The Seattle General Strike

An Account of What Happened in Seattle and Especially in the Seattle Labor Movement, During the General Strike, February 6 To 11, 1919

History Committee of The General Strike Committee

1919, March

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Front Matter

Title Page

THE
SEATTLE
GENERAL STRIKE
An Account of What Happened in Seattle and Especially in the Seattle Labor Movement,
During the General Strike, February 6 To 11, 1919

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of The General Strike Committee, March, 1919
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These writings, by various people at different times, have been brought together to help us to remember the past and create the future.

ADDENDUM (2009)

The main text of this pamphlet was scanned by anarchists to mark the 80th anniversary of the Seattle General Strike in 1999. It contains an account of the history of the 1919 general strike, put together by the Seattle General Strike History Committee historian, Anna Louise Strong, then a "progressive" reporter for the union-owned Seattle daily, *The Union Record*. The account was compiled shortly after the end of the strike, while the memories of participants were still vivid and clear. Before being published in final form, everything was submitted first to the history committee and then published in *The Union Record*, where workers comments were invited.

There is also a preface by Root And Branch, which reprinted the History Committee's account in 1972 as part of their Pamphlet series. Root and Branch is a council communist, libertarian Marxist group.

The History Committee account and the Root and Branch preface were scanned from the 1972 Root and Branch addition, Root & Branch Pamphlet 5, Cambridge, Mass. 02139.

The entire text of the Root and Branch pamphlet was read and discussed by a group of anarchists in Seattle in 1998, and the brief informational introduction containing BACKGROUND NOTES was added as a result of the discussions

We feel that this text is important because, as a concrete account of a general strike which actually occurred in the United States, it helps to counter the ideological lie that ordinary working people in this country have always been too satisfied, too divided or too intimidated to resist the powers that be in any politically significant way. When it occurred, the Seattle General Strike was viewed as a real challenge to the capitalist status quo. Although there were no major violent confrontations between people involved in strike activities and the guardians of law and order, a much more powerful and longlasting challenge was offered, the positive activities of providing socially necessary goods and services which were democratically self-managed. This was seen, by both participants and opponents, as part of the process through which ordinary working people were preparing themselves to take control of industry, their own lives and society.

BACKGROUND NOTES (1999)

Remembering the past is a vital part of understanding our present problems, confronting the system that has made our lives so miserable, and taking direct action to create a new and better world.

In our opposition to the present destruction of the natural world, ongoing wars and nationalist brutalities, and the impoverishment of the many while the rich get richer, we want to remember the one hundred thousand people who, eighty years ago, took a stand against this brutal system in the Seattle General Strike. Their enemy is ours, and in their struggle, they laid the basis for ours today.

Capitalism has from the start been a global system, developed as capitalists, aided by governments of nation-states, have exploited local and far-away people. By the beginning of the Twentieth Century, the United States economy was integrally bound up with foreign trade. In 1897, the foreign investments of United States capitalists amounted to $700 million. By 1914 they had more than quadrupled to $3 billion. In 1907, in a lecture at Columbia University, the soon-to-be President Woodrow Wilson said: "Concessions obtained by financiers must be safeguarded by ministers of state, even if the sovereignty of unwilling nations be outraged in the process…the doors of the nations which are closed must be battered down." And after he became President, Wilson continued to support "the righteous conquest of foreign markets," even as he advocated the ideology of "national self-determination of peoples" to weaken rival capitalist powers. In this he was being neither hypocritical nor deceitful. On the contrary, he well understood that the national and global expansion of business, and the ideology of nationalism were linked in buttressing the hegemony of the capitalist class.

In fact, the nation-state and the capitalist economy are interconnected. The modern state and capitalism developed at the same time and depend on each other. States create the social and physical circumstances for the "progress" of capitalism. The ideology of nationalism has been used as the justification for the expansion and consolidation of the rule of the elites within and through nation-states. It has both helped to secure new markets and enforced conformity and subservience on diverse local populations.

Ever since the emergence of the nation-state system and capitalist class as a ruling class, rivalries between business interests have resulted in wars between nation-states. War and nationalism have also served to channel the anger of the ordinary people into hostility against the people of other nations and away from those who directly exploit them.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the First World War was justified as being a war for national self-determination, and a "war to end all wars." Nevertheless, it mainly resulted in producing great power for the elites of some nation-states, and wealth for those who supplied the arms and equipment for the rival soldiers to kill and mutilate each other and the millions of unfortunate civilians who happened to be in the way.

For the European powers, the First World War began at the end of July, 1914, when the government of Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, and August 1, when the German government

declared war on Russia. Then, on August 2, 1914, the German government declared war on France and the British government followed up by declaring war on Germany—which resulted in a devastating war which continued for four bloody years.

Because the United States remained neutral in the First World War until 1917, its businesspeople were able to trade with both sides, and reap tremendous profits. By 1917, United States businesses' trade with the Allies had grown seven times in value, and trade with Germany and the other Central Powers had also grown. As the War progressed, the British government and its allies, as well as private European businesses, bought more and more American military equipment, and civilian goods. To pay for these purchases, they borrowed more and more money from American financiers, who also reaped tremendous profits. But, eventually, it became untenable to maintain this lucrative trade and secure repayment of the massive loans made by the allied nations without an end to the war. Then, in February 1917, there was a revolutionary upheaval in Russia, and the capitalist elites all over the world began to worry.

It was time for the United States government to enter the war and break the long-standing stalemate. On April 6, 1917, President Wilson signed the declaration of war against the Central Powers.

By November, 1918, German forces on the Western Front were defeated. German sailors rebelled. Revolutions began in several German cities. On November 9, 1918, the German emperor was forced to resign. He and his son fled to Holland. Germany became a republic. The new German leaders surrendered to the Allied powers on November 11, 1918, and the First World War ended.

But this didn't herald the era of participatory democracy and prosperity in the lives of ordinary people that so many had hoped for. On the contrary, both victor and defeated nation-states continued to exploit their own populations and to expand their rule. The U.S. government pursued its subjugation of all too many weaker nations, including Haiti, Cuba and Nicaragua in the 'twenties and 'thirties, and cooperated with a series of brutal regimes, including the Italian Fascist and German Nazi governments. It also supported American firms which did business with those regimes—until the very moment it entered World War II.

But simultaneously, very many ordinary people all over the world became acutely aware that war, poverty and exploitation are all integral to the capitalist system. And many began thinking about their own potential to take control of their own lives and self-manage the activities necessary for social life, rather than placing their faith in capitalism or the State elites to improve things.

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Before World War I, most American exports were transported overseas in foreign-owned ships. But, when Britain entered the war, the British navy blocked German ships from engaging in international commerce, and the German Navy interfered with British and allied shipping. Because of the decrease in the number of available ships for freight, and the threat of German submarine attacks, the cost of shipping goods and the price of marine insurance rose rapidly. As a result, American exporters found it difficult to send their goods overseas. This situation provided a prime opportunity for United States businessmen to develop the national ship-building and merchant marine industries.

Shipbuilding had been a great American industry in the age of wooden ships. But, United States shipyards had not generally kept up with the new technologies required for steel-hulled vessels, because of the high price of American steel at the beginning of the 20th century.

Then, the First World War offered American businessmen a prime opportunity of gaining government financial assistance and a predictable regulated marketplace for producing steel-hulled vessels. On September 7, 1916, Congress passed legislation creating the United States Shipping Board, to set industry-wide standards and regulations for American-owned freighters.

A subsidiary of the Shipping Board, the Emergency Fleet Corporation (EFC) was empowered to promote construction of shipyards and the manufacture of modern steel-hulled vessels and wooden ships, and to purchase and supervise the use of those ships. During World War I, it used $2.9 billion of government funds to provide the capital required by private companies to build up the shipyards and to purchase ships made in the shipyards. The government owned the ships and bore most of the economic risks, but the shipyards were operated mainly by private businesses, which reaped the profits.

The Shipping Board was organized on January 30, 1917, and the Emergency Fleet Corporation on April 16, 1917, after the United States entered the war. After some confusion, Edward N. Hurley became president of the United States Shipping Board and Emergency Fleet Corporation, and Charles Piez became general manager and vice-president of the Emergency Fleet Corporation. Government and business leaders considered Piez to be particularly well-suited for this position because he was a successful practicing engineer and businessman. He was also a member of several boards of directors of large enterprises.

Under Piez's supervision, the EFC subsidized American entrepreneurs in constructing enormous shipyards and manufacturing hundreds of ships. By 1919, the EFC had helped to build 647 ships for the United States Merchant Fleet.

The large amount of government funds available for the construction of shipyards and the great profits to be made through ship contracts encouraged businessmen all over the country, including in the Northwest, to go into the shipbuilding business. Before 1914 there was only one shipyard in Seattle manufacturing steel-hulled vessels, the Seattle Dry Dock and Construction Company. Then, between 1914 and 1917 two more ship yards for steel-hulled vessels were built, and by the end of 1918 five Seattle firms were constructing steel-hulled ships. The EFC also subsidized construction of shipyards capable of building modern wooden ships and purchased wooden-hulled vessels. This was of particular benefit to Northwest entrepreneurs, because of the easy availability and low cost of lumber in the region. With the help of the EFC, the wooden-hulled ship industry expanded rapidly to the point where twelve shipyards were producing wooden ships in Seattle by 1918.

During the First World War, ship construction became Seattle's most important industry. Throughout the war, Seattle shipyards produced 26.5 percent of all ships constructed for the EFC." During 1918 alone, there were ninety-six ships constructed in Seattle yards, sixty-one of which were steel freighters. The largest of the Seattle shipyards was Skinner and Eddy.

More than 35,000 workers were employed in the metal and wooden shipyards and allied trades. Since Seattle's local labor force was insufficient to operate the shipyards, a large proportion of the workers were recruited from other western cities and towns. The call was put out through newspaper advertisements and employment agents sent out by the shipyards. To attract workers from other cities, they promised higher wages than those offered either in non-shipyard work in Seattle or in the shipyard industry elsewhere on the West Coast. The United States Department of Labor also sent out "scouts" to recruit skilled workers. And Seattle union members were urged to visit locals of their unions in other cities to pass on the word that there was lots of work in Seattle.

Both the U.S. government and private vigilante business interests used World War I as an excuse to engage in a sustained and brutal campaign against radicals, including many labor activists. In March 1917 the Idaho and Minnesota legislatures passed the first Criminal Syndicalism laws. these laws were used to criminalize and prosecute labor activists, especially members of the Industrial Workers of The World (also known as Wobblies), and immigrants who expressed radical ideas of any kind, as well as people who were known anarchists and socialists.

The Industrial Workers of The World (I.W.W) was, from its beginnings in the first decade of the 20th century, a revolutionary union, opposed to the compromises of the A.F.L. unions with the capitalist system, and against capitalist exploitation. It was for workers full participation in managing and owning their workplaces through "industrial democracy." The I.W.W. also opposed "all nationalistic sectionalism, or patriotism, and the militarism preached and supported by our one enemy, the capitalist class." Their commitment to these principles did not waver, even when the First World War commenced, and it became dangerous for people in the United States to openly voice anti-military, anti-nationalist or anti-war ideas. Despite this danger, in their 1916 convention the I.W.W.s announced, "We condemn all wars, and for the prevention of such, we proclaim the anti-militaristic propaganda in time of peace, thus promoting class solidarity among the workers of the entire world, and, in time of war, the general strike, in all industries."

From 1916 through 1920 the I.W.W. won some of its most enduring victories and built up its strength to what was probably its peak membership of about 40,000 in 1923. In the southwest oil fields I.W.W. organizing resulted in the formation of an Oil Workers Industrial Union chartered January 1, 1917. When the Metal Mine Workers were chartered on January 29th they already predominated over the A.F.L. Mine-Mill in the Globe and Miami districts of Arizona, and the Miami wage scale became the standard for bargaining in other areas. On the east coast the I.W.W. rapidly organized merchant seamen. And, the U.S. Shipping Adjustment Board was forced to recognize the I.W.W. as the bargaining agent for the Philadelphia longshoremen. On February 7th, 1918 the Shipping Adjustment Board asked that the I.W.W. provide a member for its three-man adjustment commission empowered to settle wage disputes. The I.W.W. General Executive Board responded that this was autocratic and the Shipping Board made an exception for I.W.W. democracy and accepted the MTW representative on the understanding that he was at all times under the instruction of the union and its membership.

On the Great Lakes, where the A.F.L. unions had been wiped out in the long strike of 1909–13, I.W.W. membership began to grow. But, once the United States entered the First World War, arrests and nationalistic vigilantes stopped it.

In June 1917, several hundred sailors stationed in Bremerton, Washington were given special leave and wrecked the IWW hall in Seattle. Before the event the Roseburg, Oregon News had announced that these men had been given a few hours leave to drive the I.W.W. out of the city. (See: THE I.W.W.: ITS FIRST FIFTY YEARS: 1905–1955, by Fred Thomson; Industrial Workers Of The World, November 1955, page 110.)

But, because the rapidly expanding industrial enterprises in Seattle required more workers than they could easily get, the workers found themselves in a relatively strong position.

In order to head off the development of radical workers organizations, the employers and the government decided to temporarily tolerate the conservative American Federation of Labor union organizations. This respite enabled the Seattle shipyard unions to grow enormously, as non-union workers recognized the advantages of joining the unions soon after they were hired. In this way, the shipyards became almost 100 percent unionized.

And, despite the dominance of the A.F.L., among the many workers attracted to the Seattle shipyard boom there were radicals, including members of the I.W.W. There were approximately 900 Wobblies in Seattle who, because the A.F.L. had job control in the yards, held cards of both organizations.

However, the government and the employers decided to centralize bargaining over all labor disputes involving wages, hours, and working conditions for the duration of the war. For this purpose the three-man Shipbuilding Labor Adjustment Board (S.L.A.B.) was set up on August 20, 1917, by agreement of the Navy Department, the Emergency Fleet Corporation, and, after consultation with Samuel Gompers, various craft-international union presidents.

V. E. Macy, a New York bank director, was appointed chairman of the S.L.A.B. by President Wilson. E. F. Carry, a Chicago businessman, was the EFC representative, and Gompers appointed A. J. Berres, secretary of the Metal Trades Department of the A.F.L. The S.L.A.B. became popularly known as the Macy Board after its chairman V. Everit Macy.

As part of their predictable regulated marketplace the employers and government officials wanted to establish industry-wide national and regional standards for wages. But, the members of the Seattle shipyard unions opposed this move on the grounds that they deserved higher wages for comparable work than shipyard workers in other areas of the country. They based their argument on the fact that the distance of the Northwest from other industrial sections caused the cost of living in Seattle to be higher than the national average. In addition, they feared that if all workers were forced to accept a national or even a regional wage standard, their wages would not be raised to Seattle's high level, but dropped to the lowest denominator. And they well understood that any national or regional wage standard would be used as a first step in removing the advantages the Seattle labor movement had won through hard struggles, and the next step would be to destroy their organizations.

In July 1917, the Metal Trades Council of Seattle, negotiating for all the shipyard unions in the city, presented the employers with a set of demands for a new industry-wide agreement in Seattle. It called for wages of $8.00 per eight-hour day for skilled craftsmen, and increases in pay for semiskilled and unskilled workers. Skinner and Eddy, because its government contracts were more recent and reflected rising ship prices, at first agreed to comply with these demands. But the other shipyard owners claimed that they could not make any profits if they agreed to increase wages.

In response, the Metal Trades Council prepared to call all their Seattle members out on strike. To head off the strike, Edward Hurley, president of the Shipping Board and Emergency Fleet Corporation, asked the Council to send three delegates to Washington, D.C. to present the union case before the Macy Board.

The Seattle Metal Trades Council agreed, and sent three delegates to Washington D.C. But on September 7, Hurley demanded that the EFC have the power to veto Macy-Board decisions, so that his agency could have the final say on the cost of ships. In response, Carry resigned from the Macy Board, leaving it without authority to hear the complaints of the Seattle Metal Trades Council delegates. The delegates, therefore, decided to return to Seattle on September 23. The Macy Board's power to make binding decisions was restored and Carry rejoined the Board only after they left.

Only after the strike began did the Macy Board go to Seattle to hold hearings and negotiations. But it was not able to begin hearings in Seattle until October 8, because Carry became ill and was replaced by a new EFC representative, Louis A. Coolidge. Five international union presidents

involved in shipyard work were also asked to join The S.L.A.B. in Seattle, to help assess the situation and bring about a settlement with the Seattle unions.

The Macy Board public hearings in Seattle lasted five days. The Board decided to also hold hearings in Portland and San Francisco before deciding the case. In the meantime, the Board instructed the shipyard workers to return to work. At first, the shipyard workers of Seattle refused to return to work. But, after strenuous efforts and appeals to patriotism, the international presidents were able to get the Seattle shipyard workers to temporarily return to work under the old conditions.

After its hearings in the other West Coast cities, the Macy Board announced the establishment of a uniform wage scale for the San Francisco, Columbia River, and Puget Sound districts. It decided it would allow all shipyard workers in this region a 31 percent pay increase over the wages prevailing on June 1, 1916. This discounted the wage increases which the workers had won since that time. And even worse, these wage rates became not the minimum wage rates, as the workers had hoped, but maximum wage rates.

