Security In Unity

SEAFARERS LOG

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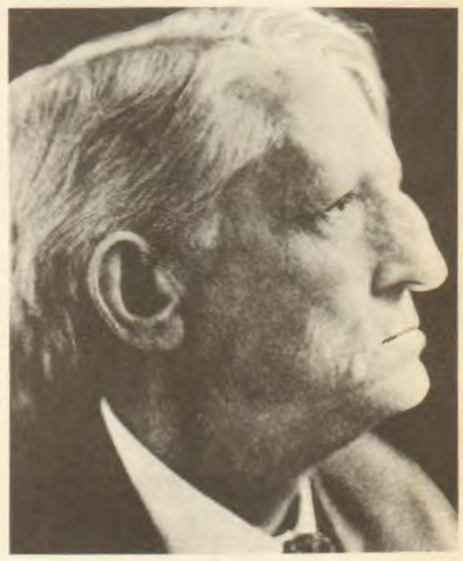
OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE SEAFARERS INTERNATIONAL UNION • ATLANTIC, GULF, LAKES AND INLAND WATERS DISTRICT • AFL-CIO

"You can put me in jail, but you cannot give me narrower quarters than as a seaman I have always had. You cannot give me coarser food than I have always eaten. You cannot make me lonelier than I have always been."

—Andrew Furuseth

"Tomorrow Is Also A Day"

—Andrew Furuseth



The Seaman's Struggle for Equality

"There is also the dignity that comes to him who stands on his own two feet, looks the world in the eye and takes on all comers in the battle for what he might believe is just."

—Tribute to Harry Lundeberg

"We Have To Educate The Whole Person"

—Paul Hall

"Politics Is Porkchops"

—Paul Hall

"You can have the best contract in the world, but if you don't have any work, it doesn't mean a thing."

—Frank Drozak

SIU Fiftieth Anniversary

Few, if any, of the gains of the past 50 years would have been possible without the seamen's hiring hall (51 Beaver Street).

"Bloody Thursday" reinvigorated the seamen's movement.

Introduction:

SIU Celebrates Fiftieth Anniversary

In 1938, Harry Lundeberg, center, received a charter from the American Federation of Labor to form a new international seamen's union, the SIUNA.

The SIU is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. The union was born during the Great Depression, one of this nation's darkest periods.

War clouds were gathering over Europe and Asia. Despair and poverty still stalked the globe nine, long years after the Stock Market Crash of 1929.

The American labor movement was split into two hostile camps. Conditions for seamen and many other workers remained intolerable.

Yet there was hope. The New Deal had given workers a mechanism to make their voices heard.

Industry by industry, workers were being organized on a scale never before imagined.

October 15, 1938

On October 15, 1938, at a convention in Houston, Texas, the American Federation of Labor presented Harry Lundeberg with a charter to form a new international seamen's union, the Seafarers International Union of North America (SIUNA).

Lundeberg was already head of the Sailors Union of the Pacific, a union of West Coast sailors which traced its origins back to 1885. Morris Weisberger, a top Lundeberg aide, took a month's leave so he could go to New York to help set up operations for a separate, autonomous affiliate of Atlantic and Gulf seamen.

A skeletal structure was already in place. An interim charter for the new international had been issued in 1937. Robert Chapdelaine had been named acting chairman. The interim union didn't even have a name. It had a number: AFL Seamen's Union 22124. Matthew "Duke" Dushane was the acting chairman of the new A&G District. John "Whitey" Hawk was in charge of the Atlantic Region; Matthew Biggs headed up the Gulf Coast.

At first there was little interaction between the two regions. Members shipped out on either a Gulf or an Atlantic Coast book. That wouldn't change for a number of years.

The A&G District Was Called the SIU

From the beginning, the Atlantic and Gulf District of the SIUNA was known simply as the SIU.

It was not an easy birth. The new union had 500 members, few resources and only nine-contracted companies. Since then, the small, struggling affiliate that Harry Lundeberg established has become a powerful force in the labor movement. The SIU now represents a wide spectrum of workers: fishermen, cannery workers, tug and barge workers, service employees, office workers, wire and rope workers, and many, many more.

The SIU's Story Dates Back Hundreds of Years

Still, the seaman's age-old struggle for equality and justice lies at the core of the union's existence. It has a universal appeal that speaks to the experiences of all Americans.

At its most basic level then, the history of the SIU is the story of a group of workers who used the labor movement to achieve equality under the law and dignity in the workplace.

It is the story of great leaders, committed members and the bond they were able to forge.

It is also the story of the American-flag merchant marine. Its continued survival presents our members with their greatest challenge as the union faces its second 50 years.

The Wall Street Strike of 1948. Members of the SIU have consistently supported their fellow trade unionists.

The SIU became a power on the waterfront after Paul Hall was named director of organizing in 1945. He immediately targeted the Isthmian and Cities Service companies for organizing and set a successful blueprint for the union's future growth.

Chapter One:

The Seaman's Struggle For Equality

"I must go down to the sea again
to the lonely sea and the sky

And all I ask is a tall ship
and a star to steer her by"

—John Masefield

Seamen lived, slept and ate in one big forecastle. Diseases swept a ship like wildfire.

Today's Seafarers lead lives virtually indistinguishable from the vast majority of Americans. They are middle-class wage earners who work onboard vessels that have to meet stringent safety standards.

Yet seamen were once among the most brutalized of American workers. In at least one important respect, they were little better than slaves.

Once a seaman signed the ship's articles, he was tied to a vessel for the duration of the voyage. "From the earliest historical period, the contract of seamen has been treated as an exceptional one, involving, to a certain respect, the surrender of his personal liberty during the life of the contract," said the Supreme Court in *Robertson v. Brown* (165 US 275).

Leaving a ship before the end of a journey was tantamount to desertion. Under an early sea code, desertion was punishable by death. In some jurisdictions, it was punishable by branding.

The seaman's unique legal status put him at a decided disadvantage in his fight to secure a better way of life. No matter how bad conditions were for workers in other industries, they at least had the right to quit and seek employment elsewhere if they were dissatisfied with their wages or job conditions. For someone who knew a skilled trade or who lived in an area where there was a labor shortage, this could be a powerful tool.

The Law Was Stacked Against Seamen

The first American statute to restrict the mobility of seamen was passed in 1790. It stated that a merchant seaman who absented himself from a vessel for more than 48 hours without leave from his captain, forfeited "all his wages due to him, and all his goods and chattel on board of said ship or vessel, or in any store they may have been lodged at the time of his desertion to the use of the owners."

The penalties for desertion were made more stringent in 1872, when Congress passed the Shipping Commission Act. Imprisonment for a period of not more than three months was added to the list of possible penalties that could be taken against a seaman who had left his vessel in mid-voyage.

A seaman who "correctly" feared for his life had the right to leave a ship. Yet a seaman who feared "only" physical abuse from his shipmates did not enjoy that right.

"Seamen, as a class, are an injudicious group often given, on shipboard, to frequent and violent quarrels... A black eye, lacerations and bruises are not too uncommon a sight," wrote a nineteenth century judge.

Bucko Mates and Cruelty at Sea

In court cases and early seamen's journals, there are numerous accounts of a dreaded maritime phenomenon: "bucko" mates who took delight in torturing the people who worked under them.

Congress passed its first anti-flogging statute in 1850. Yet it wasn't until passage of the White Act in 1898 that an officer could be held personally liable for the physical and mental damages he inflicted on a seaman.

