

Longshore men's & warehousemen's union, Int'l.

(1953)

An Open Letter from the Longshoremen to All Members of the Seafaring Unions . . .

The time is long overdue for every one
of us to take a long, hard look at what's
shaping up on the waterfront . . .

INSTITUTE OF
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In the 19 years since 1934 the maritime workers on the West Coast have really moved ahead. We've got a home on the waterfront—especially compared to the jungle on the East Coast. The unity of the rank and file at the point of production has won for all of us the best standards of work anywhere in the world. Old timers who look back at conditions that existed before 1934 can hardly believe how far we've come—hiring halls, job conditions, 40-hour week for seamen, vacations, pensions and welfare. We've come from the bottom of the barrel to the top of the heap.

But all this is in danger. And believe it or not, *only the workers themselves can destroy what they have won.*

FEWER SEAFARING JOBS

West Coast shipping is slipping—and slipping bad. Companies like *American-Hawaiian* and *Chamberlin* are out of business. *Luckenbach* has announced that its day is almost done. Another inter-coastal line will announce it's through in the next few days. *Matson* has decided against putting more passenger ships on the run.

Just about everybody under the sun is carrying cargo except West Coast ships. Foreign ships are in-

creasing, MSTS has the biggest fleet in the country, and the East Coast ships are packing more and more West Coast cargo. It has reached the point where shippers are saying that they'll ship by piggy-back or pogo stick before they put their freight on a West Coast vessel.

So far as the longshoremen are concerned, we are in better shape to take this than anyone else. No matter who carries the cargo—East Coast, West Coast, MSTS, or foreign — we get the work. Maybe we ought to be like some other outfits on this front and figure that as long as we can cut ourselves a fat hog, to hell with everybody else. But we would be mighty short-sighted to figure that way. If West Coast shipping takes any more of a beating, longshoremen are going to get hurt too.

True, there is more work now than the longshoremen can handle in just about every port on the coast. But only a blind man could fail to see the storm warnings.

THE CAUSE

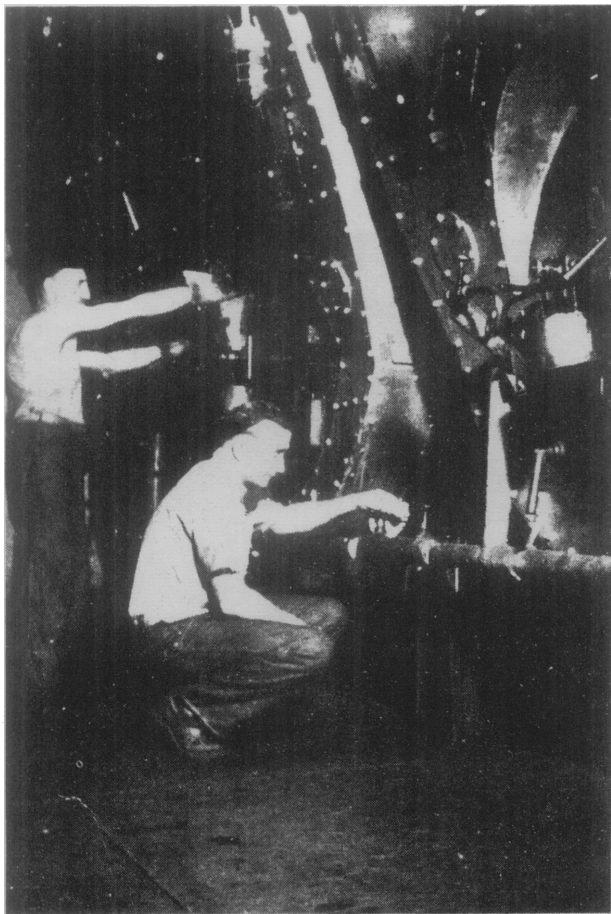
What has brought about this rotten situation? It has come from continuous warfare, jurisdictional raiding that seems to have no end, and a steady whipsawing of the industry by some union leaders out to maneuver a petty advantage for themselves.

After every one of these jurisdictional beefs and after every one of these whipsaw strikes, more shipping goes down the drain—more companies fold and more seagoing jobs go to the boneyard.

Look at the result. Every fireman now has to get off his job at the end of six months; he'll soon be forced to get off after only three months work.

It'll soon get to the point where some unions around here will have fine contracts and beautiful buildings in which to frame them—but no jobs.

The longshoremen have been sort of standing by, watching this develop and hoping that somehow or other enough people would come to their senses and call a halt. But it just hasn't happened. Instead of unity, with the maritime unions following basic trade union principles such as an *end to jurisdictional beefs*, *common expiration dates* for all waterfront contracts, and *long term agreements*, the industry is being ripped apart by phony jurisdictional beefs, continuous whipsaw strikes and a seemingly endless campaign of union against union. It's the old, old trick of pitting union against union to destroy each other.