The S.L.A.B. did make an exception for Seattle skilled shipyard workers by permitting the Skinner and Eddy schedule for its skilled workers—$5.50 per eight-hour day—to become the pay standard of the Puget Sound district. But, the Seattle metal-trades unions protested this decision on the grounds that the 1916 pay scale as benchmark was highly discriminatory, particularly against unskilled and semi-skilled workers, who were not as well organized as the skilled workers in 1916, and therefore had substantially lower wages than they later achieved.

Moreover, the Metal Trades Council noted that the EFC, by applying the 1916 wage scale in Seattle shipyards, enabled the shipyard management to pay unskilled and semiskilled union workers 22.5 cents less than their fellow unionists were making for comparable work outside the shipyards. At the same time, the Macy decision was meant to set workers against each other by allowing the shipyard management to pay skilled workers 60 cents an hour more than their fellow members in comparable jobs outside the yards.

The Seattle unions also objected to the fact that the wage increases granted to the West Coast shipyard workers were not as great as those given to workers in Eastern yards.

The Seattle Metal Trades Council attempted to appeal the Macy Board decision, but their appeal was rejected. For more than a year Seattle shipyard workers continued to work, although under constant protest against the unfairness of the Macy Board decision, in which they had had no real say." Metal-trades representatives constantly stressed the point that the international officers of their unions illegally committed them to abide by the decisions of the Macy Board, since the constitutions of many of the craft unions specifically stated that the International officers had no authority to bind locals with referendum votes.

While the war continued, the unions asked their members to stay on the job out of patriotism, but in November 1918, less than two weeks after the Armistice, Seattle metal-trades officials asked their locals to vote on an authorization to strike.

The vote was counted on December 10, 1918. Bert Swain, secretary of the Metal Trades Council, announced on the following day that "the proposition to reject the Macy award, which carried with it authorization to the Pacific Coast Council of the Metal Trades to call a strike has been adopted by the requisite two-third majority in a majority of the unions affiliated with the Seattle Council." The vote count for each of the seventeen unions were not made public, so that the employers could not offer a wage increase only to the smaller unions which voted not to strike and thereby break labor's solidarity.

Backed by the vote for strike authorization, the Metal Trades Council demanded $8.00 a day for mechanics, $7.00 for specialists, $6.00 for helpers, and $5.50 for manual laborers.

On January 16, 1919, they met with representatives of Skinner and Eddy, Seattle North Pacific, and the Ames Yard. But, the employers' committee only offered to raise the wages of mechanics. They would not consider any wage increase for the less skilled, lower-paid workers.

After this rejection negotiations were broken off, and the Metal Trades leaders decided to proceed with the strike. But, in their struggle to improve shipyard wages and consolidate the little union power they had gained during the war, the unions found that they had to contend not merely with local management but with the power of the federal government as well. Piez, general manager and vice-president of the EFC, gave notice that those ship owners who might be considering giving into the union demands should reconsider, because if they did, they would lose their steel allotments.

Piez also felt that it was time to more thoroughly suppress the labor movement in the area, because he believed that the unsettled conditions in Seattle shipyards were being used by radicals for "subversive purposes." He was convinced that the real problem was not industrial, but political. With this in mind, Piez publicly condemned the strike, and publicly asserted that it would be unpatriotic and illegal for employers to grant higher wages.

Nevertheless, on January 18, A. E. Miller, chairman of the conference committee of the Metal Trades Council, began distributing the formal strike notices to the managements of the various yards. These notices stated that all work in the shipyards would cease on January 21.

Then, the employers began circulating rumors that the shipyard employees did not really favor the strike, but were forced into compliance by radical leaders. Foremen and other supervisory personnel began circulating petitions among the shipyard workers requesting that a re-vote be taken on permission to strike. Management representatives also conducted a straw vote at Skinner and Eddy, and claimed that it resulted in 95 per cent of the workers voting against the strike. In response, the Metal Trades Council issued a statement denying the rumors and challenging the validity of the petitions and straw vote because they were circulated by the employers.

On January 21, the strike began. About 35,000 men stopped working: 25,300 in the metal yards, 3,250 in the wooden yards, and the rest in allied trades. According to the *Union Record*, the walkout was both orderly and free of violence. There was a similar strike in the Tacoma shipyards which had, in fact, gone out a few hours earlier than Seattle's. But the stoppage did not spread further down the Coast. Portland's Metal Trades leadership did not comply with the Seattle Metal Trades' request that they join the strike.

Then, some days after the strike began, the employers left Seattle on vacation. This move clearly indicated that they had no intention of negotiating and meant to starve the workers out.

At the same time, in telegrams to all the struck companies, Piez and Macy stated that the unions had violated their agreement with the government, and reasserted their agency's determination to stand by the Macy award and to approve no wage increases.

In response to this ultimatum, the secretary of the Tacoma Metal Trades Council proposed, on January 22, a general sympathy strike. Then, the Seattle Central Labor Council, on the following day, adopted a resolution proposed by the Metal Trades Council to call a general strike in Seattle, if the measure was approved by a referendum of local unions.

ROOT & BRANCH PREFACE (1972)

From February 6 to February 11, 1919, nearly 100,000 Seattle workers participated in a general strike. This pamphlet is a history of the strike, written by the History Committee of the General Strike Committee shortly after the end of the strike. It was compiled by Anna Louise Strong, then a "progressive" reporter for the union-owned Seattle daily, *The Union Record*. Before being published in final form, everything was submitted first to the history committee and then published in *The Union Record*, where workers comments were invited.

We are reprinting it for several reasons. First, it provides a concrete account of one of the few general strikes in this country's history. Although conditions have changed considerably, it still gives a good idea of what happens during a general strike and what problems arise. Second, the Seattle general strike was the general strike in the USA that went farthest towards workers' management, both in concept and in practice. It was seen, by both participants and opponents, as part of a process through which workers were preparing themselves to run industry and society. Final authority in running the strike rested with a General Strike Committee, three members from each striking local, elected by the rank-and-file. The 300 members of the committee were mostly rank-and-filers with little previous leadership experience. During the strike, this committee or its Executive Committee of 15 virtually ran Seattle. The strike was not a simple shutdown of the city. Instead, workers in different trades organized themselves to provide essential services, such as doing hospital laundry, getting milk to babies, collecting wet garbage, and many other things.

Third, the idea of strikers providing partial services presented here can be useful not only in general but in more limited strikes. Such tactics can help to keep non-striking workers (i.e. workers outside the striking plant, industry, or service) on the side of the strikers and at the same time hit the capitalists more directly. For example, in the 1970 postal strike, letter carriers promised to deliver welfare checks even while on strike. In Cleveland, in 1944, streetcar workers threatened to refuse to collect fares in order to win a pay increase; the City Council gave in before they actually used the tactic. Another possible example would be if garbage workers picked up garbage everywhere but the wealthy and business sections. This type of action would in most cases have to be taken outside the union, since few union bureaucracies would use such a clearly class-directed tactic, and thus of necessity the workers would have to organize this themselves.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STRIKE

The Seattle strike took place in a time of upheaval and crisis throughout the world. There had been a revolution in Russia, followed by revolts in Germany, Hungary, and several other European countries. it was widely believed that workers in these countries were overthrowing capitalism and taking over management of production for themselves. The Russian Revolution was supported by large numbers of workers in the U.S. as elsewhere. Late in 1919, longshoremen in both Seattle and San Francisco refused to load arms and munitions destined for Admiral Kolchak, leader of the counterrevolution in Siberia, and in Seattle they beat up the scabs who

tried to load them onto the government-chartered ship. To many workers, the Russian revolution, as they conceived it (not realizing to what extent the Bolsheviks had already destroyed the power of the workers' own factory committees and soviets and instituted authoritarian rule), was something to be followed here. [Root & Branch note: As the leaflet "Russia Did It", circulated during the Seattle General Strike (referred to in the text but never quoted), put it: "The Russians have shown you the way out. What are you going to do about it? You are doomed to wage slavery till you die unless you wake up, realize that you and the boss have nothing in common, that the employing class must be overthrown, and that you, the workers, must take over the control of your jobs, and through them, the control over your lives instead of offering yourself up to the masters as a sacrifice six days a week, so that they may coin profits out of your sweat and toil."]

In this country also there was widespread labor turmoil. Vastly expanded production for World War I and the cut-off of immigration made labor scarce, and placed workers in a powerful position. To ensure steady production, under the changed conditions, business and government made a deal with the conservative American Federation of Labor. Government and management would give up union-breaking and allow the A.F.L. to organize; in return, the unions would prevent strikes. (This wartime experience of government-guaranteed unionization later became the model for containing workers' movements in the 1930's.) However, despite the appeals to patriotism, the promises of a "new era" after the war, and the opposition of government, business, and the A.F.L., strikes mushroomed during the war: the war years 1916–1918 averaged 2.4 times as many workers on strike as 1915.

Two factors were largely responsible for this. First, there was an enormous inflation associated with the war: the cost of living practically doubled from August 1915 to the end of 1919. Thus while real wages increased, they lagged far behind workers' expectations; meanwhile, the work week was greatly lengthened. Second, as one wartime labor mediator wrote, "the urgent need for production … gave the workers a realization of strength which before they had neither realized nor possessed."

Big strikes practically stopped spruce lumber production and closed down the most important copper areas early in the war. In Bridgeport, Conn., the most important munitions center in the U.S., workers repeatedly stopped production in defiance of the orders of both the National War Labor Board and their own national union leaders.

Increasing militance was accompanied by a growing spirit of solidarity. For example, shipyard workers on the Pacific Coast tied up the yards for several months in sympathy with the lumber strikers in the Northwest, refusing to handle "ten-hour lumber" in order to aid the lumberers struggle for the eight hour day. General strikes developed in Springfield, Ill., Kansas City, Mo., Waco, Texas, and Billings, Montana, all to support particular groups of striking workers.

When the war ended, the conflict increased. Now that the great war-time industrial expansion was over, capitalists widely felt it necessary to reduce wages relative to prices if profits were to be maintained. Thus the government simultaneously ended war-time price controls and allowed corporations to resume their traditional union-breaking policies. Between June 1919 and June 1920 the cost of living index (taking 1913 as 100) rose from 177 to 216. Unemployment increased considerably right after the end of the war. At the same time, workers were eager to receive the benefits that war propaganda had promised them. The "new era" they had been promised turned out to mean declining real incomes, growing unemployment, and the undermining of what little defense against arbitrary management authority they had won.

As a consequence, more workers participated in strikes in 1919 than in any other year in American history except 1946. There were large strikes in the New England and New Jersey textile districts, involving 120,000 workers, largely opposed by the unions.

Three hundred fifty thousand steel workers walked out, crippling most of the industry. They were met with a reign of terror in the large steel districts in Western Pennsylvania, "red raids" and deportations from the federal government, and lukewarm support (and at times treachery) from the trade union movement. Since the A.F.L. unions had traditionally been all white, the employers had no trouble recruiting 30 to 40 thousand black workers as strikebreakers. The strikers held out for more than two months, but finally succumbed to the overwhelming power of the steel industry and the government.

There were several other large strikes, many of them "outlaw" or wildcat, heartily and openly opposed by the unions. The most important of these was the strike of the railroad workers, which spread across the country. It was eventually ended by the combined pressure of repression and some concessions. Most protracted was the mass upheaval in the coalfields, with sporadic strikes, national strikes, and armed battles running from 1919 into 1922. In the course of these struggles, the idea of workers' management of production often came to the fore. For example, in the course of a wildcat strike of Illinois miners, a mass-meeting of 2,000 from the Nigger Hollow Mines adopted a resolution which read:

In view of the fact that the present-day system of Society, known as the capitalist system, has completely broken down, and is no longer able to supply the material and spiritual-needs of the workers of the land, and in further view of the fact that the apologists for and the beneficiaries of that system now try to placate the suffering masses by promises of reforms such as a shorter workday and increases in wages, and in further view of the futility of such reforms in the face of the world crisis that is facing the capitalist system; therefore be it … Resolved, that the next National Convention of the U.M.W.A. issue a call to the workers of all industries to elect delegates to an industrial congress, there to demand of the capitalist class that all instruments of industries be turned over to the working-class to guarantee that necessities, comforts, and luxuries be produced for the use of humanity instead of a parasitical class of stockholders and bondholders, and that the congress be called upon to pass an amendment to the Constitution of the United States legalizing all such action in the aforementioned Congress."

Similar forces were at work in Seattle. Radical sentiment had simmered there even during the war. When a socialist and former president of the Seattle A.F.L., Hulet Wells, was convicted for opposing the draft and then tortured in prison, the Seattle labor movement erupted with giant street rallies. Seattle union membership had increased from 15,000 in 1915 to 60,000 by the end of 1918. Most of the unions were affiliated with the A.F.L. but their ideas and action differed greatly from A.F.L. policy; as Harry Ault, editor of *The Union Record*, and a moderate in the local labor movement, put it:

"I believe that 95 per cent of us agree that the workers should control the industries. Nearly all of us agree on that but very strenuously disagree on the method. Some of us think we can get control through the Cooperative movement, some of us think through Political action, and others think through industrial action …"

Right after the end of the war, the I.W.W. (Industrial Workers of the World) and the A.F.L. Metal Trades Council cooperated in sponsoring a Soldiers', Sailors', and Workingmen's Council, taking the Soviets of the Russian revolution as their model.

If the Seattle General Strike was an aspect of the stormy conflicts throughout the U.S. and the world in 1919, it also grew out of the specific historical conditions in Seattle. Partially because of its geographic isolation, the Seattle labor movement had developed a unique structure. Whereas most unions emphasize the relation of workers to others in their own industry or trade, the most important identification of Seattle workers was with the workers of Seattle as a whole. (In Seattle, an attack on one group of workers was felt as an attack on all.) This was reflected in and partially caused by the fact that most collective bargaining was coordinated through the Central Labor Council, in which all A.F.L. unions were represented. Such city-wide labor councils have been centers of radical activity in other countries, but in 20th century America they have been extremely weak. The very newness of most of the Seattle labor movement meant that there had been little time for a local union leadership with its own interests to separate itself off from the rank-and-file. Although the union leaders in Seattle certainly had their doubts about the general strike, they did not actively try to smash it—in marked contrast to union leaders' behavior in other general strikes, notably in San Francisco in 1934. Thus while the workers of Seattle had to create a new organ, the General Strike Committee, they did not come into direct conflict with the existing union structure—precisely because of the factors which made that structure unique.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STRIKE AND OF THE HISTORY

There were many limitations both in the thought and actions of the participants in the Seattle General Strike and in this account of the Strike, which leaves many important questions open. Perhaps most striking in the pamphlet is the strong emphasis on the non-violence of the strike, its peaceful intent, its maintenance of "law and order." To some extent, this stress can be explained by the fact that the History was written in part to serve as a defense for many radicals and other participants who were arrested after the strike was over. Also, it should be remembered that the author, who was one of those arrested, was a "progressive" newspaper writer and not a striking worker. However, it is true that the strike was entirely peaceful, that from the beginning it was conceived in a peaceful framework, and that this perspective shaped the development of the strike. Given the situation in Seattle, this made sense. The strike was almost completely effective and thus did not require mass picketing (which could lead to violence) to shut things down. There was no possibility of successful revolutionary action, which would have involved armed struggle, in as small and isolated a place as Seattle, whose workers were more radical than those in most other parts of the country—it would have been bloodily crushed by the much stronger forces of reaction. What is objectionable in the Strike History is the emphasis on peacefulness, its elevation to a principle rather than a tactic. To what extent this was shared by the participants we do not know.

Also strange is the attitude towards the Japanese workers expressed here. The Japanese workers had also gone on strike and were invited to send delegates to the General Strike Committee, but with no vote. It is unclear what the context of this decision was, but this might have been a serious and potentially destructive limitation in the class-consciousness of those who made the decision.

The pamphlet fails to give much information on what the Wobblies (the Industrial Workers of the World) and other radicals did during the strike, what role they played, or what had been the effect of their years of activity and propaganda (some of it about "The General Strike") on the

participants. The Wobblies were especially active in the shipyards. But the general strike was by no means a Wobbly creation, as some people have portrayed it.

Because of its early date, the pamphlet does not tell much about what happened after the strike. The account Anna Louise Strong gives in her autobiography is discouraging, although apparently accurate. She notes that the economic crisis of 1920–21 came to Seattle a year before it came to other cities. The Seattle shipyards closed a year earlier than the yards of Hog Island and San Francisco which also worked on government orders; perhaps by accident, perhaps because of "shrewd men in the East who decided that 'red Seattle' must be tamed." She continues,

"…our shipyard workers drifted to other cities to look for work. The young, the daring, the best fighters went … The life died out of a dozen 'workers' enterprises' which were part of our 'inevitable road to socialism.' Overexpanded cooperatives went bankrupt in a storm of recriminations… Workers fought each other for jobs and not the capitalists for power."

Would it have made any difference if the strike had gone farther, had lasted longer, managed more enterprises, been willing to resort to violence? Probably not. Of more significance is the question: to what extent was the decline of the workers movement in Seattle (and in other places throughout the country) a direct result of the economic crisis, as Strong suggests, and to what extent were other factors involved?