Under American law, a captain never did have the right "to beat a man with unreasonable severity." But as one judge put it, "a single act of assault and battery, though exceeding the bounds of moderation, will not justify a desertion."

Even in the most sympathetic court of law, a seaman being charged with desertion was at a considerable disadvantage. No matter how brutal a mate or captain was, he still was a more credible figure than a seaman, who was lumped in with "Indians and idiots" as being a special ward of the American state. In addition, a captain had access to the ship's log, where he made all the entries.

The *Pilgrim* inspired Richard Henry Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast.*

Two Years Before The Mast

Publication in 1840 of Richard Henry Dana's masterpiece, *Two Years Before the Mast,* marked a pivotal moment in the seaman's struggle for equality. Before that time, most Americans had no idea of the brutal conditions which existed onboard American-flag vessels.

The book has lost none of its power. In the following passage, Dana describes his reaction to a flogging at sea:

"Sam, by this time, was seized up, as it is called; that is placed against the shrouds, with his wrists made fast to them, his jacket off, and his back exposed. The captain stood on the break of the deck, a few feet from him, and a little raised, so as to have a good swing at him, and held in his hand the end of a thick, strong rope. The officers stood round, and the crew grouped together in the waist. All these preparations made me feel sick and almost faint, angry and excited as I was. A man—a human being, made in God's likeness—fastened up and flogged like a beast! A man, too, whom I had lived with, eaten with, and stood watch with for months, and knew so well! If a thought of resistance crossed the minds of any of the men, what was to be done?...If they resist, it is mutiny; and if they succeed, and take the vessel, it is piracy. If they ever yield again, their punishment must come; and if they do not yield, what are they to be for the rest of their lives? If a sailor resists his commander, he resists the law, and piracy or submission is his only alternative. Bad as it was, they saw that it must be borne. It is what a sailor ships for..."

Notorious Crimp System

This institutionalized pattern of legal discrimination reinforced abuses that were rampant in the maritime industry. In order to be employed on a ship, a seaman had to submit to the notorious "crimp" system, where the owners of bars and rooming houses were given liens on his future earnings. The system was rigged to keep a seaman permanently in debt.

The crimp often had an understanding with a captain of a ship. His rooming house or bar served as an unofficial hiring hall.

The crimp system made it almost impossible for seamen to organize. In order to gain employment, a seaman had to patronize or live in one of these crimp joints. Since he often stored his goods in these places, a seaman risked losing every single material possession he owned if he left a vessel becaue of poor conditions.

There were numerous instances of seamen being shanghaied (the term was coined in San Francisco in 1855 when seamen increasingly found themselves on runs to the Orient against their will). It was not uncommon for a crimp to get a seaman drunk to get him to sign on a vessel that was about to sail shorthanded. This was particularly common if a captain had a reputation for running a "hell-ship."

Life at Sea

If a seaman's life on land left much to be desired, so did conditions onboard ship.

Voyages often lasted two, three years. There was a constant danger of death by drowning. There was no way of reporting unsafe conditions; no mechanism to appeal arbitrary and even dangerous conditions by one's superiors.

Seamen often slept in one large forecastle. Diseases like tuberculosis often swept a ship like wildfire.

Even under the best of circumstances, life at sea was claustrophobic. "Life onboard ship calls for close contact and confinement of the men with little chance, until they reach port, for recreation," wrote a nineteenth century judge.

The seaman's debased existence at sea and on land was tied closely to his legal status. Before he could improve his working conditions, he had to win the fight for equality under the law.

Chapter Two:

Seamen's Act of 1915 Brings Freedom

There were three pivotal developments in the seaman's early fight for equality under the law.

The first came in 1840 when Richard Henry Dana published his classic novel, *Two Years Before the Mast.* Before that time, Americans were not aware of the abuses that existed in the maritime industry.

The next important development occurred gradually over a 30-year period. It was the formation of permanent seamen's unions strong enough to protect the rights of their members.

Finally, there was the rise of leaders within the ranks of the seaman's movement.

The early seamen's unions were blessed with an abundance of talented and selfless people: Dan Keefe, Sigismund Danielewicz, Burnette Haskell. But it was Andrew Furuseth who gave the seaman's movement its unique voice.

Seamen Get A Spokesman

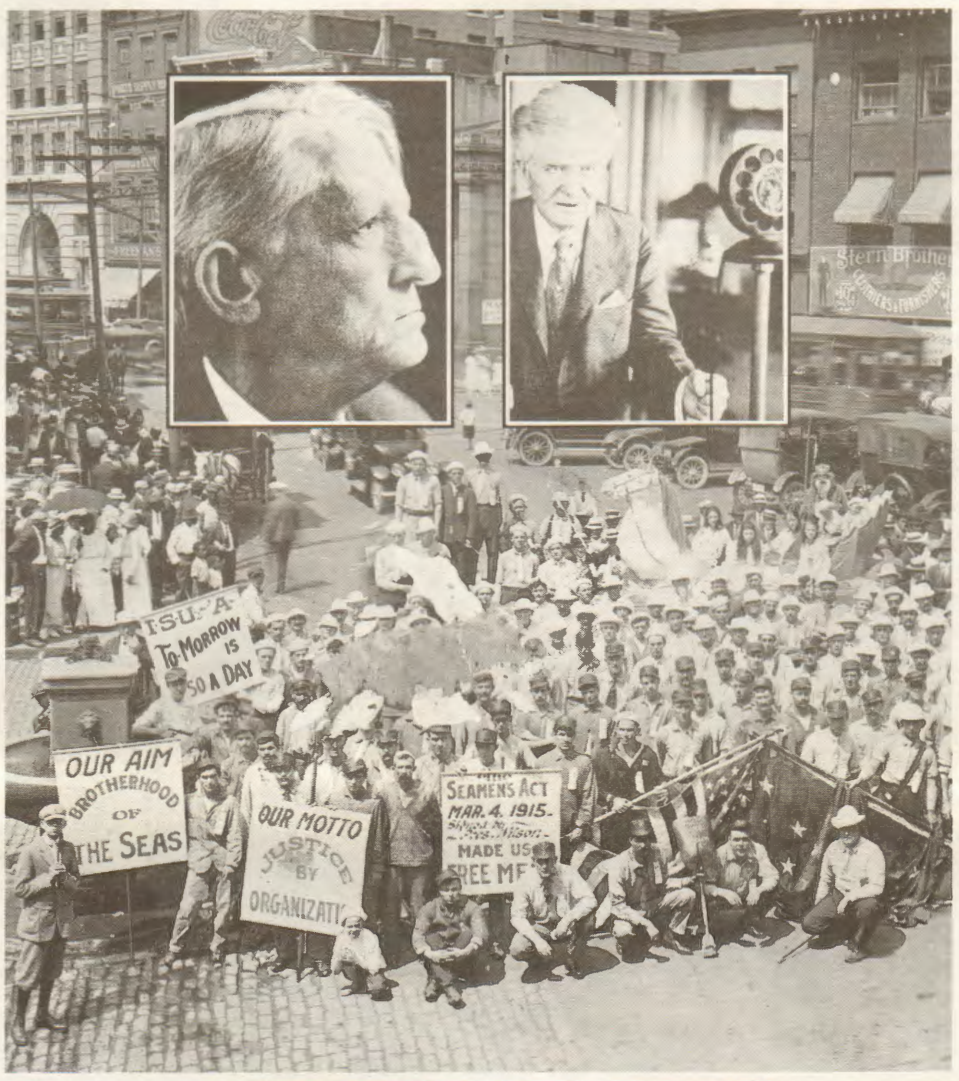
The formation of the International Seamen's Union in 1892 out of a group of bickering, unaffiliated unions gave the seamen's movement a veneer of unity to the outside world. More important, it gave them a respected spokesman, Andrew Furuseth, who could represent their interests in Washington, D.C.

