under Communist influence. No one watching today can help but see—and be impressed with—the "new look." If current trends continue, peace will remain. Tim Flynn will emerge as California's most important labor figure. And the Reds will be permanently on the run.

The West Coast has its fingers crossed.



Victim Pearson: "scared"

that some of the pieces of the puzzle began to fall into place.

A telephone call to the Wilshire station showed no report of the arrest. Ergo, there must have been a "fix." The *Times* made the most of it in a three-page splash, including a page of incriminating pictures.

Police Chief Clement B. Horrall immediately called a board of inquiry. He suspended Det. Lt. C. B. Swan and Sgt. W. S. Wolfe, who had turned the seven gangsters loose and who reportedly had told the arresting officers to destroy their notes.

Mickey and his half-blind henchman, Solly Davis, were hustled off to jail to face charges of conspiracy to commit murder. Police searched everywhere for the seven hoodlums while the grand jury was called into session. "Da Mick" himself finally was freed in \$100,000 bail.

What made the pinch so embarrassing to the Bowron forces was that it substantiated what everyone had known—that Mickey was a pretty hot shot around Los Angeles. The implication that his power reached into places high enough to force two veteran police officers to do his bidding was even worse.

**Dull Comeback.** Bowron issued an inept statement in which he declared that Mickey and his gang invariably fled into county territory whenever the going was rough. Sheriff Eugene Bisselluz bristled with another statement that caused Bowron to back water.

Mickey's police record in LA goes back to 1933, when he was first floated out of the city as a bad boy. He served a term in Ohio before showing up again in 1939. He was pinched often for bookmaking but served only one five-month stretch.

He was arrested for the murder of Max Shaman, but was freed without prosecution on a plea of self-defense. He was arrested in connection with the murder of Paulie Gibbons in May, 1946, but nothing was pinned on him. And only last August, one Hooky Rothman was slain in his elaborate Sunset Strip haberdashery.

Since the demise of Siegel, Mickey has

## GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

### "Da Mick's in Da Middle"

ELECTION day was just 18 days away, and no one could get up a particular head of steam over the outcome of the balloting in Los Angeles.

Most of the apathetic burghers felt that Fletcher Bowron would be returned without too much difficulty, although four of the seven other candidates were hurling dead cats and tomatoes in his direction. Their dearest cat was crime.

Bowron has insisted from the start the city is comparatively free from crime. His opponents have pointedly remarked that one Mickey Cohen has been remarkably active in the environs since the death of the unlamented Bugsy Siegel (FORNIGHT, July 14, 1947).

Then, over what seemed a minor squabble, the lid blew off.

A radio technician (and sometime nudist-camp operator) named A. B. Pearson was brutally mauled by seven men. Pearson had just made the headlines when Mrs. Elsie Phillips, a 63-year-old widow, claimed Pearson had foreclosed an \$81 judgment on her and had bought her \$4,000 house for \$26.50.

Consensus was that Pearson got only what was coming to him. But an amateur photographer happened on the scene just as two alert police officers captured the seven when they wheeled away from Pearson's shop.

**What's This?** The men were hauled

off to Wilshire police station, and, mysteriously, released—together with their guns, tire irons and loaded canes—within a few minutes.

The photographer took his pictures to the *Times*, which bought them for \$50 because they showed remarkable enterprise. It was only after close study developed the fact that some of the strong-arm men were Mickey Cohen's henchmen,



Mickey Cohen: heat's on