One of the major problems of the workers in the strike was their leaders. This is recognized in the pamphlet and a fair amount of information is given concerning it, mostly about the attempts of the national unions to force their Seattle locals to break the strike. There is much that can be added from other sources as well. Seattle's union leadership was notoriously radical. Yet the decision to strike was made while most of the "labor leaders" were at a special conference in Chicago to organize a national general strike to free Tom Mooney. [Root & Branch note: According to one of them, Strong, the general strike would probably not have occurred if they had been in town. "They were terrified when they heard that a general strike had been voted… It might easily smash something—us, perhaps, our well-organized labor movement." They went along with the General Strike because it was happening and in the hopes of controlling where it went and bringing it to a speedy conclusion. The established union leaders never did manage to gain control of the strike, but they had more and more influence as the strike went on. Strong also pointed out that:

"… as soon as any worker was made a leader he wanted to end that strike. A score of times in those 5 days I saw it happen. Workers in the ranks felt the thrill of massed power which they trusted their leaders to carry to victory. But as soon as one of these workers was put on a responsible committee, he also wished to stop 'before there is riot and blood.' The strike could produce no leaders willing to keep it going. All of us were red in the ranks and yellow as leaders."

This situation was dramatized when the Executive Committee voted 13 to 1 on Saturday (the third day of the strike) to recommend ending the strike that night. The 300 members of the General Strike Committee were almost persuaded until they took a supper break and talked with members of their own rank-and-file; they returned to the meeting and voted overwhelmingly to continue the strike. All of this suggests that the problem was not one of "bad" or "yellow" leaders, but was inherent in the division between "leaders" and "led". The strikers could continue only insofar as they kept decisions in their own hands.

For us, one of the most important questions in any strike is to what extent do the participating men and women take over direction of their activities themselves, and to what extent are they simply following the directives of an alternative elite. A strike committee, for example, can be only a means by which different groups of workers coordinate their activity; on the other hand,

it can be a new directing authority. Many questions about decision-making in the Seattle strike are not answered by the Official History.

Who was on the General Strike Committee of 300 and the Executive Committee of 15? Were they rank-and-filers or leaders? If the former (as turned out to be the case) what was their position and level of activity in the A.F.L. unions? Did the rank-and-file ever meet during the strike? When did the delegates on the General Strike Committee consult them?

From other books, we have gathered that there were union meetings during the strike and that these union meetings, unlike most today or even most A.F.L. union meetings outside Seattle at that time, did allow some kind of democracy and communication—the rank-and-file really could control what happened to a fair degree.

Also it is probably true that the 30,000 rank-and-file workers a day who participated in the mass meals that had been arranged discussed the strike with each other at these meals. This was most likely the major way in which mass pressure was put on the Strike Committee members, many of whom came to these meals. (Most of these questions are not answered in any other accounts of the strike either.)

Exactly who ran those services that were run by "workers" during the strike? Were they the local union leaders? Were they workers elected from the rank-and-file? Were the decisions about how to run things made at mass meetings? If done by delegates, to what extent did they contact the rest of the workers about doing these things?

These are important questions to ask, about what for us was perhaps the most important aspect of the General Strike. Workers' management is the basis of the socialist society we hope to see created and to help create. But workers' management does not mean appointing leaders to make all the decisions, even if these leaders are workers. It means that workers make those decisions that affect them (in the area of production, these decisions would be: what is produced, how is it produced, by whom, and how is it distributed). These decisions should be made directly when possible, by rotated and immediately recallable delegates when not, and then only after full discussion of the crucial issues by those to whom the delegate is responsible. (For one view of this see Root & Branch Pamphlet #1, Workers Councils by Anton Pannekoek.)

It will also mean a drastic change in peoples' daily lives and relationships.

This brings us to another set of questions left unanswered by the pamphlet. What did the participants do with their time? To what extent did they just sit at home (except for the mass meals, which maybe half of them came to) or have a vacation, as some of the strike bulletins told them to do? How were their daily lives and relationships with friends, family, coworkers affected?

GENERAL STRIKES TODAY

Finally, while it is useful for us today to study what happened during the Seattle General Strike, what problems the workers faced and how they tried to solve them, it is important also to point out the respects in which the situation and thus the problems are different today (and were different, in most places outside Seattle, in 1919 as well). As we have already pointed out, the Seattle union movement was uniquely democratic even for its own time. A general strike today would probably have to be wildcat, in opposition to, fought by, and out of the control of the union bureaucracy. This is because most unions are bureaucratic, hierarchical structures which allow

little meaningful participation of rank-and-file members. Their function is to act as middlemen in the labor market: insuring employers a quiet and docile labor force between contracts, and at contract time making sure that both the demands and the methods used to win them, whether "collective bargaining" or strikes, do not threaten the system. These features seem to be inherent in the nature of modern trade unions.

A second difference is that the U.S. government would most likely play a more active and repressive role in fighting a general strike today. In fact it was very unusual for 1919 that there was not more repression and violence on the part of the employers and the government.

Third, a general strike now would probably require much more mass participation both in decision-making and in physical activity. The former because a general strike would be done in conflict with the union structures and workers would have to build new organizations to run the strike (which at the outset, at a minimum, would probably mean mass participation). The latter because most cities or areas now are not as isolated as Seattle was, and it would be necessary, even if the strike was totally effective within the city or area, to have mass picketing and related activities in order to stop shipments coming into the city or area from the outside and to prevent the use of troops as strikebreakers.

These are the ideas that have occurred to us in connection with the pamphlet. Other people approaching it from different perspectives and experiences would naturally have other questions and thoughts.

Main Text

THE SEATTLE GENERAL STRIKE
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INTRODUCTION

From coast to coast went the report that a revolution was imminent in Seattle. A General Strike had been called in sympathy with the shipyard workers, and no one knew what would come of it. Both before and after the strike, government officials in Washington and other prominent persons, declared that Bolshevism had attempted to make its first appearance in the Northwest.

In Seattle itself the tension before the General Strike is difficult to describe. Business men took out riot insurance on their warehouses and purchased guns. The press appealed to the strikers not to ruin their home city. Later they changed their tone and became more threatening, appealing to the strikers to state "which flag they were under," and if under the American flag, to put down Bolshevism in their midst.

Many opponents of organized labor hoped to see the Labor Movement of Seattle broken by the attempt to handle a General Strike, and many old-timers in the labor Movement feared that this would indeed happen.

Meantime the people of the city laid in supplies for a long siege. Grocery stores sold enormous quantities of goods. Hardware stores ransacked their storehouses for discarded supplies of lamps of the sort used by last summer's resorters in beach camps, and sold them out at a substantial advance in price. A few of the wealthy families were reported in the press as having moved to Portland, to be out of the "upheaval."

And yet, when the strike occurred, never had there been less outward turmoil in the city of Seattle. Ordinary police-court arrests sank below normal. Quiet reigned throughout the city. Even the ordinary meetings of radical groups were voluntarily suspended lest they give an opportunity to some one to start trouble. In short, as a reporter from a nearby town declared "while the authorities prepared for riots, labor organized for peace and order." And peace and order obtained.

Now that the strike has passed into history, it is the purpose of this account to gather up the information in scattered documents, in the press, and in the minutes of the strike committee and relate what happened during the strike in the labor world of Seattle. We do this because the General Strike is a new weapon to the workers of the United States. Before our strike occurred, we did not know how the weapon which we held in our hands would "go off." And we have gained an experience which we believe will be of use to the Labor Movement of our country.

In the uncertainty and tension before the strike occurred, when no one knew exactly what might come of it, the statement that "this is not a strike but a revolution" was first made by the mayor of Seattle. It was the morning paper, the Post-Intelligencer, which first publicly announced the alleged "Bolshevik" character of the strike, in a cartoon showing the red flag hoisted above the stars and stripes in the city of Seattle.

To what extent Revolution was or was not in the minds of workers participating in the strike, will be discussed later, after the actual happenings of the strike have been made clearer. But since an editorial published in the *Union Record* (the official daily organ of the Central Labor Council) the day before the strike, has been quoted in partial form from coast to coast, as a sign of revolutionary intentions, we give it here in full:

On Thursday at 10 A.M.

There will be many cheering, and there will be some who fear.

Both these emotions are useful, but not too much of either.

We are undertaking the most tremendous move ever made by LABOR in this country, a move which will lead—NO ONE KNOWS WHERE!

We do not need hysteria.

We need the iron march of labor.

*****

LABOR WILL FEED THE PEOPLE. Twelve great kitchens have been offered, and from them food will be distributed by the provision trades at low cost to all.

LABOR WILL CARE FOR THE BABIES AND THE SICK. The milk-wagon drivers and the laundry drivers are arranging plans for supplying milk to babies, invalids, and hospitals, and taking care of the cleaning of linen for hospitals.

LABOR WILL PRESERVE ORDER. The strike committee is arranging for guards, and it is expected that the stopping of the cars will keep people at home.

A few hot-headed enthusiasts have complained that strikers only should be fed, and the general public left to endure severe discomfort. Aside from the inhumanitarian character of such suggestions, let them get this straight:

NOT THE WITHDRAWAL OF LABOR POWER, BUT THE POWER OF THE STRIKERS TO MANAGE WILL WIN THIS STRIKE. What does Mr. Piez of the Shipping Board care about the closing down of Seattle's shipyards, or even of all the industries of the northwest? Will it not merely strengthen the yards at Hog Island, in which he is more interested?

When the shipyard owners of Seattle were on the point of agreeing with the workers, it was Mr. Piez who wired them that, if they so agreed he would not let them have steel.

Whether this is camouflage we have no means of knowing. But we do know that the great eastern combinations of capitalists could afford to offer privately to Mr. Skinner, Mr. Ames, and Mr. Duthie a few millions apiece in eastern shipyard stock, RATHER THAN LET THE WORKERS WIN.

The closing down of Seattle's industries, as a MERE SHUTDOWN, will not affect these eastern gentlemen much. They could let the whole northwest go to pieces, as far as money alone is concerned.

But, the closing down of the capitalistically controlled industries of Seattle, while the workers organize to feed the people, to care for the babies and the sick, to preserve order—this will move them, for this looks too much like the taking over of power by the workers.

Labor will not only Shut Down the industries, but Labor will reopen, under the management of the appropriate trades, such activities as are needed to preserve public health and public peace. If the strike continues, Labor may feel led to avoid public suffering by reopening more and more activities.

UNDER ITS OWN MANAGEMENT

And that is why we say that we are starting on a road that leads—no one knows where!

This editorial was perhaps more variously interpreted than any statement made during the strike. The Post-Intelligencer published it the next morning and made no further comment. And perhaps comment is needless, Since each man will interpret it according to his own intentions.

It might be mentioned, however, that the editorial was submitted, as were all matters affecting the strike, to the members of the Conference-Committee of the Metal Trades, before it was published. And at the very time when it was being held aloft as the banner of revolution, by the capitalist press of the country, members of Labor and other liberal minded citizens of Seattle were declaring that here at last was, out of the turmoil, a Suggestion of some truly constructive attainment that might come out of the General Strike.

For the mood of Labor, as the General Strike drew near, was one of deep seriousness. They knew that they were facing a situation as yet untried, and they did not know what would result from it, of good or bad, for the City of Seattle and the labor movement in that city.

What did come out of it, as will be seen as the story proceeds, was precisely what was hoped for in this editorial—"more and more activities under the management of labor." The stimulus to co-operative enterprise and to the enthusiastic working together of unions was the most important, permanent and constructive result of the General Strike.

To supplement the editorial given above, we call attention to the two Anise verses printed as an appendix to this book [of which only one, They Can't Understand, was reprinted by Root & Branch], and also to an editorial printed in the *Union Record* some weeks after the strike, of which we quote only parts:

Concerning Revolution

We are growing tired of explaining that we didn't mean this and that; we are weary of seeming to take the negative explanatory attitude in connection with a faith of which we are proud, a faith which adds meaning to our lives. We want to tell, in positive words, the glorious thing we do mean.

If by revolution is meant violence, forcible taking over of property, the killing or maiming of men, surely no group of workers dreamed of such action. But if by revolution is meant that a Great Change is coming over the face of the world, which will transform our method of carrying on industry, and will go deep into the very sources of our lives, to bring joy and freedom in place of heaviness and fear—then we do believe in such a Great Change and that our General Strike was one very definite step towards it.

We look about us today and see a world of industrial unrest, of owners set against workers, of strikes and lockouts, of mutual suspicions. We see a world of strife and insecurity, of unemployment, and hungry children. It is not a pleasant world to look upon. Surely no one desires that it should continue in this most painful unrest.

We see but one way out. In place of two classes competing for the fruits of industry, there must be, eventually ONLY ONE CLASS sharing fairly the good things of the world. And this can only be done by the workers learning to manage.

When we saw in our General Strike: The Milk Wagon Drivers consulting late into the night over the task of supplying milk for the city's babies; The Provision Trades working twenty-four hours out of the twenty-four on the question of feeding 30,000 workers; The Barbers planning a chain of co-operative barber shops; The steamfitters opening a profitless grocery store; The Labor Guards facing, under severe provocation, the task of maintaining order by a new and kinder method; When we saw union after union submitting its cherished desires to the will of the General Strike Committee: then we rejoiced. For we knew it was worth the four or five days pay apiece to get this education in the problems of management. Whatever strength we found in ourselves, and whatever weakness, we knew we were learning the thing which it is necessary for us to know.

Someday, when the workers have learned to manage, they will begin managing. And we, the workers of Seattle, have seen, in the midst of our General Strike, vaguely and across the storm, a glimpse of what the fellowship of that new day shall be.

THE SHIPYARDS STRIKE

The General Strike in Seattle grew out of the strike of some 35,000 shipyard workers for higher wages.

The Seattle shipyards are on a basis of closed shop and collective bargaining between the various yard-owners and the Metal Trades Council of Seattle. The Council is composed of delegates from twenty-one different craft unions, (seventeen at the time of the first strike vote). These separate unions no longer make separate agreements with the yard-owners; a single blanket-agreement is made at intervals by the Metal Trades Council for all the crafts comprising it. This was the situation before the United States entered the war.

In August 1917 the workers had succeeded in establishing a uniform scale of wages for one-third of the Metal Trades men working in the city. Some of the ship yards were unable to reach an agreement on account of having clauses in their contracts with the government preventing them from raising wages without the government's consent. The Macy board came out on the Coast to adjust the wages and instead of bringing about uniformity in the wage scale through their system of applying the increased cost of living to wages received that had been brought about through collective bargaining, applied the increase to the wages received the year before and owing to some of the crafts having been in a disorganized condition at that period and others having been organized and in a position to maintain their standards, the application of the increase gave some crafts 60 cents per day more than they had requested and the great majority of basic ship yard trades 22 cents per day less than they were receiving in the other yards and shops Making a difference of 82 cents per day between the crafts which created dissatisfaction from the very start.

There was bitter opposition to this among the Seattle workers, who saw themselves deprived of advantages gained by long years of organization and struggle. But the International Officers of various crafts involved had signed the memorandum creating the Macy Board, and the men, while protesting, refrained from striking for patriotic reasons, because of the war needs of the country.

The Seattle workers maintained that according to the constitution of the various craft unions, the International Officers of the various crafts had no authority thus to bind their locals, without a referendum vote. This was felt all the more keenly as the local crafts had themselves given over their rights to the Metal Trades Council, in order that they might bargain for the entire industry at once, and they felt that power was wrongfully taken from the instrument they had built for their own protection.

For more than a year they continued work, though under constant protest against the fairness of the agreement, to which they constantly stated they had not been a party. Appeal after appeal was made, with no result. While continuing at work, the Seattle shipyard workers established world records in the building of ships. So great was their efficiency that official records state that 26 percent of all ships built for the United States Shipping Board during the war were built in Seattle alone.

After the armistice was signed, and after repeated failure to get relief through appeals, the various crafts of the Metal Trades took a strike vote by referendum. According to the strong conviction of the Seattle unions, in voting on these matters each worker should count as one, no matter in which union he belongs. According to the constitution of the various international organizations and the Metal Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor, however, the vote is counted by crafts, and requires a majority of the crafts represented in order to settle an issue. Thus in Seattle, where the boilermakers and Shipbuilders' Union is about as large as the other twenty put together, it would have only one vote in twenty-one. The majority of men in the yards might be overwhelmingly one way and the majority of craft unions might be the other way.

In this particular case, however, the majority, counted either way, was in favor of the strike. Ten of the seventeen craft unions declared for the strike, each according to its own constitution, which in some cases required a two-thirds, in other cases a three-fourths vote. Of the remaining seven unions, only one failed to secure a majority vote for the strike. In counting the majority of workers the desire for the strike was even more noticeable, since it was precisely in the large unions that the vote went strong for the strike.

The vote was counted on December 10, 1918, and was announced and held by the Metal Trades Council to use whenever they decided the time had come.

Meantime attempts at negotiation were continued. Failing to secure satisfaction, on Thursday evening, January 16, the strike was called to take effect the following Tuesday morning. The Tacoma Metal Trades Council took the same action.