There has never been anyone more effective in making the public aware about the need to reform conditions in the maritime industry. To the outside world, Furuseth, with his stooped shoulders, lined face and eloquent speech, was the living embodiment of the American sailor.

He was born in 1854 in Furuseth, Norway. Forced to leave school at an early age, he was a self-taught scholar, fluent in English, German, Dutch, French and Norwegian. Like many other Scandinavian seamen of his era, he eventually made his way to the West Coast of the United States, sailing, for the most part, on the elegant schooners which were being rendered obsolete by new technology.

Furuseth became secretary of the Coast Seamen's Union in the 1887, two years after that union was formed. One of the first things he did was to establish the *Coast Seamen's Journal.* He understood the importance of communication and the power of the written word.

He had the ability to make people sit up and listen. "Tomorrow is also a day," he said after a bitter defeat. "You can put me in jail," he once said, "but you cannot give me narrower quarters than as a seaman I have always had. You cannot give me coarser food than I have always eaten. You cannot make me lonelier than I have always been."



The Seamen's Act of 1915, known as the Magna Carta of American seamen, set minimum safety standards and removed many remaining legal restrictions. It was sponsored by Senator Robert LaFollette (right inset above), a long-time ally of Andrew Furuseth (left inset above).

The seamen's bill provided a two-watch system for the deck force and a three-watch system for the engine gang, plus a maximum nine-hour working day in port. It set a more liberal schedule for rations and a minimum 100 cubic feet of space per man in the forecastles. Previously, each man had been allotted 72 cubic feet, which Furuseth described as "too large for a coffin, too small for a grave." Also, the law specified that bunks in forecastles could be no more than two high.

The law also decreed that 75 percent of the crew must be able to understand the commands given in the English language. It decreed that the sailor could no longer allot part of his wages to creditors before signing a vessel. And he could no longer be imprisoned on charges of desertion if he left his ship before the end of a contracted voyage.

Maritime in Turmoil

Furuseth came to prominence during a troubled period in the history of the maritime industry.

Seamen and other workers were just beginning to establish permanent unions capable of protecting their rights. The gradual transformation of businesses into corporations had created an impetus for a national labor organization. This led to the creation of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in 1881.

Wages for West Coast sailors were slightly higher than those of their East Coast counterparts. Still, the depressed conditions in the maritime industry created hardships for all seamen. Many of the early strikes and organizing drives called by the ISU and Coast Seamen's Union ended in failure.

The United States merchant marine reached its zenith in the decade before the Civil War. With its beautifully designed schooner ships, it was on the cutting edge of modern technology.

Yet this was to change. The Civil War and the switch to steamships ushered in a dark era for American shipping. This decline was accentuated by America's preoccupation with its vast internal markets and by the growth of alternative modes of transportation, mainly railroads. In addition, Great Britain enjoyed an overwhelming advantage because of its access to low-priced steel.

Mahan Shapes the Debate; America Needs Superior Merchant Marine

By the end of the nineteenth century, America's presence in the foreign trades had declined so precipitously that it was a source of great concern to military planners, most notably Admiral Alfred Mahan, who is generally considered to be one of the nation's most brilliant naval tacticians.

Mahan alleged that the United States would never be a first-class power unless it developed and maintained a superior navy and merchant fleet.

Throughout history, said Mahan, there had always been a close connection between a country's maritime capability and its status as a world power. His observations gave seamen a more receptive audience than they might otherwise have enjoyed when they argued for reform of the maritime industry.

Seamen Win Legislative Victories

In 1895, Congress enacted the MacGuire Act, which did away with the worst abuses of the crimp system and abolished the penalty of imprisonment for seamen who had "deserted" their vessels. This was a monumental step forward in the emancipation of seamen.

Yet two years later, the Supreme Court handed down a case, *Robertson v. Brown (165 US 275),* which seemed to reverse at least part of the MacGuire Act. The court upheld the conviction of seamen who had "deserted" the *S.S. Arago* on a coastwise run. Writing a vigorous dissent, Justice John Harlan called the decision "Dred Scott II," and said that instead of hunting runaway slaves, Americans could now hunt runaway seamen.

Furuseth's *Coast Seamen's Journal* was even more concise. It said that the difference between a slave and a seaman was about $15 a month.

By this time, Furuseth was spending a good portion of his time in Washington, D.C. lobbying Congress. In 1898, Congress passed the White Act. Among other things, it made licensed officers liable for their acts of brutality.

Political Climate Helps Progressive Causes; Seamen's Act of 1915 Enacted

Meanwhile, Americans were slowly but surely expanding the rights of the working people. There was a widespread backlash against the conglomerates which now controlled the economic life of the nation.

Tragedies like the Triangle dress factory fire, where hundreds of innocent immigrants—mainly young women—were killed, created an upswell of support for more stringent safety standards.

A turning point in the maritime industry came in 1912 with the sinking of the *Titanic.* The highly publicized deaths of so many prominent people made Americans aware of the perils that seamen faced on a daily basis.

Furuseth (who in 1908 had been named president of the ISU) and his closest ally in Washington, D.C., Robert LaFollette, the progressive senator from Wisconsin, were able to capitalize on this changed public mood. In 1915, Congress enacted the Seaman's Act of 1915, which abolished many of the remaining legal restrictions against seamen.

Woodrow Wilson signed the bill into law. His motives were not entirely altruistic. World War I had created an insatiable demand for America's neutral shipping. While Wilson intended to keep this nation out of the war, he felt that this nation needed a reliable source of sealift just in case. In 1917 America was dragged into the conflict. American seamen were the first to die for their country.

Important Dates In Maritime Labor

1803: The seamen of New York go on strike and win a $7 increase from their base pay of $10 a month.

1837: Seamen in Boston go on strike.

1854: The first union of marine engineers is formed on the Great Lakes. It quickly fades but is revived in 1863 and 1875 to become the National Marine Engineers Beneficial Association.

1863: Seamen on the Great Lakes form the Seamen's Benevolent Union of Chicago. It does not engage in collective bargaining, but concentrates on taking care of the sick and indigent.

1866: The Seamen's Friendly Union Society is formed in San Francisco. It elects Alfred Enquist as president and George McAlpine as secretary. It doesn't last very long.

1875: The National Marine Engineers Beneficial Association is formed.

1877: Longshoremen on the Great Lakes organize.

1878: The Seamen's Benevolent Union of Chicago is revived under the name Lakes Seamen Benevolent Association. Dan Keefe heads this organization, which tries to engage in collective bargaining.

1878: The Seamen's Protective Union in San Francisco is formed. It boasts 800 members but doesn't last long.

1883: The Marine Firemen's Union is formed.

1885: A group of disaffected seamen meet on the Folsom Street wharf and form the Coast Seamen's Union. Billy Thompson is elected president.

1886: The Steamship Sailors Protective Association is formed.

1887: Andrew Furuseth is elected secretary of the Coast Seamen's Union. He starts printing the *Coast Seamen's Journal*, a union publication.

1891: The Coast Seamen's Union and the Steamship Sailors Protective Association merge, creating the Sailors Union of the Pacific.