THE MCS BEEF

Now the whole thing has come to a head around the MCS jurisdictional beef.

The MCS has been operating for over a year without a contract. Replacements for the stewards department are being dispatched from a Central Registration Office—another name for the first open shop employer-government dispatching hall we've had on the West Coast since 1934. All this is the result of the SUP raiding of the Cooks. And there's no election in sight to help settle the matter.

How would you like to have your union operating this way?

We've been watching this latest union-wrecking operation by Lundeberg unfold for some time. And finally the longshoremen on a coastwise basis decided last month that unless an election was ordered immediately, and the MCS beef settled one way or the other, we'd have to move in for our own self-preservation and protect our own jobs and conditions.

Because there is still no settlement in sight we have decided that the time has come for us to move. We are going to start organizing the seamen in a stewards department of the ILWU.

A SMALL PART OF THE RECORD

What could have been crazier from the point of view of any rank and file maritime worker than the SUP campaign which Lundeberg and Ryan cooked up to destroy West Coast conditions and bring ILA corruption and gangsterism to our waterfront around the Isthmian beef?

Not another AFL official—not even the Teamsters—dared support Lundeberg in the Isthmian beef and the tie-in with Ryan to do a job on the ILWU hiring ball. Had he succeeded, how long do you think your

hiring hall or vacations or wages or welfare plan would have lasted? Another six months? A year? Luckily for everybody, the longshoremen were tough enough to knock that one off.

Take a look at a few other deals and think what it's costing each one of us.

Was Lunchbox trying to destroy the MEBA when he signed a backdoor contract with Isthmian? Just ask any engineer.

And what did he do to the MFOW in the MELLO FRANCO and ROLANDO beefs? Every fireman knows. (And where are those ships now? Out of business—no jobs for anyone.)

Yet instead of a program to end this warfare, Lundeberg is now offering a charter to the MFOW in order to pick up an ally and some fall guys for his jurisdictional raiding. The members of the ILWU and MFOW have always been strong allies, and have always supported each other to our mutual advantage. Now the firemen are being asked to vote up an affiliation with the SUP which, by the terms laid down by Lundeberg, means joining in the war against the cooks and now the longshoremen.

When the walking bosses in Seattle wanted to put an end to the jurisdictional beefs and gangster control by Joe Ryan from New York, with all its sell-outs, who took them on and tried to keep them in the ILA? Not Ryan. But Lundeberg and his machine, which



includes everything from gunmen like a Giblin who shot up an MCS member, to the goons who worked over a fireman on the MARGARET SCHAEFFER, to screwballs who play Russian roulette backwards.

When Lundeberg's raiding of MCS fell apart because the rank and file of the cooks would have nothing to do with him, he wrote a letter to the government on May 9, 1952, demanding that the ship-owners be forced to hire for the stewards department Taft-Hartley style from the U.S. Employment Service. That's right. He demanded that the employers be ordered to dump the union hiring hall and use the USES, in these words:

"We further recommend that you notify the shipowners that in the future that they get their men from the United States Employment Service in every port on the Pacific Coast."

What working longshoreman or seaman could ever hope to benefit from this kind of a deal? And how long would it be before men for all departments—longshore too—came from the USES and off the streets and docks?

A DANGER TO ALL

If we were short-sighted we'd stick to our knitting and our jobs, and kiss off this mess as none of our affair. But we're not stupid. And neither is the average member of any of the other crafts.

We know that if Lundeberg continues along his present path he'll bring all of West Coast shipping down on his head—and on yours too.

The greatest menace to our livelihood right now, to our jobs and to all our unions, comes from this lunatic jurisdictional raiding by Lundeberg. As far as we're concerned, our own long-range survival demands an immediate end to it. And there's too damn much at stake to let it slide along, hoping that he'll just commit suicide. That's why we're telling you that we've decided that *there's got to be a halt.*

The facts as we see them are known to all of you. The drying up of the work is no secret. Each of you knows how many months it takes to ship out, and if Lundeberg keeps driving the West Coast ships out of business it's going to get much worse.

The jurisdictional warfare must stop. And we've got to go like hell just to win back the work on the West Coast ships which Lundeberg has already driven away.



This waterfront needs a program of united action of all maritime unions—a program that will result in *long term contracts with common expiration dates; contracts that preserve our hiring halls, improve our wages, hours, conditions, welfare and pension programs and, especially, our job security.*

We want more and more West Coast ships, manned and worked by West Coast union seamen and longshoremen, and this includes every single MSTS ship.

Simply—we want *your* support in a program of co-operation and joint action of all West Coast maritime workers, such as we used to have years ago, to help maintain real rank and file unionism and to bring about stability in the maritime industry so that we can all keep and improve what we've built on the waterfront.

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