The demands of the men were $8.00 per day for mechanics, $7.00 for specialists of semi-skilled mechanics, $6.00 for helpers with a scale of $5.50 for laborers, eight hours per day, forty-four hours per week. This demand, however, was not final insofar as the vote was concerned and had there been a compromise offered affecting all men in the yards in the same proportion it would have been necessary to resubmit the vote to the membership for acceptance or rejection.

Many evidences point to the fact that it was the raise in pay for the lower-paid men which was most desired. Many of the skilled men were already getting more than the minimum asked under the new scale. They were, however, strong in their advocacy of the strike on account of the condition of the laborers. It is stated, on many good authorities, that Seattle businessmen, and especially Seattle landlords, had taken occasion to profiteer to a greater degree than in other places along the coast, and that consequently the cost of living in Seattle had increased far above that in Los Angeles and other California points. This bore hardest on the lower paid men.

The Conference Committee, which had conferred with the employers, reported that the yard owners were willing to grant an increase to the skilled mechanics but not to the lower paid helpers. The men stood together in their unwillingness to accept such an agreement, regarding this as a bribe to induce the skilled men to desert their brothers.

The shipyard workers came out and the yards closed down, making no attempt whatever to run.

Special reference must be made to the attitude of Charles Piez, Director General of the Emergency Fleet Corporation. During war time, while ostensibly admitting the right of the workers to bargain collectively with their employers, he informed the Seattle yard-owners that if they gave in to the demands of their workers, he would not let them have steel.

When the appellate board, which reviewed the decision of the Macy Board, ended in a deadlock, Piez told James Taylor president of the Metal Trades Council and local representative of the

Seattle workers with the Macy Board, that the men were free to deal directly with their employers. He later confirmed this statement by telegram to Mr. Skinner of Skinner & Eddy Corporation, and in an interview to Mr. Ashmun Brown, published in the Post-Intelligencer of January 24th.

But when the yard-owners and the workers took him at his word and entered into conference, he again threatened the yard-owners, this time with the withdrawal of contracts, in case they changed the wage scale.

This attitude continued throughout the strike. In a most perplexing manner one telegram from Mr. Piez stated that the yard-owners were free to make their own dealings with the men and that he had no power to prevent them; another stated that government contracts would be denied any yards which changed the rate of wages; still another stated that as far as he was concerned the government would not allow, even later, any raise in the war-time wages.

Throughout the strike, he seemed consistent only on one point—that he would have no dealings whatever with the men until they had returned to work.

SYMPATHETIC STRIKE ASKED FOR

The strike of the shipyard workers occurred on Tuesday morning, January 21st. On the following evening, at the meeting of the Central Labor Council, a delegate body composed of representatives from all the unions in the city, including the unions of the Metal Trades, a request was presented from the Metal Trades Council, asking for a General Strike throughout the city, in sympathy with the shipyard workers.

This request was approved by the Central Labor Council and went out to the various unions to vote on, as they hold the final authority in case of a strike of their members. On the following Sunday, a meeting of executive officers of local unions was held which recommended to the Central Labor Council that the General Strike, if it should be favorably voted upon, should be governed by a Strike Committee, composed of three delegates elected from each striking union, and that this General strike Committee should be called to meet on the following Sunday.

By the next Wednesday meeting of the Central Labor Council, so many unions had declared their intention to strike, that the suggestion of the executive officers of unions was accepted and a General Strike Committee called to meet on Sunday morning, February 2nd, at 8 o'clock. This General Strike Committee composed of delegates from 110 unions and the Central Labor Council, held the ultimate authority on all strike matters during the time of the sympathetic strike.

Some of the striking unions

The completeness with which the unions of Seattle voted for the General Strike came as a surprise to many unionists. Union after union sacrificed cherished hopes, "in order to go out with the rest." The Longshoremen's Union, in which, after many vicissitudes, the Truckers had at length combined with the Riggers and Stevedores, had just put through a closed-shop agreement for the waterfront of Seattle which was seriously imperiled and in fact, broken down, by their participation in the General strike.

The Street Car Men were 100 per cent organized, after a long and bitter fight which had included a street car strike. They were looking forward at last, at last, after a year of waiting, to some fruit from their labors. Poorly paid, and with long hours, they expected a decision to be handed down from the Supreme Court of the State, and on the very day after the date set for the General Strike, which would assure them a substantial advance in wages. All this seemed to them endangered. Yet a majority of them voted in favor of standing with the rest of labor. And although the Street Car Men were later among the first unions to go back, at the orders of their executive committee and an international officer, yet even the Most radical union men, knowing the pressure under which they labored, were inclined to urge: "Don't be too hard on those boys; they risked a great deal."

Many weak unions, knowing that they risked their jobs as individuals and their existence as unions, yet took this chance and went out with the rest. Among these were the Hotel Maids, the Cereal and Flour Mill Workers, the Renton Car Builders.

Over against these were the votes of the old and conservative unions, unused to indulging in sympathetic strikes or "in demonstrations." The most unusual was perhaps the vote of the Typographical Union, a union whose control of its own jobs has been for years so strong that strikes have fallen into disuse in its organization. Yet it gave a majority vote in favor of striking, although its strike was not allowed by its International, as it failed to get the required three fourths vote.

The Musicians' Union, another conservative union, took two votes. It was almost 5 to 1 against the idea of the General Strike, but 6 to 1 in favor of striking with the rest of organized labor, in case the others decided to go out. In other words, it stood for solidarity even against its own preferences.

The Carpenters' Union, 131, an old, conservative union, which has become one of the "big businesses" of the city, due to its ownership of a very profitable building, voted for the strike by a majority of "better than 2 to I." "There was no one down there haranguing us, either," said one of the members. "We wouldn't have stood for it. We took a secret ballot and decided to strike; and then we put our fate in the hands of the Strike Committee and stuck till the end."

The Teamsters' strike is remarkable because of the great pressure under which they labored. It is stated that 800 calls came into their office during the strike, from members of their own and other unions, complaining that fuel had given out and that they could not get any heat on account of the strike of the Teamsters. Many people realized for the first time how this union, which handles the transportation of freight in a modern city, is at the basis of all the city's activities.

These are only a few of the unions striking; others will be mentioned in connection with activities which they carried on. But these are sufficient to show the great variety of crafts which sank their own interests for the sake of the sympathetic strike in Seattle.

It is interesting to note, in passing, that among the few unions which did not go on strike were various groups of government employees. Workers in the Post Office Department stated on the floor of the Central Labor Council that the regulations were such that they practically faced jail for striking. Thus for the first time, the Labor Movement in Seattle was brought face to face with the fact that government ownership may mean, not greater freedom for the workers but greater rigidity of regulations, and less freedom for the individuals employed than does even private ownership.

ORGANIZING FOR THE STRIKE

Four days before the strike actually took place, the meetings of the General Strike Committee began. With their first session on Sunday, February 2, 1919, authority over the strike passed from the Central Labor Council, which had sent out the call, and from the Metal Trades Council, which had asked it, and was centered in a committee of over 300 members, elected from 110 local unions and the Central Labor Council, for the express purpose of managing the strike.

The first meeting was called to order at 8:35 in the morning, and continued in session until 9:35 that evening, with short intermissions for meals. From this time on until the close of the strike, there were meetings daily and at almost all hours of day and night, of either this General Strike Committee, or of the Executive Committee of Fifteen to which it delegated some of its authority. The volume of business transacted was tremendous; practically every aspect of the city's life came before the strike committee for some decision.

A general strike was seen, almost at once, to differ profoundly from any of the particular strikes with which the workers of Seattle were familiar. It was not enough, as some of the hasty enthusiasts declared, to "just walk out." The strikers were at once brought face to face with the way in which the whole community, including their own families, is inextricably tied together. If life was not to be made unbearable for the strikers themselves, problems of management, of selection and exemption, had to take the place of the much simpler problem of keeping everyone out of work.

The strikers had no quarrel with the city of Seattle or with its inhabitants, of whom they themselves and their families comprised perhaps half. They had no particular quarrel with the city government, and most of them took pride in the municipally owned light and water and garbage systems, the municipal car line and the public port. While they were doubtless deeply touched by that spirit of unrest and desire for a new world which is sweeping the world today, they had no definite revolutionary intentions.

Consequently the problems of what should be done about the water supply, the lighting system, the hospitals, the babies' milk supply, came before a committee of quiet working people whose stake in all these things was as great as that of any persons in the city and who, while they intended to make a tremendous and solid demonstration of sympathy with their brothers in the shipyards, had at the same time no desire to wreck the city's life.

They realized that they were undertaking something new in the American labor movement; they were not quite certain where it would lead; but they felt themselves strong enough to handle whatever problems might arise.

The Committee Organizes

To make the problem harder, the General Strike Committee was not, like the Central Labor Council, composed of delegates who had experience in working together. They were a new group,

a very large and unwieldy mass of unacquainted individuals, upon whom, almost at once, great and momentous questions descended.

The quantity of business transacted and the businesslike attention to many aspects of complicated questions, is shown in the minutes of the committee, and indicates a much higher level of efficiency and business-like methods that could normally be expected from such a large governing group.

The morning session of the first day was taken up with passing on credentials. Eighty unions, in addition to the 21 unions of the Metal Trades, presented acceptable credentials at this meeting. A few other unions were added later, making 110 in all.

All unions which had voted to strike, or which belonged to a district council which was striking as a unit, were granted three delegates. A few of the officials of the labor movement were granted seats in the meeting by special vote. Several irregular credentials were turned down.

The first appearance of the inevitable problem of the relation of the strike to the city authorities occurred when the Garbage Wagon Drivers asked for permission to explain why they had voted against the strike. They stated that Dr. McBride, the health commissioner of Seattle, had told them that they must take care of the hospitals and sanitariums, subject to penalty under the law. They had not known whether the strike committee would make any exemption in favor of these emergency needs, and so had voted not to strike. Later the Garbage Wagon Drivers' delegates were seated and certain exemptions were made in the interests of health.

Another fundamental problem which raised its head in this first meeting was the opposition of officers of international unions. The stereotypers stated that one of their international officers was in the city and would probably try to force them back to work. They wanted to know what support the unions of Seattle could give them in case their international officers supplied men to fill their places and otherwise disciplined them. The committee declared that the sympathetic strike would not be called off until the stereotypers were reinstated in any positions lost as the result of striking.

The date on which the strike should be called came in for much discussion. it was finally decided to fix the following Thursday, February 6, at 10 a.m., and to ask Tacoma and Aberdeen to postpone the general strike, which they had ordered, until the time agreed on by Seattle.

An executive committee of fifteen was next appointed to work with the metal trades committee in formulating a plan of action, and to present this to the Central Labor Council on the following Wednesday evening. Almost at once other motions made this committee permanent and instructed it to consider all questions of exemption that might arise in the handling of the general strike. The decisions of this committee were at times subject to appeal by the General Strike Committee, but in practice, repeal was not found necessary.

Committees on publicity, on finance and on tactics were also appointed, and many other minor matters of business were disposed of. Among these were the forwarding of a resolution to Washington, D.C., demanding the removal of Mr. Piez of the shipping board, and the adoption of a resolution that no officer or committeeman should receive any salary during the strike.

Just at the close of the meeting two slogans were suggested. "We have nothing to lose but our chains and a whole world to gain" was rejected in favor of "Together We Win." The unions of Seattle were declaring in favor of labor's solidarity; they were not declaring in favor of the well known phrases of the class war.

Executive Committee Organizes

Even while the first meeting of the General Strike Committee was going on, the newly appointed Executive Committee of Fifteen met and prepared for business. Brother Nauman, of the Hoisting Engineers, was elected chairman, and Brother Egan, of the Barbers, secretary. Three subcommittees were appointed to consider exemptions from the general strike order, under three main heads: Construction, Transportation, and Provisions.

Committees on miscellaneous exemptions, on grievances and on general welfare were also appointed.

The Cooks Union reported at this time that their arrangements for feeding the strikers and the public were well under way.

The executive committee decided upon daily meetings. As a matter of fact, so many and so important were the matters brought before them that they found themselves compelled to meet more than once a day.

First Exemption Granted.

On the following day, Monday, the Committee of Fifteen met again. Before them came a delegation from the Firemen's Local 27, whom they had requested to appear. After some discussion the committee requested the firemen to stay on the job. This was the first exemption granted in the strike. It was followed by many more.

The transportation subcommittee was instructed to arrange for the necessary forms of permit and signs to designate the autos and trucks used by organized labor in carrying on the necessary activities of the strike. Here again the necessity of exemption was recognized.

C. R. Case, head of the department of streets of the city of Seattle, was the first department head to appear before the committee to state city needs. He pointed out the fact that the water supply of Queen Anne Hill and West Seattle depended on electrical help from the City Light and Power. He also stated that large quantities of food in cold storage would spoil if the power system did not run, and that without the street lights the city would be a prey to lawlessness and disorder and thuggery. He mentioned the needs of gas in hospitals and laboratories, and the need of transportation for the various city institutions.

The Committee of Fifteen realized what they were facing, if a strike were carried through without exemptions. They appointed a special hour on the following day at which they requested heads of city departments to appear and state their needs, and they ex pressed as the sense of the committee that they cooperate with these heads in every way possible.

Organization of Laundry Workers

One of the neatest little bits of team work between four different organizations came up for approval at this first meeting of the executive committee of 15. The Laundry Drivers' Union had at first voted not to strike, but later changed their vote. They had a great deal to lose in any strike, as they had built up laundry routes with much patience and the effort of many years. They were working under an agreement with the Laundrymen's Club, the organization of laundry owners.

There was also in Seattle a Mutual Laundry, owned by organized labor, and the question of its operation came to the fore. After consultation between the laundry drivers and inside laundry workers, it was proposed that hospital laundry only should be handled; that a certain number of wagons should be exempted and furnished with signs and permits to serve the hospitals; that one laundry should be agreed on as the one best qualified to handle hospital laundry and should be allowed to operate under a permit, with a sign, "Hospital Laundry Only, by Order of General Strike Committee." This laundry should not be the Mutual Laundry, which did not care to handle hospital work.

The laundry workers served notice to their employers to take no more laundry, as it could not be finished, and then requested the Committee of Fifteen to allow them to work a few hours past the time of the calling of the strike, in order that the clothes already in the plants should not mildew from dampness.

A note from the Laundry Owners Club, accepting the Washington Laundry as the one to be exempted, was also submitted, together with the rest of the requests from the laundry drivers and laundry workers. It was a well-thought out program, indicating complete agreement with the entire laundry industry, and it was accepted by the Committee of Fifteen.

The Problem of the Butchers

The meat cutters presented an entirely different problem from that of the laundries. Instead of a complete organization of the industry, they had a small and struggling union, organized in a few shops, but unable to gain an entrance into some of the big markets which were controlled by the representatives of the packers.

If they should strike, and withdraw their men from the little shops, which had dealt fairly with the union, were they not penalizing their friends and strengthening their enemies whose non-union shops would be running full blast?

The somewhat original and interesting solution proposed by the Committee of Fifteen was that that the meat cutters should strike with the rest of labor, and should then contribute their time without charge to supply the public with meat through certain specified union shops, demanding only that the saving of their wages be deducted from the cost of meat. In the end, the strike of the meat cutters was incomplete, due to the handicap they labored under.

Law and Order Committee

By Tuesday noon, still two days before the strike, the need of a law and order committee was felt to be pressing, and the Committee of Fifteen appointed a committee of three to handle this matter. An advertisement was placed in the *Union Record* asking that labor union men who had seen service in the United States army or navy come to a meeting to discuss important strike work. This was the beginning of the famous Labor's War Veteran Guards, who did such splendid service in preserving order during the strike.

Demands for Exemptions

Demands for exemptions came in thick and fast on Tuesday, now that the strike was actually looming near. The proposed meeting with heads of city departments never came off, but requests from several public officials came in formally for exemptions. These were referred to their appropriate committees, considered, returned with recommendations, and either granted or rejected. In some cases a conditional grant led the Committee of Fifteen into the position of actually prescribing the conduct of certain lines of activity.

Here are a few selections from Tuesday's minutes:

"King County commissioners ask for exemption of janitors to care for City-County building. Not granted."

"F.A. Rust asks for janitors for Labor Temple. Not granted." (The committee was playing no favorites: it is worth noting, however, that a few days later, when the Co-operative Market asked for additional janitor help because of the large amounts of food handles for the strikers' kitchens, their request was allowed.)

"Teamsters' Union asks permission to carry oil for Swedish hospital during strike. Referred to transportation committee. Approved."

"Port of Seattle asks to be allowed men to load a governmental vessel, pointing out that no private profit is involved and that an emergency exists. Granted." (Note: This was on a later date.)

"Garbage Wagon Drivers ask for instructions. Referred to public welfare committee, which recommends that such garbage as tends to create an epidemic of disease be collected, but no ashes or papers. Garbage wagons were seen on the streets after this with the sign, 'Exempt by Strike Committee.'"

Drug Stores—Prescriptions Only

"The retail drug clerks sent in statement of the health needs of the city. Referred to public welfare committee, which recommends that prescription counters only be left open, and that in front of every drug store which is thus allowed to open a sign be placed with the words, 'No goods sold during general strike, Orders for prescriptions only will be filled. Signed by general strike committee.'"