1892: The National Longshoremen's Association is formed in Detroit. This eventually becomes the International Longshoremen's Association in 1895.

1892: A convention of seamen is held in Chicago, with delegates from the various unions now organized on the West Coast, the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico in attendance. East Coast unions are too poor to send delegates.

The convention gives birth to the National Seamen's Union, which is later rechristened the International Seamen's Union. Charles Hagen is the first president; Thomas Elderkin is the first secretary and James McLaren is the first national organizer.

1908: Andrew Furuseth is elected president of the ISU.

1915: Congress enacts the Seamen's Act of 1915, which abolishes most remaining legal restrictions against seamen.

1919: The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) establishes the Marine Transport Workers Union No. 510.

1921: The ISU, which now boasts a membership of 115,000 seamen, is dealt a near-fatal blow during an ill-fated industry-wide strike.

1928: The Marine Workers Progressive League, a communist-dominated organization, is formed. It later becomes the Marine Workers' League (MWL) and then the Marine Workers Industrial Union.

1929: The membership of the ISU now stands at 3,000.

1934: The West Coast Strike of 1934 reinvigorates maritime labor.

1937: The National Maritime Union is formed. The ISU is forced to disband. A temporary AFL seamen's union is established on the East and Gulf coasts. Robert Chapdelaine is acting chairman.

John "Whitey" Hawk heads up the Atlantic region; Matthew Biggs is in charge of the Gulf Coast.

1938: The American Federation of Labor presents SUP head Harry Lundeberg with a charter to form a new international seamen's union, to be composed of autonomous affiliates. Matthew "Duke" Dushane is named acting chairman of the A&G District. Morris Weisberger, a top Lundeberg aide, takes a month's leave to go to New York to help set up operations for the new union.

1948: The SIU of Canada is established. Within three years, its membership grows from 200 to more than 6,000.

1949: The Brotherhood of Marine Engineers (BME), a forerunner of District 2-MEBA, is formed.

1951: The American Federation of Labor presents a charter to the Marine Cooks & Stewards, AFL.

Chapter Three:

Maritime Enters Dark Age

The period between 1916 and 1934 is routinely described in the history books as the "Dark Ages of the maritime industry."

The era started out on a promising note. Congress had just enacted the Seamen's Act of 1915; World War I made it possible for seamen to dramatically improve their wages and working conditions.

Maritime's lobbying machine in Washington, D.C. remained effective. In 1920, Congress passed a piece of legislation, the Merchant Marine Act of 1920, which established the Federal Maritime Commission and strengthened existing restrictions against foreign participation in the domestic trades.

This bill became known as the Jones Act. Had it not been enacted into law, there might not be an American-flag merchant marine today.

In 1919, the International Labor Organization was created as part of the Versailles Peace Treaty. This gave seamen and other groups of workers an international forum to improve worldwide conditions.

Red Scare Sweeps Country

Seamen were able to win impressive increases during a strike in 1919. Yet there was an ugly new mood in this country which would have important ramifications for all workers.

The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917 had created a serious backlash among American voters. America was now gripped with a "red scare."

For the moment, strikes and other legitimate forms of job action smacked of revolution in the minds of average Americans.

Many of the gains that workers had made during the previous 20 years were now in jeopardy. An example of this was the ill-fated Maritime Strike of 1921.

An Ill-fated Strike Breaks the ISU

By now, demand for American shipping had decreased substantially from its peak in World War I. This gave the shipowners the upper hand.

Even though the owners were forced to capitulate in the Strike of 1919, the general trend was on their side.

They prepared diligently for the next round. When the next set of contract negotiations came around, they played hardball. After an all-ports strike was called by the ISU on May 1, 1921, the shipowners set up their own hiring halls. The strike was broken and the ability of the ISU to act as an effective bargaining agent for seamen was destroyed.

While ISU President Andrew Furuseth retained the overwhelming respect of American seamen, he became increasingly removed from the day-to-day operations of his union.

The numbers tell the story. In 1921, the ISU had a war-inflated membership of 115,000 seamen. By 1929 there were fewer than 3,000.

Shipping companies like the International Pacific Marine Co. set up their own hiring halls after the ill-fated 1921 Maritime Strike.

The IWW made great strides among disaffected seamen.

The Growth of Radical Organizations On the Waterfront

During the 1920s, radical groups like the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and the communist-dominated Marine Workers Industrial Union tried to make inroads among the rank and file, who suffered terribly during this period.

Indeed, during the '20s and early '30s, "the ISU's major adversary... was not the shipowner, but the IWW," wrote Philip Ross, labor historian at Cornell University.

"The Wobblies made no bones about where they stood," wrote Ross. "(Their motto was that) the employer class is a class of social bloodsuckers...(They felt there was) no such thing as a good boss or a bad wage earner."

"The overriding precept of the IWW," said Ross, "was the necessity for workers led by their unions to respect all picket lines, a principle which led to the condemnation of all bargaining contracts. War with the AFL unions was inevitable since the essence of American unionism was the getting and preserving of gains in such bargaining agreements whose quid pro quo for the employer was a no strike clause.

"As a group consisting largely of nomadic single men whose working life offered them much opportunity to read, reflect and argue, many seamen were attracted to IWW ideology with its emphasis on worker solidarity and the spirit of an injury to one is an injury to all. In particular, seamen were tempted by the advantages of industrial unionism despite the fact their unions from their origin were organized on a craft basis."

Despite their strong pro-worker stance, the Wobblies did not pose much of a threat to the ISU. Their innate distrust of any kind of bureaucratic structure made it impossible for them to build a union capable of organizing on a mass scale.

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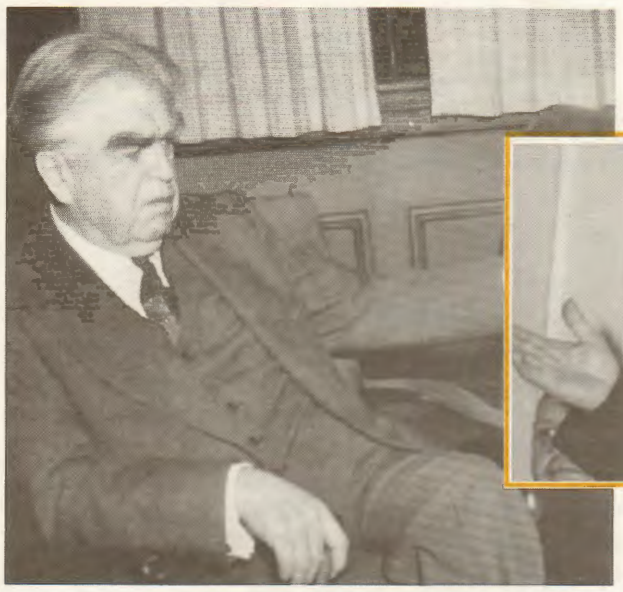


John L. Lewis changed the face of the labor movement.

AFL President William Green issued a charter to the SIU.

FDR pledged a New Deal for Americans. He revitalized the American-flag merchant marine.

The First American-Owned, Panamanian-Registered Vessels

Conditions for seamen were exacerbated by the decline of the maritime industry. Still, things could have been much worse.

In 1917, American companies made use of a lax registry system in Panama to evade the modest provisions of the Seamen's Act of 1915. But while the Harding, Coolidge and Hoover administrations could not reverse the decline of the American-flag merchant marine, they did nothing to encourage the mass exodus of American shipping companies overseas.

In part, this was because of the bad reputation of Panamanian-registered vessels. In this era of Prohibition, they were linked in the public's mind with "rum-running" expeditions.

The 1929 Stock Market Crash ushered in the Great Depression. Despair gripped the nation.

The 1917 Russian Revolution sent shockwaves through the nation. Strikes became suspect.

Seamen were not the only group of workers to be hurt during this period. Most industrial workers suffered reductions in living standards.

Still, some groups, especially those in the skilled trades, actually prospered during this period.

The Great Depression

For many Americans, the 1920s were a period of great prosperity. Yet the glittering boom was built on a shaky foundation.

Much of the nation's new-found wealth was not real: it existed only on paper. It was fueled by speculation and easy credit.

The whole system came crashing down on October 29, 1929, "Black Tuesday," when the value of all stocks traded on the New York Stock Exchange fell almost by 20 percent in one day.

This ushered in one of the darkest periods in American history, the Great Depression.

During the next three years, the total net worth of the United States fell by one-half, from $82 billion to $40 billion. Despair and poverty gripped the nation.

Wages plummeted; unemployment soared. America's industrial machine ground to a virtual halt.

The Great Depression was not just confined to the United States. There were severe political and social dislocations in every part of the globe. War clouds gathered over Europe and Asia.

Democracy and freedom were on the run. Yet in one important respect, it was an era of hope.

During the darkest days of the Great Depression, the American people voted overwhelmingly for New York Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In his acceptance speech on January 20,. 1933, he made the following promise:

"I pledge you; I pledge myself, a new deal for the American people."

The New Deal ushered in an era of hope for Americans. Workers' rights were expanded.

Chapter Four:

The Seaman's Movement Is Reborn

Upon taking office, Franklin Delano Roosevelt immediately began laying the foundation for a national recovery. He introduced legislation aimed at improving the living standards of all Americans and providing the ten million people without jobs with temporary relief.

Within two years, he had passed the Social Security Act, the Civilian Construction Corps, the Work Progress Administration, the National Industrial Recovery Act and a host of other legislation.

Having served as assistant secretary of the Navy during World War I, Roosevelt had a keen interest in the maritime industry. Alarmed by the decline in the American-flag merchant marine, he persuaded Congress to enact the Merchant Marine Act of 1936.

This historic piece of legislation established a system of subsidies which reversed the decline of the American-flag merchant marine and enabled this country to enhance its badly-deteriorated sealift capability.

He also signed into law the Wagner Act of 1935, which made it possible for unions to organize workers on a scale never before imagined.

Industry by industry, workers flocked to organized labor. Yet this period was not without its difficulties.

Split in Organized Labor

In 1935, organized labor split into two hostile camps: the American Federation of Labor and the Committee of Industrial Organizations (later named the Congress of Industrial Organizations).

The CIO was founded by Mineworkers President John L. Lewis, who believed that organized labor had to embrace industrial trade unionism. Yet only 16 of the 109 unions which were affiliated with the AFL were industrial unions; the rest were craft unions which represented one type of worker (plumber; cigarmaker).

When the AFL voted against organizing workers on an industrial basis in October 1935, Lewis resigned from the AFL executive board and formed the Committee of Industrial Organizations.

This split had important consequences for organized labor. For one thing, it was a leading cause for the establishment of the SIU. "I am convinced," said George Meany, who took over from Green in 1952, "that these differences of opinions that caused the split could have been worked out within the framework of the American Federation of Labor. There was no need for a split."

Yet according to Meany, there was a bright side to this development. "The fact that the CIO was set up had a tremendous effect on industrial workers. When this split came, the old AFL conservatives were under attack, and they got off their butts and went to work."

Bloody Thursday

Seamen were among the first group of workers to respond to the changed political situation in this country brought about by the Great Depression. On the West Coast, they rose up en masse to support striking longshoremen, who were seeking an increase in their paltry $10 a week salary. The strike began on May 9, 1934. Within days, shipping in San Francisco and other West Coast ports was at a standstill. The shipowners and port officials were determined to break the strike. They decided to run cargo through the picket lines on Pier 38 on the Embarcadero in San Francisco.

On July 3, more than 5,000 seamen, longshoremen and other workers watched as a convoy of loaded trucks tried to make their way through the picket ines on Pier 38. All hell broke loose. On July 5, the battle began again. This day became known to future generations of seamen as "Bloody Thursday."

According to SIU historian John Bunker, "pickets set cars on fire, hundreds of policemen charged the mass pickets, and a full-scale engagement began, with bricks and bullets, clubs and tear gas on nearby Rincon Hill, a knoll along the waterfront... Two picketers were killed; scores wounded."

On July 16, a full-scale general strike was called. "This...paralyzed the city. Nothing moved. Stores closed. Only a few restaurants were permitted to open. Business life came to a standstill," wrote Bunker. The strike was called off on July 19 when the Joint Strike Committee representing 120 striking unions agreed to put all demands to arbitration. Maritime workers made substantial gains.

Historian William Cahn said that "the West Coast maritime strike was a harbinger of things to come in other industries: steel, auto, rubber. It set an example of union solidarity... that proved unbeatable."

Seamen were among the first group of workers to respond to the changed political conditions brought about by the Great Depression (bottom photo). In 1934, they rose up en masse to support striking longshoremen on the West Coast. The authorities responded with police barricades to keep seamen from their ships (top photo). Even though they were clubbed and jailed (inset), their resolve was strengthened (middle photo). Two seamen, Howard Sperry and Nick Bordoise, died in what future generations of seamen have called "Bloody Thursday." This marked the resurgence of the seamen's movement, which had been in a state of decline since the ill-fated strike of 1921.

Chapter Five:

The SIU Is Born Out of the Ashes of ISU

The revival of union fervor on the waterfront spelled trouble for the International Seamen's Union. Its leadership was weak and divided. The organization had ceased to have any credibility with seamen.

The day-to-day operations of the ISU had passed from Furuseth to Victor Olander, Dave Grange, Paul Scharrenberg and a number of other officials. These officials were not exactly what one would call militant: they had to be coerced into supporting the longshoremen during the 1934 strike. Many, including Furuseth, favored government hiring halls.

In 1934 Harry Bridges, president of the Pacific District of the International Longshoremen's Association, formed the Maritime Federation of the Pacific. The new federation sought to provide a forum for maritime unions to discuss issues of common interest. The leaders of the International Seamen's Union strongly opposed this organization. But the MFP had attracted a great deal of support during the 1934 strike. Its militant stand during that period contrasted sharply with the one taken by the ISU. As a result, the ISU leaders suffered a serious blow to their prestige.

By 1935 discontent within the ranks of the ISU had become rampant. Dissidents within the union started printing a newsletter which later became the official organ of the NMU. The headline on the first issue became a rallying cry for CIO seamen: "It's time to go I heard them say, I heard them say it's time to go."

The leadership of the ISU found itself increasingly isolated. In 1936, they pushed through a constitutional amendment which permitted the revocation of an affiliate's charter at any time and for any reason. Afraid of the growing popularity and militancy of SUP head Harry Lundeberg, they revoked the charter of the Sailors Union of the Pacific.

Sailortown during the 1936 strike. The strike marked the beginning of the end of the ISU.

Harry Lundeberg's militant stand in favor of the hiring hall attracted widespread support.

1936 Strike Breaks Out

The beginning of the end for the ISU started in 1936 when a West Coast strike broke out. ISU officials resisted calling a sympathy strike on the East Coast. For the few remaining faithful, this proved to be the last straw.