"Communication from House of Good Sheperd. Permission granted by transportation committee to haul food and provisions only."

This is by no means all the business that came before the Committee of Fifteen in a single afternoon. An appointment of a committee of relief to look after destitute homes, the creation of a publicity bureau, an order that watchmen stay on the job until further notice, and many other matters were dealt with. And after this eventful afternoon there followed a night meeting at 10 p.m.

To Fix an End for the Strike

Should a final limit be fixed to the general strike? Or should it start to end—no one knew where? This as the question discussed on Tuesday evening by the executive meeting.

Many of the older members of the labor movement frankly dreaded the general strike. They saw in it even such possibilities as the complete disruption of Seattle's labor movement. They urged that a definite time limit be fixed to the sympathetic strike, with the threat to repeat it unless action was secured on, the difficulties of the Metal Trades. Foremost among those urging this limit were James Duncan, secretary of the Central Labor Council, and F. B. Ault, editor of the *Union Record*.

The executive committee of the Metal Trades was at first reported as having approved such a time limit, but after they had conferred with their general conference committee, which refused to agree to the proposal, the Metal Trades Council sent word shortly after midnight that they had no request to make. They also stated that the mine workers of the state would be asked to strike and that the State Federation of Labor would be requested to co-operate with the strike.

The move to fix a time limit to the sympathetic strike consequently failed.

Take Over Printing Plant

On Wednesday the same grist of requests for exemptions and for directions came before the Committee of Fifteen. The Trade Printery asked for exemption on the ground that it was printed material needed by the various unions. The request was denied, and the Trade Printery was asked instead to turn over its plant to the strike committee, to be run by printers giving their services. To this the Trade Printery agreed.

The day before this offer was made the Equity Printing Co. offered to put its plant at the disposal of the strike committee, volunteering free labor. This offer was favorably considered by a sub-committee, but rejected by the Committee of Fifteen.

The auto drivers were given permission to carry "mail only" on the Des Moines road. They were also allowed to answer emergency calls for hospitals and funerals, provided those calls came through the Auto Drivers' Union.

Ministers Appeal

The Ministerial Federation sent representatives to see the Committee of Fifteen on this day. After submitting the resolutions which they had already sent to Mr. Piez and Woodrow Wilson as evidence of their sympathy with labor's cause, they formally requested postponement of the general strike for one week to give a chance for peaceful settlement. They were given a rising vote of thanks for their interest, but their request was not granted.

The telephone girls were requested to stay on the job temporarily.

The school janitors' request to remain on the job was refused, and they were referred to the Engineers' Union, which on the following Saturday allowed them to return.

Bake ovens at Davidson's bakery were allowed to operate, all wages to go into the general strike fund. This was the usual policy adopted when union men were allowed to work for private employers in a matter of public emergency.

THE QUESTION OF CITY LIGHT

The eventful Thursday drew near. One most important matter was still unsettled—the question of City Light. At the request of the Committee of Fifteen, Mayor Hanson came to the Labor Temple to a night meeting for conference on the subject. The meeting convened shortly before midnight, and the mayor arrived after midnight, remaining until 3:30 in the morning of Thursday.

The electrical workers had voted to strike without exemptions. On the day before the strike an interview purporting to be from Leon Green, their business agent, appeared in the morning paper, announcing that not a single light would burn in Seattle, and that the telephone system, the newspapers and every enterprise depending on "juice" would cease to run.

"No Exemptions"

To the question, "How about hospitals, where people may die for want of light," Green was stated to have replied, "No exemptions." The same answer was made to the question of the automatic fire alarm system. More than any other one event during the entire strike, this front page report of Green's intentions aroused both fear and resentment, not only among outsiders, but within the ranks of organized labor as well.

The mayor, who had previously taken no sides, announced that City Light should run, even if he had to bring in soldiers to run it. Appeals were made to the public for volunteers to run the City Light plant. And meanwhile the general public, uncertain of the outcome, laid in supplies of oil lamps and candles.

The electricians took the ground that a complete tie-up would shorten the duration of the strike. In answer to this the city authorities stated that the shutting down of city power would shut off the water supply in West Seattle and on Queen Anne Hill; would mean the spoiling of large quantities of food in the cold storage warehouses, while the darkening of the streets would inevitably lead to disorder, and the shutting off of lights from the hospitals might mean many deaths.

All committees Much Concerned

The various committees dealing with the strike were all deeply concerned. The Committee of Fifteen requested the electricians to allow enough electricity to operate the fire alarm system; they also appointed a committee of three to formulate a solution of the electrical supply problem, and called for a late night meeting to make final decision.

At the same time the conference committee of the Metal Trades, charged with the conduct of the original strike of the shipyard workers, called into conference the three men who been appointed by the electrical workers to handle their part in the strike. At first the committee of

electrical workers stood firm for a complete shut-down, but when it was evident that the representatives of the Metal Trades were much opposed, they finally consented to allow exemptions if a committee on exemptions could be installed in the City Light plant, with authority to state what parts of the system should be allowed to run.

First Conference With Mayor

At this point A. E. Miller, chairman of the conference committee, called up Mayor Hanson on the telephone and asked him to join the conference. The mayor came over at once to the Collins building and announced that City Light and city water should not be interfered with. He refused to recognize any committee on exemptions, but finally, after a long discussion, consented to meet with such a committee and take up with them, section by section, the various parts of the lighting system, in an effort to prove to them that no part of the system should be shut down. A committee of three went over to the mayor's office, but a deadlock occurred at once on the question of street lighting, which the committee of three refused to allow.

Upon this the Engineer's Union announced to the mayor that if the electricians left they would operate enough of the plant to supply hospitals and other public needs.

Midnight Meeting With Mayor

All the various pieces of consultation and planning on the subject of City Light, which had started spontaneously in different quarters as soon as the Green interview appeared in the paper, came to a head in the midnight session of the Committee of Fifteen, called the night before the strike at the Labor Temple. The subject under consideration had been recognized all day as the most serious problem which had yet arisen, involving questions of relations with the city government, as well as the relations between individual unions and the general strike committee. In addition to the Committee of Fifteen, representatives of the electrical workers, the engineers and the conference committee of the Metal Trades were present.

The mayor, invited at a late hour by telephone, appeared shortly after midnight, and reiterated his statement that city water and City Light must run. He said that he would prefer to run them with the union men, but that he would run them with soldiers from Camp Lewis or Bremerton if necessary. He added that he did not care about the other public utilities. The car line was not essential; in fact, he might even have the men given a lay-off so that they would not lose their civil service rating. But light and water, he stated, were needed for public health and public peace.

The mayor finally left at 3:30, and the Committee of Fifteen voted, after his withdrawal, to order the electricians back to run the City Light plant, with the exception of the commercial service. A committee was appointed to announce this decision to the mayor, who, when called on the telephone, said he would be in his office at 8:30 in the morning.

In the end the City Light plant ran without interruption, as far as was apparent to the citizens of Seattle. A month after the strike a member of the strike committee of the electrical workers, when asked how this happened, made the following statement: "The matter of City Light was a bluff between Green and Hanson. We had the operators in the sub-station only partially organized and could not have called them off if we had wanted to. We could and did call out the line men and

meter men, who responded. But their absence made little immediate difference, and they went back before the strike was called off.

"The engineers were in a better position than we to close down City Light, but this they declined to do, and only called off their men after it was sure that the City Light could run anyway."

It was perhaps a rather inglorious explanation of a matter which caused so vital a stir. But, however much bluffing entered into it, a few facts stand out as interesting. First, that the executive committee of the strike, believing that it had the power to shut down City Light, ordered that all city lights should run except the commercial power. This is important because it shows the temper of mind in the executive committee. Second, that up to the time when the strike was actually in full swing, Mayor Hanson was not the "revolution quelling strong man" that he has been announced as since, but a worried and busy mayor, not sufficiently familiar with the details of his light plant to call Green's bluff and endeavoring for many hours in midnight session to argue the strike committee into saving City Light from serious inconvenience. It is perhaps not so thrilling a picture, but it is a more human one.

ON THURSDAY AT 10 A.M.

The strike had been called for Thursday at 10 a.m. At that hour the street cars began to pull for the barns, the workers all over the town left their tasks, and the strike was on. Some crafts had stopped before the hour set. The cooks had been on strike all the morning, and were working hard preparing food for the strikers' kitchens.

According to the business press of the city, Seattle was "prostrate. According to an admission in the morning paper, "not a wheel turned in any of the industries employing organized labor or in many others which did not employ organized labor."

Regular A.F. of L. Strike

Some 60,000 men were out on strike. The strike was called, organized and carried through by the regular unions of the American Federation of Labor, acting regularly by votes of the rank and file. It was a strike in the calling and conduct of which, contrary to statements made widely throughout the country, no I.W.W. had any part.

Yet the strike affected more organizations than those in the American Federation of Labor. Organizations of the I.W.W. also struck at once, and sent word that if any of their members proved unruly, they themselves would put them out of town and keep them out, as they intended to show the A. F. of L. that they could co-operate in a strike without causing disorder. Since no disorder of any kind occurred in Seattle in connection with the strike, it will be seen that they were as good as their word.

Japanese Strike

Among the other organizations striking were the Japanese barbers and restaurant workers. In fact, all the Japanese section of the city was closed up tight and remained closed. The response of the Japanese workers added greatly to the good feeling between them and the American workers, and they were invited to send delegates to the general strike committee, but without vote.

As has been said, the strike was from the beginning to the end under the firm control of duly elected representatives of regular A. F. of L. unions, and any other organizations which had also struck had no voice or vote in its conduct. (Note 3.)

Many Individual Strikers

How many individuals, unconnected with any organizations, struck just out of a feeling of fellowship for labor will never be known. But there were many of them. In the nature of the case, word is only heard of a few. an elevator boy in an office building of conservative business men, two laborers working for a landscape gardener, and hundreds of other sporadic cases of this type

occurred. Persons of this kind had not even a union to protect them in securing their jobs again, yet they struck out of a feeling of sympathy, and a desire to be "a part of the general strike of Seattle's labor movement."

Second Meeting of General Strike Committee

Two hours after the strike began the general strike committee held its second full meeting, Thursday at noon. An avalanche of business descended upon it. For three and a half days the Executive Committee of Fifteen had been the authority in strike matters. Now at last the strike was on and the general committee met to survey its handiwork.

The greater part of the first session was devoted to attempting to unwind the tangles of the City Light situation, which is elsewhere described.

Exemptions Referred to Executive Committee

The regular grist of request for exemptions began to the general committee to come in to the general committee, but was soon found to be too burdensome for so large a body to deal with. It was finally directed that all exemptions should go first to the Committee of Fifteen.

A few typical instances of the type of exemption asked for from the general strike committee are as follows:

Seattle Renton Southern asks permission for transportation in carrying mail. All motions made on this were tabled.

Co-operative Market says that the milk supply is short, and the farmers have offered to deliver it if permission is granted. This was referred to the joint council of teamsters.

The longshoremen ask permission to handle government mails, customs and baggage. Permission is given for the mails and customs.

The postal clerks ask that enough taxi company's cars be exempted to give them transportation over the city. This was refused.

The icemen ask for exemption in transporting ice to hospitals and drug stores. This was referred to the joint council of teamsters.

Meanwhile words of greeting and help came from nearby towns.

Tacoma had called her strike at the same time as Seattle. Various unions in Renton also struck. Everett sent a delegation to state that if any work was sent to Everett from Seattle they would call out their men. The mine workers from Taylor offered financial assistance.

The Renton mine workers, being affiliated with the Seattle Central Labor Council, struck. Other organizations of mine workers sent good wishes and the statement that they stood ready to strike if the movement was made statewide.

Meanwhile the Committee of Fifteen had been called upon for additional minor exemptions. They granted permission to the street car men to appoint six of their watchmen for the car barns. They gave permits to the plumbers and steamfitters for seven men to act in emergencies only under the direction of the Plumbers' Union. These details are of particular interest in showing the closeness with which the city was tied up, and the inevitable result in placing power in the hands of the strike committee over many aspects of the city's life.

I.W.W. Cards Recognized for Meals

On Friday morning a new issue came before the general strike committee. A committee from the Transport Workers, an I.W.W. organization, appeared to protest because their "red cards" were not recognized at the strikers' commissaries. At these eating houses the general public paid 35 cents, while men with union cards were admitted for 25 cents.

The general strike committee voted that all union cards, regardless of affiliation, should be recognized in the eating places.

This instance of a tendency to cut across the barriers that existed before the strike also came out in discussion concerning the Japanese workers, who had struck in unison with the Americans. After much discussion between those who wished to offer the Japanese full representation on the general strike committee and those who wished only to send a committee to confer with them, it was finally decided to invite them to have seats in the general strike committee, but without vote.

The Mayor Makes Demands

Twenty-four hours after the strike began came the pre-emptory demand of the mayor that the strike be called off. It was perhaps the very completeness and success of the strike, together with the alarm of the business men, that brought him to take this aggressive attitude.

At all events, Mayor Hanson, who 36 hours before had spent long hours conferring with the Committee of Fifteen regarding the City Light, suddenly adopted a different position. He issued a proclamation to the people announcing that he had plenty of soldiers to maintain order; he sent word out by the United Press throughout the country that he was putting down an attempted Bolshevik revolution. And he sent word to the general strike committee that he wished at once to see their representatives.

To these representatives he declared that unless the strike was at once called off he would reopen all industries, using soldiers and declaring martial law if necessary. The time first fixed by the Mayor was Friday at noon, but as it was noon before his communication finally reached the general strike committee he deferred the hour till 8 o'clock Saturday morning.

Already there were members of the committee who had been from the beginning in favor of a limited strike. But, according to the statements of committee members, this action of the mayor's solidified resistance. This view of the mayor's intrusion was given by Ben Nauman the following Wednesday at the Central Labor Council:

"Ole attempted to call the strike off at noon of Friday, and said that if we didn't do it he'd declare martial law. Then he said that unless we declared the strike off Saturday morning he'd declare martial law. We didn't declare it off, and Ole didn't declare martial law. Finally, he made many of the members of the committee so mad we couldn't declare it off ourselves."

THE STRIKE CALLED OFF

The picture of the calling off of the strike given by Mayor Hanson to the press of the country was dramatic enough. It is significant that it was not printed in the press of Seattle; it was not for "home consumption."

According to the accounts that went around the country, "the Central Labor Council, which is composed of the heads of the various unions, is controlled by the radicals. Labor tried to run everything.

"We refused to ask exemptions from any one. The seat of government is at the City Hall. We organized 1,000 extra police, armed with rifles and shotguns, and told them to shoot on sight anyone causing disorder. We got ready for business.

"I issued a proclamation that all life and property would be protected; that all business should go on as usual. And this morning our municipal street cars, light, power plants, water, etc., were running full blast.

"There was an attempted revolution. It never got to first base."

Lost His Head

This was the account of the Seattle strike sent out by the mayor of Seattle. Later, the president of the Port of Seattle said of Mayor Hanson, in a speech in Washington: "He is a pretty good fellow, and a mighty good advertizer. But he lost his head completely. He spent $50,000 of the taxpayers' money for extra policemen which was never needed. Tacoma spent no money and Tacoma had no trouble."

How the Mayor Shifted His Ground

It was not until the second day of the strike that Mayor Hanson under the pressure of business men finally took sides against the strikers.

Two days before the strike he took James Duncan, secretary of the Central Labor Council, and Charles Doyle, its business agent, out to lunch at Rippe's Cafe, paid for the dinner, and talked over the coming strike in a most friendly manner.

"Now boys," he said, "I want my street lights and my water, and the hospitals. That's all. I don't care about the car line or the other departments."

Perhaps it was the very completeness of the strike, or perhaps the pressure from meetings of business men. Or perhaps the tilt with Green over City Light had angered and unnerved him. At any event, on Friday morning he issued a proclamation to the citizens, announcing that he had 1500 policemen and 1500 soldiers and calling upon the citizens to go about their business as usual.

He also called up James Duncan and said that the strike must close by noon. When Mr. Duncan replied that this was impossible, he asked that the Executive Committee of the Strike should come to his office at once. He was told that this message would be transmitted but that the committee was very busy and might be unable to come as a body.

The Executive Committee sent a sub-committee of six members to confer with the mayor. The mayor urged them to call off the strike, saying that if the matter could be settled locally they had won "hands down," but that Mr. Piez must be seen, and that "that group" had already double-crossed the city and were probably double-crossing the shipyard workers. He offered that if the strike were at once called off, to "lock up his desk and go to Washington with them, to try to get the wages of the lower paid men raised," a demand which he declared to be just.

In case the strike were not called off, he threatened martial law. The committee replied that they were not afraid of martial law, and if that was the mayor's next card, they had still other cards themselves. The gas workers had not been ordered out, and the mine workers of the state were ready to go out.

"If you want the strike to spread, declare martial law," they said. "And furthermore, you don't know how the boys in Camp Lewis will stand on the question of strikebreaking."

"By G-, said the mayor, "if they are not loyal I want to know it."