Bridges tried to fill in the vacuum on the West Coast, but he had little luck. Longshoremen and seamen had historically been at odds out there, and besides, Bridges' well-known left-wing sympathies were out of sync with the political mood of most West Coast sailors.

The ISU attempted to establish an alternative West Coast sailors union, but it attracted virtually no support. West Coast sailors remained overwhelmingly loyal to the SUP.

On the East Coast, the situation was fragmented. There was no strong, autonomous seamen's union capable of providing leadership.

NMU Formed

A sitdown strike on the *S.S. California* in March 1936 thrust Joe Curran, an unknown bosun, into the national limelight. He soon formed a close alliance with Bridges and other CIO officials. A new union, the National Maritime Union, was formed in May 1937. Within a year, the NMU was able to pick up a majority of the contracts of the old ISU.

"Curran was aggressive, articulate and ambitious and the times suited him well," wrote SIU historian John Bunker. "It was evident, judging by those who surrounded and supported him, that Curran was willing to front for the strong cadre of left-wingers in the new union."

Large numbers of East Coast seamen refused to join the NMU. Many felt that the NMU was dominated by left-wing elements; others remained loyal to Andrew Furuseth and the AFL and blamed the ISU's decline on Victor Olander, Dave Grange and Paul Scharrenberg.

The NMU applied for membership in the newly-formed CIO. This prompted the AFL, which was in a life-and-death struggle with the CIO, to respond.

"By 1937 the dispute with the CIO really got hot; (in May) there was a closed convention of the AFL in Cincinnati, with no press and no outsiders," recalled George Meany in a taped interview with Archie Robinson. "It was at this point that the AFL really started to move; all the AFL unions started to organize." Fearing that the AFL might be shut out of the waterfront, AFL President William Green requested the resignation of the ISU's top leadership. A temporary charter was issued in August 1937. Green, ILA President Joe Ryan and AFL organizer Holt Ross were named to the executive committee.

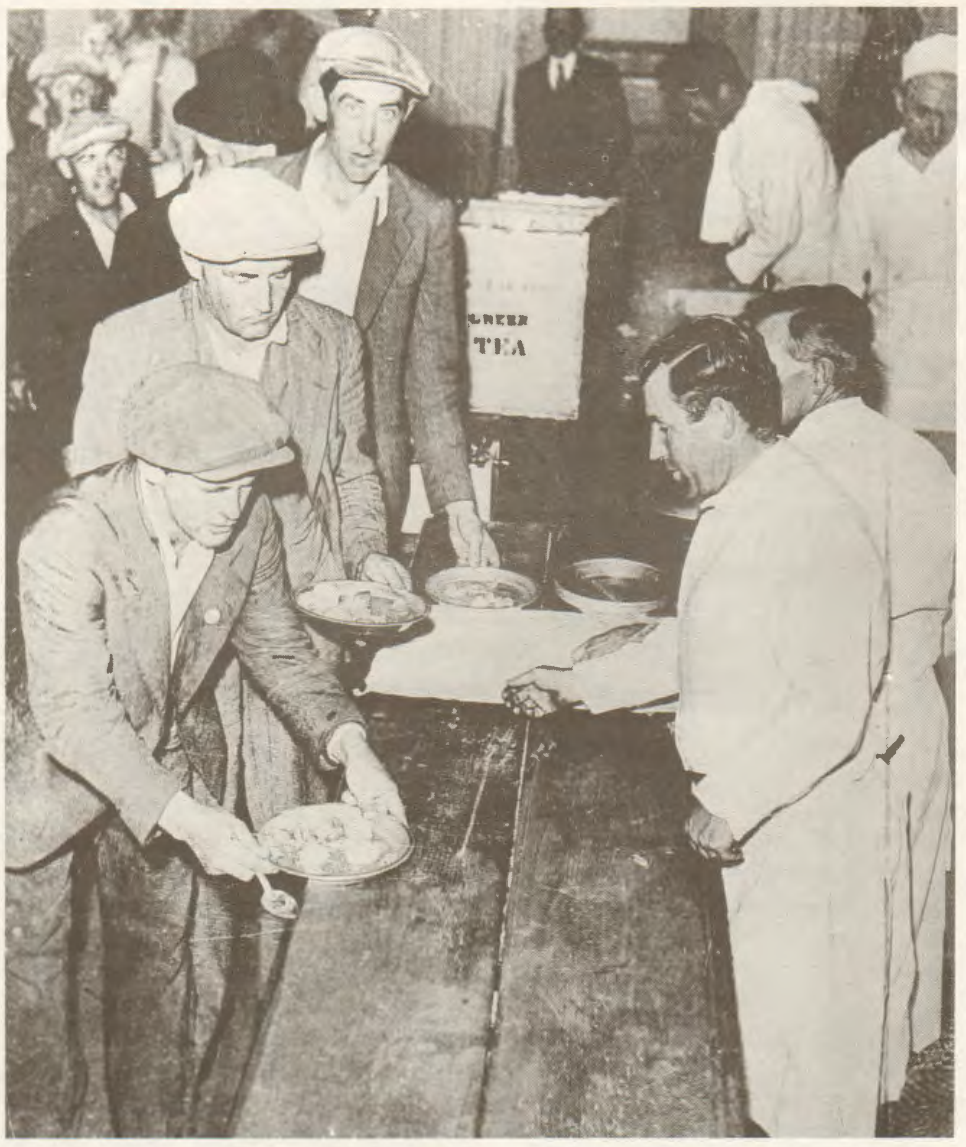
In December 1937, a new committee, headed by Harry Lundeberg, was put together. Robert Chapdelaine was named temporary head of the new union.

On October 15, 1938, at its convention in Houston, Texas, the AFL presented SUP head Harry Lundeberg with a charter to form a new international seamen's union. Morris Weisberger, a top Lundeberg aide, took a month's leave to go to New York and help set up operations for an autonomous affiliate, the Atlantic and Gulf District.

A skeletal structure was already in place. Matthew "Duke" Dushane was acting chairman of the new A&G District. John "Whitey" Hawk was in charge of the Atlantic region; Matthew Biggs headed up the Gulf Coast.

At first, there was little interaction between the two regions. Members shipped out on either a Gulf or an Atlantic Coast book. That wouldn't change for a number of years.

From the beginning, the Atlantic and Gulf District of the SIUNA was known simply as the SIU.



An AFL hiring hall during the 1936 strike. The white caps symbolized support for Lundeberg.

Chapter Six:

SIU Lays Strong Foundation for Future

There was an intense rivalry between AFL and CIO unions. The split between the two organizations was a leading cause for the formation of the A&G District of the SIUNA.

The union hall at 51 Beaver Street in N.Y. was like a second home to many Seafarers. SIU members welcome a friend back from a dangerous run during World War II.

The SIUNA held its first convention in San Francisco, Calif. in 1942. Great progress had been made since the union's inception in 1938. World War II had created many new jobs.

Seafarers writing home from the union hall at 51 Beaver Street just before the war's end.

The SIU did not have an easy birth. The new union had 500 members, few resources and only nine contracted companies. "In the beginning," said Ted Babkowski, book number B-1 and a charter member of the union, "there was virtually nothing."

"I started shipping in Baltimore," said Babkowski. "The first union hall was on Pratt Street. We had one desk. One bench. No money.

"Bill McKay was the port agent there. We had to move because the rent was $7 and we couldn't make it."

The SIU Has a Tough Go

The NMU, by contrast, had organized a majority of the companies under contract with the ISU. By 1939, it claimed a membership of 35,000.

"We had a tough go," said charter member L.S. Johnny Johnston. "The NMU was breathing down our neck, making it hard for any seaman not belonging to their union. You could look for a dumping if caught by their beef squad leaving or returning to your ship.

"It was hard, and as I look back today I wonder what kept the men fighting when it was so easy just to walk into any NMU hall, throw your ISU book on the counter and get an NMU work permit."

Still, the nucleus for a new union was there. "The AFL was able to hold onto Delta and Waterman Steamship and a number of other companies," said Johnston.

Battle With CIO Heats Up

The SIU, like all other unions during this period, was preoccupied with John L. Lewis's decision to break away from the AFL and form the CIO.

Dual unionism, as it was called, was the single overriding reality for all trade unionists until 1955. That was the year that George Meany engineered an historic merger between the two national organizations.

In order to remain a viable force on the waterfront, the AFL needed to re-establish itself on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts. It already had a solid base on the West Coast with the SUP.

Early editions of the *Seafarers LOG* devoted a lot of space to the rivalry between the two national organizations. There was a constant barrage of unflattering stories about John L. Lewis, Joe Curran, Harry Bridges and other leading CIO figures. Needless to say, there was no love lost on either side, and the compliments were returned in style.

The Hunter and the Dog

In his later years, when asked to put the split into perspective, Meany would say that the CIO had made several important contributions to the labor movement.

He felt that the CIO had forced the AFL unions to "get off their butts and organize new members." In addition, he lauded the CIO's commitment to political action and racial equality.

Yet he and many other AFL leaders had one overriding problem with the CIO which they were never able to reconcile.

"Lewis brought in all the hot-shots, the radicals and the Communists that were in other unions. They all flocked to Lewis and he took them all in. They were outstanding organizers; they could get people to join. They were not very good at conducting the affairs of the union.

"When (Ladies Garment Workers President David) Dubinsky would argue with Lewis about using Communists as organizers, he said to Dubinsky, 'Well, who gets the bird—the hunter or the dog?' In other words, the communist organizer was the dog and Lewis was the hunter."

Lundeberg and Curran

In a sense, the differences between SIUNA President Harry Lundeberg and NMU President Joe Curran mirrored those of William Green and John L. Lewis, the heads of their respective national organizations, the AFL and the CIO.

In taped conversations with Archie Robinson towards the end of his life, George Meany pretty much summed up the AFL position on this issue. He differentiated between a member's individual beliefs and the wisdom of allowing the entire administration of a union to fall under the control of non-democratic forces.

Meany's views were shaped by the times. He and other AFL leaders had witnessed from a distance the rise of Fascism in Germany. They had seen trade unionists and others put to death for their commitment to democratic principles. This was not just a theoretical issue to them.

"In the final analysis," said Meany, "no matter what type of dictator takes over a country, the first thing he does is destroy worker freedom. If he's going to dictate, he has to have control of the workers. That's the reason every dictator—whether military, right wing or left wing—begins by wiping out the freedom of workers. They wipe out free trade unions.

"The Communist Soviet philosophy back in those days was to try to bore into the American industrial scheme and they looked upon communication and transportation as being very important.

—continued next page

"They would have liked to get control of the radio system—anything to do with communications. They would have liked to get control of trucking if they could; city transportation was very important to them.

"They did get control of radio operators on ships that union became strictly under the control of the Communists. They had control of certain shipping; they had control of the National Maritime Union."

Communist Presence in the NMU

The Communist Party has never played a prominent role in American political life. After the McCarthy era, its influence became negligible. But during the Great Depression and World War II, it achieved a certain respectability which it sought to convert into power.

For a while, it exerted a considerable influence in a number of CIO unions, one of which was the NMU. "The NMU was the crown jewel of the Communist Party," wrote Philip Ross in his history of the SIU.

Five out of six members of the NMU's executive council were members of the Communist Party. The only one who wasn't was NMU President Joe Curran, and he flared AFL resentments by marching in the 1936 May Day parade.

"The Party had become the vehicle for the young man of conventional ambitions," wrote Murray Kempton, one of this nation's most respected journalists, in his classic book on the era, *Part Of Our Time*. "The Communists made the decisions and assigned the offices. Membership in the waterfront section of the party had become more necessary for the careerist in the NMU than the Rotary Club ever hoped to be in more ordinary societies."

The *NMU Pilot* had a communist editor, and it pretty much followed the Party line. After Hitler and Stalin signed a non-aggression treaty, the *Pilot* was strongly in favor of the United States remaining neutral. Yet the week after the Germans invaded the Soviet Union, the *Pilot* strongly urged the United States to enter the war on the side of the Allies.

Wobs Played a Role

A good many of the early members of the SIU were former Wobblies who staunchly opposed what they perceived was the communist domination of the NMU.

"As individuals," wrote Ross, "many Wobbly members played important roles during the stirring organizing years of the middle and later 1930s. By and large, Wobs were to be found closely allied with Harry Lundeberg in his battles with the Communist Party."

"There were ships sailing SIU during the war,"wrote Ross, "which were crewed from master down to ordinary seamen, top to bottom, with only Wobs."

SUP Gave A Helping Hand

For the first few months of its existence, the SIU was little more than a shell organization. Until 1940, the union was run by SUP organizers.

But the stated goal of Harry Lundeberg was to enable the A&G District to become a fully autonomous member of the SIUNA. Right before the first election, the SUP organizers returned to the West Coast.

Speaking about this at the first SIUNA convention in 1942, John Hawk, the first popularly-elected secretary-treasurer of the SIU, had this to say:

"The SUP men when they came east had promised the seamen that the SUP was not moving in to control the new organization, but only to give it fraternal support until it got off its feet. Now that the District was obviously on a sound organizational basis, the SUP brothers wisely decided to turn the leadership over to the men elected from the rank and file."

Security In Unity; Brotherhood of the Sea

Helping to build up the A&G District was consistent with Lundeberg's philosophy of trade unionism. He believed that affiliates of an international should be free to run their own affairs, but that they should band together on larger issues.

Above all, Lundeberg believed that the various affiliates had an obligation to support one another. Simply put, he believed in the two mottos of the SIU—Brotherhood of the Sea and Security In Unity.

Organizing Drives

The new union won a number of important organizing drives and strikes against Alcoa, P&O, Calmar, Ore, Robin, Bull Line, Eastern Steam Ship and other companies. But more than anything, the outbreak of World War II turned the new union into a viable organization.

In a sense, it was a repeat of what happened during World War I. America was once again the world's largest neutral shipper, and there was an explosive demand for its services. World War II transformed the American merchant marine into the largest in the world and defined a whole generation of seamen.

World War II created so many new jobs for American seamen that the SIU was forced to move out of its cramped quarters at 2 Stone Street into a new union hall at 51 Beaver Street.

SIU Members Help Fuel the War Effort

In the beginning, there weren't enough seamen or ships to carry on the war effort. Once again, America had been caught short.

The federal government ran advertising campaigns trying to persuade seamen to enlist. Shipyards were on an all-out schedule to meet the unexpected demand for vessels.

"I remember seeing a government poster for the American-flag merchant marine," said Jim McCue, a former member of the SIU. "I decided that this would be a good way to help my country."

Some seamen, determined to serve their country, joined the merchant marine because they couldn't pass the physical for the armed services. "They wouldn't take me," said SIU Vice President Red Campbell, "so I joined the merchant marine. For a while, I was the only male between the ages of 16 and 60 on my block."