"If you want to see the streets of Seattle run with blood to satisfy your curiosity about loyalty, we don't" replied Mr. Duncan.

The committee suggested that if they could meet with representatives of the Conciliation Board, the latter might be able to present some offer that they could make to the men as a reason for going back. Consequently the mayor called J. W. Spangler, a banker, and Rev. M. A. Matthews, down to the office, as representing a group of business and civic organizations.

Mr. Spangler said that he must report to "his people;" a further conference was then set for 8 o'clock in the evening.

Tone Seems Changed

When Mr. Spangler returned that evening, his tone had changed. Whereas in the afternoon he had called the labor men by their first names, he was now very short, stating that "his people" took the stand that this was a revolution and they would not deal with revolutionists. He admitted that he himself was "not fooled" and did not consider it a revolution, but that "his people" did; and that they refused to dicker in any way until the strike was called off.

"That's final, is it, Spangler?" said Hanson, and on being told that it was he said to the Strikers committee: "Then that's all there is to it, boys."

From this time on the mayor definitely sided against the strikers. He threatened martial law; he issued his statement to the press of the country branding the strike a revolution.

The interpretation of his action given by the strikers since that time has been that he tried, like a good politician, to play both sides, but when it became necessary to choose, he sided with the business group.

After the strike was over, when employees of the city were being penalized for having taken part in it, and when officials of the Central Labor Council went to the mayor to intercede for the men, he remarked:

"You think we couldn't run an open shop town here if we wanted to," clearly indicating that he had dropped his attitude of conciliation toward the Seattle labor movement for one of hostility.

The Fateful Saturday Morning

Many striking inaccuracies occur in the announcement made to the press of the country by Mayor Hanson. "We refused to ask exemptions from anyone" he proclaimed. The fact was that he had been conferring regarding exemptions for several days.

"I issued a proclamation and this morning all our municipal street cars, light, power plant, water, etc., were running full blast." The only effect of the mayor's proclamation was that seven cars began to run on the Municipal car line.

The water, power and lights had been running from the beginning. On Saturday morning, the time when the mayor called upon business to resume under his protection, business simply did not resume.

The main car lines of the city were not running. A picture taken of Second and Pike streets, one of the busiest corners of the city, at 9 o'clock on Saturday morning, shows a deserted city. Teamsters, trucks and autos were absent. The restaurants were closed.

What Did Stop the Strike?

What did stop the strike, then, if the mayor's proclamation had so little effect? Pressure from international officers of unions, from executive committees of unions, from the "leaders" in the labor movement, even from those very leaders who are still called "Bolsheviki" by the undiscriminating press. And, added to all these, the pressure upon the workers themselves, not of the loss of their own jobs, but of living in a city so tightly closed.

Saturday morning at 8 o'clock, the hour specified by the mayor for the reopening of industry, saw the General Strike still in full swing. The strike committees were still discussing exemptions, and sending delegates to other cities to explain the strike and ask for support.

But the Executive Committee of Fifteen was seriously considering a resolution for calling off the strike. It was realized that in some form or other the city would have to resume some activity soon. On Saturday afternoon this committee brought in to the General Strike Committee a resolution fixing Saturday night as the close of the strike. This had been passed by a vote of 13 to 1 in the Executive Committee, one member being absent and one voting against it.

The resolution follows:

WHEREAS; the unparalleled autocratic attitude of Charles E. Piez, General Manager of the Emergency Fleet Corporation, in refusing to permit the shipyard employers and employees of this community to enter into a mutually satisfactory agreement as to wages and working conditions (which would not add to the government cost one penny) so aroused the indignation of all unionists in Seattle as to cause them to express that indignation through the medium of a general strike; and

WHEREAS; it has been recognized that the objectives of such a strike would be extremely limited and consequently no good could be accomplished by continuing such a strike indefinitely; and

WHEREAS; on the 7th day of February, 1919, the Executive Strike Committee was in session deliberating upon the advisability of calling off said strike on the ground that its object had been fully attained through the unprecedented demonstration of solidarity and the encouragement to the workers in other ship building centers to further co-operate; and

WHEREAS; the ill-advised, hysterical and inexcusable proclamation of Mayor Ole Hanson tremendously embarrassed the committee in carrying out its plans, by reason of the fact that it suggested coercion; and

WHEREAS; martial law having been suggested and threats made to throw the military forces of this nation in the balance on the side of the employing interests; and

WHEREAS; thirty thousand shipyard workers have been on strike for a period of sixteen days, and sixty-five-thousand workers have been on strike for a period of three days without so much as a fist fight or any other minor disturbance; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED; that we recommend that the Executive Committee for the general strike, recommend that the general strike, excepting the shipyard workers, be called off at 12 midnight, Saturday, February 8, with the understanding that all persons, who went on strike return to their former positions, holding themselves in readiness to respond to another call from the General Strike Committee in case of failure to secure a satisfactory agreement of the Metal Trades' demands within a reasonable length of time; and, be it further

RESOLVED; that Organized Labor of this community express to the Mayor, and all others, its deep regret at the action taken, and announce as law abiding citizens they have no fear of martial law or any other acts of intimidation used by those presumed to represent the public, but who in reality are representing only one class; and further be it

RESOLVED; that we take this opportunity of expressing to the strikers our deep appreciation and admiration for the splendid spirit and order maintained under the most trying and aggravating circumstances.

Not Yet Ready to Quit

All afternoon and all night the discussion raged in the General Strike Committee.

Many of the most prominent men of the labor movement, including the persons who have since been denounced by Mayor Hanson as "leaders of revolution" argued most strongly in favor of ending the strike.

In spite of their arguments, however, after a discussion which lasted until 4:12 in the morning, the voting of the General Strike Committee showed such an overwhelming defeat of the resolution that it was unanimously decided to continue the strike. It was obvious that the Executive Committee of Fifteen and the old-timers in the labor movement were more cautious than the larger committee just elected from the rank and file.

But the break had already begun to appear. Whether the recommendation of the Committee of Fifteen was merely a wise forecast of what was about to happen, or whether their action and the uncertainty about the closing of the strike gave encouragement to the thought of returning, by Monday morning, when the General Strike Committee again met, several unions had gone back to work, under orders from international officers or from their own executive committees, in many cases hastily called and without full attendance. In no case is it recorded that this return was taken by the rank and file.

Most important of these unions were the Street Car Men and the Teamsters. The former reported that they had returned by order of their Executive Committee on recommendation of an international officer, but that they would come out again if called by the General Strike Committee.

The Teamsters had also returned on recommendation of the joint Council of Teamsters, but the rank and file had called another meeting for Monday afternoon at which it was predicted that they would go out on strike again.

An incident in connection with the return of the Teamsters to work is enlightening, as it shows what results may happen through a minor personal friction. On Sunday evening Auditor Briggs, international officer of the Teamsters' Union, appeared before the Committee of Fifteen and stated that he had tried to gain the floor both in the Central Labor Council and at the General Strike Committee and had been denied admission. He stated that it was as a result of this attitude toward him (an A.F. of L. representative and an international officer) by the persons responsible for the strike that he had ordered the teamsters back, and that he might have acted differently if he had been treated by these bodies as the Committee of Fifteen had treated him.

Roll Call on Monday Shows Some Missing

A few other scattering unions were found missing from their places when the General Strike Committee met on Monday morning. The Barbers had gone back, instructed thereto by a meeting of their Executive Committee.

At this meeting a member of the Lady Barbers was also present, arriving late, and through this fact some confusion arose, a few of the Lady Barbers going back to work without the knowledge of their officers. The majority, however, led by their own Executive Committee, remained out.

As a matter of fact all the women's unions showed a strong feeling of loyalty toward the strike, many of them outlasting the men of the same craft.

The Stereotypers were also back at work, reporting that they had been under severe pressure from their international officers, but had only gone back on the report made to them on Saturday night, that the strike was being called off.

The Auto Drivers, Bill Posters, Ice Cream Drivers, and Milk Drivers were not present and were reported as having returned to work. Some of these organizations belonged to the Joint Council of Teamsters and were included in the general order that was issued by that body.

It was reported that the newsboys had been ordered back by a small meeting of their Executive Committee, at which not even a quorum was present, but that they were holding a general union meeting that evening to settle the question.

All other unions were still out on strike and many of them voted enthusiastically to remain "to the last ditch."

A few unions, while sticking to the strike, reported that it might involve them in great hardship. The Sailors' Union, for instance, felt that by striking they were placing the Seaman's bill in jeopardy. The Hotel Maids stated that, since they were a small union with much competition from non-union girls, they stood to lose their jobs.

At the end of the Monday morning session the Executive Committee of fifteen again submitted a revised resolution, calling for all unions which had returned to work to go out on strike again,

in order that all might return in a body the following day, Tuesday at noon. The resolution was passed almost at once by the General Strike Committee.

The voting was confined to the "allies" or sympathetic strikers, the shipyard workers not being granted a voice.

The text of the resolution was as follows:

WHEREAS, this strike committee now assembles in the midst of the general understanding of the true status of the general strike; and

WHEREAS, the Executive Committee is sufficiently satisfied that regardless of the ultimate action that the rank and file would take, the said committee is convinced that the rank and file did stand pat, and the stampede to return to work was not on the part of the rank and file, but rather on the part of their leaders.

(However, be it understood that this committee does not question the honesty of any of the representatives of the general movement.) Therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the following action become effective at once, February 10, 1919:

That this strike committee advise all affiliated unions that have taken action to return their men to work, that said unions shall again call their men to respond immediately to the call of the rank and file until 12 noon February 11, 1919, and to then call this strike at a successful termination, and if developments should then make it necessary that the strike be continued, that further action should be referred to the rank and file exclusively.

In the evening the Teamsters reported that a meeting of the rank and file had unanimously voted to strike, again till Tuesday noon in accordance with the recommendation of the General Strike Committee.

It was generally expected that the Street Car men would also strike again, since they had reported on Sunday to the Committee of Fifteen that their Executive Committee had full power to call them out again, if it seemed needed in the interests of solidarity, and since they had reported on Monday to the General Strike Committee that they would go out again if called to do so by the General Strike Committee. It took, however, some hours to summon a meeting of the Street Car Men's Executive Committee, who were at work; and when they were called together, they stated that a meeting of the men to decide on the matter could not be held in time. Consequently the street car men did not come out again.

The meeting of Newsboys took a vote and decided to remain on strike till Tuesday noon. So also did the meeting of Auto Drivers.

It will be noticed that all cases in which the unions voted on the question were decided in favor of the request of the General Strike Committee, while all in which the Executive Committees or the International officers took action, were decided against the General Strike Committee.

This fact was apparent from the beginning of the strike to its close—that it was not a strike engineered by leaders, but one voted for, carried on, and kept up by that part of the rank and file that attends union meetings or takes part in referendum votes. The influence of recognized "leaders" was in every case on the side of greater caution and conservatism than was actually displayed.

CONSTRUCTIVE ACTIVITIES OF STRIKE: FEEDING THE PEOPLE

Among the pieces of constructive organization carried on during the general strike were the supplying of milk to babies by the milk wagon drivers' union, the handling of hospital laundry by joint agreement between the laundry drivers, laundry workers, and laundry men; the feeding of strikers and many of the general public by the provision trades, and the maintaining of public peace by the Labor War Veteran Guard.

Milk Stations for Babies

The arrangements made by the laundry drivers and laundry workers for handling hospital laundry are related elsewhere. The milk wagon drivers at first attempted to make a similar type of agreement with the milk dealers or dairy owners. They worked out a plan for neighborhood milk stations all over the city, and for downtown depot stations from which delivery might be made to hospitals.

This plan was submitted to the employers. It was soon felt by the union that the employers were attempting to direct the operation of the plan in such a way as to gain credit themselves in relieving the milk situation of the city. Furthermore, the plan of the employers involved opening of downtown dairies only, which the union believed would leave thousands of babies, and especially of the poorer classes, unable to get milk.

The milk wagon drivers' union therefore withdrew from the attempt to work together with the employers and established through their own organization 35 neighborhood milk stations all over the city. The employers meantime combined together and operated one pasteurizing plant at which they themselves did the work, and from which they distributed milk to the various dairies in the city. For this distribution they applied for exemption of one truck, and the milk wagon drivers' union endorsed their request to the general strike committee. The hospital were required to come to these dairies for their supply of milk.

Arranged all Over Town

The dairies thus supplied by the milk dealers were only eleven in number, so located that it would have been impossible for the mothers of Seattle to secure milk unless they owned automobiles. The milk wagon drivers therefore chose 35 locations properly spaced throughout the city, secured the use of space in stores, and proceeded to set up neighborhood milk stations.

The stations were announced as open from 9 to 2, but the milk was always gone before noon. The amount handled increased as the days went on until about 3,000 gallons were handled in the various stations. The first day the supply ran noticeably short, especially in some parts of town,

but by the third day of the strike the irregularities were ironed out and the supply was more adjusted to the need.

The milk was brought into town by the small private dairymen, whose dairies were near the city and had consequently been thoroughly inspected by the board of health. It was raw milk, pure, and authorized for babies. Each dairyman was given the address of a different milk station and made his deliveries direct.

The over-supply at some and the under-supply at others was changed the second day by a small amount of delivery handled by the milk drivers' union between stations.

Union Loses Money

The men at the stations gave their services free, and as a result the union stood to make a small profit on their activities in spite of the loss in efficiency which always occurs when a new system is put into effect.

But this gain was more than offset by heavy losses in connection with the supply of milk to the strikers' eating places. The estimate of the number of people who would have to be fed was much heavier than the number of those who actually came, some 3,000 gallons of milk ordered for these kitchens were never required, and as the milk drivers' union had contracted for this with the farmers they stood the loss. The milk came from distant farms and could not have been transferred to the milk stations, because it was uninspected and not usable for babies. A loss of $700 was therefore sustained by the milk wagon drivers' union as part of their contribution toward meeting an emergency in the city of Seattle.

The union has, however, gained in an understanding of the milk problems of a large city, and in ability to do the teamwork of co-operation whenever, in the inevitable development of industry, it is seen desirable to handle the milk of the city as a co-operative unit.

Feeding the Strikers

The heaviest and most complicated job of organization fell to the provision trades, charged with feeding the strikers and such members of the general public as desired to patronize the strikers' commissaries.

The restaurants of Seattle are almost 100 per cent organized. When the vote of the cooks and assistants, the waiters and waitresses threatened to close them down the restaurant owners took the matter philosophically. Many of them offered their kitchens to the cooks for the preparation of food for the strikers and some offered their entire establishments to the unions for the duration of the strike.

It was realized that the feeding of people through a few large restaurants would be much simpler and less expensive than feeding them in specially arranged halls. But for various reasons the offer of the restaurant owners was refused. Chief among the reasons was the fact that to take a few restaurants and omit others would be unfair to the owners who were omitted.

One restaurant owner said to the union: "Sure, take my whole place and run it. When you boys get through I'll have some business." The truth behind this remark made it impractical to take some restaurants and leave others. In a few of the outlying districts, where it could be done

without discrimination, an occasional restaurant was taken over in its entirety for the duration of the strike, with the consent of the owners.

Open Twenty-one Eating Places

Some 21 eating places were opened in various parts of the city. The food was cooked in large kitchens, the use of which was donated by various restaurants, and was then transported to various halls where it was served, cafeteria style. The original plan called for each person to bring his own "eating utensils, but this caused so much dissatisfaction that large quantities of paper plates and pasteboard cups were bought, together with small quantities of dishes, tin cups, knives, forks, and spoons.

The trials of the commissary department were many. It had to organize the supply of a large but quite unknown number of meals. It faced difficulties in securing provisions, in transporting cooked materials, in bringing the volunteer cooks to and from their homes. Each of these problems depended on the working together of people who had not had time to become welded into a complete organization.

Delay was experienced on the opening day from many causes. Some of the kitchens promised were withdrawn at the last moment, and the cooks and provisions sent there had to be taken elsewhere. The arrangements for transporting cooked food from one place to another did not work perfectly. In many places the first meal of the day was not ready until 4 or 5 in the afternoon. When it arrived there was only the smallest possible supply of dishes, and the patrons had not noticed the order that each must bring his own. There was no corps of dishwashers to keep up the meager supply of dishes until the waitresses' union, assisted by patrons, leaped into the breach and organized this very necessary branch of service.

Many of the strikers had been without food all day, as the restaurants had not been open for breakfast. Consequently on the first day there was a certain amount of inevitable grumbling from hungry men. By the second day, however, the difficulties were much reduced and meals began to appear with regularity.

Zeal and Sacrifice Under Difficulties

The amount of zeal and sacrifice of many of the cooks deserves special mention. It was expected that they would be taken to and from their work by the auto drivers' union, but these arrangements did not always work at first, and men who had labored 12 to 14 hours at the hardest kind of work sometimes found themselves faced with a five mile walk home, and another day on the morrow of the same kind of labor.

Through all these difficulties the commissary committee, consisting of William Hinkley, Bert Royce, William Wilkening, and Harry Nestor, with the special assistance of Fred Leandoys, business agent of the cooks, made persistent headway. They had greatly overestimated the number of people that would need to be fed, for many people stayed at home for one or all meals. In the end they were serving 30,000 meals a day with little trouble or friction. It was a task the magnitude of which only those can appreciate who have attempted to feed even a thousand people with a completely new organization of personnel and facilities.

There was some confusion as to the price of meals. It was at first reported that union men should pay 25 cents a meal, and the general public 35 cents. Different modifications took place in this order, sometimes without reaching all the eating houses. On the final day the price was 25 cents to everyone.

This covered a full and very substantial meal of beef stew, with large chunks of beef and whole potatoes and carrots, spaghetti with tomato sauce, bread and coffee. On some days the menu was varied by steak, or pot roast and gravy, in place of the stew. It will be seen that the diet chosen was by no means an inexpensive one, especially as every person was allowed as much as he could eat.

Money Loss of Kitchens

After the strike was over and the committee of the Metal Trades who had guaranteed the bills added up their accounts they found a loss of some $6,000 to $7,000.

Nearly $1,000 worth of bread was left on the last day and had to be given away. Over $1,000 had been spent on equipment, and $1,500 for trucks to haul the food from place to place. In addition to this the first day of the strike showed a loss, for this day alone, of over $5,000, due to the difficulties of getting started and the spoiling of so much food which soured before the next day. Much of this was due to overestimating the number of meals that would be necessary, and much of it to the fact that a few hours was not long enough to get the machinery of transportation and operation into running order.

"If the strike had lasted four or five days more," states Bert Swain, secretary of the Metal Trades Council, "we would have come out even, and after that, reduced the price. Another time there should be some one caterer at the head for the buying of supplies, and some one person in charge of transportation. We did not realize how large a feature of the job the transportation work would be."

PRESERVING THE PEACE

It was the universal testimony that never had a strike been carried on so peacefully as the Seattle general strike. "Sixty thousand men out and not even a fistfight" was the way one labor group expressed it.

The city was far more orderly than under ordinary conditions. The general police courts arrests sank to 32 on the first day of the strike, 18 on the second, and 30 on the Monday morning report for Saturday and Sunday. Not one of these arrests was due in any way to the strike.

Maj. Gen. Morrison, who came over from Camp Lewis in charge of troops, told the strikers' committee which called upon him that in 40 years of military experience he had not seen so quiet and orderly a city.

Reasons Given for Order

What was the reason for this order? Mayor Hanson says it was secured by his extra police. "They knew we meant business and they started no trouble," he declared, in the pronouncement sent broadcast throughout the country.

"While the business men and the authorities prepared for riots, labor organized for peace." Such is the statement of a reporter from a near-by city, who came to get a first-hand view.

Robert Bridges, president of the port of Seattle, wrote a letter to the Central Labor Council in which he declared that "it was the members' of organized labor who kept order during the strike. To them and to no one else belongs the credit.

"It was a great spiritual victory for organized labor," he declares, "a victory that cannot be taken from you not withstanding many assertions that others than yourselves were responsible for preserving that peace and order."

He alluded to the show of force and the calling in of the troops as "an aggravation" rather than a help, tending to give labor the impression that violence was expected from them. "Notwithstanding these extraordinary precautions, which were an extreme aggravation to them, the members of organized labor restrained themselves and went about their way quietly and peaceably. I sincerely hope that this will establish a precedent for future strikes."

The View of the Business World

There is no doubt that large numbers of business men in Seattle believed the view that has been sent broadcast throughout the nation, that it was the action of Mayor Hanson in bringing in machine guns, increasing the police force by six hundred men, and deputizing some 2,400 citizens of all varieties with the right to carry guns, that stopped a bloody and violent revolution in the Northwest. This is the time honored method of the authorities, and the business world as a class believes in it, and expects machine guns to prevent violence.

Bitterness Among Business Men

Bitterness was great in the business world. Some reasons why it was greater among them than among the strikers may be touched upon later; here we will merely quote the statement made to the writer by a prominent public official who was mixing much with both sides: "It is only necessary to mix among the business men of this city and then among the strikers, and hear their remarks, or even watch their faces, to find out which ones have murder in their hearts!"

It was a commonly noticed fact that women on trains running into Seattle, or in clubs, or in gatherings of other kinds, expressed the view that "those strikers ought to be stood up against a wall and shot down." Two weeks after the strike, a prominent businessman remarked to friends: "If that strike had lasted a few days longer, there would have been some people hung." The expectation, even the desire, to see the streets run with blood, was heard constantly in business offices.

"I had four hundred requests for guns," said one proprietor of a hardware store, "and not one from a laboring man, as far as I could judge them."

Two thousand four hundred citizens, according to the mayor's statement, were given authority to use stars and guns. The process by which this authority was secured is thus described by two young men who were deputized:

"We went into an office and held up our hands and someone mumbled some oath or other and they pinned a star on us and turned us loose."

One responsible business man who secured a star in order to "protect his property" relates overhearing two "young kids" who had just been deputized, and who were openly exulting in the hope of "potting a striker."

Soldiers Brought In

In addition to the armed men thus turned loose somewhat irresponsibly in the city's streets, soldiers were brought over from Camp Lewis. These were, however, hardly seen at all by the citizens, as they did not appear on the streets in any numbers.

It was fortunate for the city of Seattle that the soldiers came under the charge of a man like Maj. General Morrison. Vested, in the absence of President Wilson from our shores, with the right to declare martial law if he deemed it necessary, he appeared to wish to conduct himself in such a manner as to bring no censure from the president for hasty action. To a committee of strikers who called upon him to ask about the mayor's threat of martial law he replied that if any martial law was necessary, he himself would declare it, and it would be no bluff when he declared it.

Two facts deserve comment in connection with the calling in of the soldiers. One is that the high pile of "literature" about the strike which had been furnished Maj. Gen. Morrison to give him "information" contained not a single page of authentic statement from the strikers.

Denunciations in untempered language from small business sheets, together with unauthorized dodgers, some of which seemed to come from the I.W.W., were there in abundance. The whole collection tended to foster a belief in the revolutionary character of the strike. But not one single copy of the official announcements published by the strike committees; and not a copy of the *Union Record* or the strike bulletin, of which over 100,000 had been sent broadcast. The major general did not even know of the existence of the *Union Record*, the official organ of the

Central Labor Council, and the paper which has the largest circulation of any newspaper in the Northwest. Who compiled the collection of "information" for him is not known, but its intent was obvious.

A second interesting fact is that when the writer of this history called upon the successor of Maj. Gen. Morrison, to secure information regarding the calling in of the troops such information was not available. The officer in charge stated that he was not authorized to inform the people of Seattle either the number of men sent over, nor at whose request or order they had been sent, nor for what purpose they were in the city, whether to guard government property or to give general aid in case of trouble. It thus appears that military authorities may be quartered in an American city, and the people of that city be denied the right to know at the time or afterward for what purpose or at whose request they have come and what they propose to do.

Labor Organizes for Order

Meanwhile the strikers "organized for peace and order." They realized that they had nothing to gain and everything to lose by a riot in the streets. The tone of the editorial comment in the Strike Bulletin and the *Union Record*, both before the strike and after, shows a marked absence of bitterness and a prevalence of good humor.

"A machine gun may be a good argument, but it does mighty little execution where there are no crowds" was one little squib intended to discourage the forming of large groups in the streets.

"Wild rumors are floating around. Be careful how you believe them. The worst of these tales yesterday was that the strikers had blown up the city water dam. Whoever started this is responsible for much unnecessary mental anguish. The strikers are not blowing up anything. So runs another of the "Strike Notes. "

"Keep quiet. Let the other fellow do the quarreling," was another slogan passed around.

The Strike Bulletin commented favorably on the use of public libraries which had increased with a tremendous bound during the strike, and urged small community sings and recreational gatherings for the purpose of "making the most of your leisure time." And it ended: "This is fine weather for a vacation, anyway."

Editorials on "Keep Smiling" poked gentle fun at the self-important new youthful deputies who pushed their way through crowds at the Labor Temple, and urged the workers to remember that "when you were 18 you thought you ran the world," and not to grow angry at the youths.

Labor's War Veterans

In addition to this constant stream of propaganda in the interests of quietness and order, a group of some 300 union men who had seen service in the U. S. army or navy were organized into Labor's War Veterans. F. A. Rust, head of the Seattle Labor Temple Association, an old and tried and rather conservative member of organized labor, was at the head.

In an interview with the mayor before the strike, Mr. Rust was told that he could have his men deputized and given police authority if they would come down and be sworn in. He refused this suggestion.

"We think it will reassure the public to know," he said, "that we have no guns. We know that we can keep order in our own ranks without the use of force. If there is any shooting done, it will not be by us."

"We Have No Guns"

Scrawled across the blackboard at one of the headquarters of the War Veterans Guard ran the words: "The purpose of this organization is to preserve law and order without the use of force. No volunteer will have any police power or be allowed to carry weapons of any sort, but to use persuasion only. Keep clear of arguments about the strike and discourage others from them."

The method of dispersing crowds was thus described by one of the volunteers: "I would just go in," he said, "and say: 'Brother workingmen, this is for your own good. We mustn't have crowds that can be used as an excuse to start any trouble.' And they would answer: 'You're right, brother,' and begin to scatter."

This was the method used in dispersing the crowd that gathered when the first unsuccessful attempt was made to start the municipal car line. One of the guards reporting on this stated that, "the regular police didn't get in until we had the crowd moving, and then they came over swinging their sticks and saying 'get out of here.'

The "Shooting" Star

One of the "aggravations" mentioned by Mr. Bridges as tending to provoke disturbance, but which failed to cause any trouble because of the methods used by the Labor's War Veterans Guard, was the action of the Star, a Scripps paper, which, until the advent of the Union Record, had been the largest paper in the Northwest. Its circulation by the time the strike occurred had been almost cut in two.

With the help of men who worked under the direct order of international officers, the Star published a small issue on the afternoon of the strike, and sent a boy to the Post Office corner to dispose of them. A large and somewhat irritated crowd gathered. A hurry call sent to the headquarters of the Labor Guard brought out several men who succeeded in quietly dispersing the crowd.

Then one of the Labor Guard talked to the boy, explaining what scabbing meant. The youth declared that he would stop if he could get back to the Star office, whereupon the guard hailed a passing automobile belonging to a union man and sent the boy with his papers to the paper that sent him out.

On the following day the Star again printed its paper with a cordon of police drawn up at both ends of the street. The papers were passed out by police and were sent into the residence districts in machines full of armed guards. The strikers made at no time any attempt to interfere. The episode seriously injured what remaining popularity the Star had with the workers of Seattle. It has been alluded to in spontaneous cartoon and comment, as the "shooting Star."

A Permanent Gain

The Labor War Veteran Guard was organized with two headquarters, each with a chairman and secretary in charge for eight hour shifts day and night. The men in charge were in every instance exceptional appearing individuals, the kind one instinctively classes as "leaders of men." The groups acting under them were loyal labor men, most of whom could have received from $5 to $6 a day as special police, if they had acted under the police department instead of volunteering their service for labor. But they believed in the "big idea" behind the Labor Guard, which one of them expressed thus:

"Instead of a police force with clubs, we need a department of public safety, whose officers will understand human nature and use brains and not brawn in keeping order. The people want to obey the law, if you explain it to them reasonably."

The Labor War Veteran Guard co-operated with the police force and worked without friction with them. How long this would have lasted cannot be estimated, since, of course, the fundamental principles underlying the two groups are dissimilar.

The Labor Guard is to become a permanent organization in Seattle for the purpose of preserving order in labor's own ranks, during strikes, parades, public meetings and similar events.

OUR OWN ACTIVITIES

Some misunderstanding, intentional or otherwise, was caused by the interpretation given by the daily press to the editorial in the Union Record which spoke of "opening up more and more activities under our own management." This was held to presage a violent overturning of government and a seizure by force of property in the city.

As a matter of fact, without disturbance or disorder, more and more activities in Seattle have opened under the management of labor; and the move in this direction seemed to be only a beginning. A month after the strike, when this was written, union after union is talking co-operative stores of various kinds.

These range from the simple desire to start a cooperative workshop in which members of the same union shall co-operate to produce—to more elaborate schemes for enlisting groups of unions in starting a department store. The barbers union is talking of a chain of co-operative barber shops. The jewelry workers have already opened a store on the Rochdale plan. The steamfitters and plumbers are carrying on a flourishing grocery business.

The interest in "our own activities" has been tremendously stimulated by the strike. Both money for starting movements and money for patronage come easily. The members of organized labor have had the experience of working together and they appear to want more of it.

Some of the unions, like the cooks, milk wagon drivers and laundry workers, have had the experience during the strike of co-operation on a large scale. These particular organizations are not announcing plans for co-operation at present, as their relations with their employers are satisfactory. But it is evident from the tone of discussion that the rank and file in these organizations feel a new sense of power to organize and manage activities of their own craft or industry. They are ready to use it, when occasion comes.

Co-operative Markets Stimulated

The Co-operative Meat Market grew greatly during the strike. It had three shifts of men working to supply the strikers' kitchens. On the first Friday in February, during the strike, this concern did a cash business of $6,257, including over $3,000 worth of meat bought by the strikers' kitchens. The contrast of this with the first Friday in January, when the cash business was $2,126, or with the entire month of January, when the business was $37,000, shows the big gain during the period of the strike.

How much of this gain will be permanent cannot be told. Of course, the strikers' kitchens are no longer supplied, but the increase over the January sales, even after the strike terminated, is still noticeable. Some of this no doubt would have come through natural expansion, but the strike called attention more quickly.

The Co-operative Grocery, (Rochdale plan) traces its sudden growth not only to the strike, but to a raid conducted on its office a week before the strike, during which the books were seized.

Before that time, the business ranged from $250 to $500 a day; but the first Saturday after the raid a record of $1,100 was established. During the strike, the business was still nearly three times what it had been before the raid.

Membership in the grocery organization, which involves a $10 entrance fee, also increased 70 per cent during this period. Much interest started in outlying districts, and plans are now discussed for a large number of branch stores.

In Tacoma, the interest in Rochdale stores also reached a climax, resulting in the establishing of three such stores in a period of two weeks. At the same time, the Sheet Metal Workers' union opened a cooperative shop owned by their organization, and the auto-mechanics laid plans and raised money for an auto repair shop owned by the union, while the painters and decorators are getting a similar project under way.

The Pipe Trades Grocery

One of the most enthusiastic developments of the General Strike was the profitless grocery run by the steamfitters and plumbers. It was started to furnish provisions to strikers at wholesale cost plus the overhead cost of handling. Rent was secured free from the Union Record, striking steamfitters gave their time without charge, and the organization advanced a preliminary $1,500 to buy goods. On the first day the store was crowded with customers and has remained so ever since.

Then the steamfitters went into various unions and sold "grocery tickets," entitling the recipient to $5 worth of groceries. With receipts from these tickets, together with another $1,500 advanced from the organization treasury, and $2,100 from the plumbers, they had capital enough to buy out a $15,000 business on a prominent corner.

Already (a month after the strike) they are buying potatoes, eggs, butter, meats and milk direct from the farmers, and expect before long to get flour direct from the co-operative mill. They are doing a business of $1,800 per day. When the strike of the shipyard workers is over and the steamfitters and plumbers go back to work, those who are retained to care for the store will be paid wages. The plan is at present to pay $8 a day to everyone employed from the manager down, this being the wage demanded by their trades.

Striking Against Their Own Plants

Undoubtedly the business of the various union-owned activities in Seattle would have received a larger boost, if it had not been for the policy pursued by the strikers of "striking against their own plants." For when the capitalistacally controlled industries of Seattle were shut down, no discrimination was shown by the strikers; the union owned activities also took a vacation.

The underlying reasons for this were many. Among them is the fact that the workers, striking as crafts, were naturally in the position of employees, not owners, in each particular union-owned industry. To a janitor, the Labor Temple association was as much of an "employer of labor" as was the City-County building.

But the main reason was that the vast majority of the workers, not contemplating revolution, knew that after the strike they would still have to do business in a business world. And the

standards of fairness in that world demanded that they should not unfairly favor one of two competing concerns, if they hoped to deal satisfactorily with both of them.

There was even talk of closing down the Co-operative Market, but the need for food prevailed over this idea. However, the Mutual Laundry shut down; the Labor Temple went without janitors, except for volunteers; and the Union Record stopped for a day and a half.

This shut-down caused more protest from the strikers than any other in the closing of industries. The Union Record was "their paper;" many of them hoped to see it sweep the others from the streets as the only paper issued. The craving for news, for printed matter of any kind connected with the strike, became very urgent. It was a need almost greater than that for food.

The plant of the Union Record, under the direction of the Strike Committee with a volunteer force, published for free distribution a "Strike Bulletin," a small two-page sheet without advertisements, and with no telegraph news service except such as bore directly on the strike.

On the afternoon when it was given out, streets surrounding the Union Record office were jammed with a crowd of perhaps 5,000 people. Even the efforts of the Labor Guard were insufficient to keep them away.

But the Strike Bulletin served only to aggravate the desire for reading matter, and on Saturday, the third day of the strike, after the Star had disregarded the strike by sending out papers on wagons with armed police, and after the Post-Intelligencer had managed to issue a four-page sheet which was given away at its own doors, the General Strike Committee directed the Union Record to start printing again. At the same time, the General strike Committee assumed full responsibility for the fact that the paper had not been published.

The grounds for closing down the Union Record are given by its editor, E. B. Ault, and board of directors, as follows:

"Since the strike was not revolutionary in intent, the conduct of the official organ of the Central Labor Council was a matter for careful consideration. The printing trades on the other papers had been asked and were expected to strike in concert with all the other trades. After the purposes of the general strike had been served these men were expected to go back to work in the offices from which they had walked out, and the management of the Union Record felt that it would be unfair business practice to take advantage of their competitors by operating during the strike, and also felt that it would make it much harder for the printing trades to return to their work with continued amicable relations with their employers.

"Then, too, news is as much a part of public service as transportation, and since transportation was stopped news naturally should have been stopped in order that the community might know what labor solidarity really meant. The needs of the workers could be and were served by the issuance of a strike bulletin carrying all the essential developments of the day.

"The policy of the management of the paper was explained to the executive committee of the general strike committee and met with the approval of that body. That it was justified has been proved by the fact that the circulation of the paper has increased tremendously since the strike, and by the further fact that the opponents of organized labor have not been able to point to any unfairness on our part in conducting the strike.

THE AFTERMATH

There were no arrests during the strike for any matters connected with the strike. There was, as the strikers liked to remark, "not even a fist-fight."

But no sooner was the strike over than the county authorities sent out and arrested thirty-nine members of the Industrial Workers of the World, on the charge of being "ring-leaders of anarchy." Some of these arrests were accomplished by raiding the I.W.W. headquarters, and then stationing a plain clothes man in the office of the secretary to arrest all members as they came in to pay their dues. Most of the members were soon released, only a few of the more prominent being held.

The Socialist party headquarters was also raided and the Socialist candidate for the city council arrested. The Equity Printing Plant, a co-operative printing establishment, the stock of which is owned by various organizations of workers and many individual workers, was raided, its manager arrested and the plant closed down. Later the plant was allowed to reopen, for eight hours daily, under the constant surveillance of policemen. The policemen opened the plant in the morning, locked it up at night, and supervised its operation during the day. A marked falling off in business was stated to be the result.

The cause given for all these arrests was the passing out of leaflets during the strike, which were alleged to have been prepared by the I.W.W.s or radical Socialists and to have been printed at the Equity Printing Plant.

Chief among these was a dodger entitled "Russia Did It," urging the workers to operate their own industries.

The arrested men had no connection with the Central Labor Council or with the General Strike. They claimed, however, that they were arrested because of a desire of the authorities to prosecute someone on account of the strike, and that they, being undefended by any union, were the easiest victims. They asked the central Labor Council to come to their defense.

A committee of the Central Labor Council was appointed to investigate their case, and reported that in its opinion no one of the leaflets on which charges were passed gave any evidence of anarchy or desire for violence, but were rather socialistic in their teaching.

They alluded especially to the setting of a policeman in the Equity Printing Plant, together with the remark of the chief of police that he did this because "he got tired of what they were printing" and his further remark to a protesting committee that if any more committees came to see him he would close down the plant entirely.

Declaring that an "invasion of fundamental rights had taken place," through unlawful raids and arrests, they announced that "fundamental rights do not go by favor, and when they are denied to one they are denied to all."

While expressing their opposition to the I.W.W. as a dual organization, and urging workers everywhere, in the interests of solidarity, to join the regular labor movement, they yet recognized the existence in this case, of "one common enemy."

Their recommendation was adopted by a practically unanimous vote: "That the Central Labor Council immediately take up the defense of these men, in order that the fundamental rights involved in these cases which are necessary to our own existence, shall be preserved."

There the cases stand at present (March 6) with several workers, presumably members of the I.W.W. arrested on the charge of criminal anarchy in connection with the strike, and the Central Labor Council coming to their defense because "fundamental rights are involved.

WON OR LOST?

From coast to coast the newspapers declared that the General Strike in Seattle was lost. The Seattle newspapers announced the same fact, declared that the workers were creeping back to work downcast, that they had lost their strike. The press then proceeded to offer them many bits of advice and admonition, chiefly that they must "clean house" at once, and get rid of their radical leaders.

But strange to say, except for an occasional note of regret, the workers of Seattle did not go back to work with the feeling that they had been beaten. They went smiling, like men who had gained something worth gaining, like men who had done a big job and done it well. The men went back, feeling that they had won the strike; although as yet there was no sign from Washington that Piez would relent on a single point.

They went back laughing at the suggestion that they "clean house of their radical leaders who had tried to make a Bolsheviki revolution." They knew quite well that these same leaders were the men who had counseled caution and moderation, who had urged them to fix a time limit, and had later urged a return before the individual unions should start back, one at a time. They knew that these "radical leaders" were really more conservative than the voting rank and file that goes to meetings; and they were amused at the attempts of the press to make them believe otherwise. They had chosen the strike themselves, and it had been a great experience.

Hardly a word of regret was heard from the men who had lost five days' pay for a cause. It was the men whose business had been hurt, the men who had expected riot and found none, who told them they had "failed."

So it is worth considering for a moment, to what extent was the Seattle General Strike won—or lost?

What Was the Strike For?

What did the workers expect to gain? What were they striking for?

It is easy, once we have had an experience, to analyze the complex motives that went into it. But reasoning and analysis cannot take place before there is an experience to learn from. There had never been a General Strike in this country. None of Seattle's workers had ever lived through one.

So it is not surprising that we should be able now to see the fact that many varied motives and reasons entered into the Seattle General Strike, and that we had not had the experience at the time to state to ourselves very clearly just what we wanted or expected.

Some were striking to gain a definite wage increase for their brother workers in the shipyards. Some few, a very few, were striking because they thought "The Revolution" was about to arrive. But the vast majority were striking "just for sympathy," just as a show of solidarity. The extent to which they were also moved, half-consciously, by the various forms of labor's upheaval going

on throughout the world, cannot be estimated. Consciously perhaps, not very much; but unconsciously and instinctively, a great deal. Strikes and upheavals were in the air.

For a Definite Gain?

Those who struck for a definite aim—the raise of the wages in the shipyard, did not gain their aim. It is true that men were hurrying here from Washington, D.C., to look into matters. It is true that some gain may in the end be influenced by the strike. But the sympathetic strikers went back to work with Piez still interfering in the local situation.

Possibly one of the reasons they did not gain a definite end was that no end was stated quite definitely and simply enough. And perhaps one lesson that other cities may learn from the experience of Seattle is this: "If you are striking for a definite aim, and refusing to come back until you have gained it, make your aim so clear and simple that everyone in the city will know the one man on whom to bring pressure, and what one act to demand of him."

If the strikers had said: "We are remaining out until Mr. Piez definitely and publicly states that he will leave Seattle employers and employees alone to bargain together over their own affairs,"—if they had asked anything so simple as that it is quite possible that the worried business men and the general public of Seattle would have been led to concentrate their annoyance on Mr. Piez until he gave into this definite demand.

But what they were asking—a raise in wages in the shipyards—was not something which either Mr. Piez alone, or the Seattle shipyard owners alone, or the Seattle Chamber of Commerce alone could give them. It was something that demanded joint action by several different people.

And consequently the persons in the community who felt the ill effects of the general strike had no immediate outlet for their grievance. They felt that they were being annoyed and punished for something which was not their fault and about which they had the power to do nothing. This fact undoubtedly accentuated the feeling of bewildered bitterness in the business world.

They could see no constructive plan in the strike. They naturally jumped to thoughts of revolution and disorder.

For Revolution?

Those workers, of whom there were probably few, who thought "the social revolution" was ready to start in Seattle, were also doomed to disappointment.

Probably hardly any of the so-called "leaders," accused by the press of trying to start Bolshevism in America, believed that the revolution was at hand. Such belief as there was occurred in isolated cases in the rank and file and was expressed by the disappointed youthful cry of the boy in the Newsboys' Union: "I thought we were going to get the industries."

The men who had been longer in Seattle's labor movement, even those among them who look forward to "the revolution" ultimately, were quite certain that it was not coming now. They knew that it was not coming because the majority of Seattle's workers did not have the intentions or the past experience on which revolution is built.

And yet, while no revolution occurred and none was intended, the workers of Seattle feel themselves, because of their experience, in the position of men who know the steps by which an industrial revolution occurs.

An editorial in the Union Record, two weeks after the strike, discusses the workers' government just arising in Belfast, and draws comparison with the Seattle general strike. "They are singularly alike in nature. Quiet mass action, the tying up of industry, the granting of exemptions, until gradually the main activities of the city are being handled by the strike committee.

"Apparently in all cases there is the same singular lack of violence which we noticed here. The violence comes, not with the shifting of power, but when the 'counter-revolutionaries' try to regain the power which inevitably and almost without their knowing it passed from their grasp. Violence would have come in Seattle, if it had come, not from the workers, but from attempts by armed opponents of the strike to break down the authority of the strike committee over its own members.

"We had no violence in Seattle and no revolution. That fact should prove that neither the strike committee nor the rank and file of the workers ever intended revolution.

"But our experience, meantime, will help us understand the way in which events are occurring in other communities all over the world, where a general strike, not being called off, slips gradually into the direction of more and more affairs by the strike committee, until the business group, feeling their old prestige slipping, turns suddenly to violence, and there comes the test of force."

To Express Solidarity?

We come then to the last of the reasons entering into the general strike—the reason which was the simplest and the most important. The vast majority struck to express solidarity. And they succeeded beyond their expectations.

They saw the labor movement come out almost as one man and tie up the industries of the city. They saw the Japanese and the I.W.W.s and many individual workers join in the strike, and they responded with a glow of appreciation. They saw garbage wagons and laundry wagons going along the streets marked "exempt by strike committee." They saw the attention of the whole continent turned on Mr. Piez and the Seattle shipyards.

They learned a great deal more than they expected to learn—more than anyone in Seattle knew before. They learned how a city is taken apart and put together again. They learned what it meant to supply milk to the babies of the city; to feed 30,000 people with a brand-new organization. They came close for the first time in their lives "to the problems of management."

They went back proud of themselves for the way they had come out; proud of themselves for the way they had kept order under provocation; glad to have gained so much education with so little comparative suffering; glad to have worked shoulder to shoulder with their fellow unionists on a lot of big problems; and a bit relieved, to tell the truth, that no one had been raided, no one shot and that the labor movement of Seattle was still "going strong." For they were quite aware that they had held in their hands a weapon which might have exploded in any one of a dozen different directions. They were glad to find themselves able to use it, to examine it and to lay it down without any premature explosions.

And that is why they went back from the "glorious vacation" feeling that they had won. Not perhaps exactly the things they had set out to win, but something better.

At any event, whether this be the explanation or not, the fact remains that the workers went back, most of them, not feeling defeated, but feeling quite reasonably successful, glad they had

struck, equally glad to call it off, and especially glad to think that their experience would now be of use to the entire labor movement of the country as it makes its plans for the Mooney general strike, by giving the necessary information of just what happens in a community when a general strike occurs, what problems arise, and how one city met them.

And, for the giving of this needed knowledge and education, the labor movement of Seattle rejoices to know that both its successes and its mistakes will be of equal advantage to the labor movement of the country.

NOTES

1. The idea of workers taking over production and society was in the air throughout the industrialized world in 1919. The autocratic Kaisers, emperors, and tsars of Germany, Eastern and Central Europe, and Russia were overthrown in the wake of the war. In Russia, workers' factory committees in many places took over factories and ran them themselves, until ousted from control by the new Bolshevik government. In Germany, workers formed committees elected in the factory called "Workers Councils". While these councils actually accomplished little, their existence led the most militant workers to conceive of a society run by the councils. In Italy, the so-called "Internal Commissions" which had formed in Turin's factories during the war, were gradually being transformed into factory committees—organs of struggle representing all the workers in the factory (not just those in a certain union or party). These committees led several militant struggles, including a weeklong general strike, and later, the occupation of most Turin factories to combat an employer lockout. During the occupation, many factories were run under the direction of the factory committees. A similar process was also occurring in the formation of the English Shop Stewards movement. (Root And Branch)

2. Tom Mooney was an A.F.L. organizer in San Francisco who had been convicted of throwing a bomb into a 1916 preparedness parade, despite the evidence of a photograph of him standing by a clock a mile away from the scene at exactly the time the bomb was thrown. (Root And Branch)

3. The rumor that the I.W.W. had a leading part in the strike can be traced perhaps to the general desire on the part of the press to discredit the strikers, and partly to the fact that certain dodgers were published and distributed during the strike calling on the workers to emulate Russia, which seemed to be of I.W.W. origin. In the excited minds of business men untrained to discriminate in matters affecting labor, this was supposed to be part of the authorized "strike propaganda." It caused no excitement in the ranks of the workers, as they are accustomed to seeing such propaganda put forth by radical groups, and as they are also accustomed to distinguishing statements authorized by their organizations from totally unauthorized leaflets. (Anna Louise Strong)

FURTHER READING ON THE SEATTLE GENERAL STRIKE AND 1919

The Seattle General Strike by Robert L. Friedheim (Seattle: University of Washington Press) provides a great deal of detail on the strike and the Seattle labor movement, though little valuable analysis. Its notes have a full listing of available sources.

I Change Worlds by Anna Louise Strong (N.Y.: Henry Holt, 1935), written after she became a Communist, contains an interesting chapter on "Our Seattle Revolution."

Revolution in Seattle by Harvey O'Connor (N.Y.: Monthly Review Press, 1964; Seattle: Left Bank Books, 1981) gives a vivid, if personally biased, account of the radical wing of the Seattle labor movement, based on personal recollection.

Americanism versus Bolshevism by Ole Hanson (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1920) shows primarily the way in which Seattle's Mayor (the author) tried to exploit the anti-red hysteria of the time to parlay his belated opposition to the strike into a flamboyant Presidential campaign.

Communism and the General Strike by Wilfred H. Crook (Hamden, Conn.: The Shoe String Press, 1960) provides an extremely valuable compilation of information on general strikes in both American and world history. Crook, a fanatical anti-leftist, sees general strikes as inevitably menacing established government and society because they require that the strikers take over management of important social functions, thus posing the idea of workers' management of society.

Strike! by Jeremy Brecher (San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1972) includes a chapter on the large-scale labor struggles of the United States in 1919, and considerable information on other general strikes in the US.

Nineteen-Nineteen by John Dos Passes (various editions) contains a fictional but interesting picture of the conflicts racking American society in the wake of World War I.

Rebel Voices: An I.W.W. Anthology ed. Joyce L. Kornbluh (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964; Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1998).

Root & Branch: The Rise of the Workers' Movements ed. Root & Branch (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett/Crest, 1975)

A People's History of the United States by Howard Zinn (New York: HarperPerennial, 1995)

They Can't Understand by Anise

(In the *Seattle Union Record*, the *Labor Daily*.)

"Anise" was the pen name of Anna Louise Strong (1885–1970), a journalist and writer. Miss Strong was feature editor of the

Seattle Union Record from 1916 to 1921.

What scares them most is
That NOTHING HAPPENS!
They are ready
For DISTURBANCES.
They have machine guns
And soldiers,
But this SMILING SILENCE
Is uncanny.
The business men
Don't understand
That sort of weapon.
It comes
From a DIFFERENT WORLD
Than the world THEY live in.
It is really funny
And a bit pathetic
To see how worried
And MAD
The business men are getting.
What meetings they hold,
What WILD RUMORS
They use
To keep themselves
STIRRED UP.
Yet MOST of them
Might be real pleasant
HUMAN BEINGS
Except that life
Has separated them
Too much from common folks.
It is the SYSTEM
Of industry
That makes them sullen
And SUSPICIOUS of us,
Not any NATURAL depravity.
It is the system
That trains them to believe
In the words of our
Beloved Ole,
That they can bring in

Enough ARMED FORCE
To operate our industries.
But how many
MACHINE GUNS
Will it take to cook
ONE MEAL?
It is your SMILE
That is UPSETTING
Their reliance
On ARTILLERY, brother!
It is the garbage wagons
That go along the street
Marked “EXEMPT
By STRIKE COMMITTEE.”
It is the milk stations
That are getting better daily,
And the three hundred
WAR Veterans of Labor
Handling the crowds
WITHOUT GUNS,
For these things speak
Of a NEW POWER.
And a NEW WORLD
That they do not feel
At HOME in.

Back Cover Text

The tyranny of the present order can only be abolished if those of us who are sincerely interested in a better life for all are able to defeat oppressors by going beyond the deadly ideologies of nationalism and the state, and religious, racial and ethnic bigotry; by going beyond the market and wage labor; beyond domination by any elite; and by going beyond dependency on a way of life based on the exploitation of nature and the destruction of the environment. We must learn to put into practice the self-organization of life activities based on the full participation of all in decision-making. In the long run, only this can put an end to hierarchies of domination and achieve freedom for all.

History Committee of The General Strike Committee
The Seattle General Strike
An Account of What Happened in Seattle and Especially in the Seattle Labor Movement, During the General Strike, February 6 To 11, 1919
1919, March

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