"With the outbreak of war," wrote columnist James J. Kilpatrick, "merchant seamen received additional military training. Shipping articles were changed so that seamen could be ordered to such ports and places in any part of the world as may be ordered by the U.S. government. A War Shipping Administration took over the merchant ships for service consistent with strategic military requirements."

Seamen suffered the second highest casualty rate of the war. President Roosevelt talked about extending G. I. benefits to seamen, but he died before he could take action on that issue.

Still, seamen had at least the satisfaction of knowing they had served their country. And it made for some truly wonderful sea stories.

Asst. Sec.-Treas. J.P. Shuler handles this member's beef.

The new union organized companies like Calmar.

Torpedoed Seven Times

"One of our members, Bobby Burton, set a record for being onboard seven vessels hit by German torpedoes and still surviving," said SIU Secretary Joe DiGiorgio.

"He became something of a celebrity among seamen. I remember going onboard a ship and seeing him. I got right off. Damned if the vessel wasn't torpedoed."

"They wouldn't let us use electric razors onboard ship because they thought that we might send signals to the Germans with them," said Red Campbell. "We had to go to bed with our clothes on in case we got hit by German torpedoes. When that happened, every second counted."

Liberty Ships and Hog Islanders

In the early days of the war, the United States was lucky to have a supply of Hog Islanders left over from World War I. The Hogs, named after the shipyard just outside Philadephia, Pa. where they had been built, were the first vessels mass-produced in American shipyards. They were the inspiration for a whole new generation of World War II vessels, the Liberty vessels, which President Roosevelt dubbed the "ugly ducklings" of the American-flag fleet.

American seamen developed a strong attachment to these old ships. They may not have been the most beautiful vessels, but they were sturdy and dependable.

SIU Wins War Bonus Benefits

Throughout the war, the SIU attracted growing attention because of its tough stands. It was able to win impressive wage increases for its members, and took the lead in fighting for War Bonus benefits.

In 1939, SIU crews started walking off ships to gain this important benefit for its members. The United States was neutral, but American ships were still at risk.

In September 1941, before America was engaged in the war, it tied up 20 ships on this issue. Roosevelt stepped in and said that "the ships must sail or else."

Hearings were held in Washington, D.C. before the newly-created National Defense Mediation Board (NDMB) to resolve the dispute. The NDMB granted an immediate increase in war bonuses for unlicensed seamen.

By the end of World War II, the SIU had established itself as a presence on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts.

Speaking about these early days, Ted Babkowski had this to say, "Help from the SUP was critical. Then World War II came along and created a lot of jobs for us.

"Afterwards, Paul Hall took over as director of organizing. He signed up Isthmian and Cities Service and turned the SIU into the most powerful union on the waterfront."

Chapter Seven:

The SIU Fights For Democracy In WWII

The SIU had barely been formed when World War II erupted. SIU seamen played a pivotal role in that war, carrying troops and ammunition overseas. John Bunker, former head of the union's historical research department, wrote the following article on that important period in our nation's history. It appeared in the LOG as part of a 26-part series on the history of the union (check individual issues from 1980-1982).

Bunker, a former reporter for The Christian Science Monitor, *started writing for the SIU in the 1940s. He is best known to SIU members for* The SIU at War, *a pamphlet he wrote during World War II which chronicled the heroic efforts of SIU members.*

Members of the Seafarers International Union were on the front lines of battle in World War II. They carried guns, planes, gas and "ammo" to a dozen beachheads and to supply ports and island bases all over the world from the Aleutians to Algiers.

Even before the United States had officially entered the war against Germany, Italy and Japan, SIU sailors knew what it was like to be torpedoed and put adrift in open boats hundreds of miles from the nearest land.

On May 21, 1941, long before Pearl Harbor, a submarine stopped the unarmed *S.S. Robin Moor* of the Robin Line on route from New York to South Africa. Captain William Myers was given 20 minutes to abandon ship, after which the U-boat's gunners put 33 shells into the freighter and sank her. After the sub disappeared, the 45 survivors struck out for land in four boats. Fortunately, all four were picked up but not until the fourth boat had traversed 700 miles of open ocean.

When the first survivors were landed and news of the sinking stirred the nation, President Roosevelt sent a special message to Congress in which he said that American ships would not be intimidated. "We are not yielding," he said, "and we do not propose to yield."

Survivors of the *Robin Moor*, the first American-flag vessel to be hit during World War II.

German U-Boats Prowl Seas

When German U-boats brought the war to the very coasts of the United States early in 1942, SIU seamen were among the first to feel the brunt of it.

The City of Atlanta was northbound off Cape Hatteras on January 19, 1942, when it was torpedoed by a German submarine. The ship sank so fast that there was no time for the crew to launch the lifeboats. Only three men survived; 39 were lost. The three survivors were rescued by the SIU-contracted *S.S. Seatrain Texas.*

Less than a week after this, the SIU-manned *S.S. Venore,* an ore carrier, was torpedoed off Cape Hatteras with the loss of 18 men. Following quickly in the wake of this sinking were a long list of SIU ships, all of them unarmed and unescorted.

There were the *Robin Hood,* the *Alcoa Guide, Pipestone Country,* the *Major Wheeler,* the *Mary,* and many more as U-boats enjoyed a field day along the Atlantic Coast, in the Gulf of Mexico and in the Caribbean.

Two boats from the *Pipestone Country* were adrift for 16 days before being picked up. The *Major Wheeler* completely disappeared. The *Robert E. Lee,* a passenger ship, was sunk almost inside the Mississippi Delta.

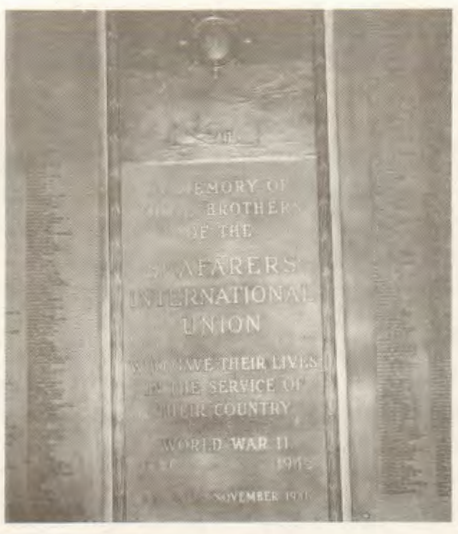
No SIU Ship Held Up

Despite this havoc, no SIU ship was held up for lack of a crew. Many crews steamed out to meet almost certain death. The *Alcoa Pilgrim*, loaded deep with 9,500 tons of bauxite for Mobile, caught a "tin fish" and went down in 90 seconds with heavy loss of life.

SIU men made the hazardous run to Russia, including the famous convoys of July and September 1942, which were hit by subs and bombers and lost many ships in those cold, Arctic waters. SIU crews made all the hazardous war runs---all the bloody beachheads. Unsung "heroes," in a way, were the crews who spent months on tedious trips to supply bases behind the tides of the battle.

Government recruiting posters promoted employment onboard American vessels.

American seamen suffered the second highest casualty rate of World War II.



New Yorkers thronged Times Square to celebrate VE Day. World War II was nearly over.

Invasion of Normandy

There wasn't a beachhead from Anzio to the Philippines; from Normandy to Okinawa, where SIU crews were not in the forefront of war. They took part in the longest battle of the war too--the fight to keep England supplied with food, gas, guns and other war supplies.

Thousands of SIU seamen took part in the greatest resupply in the history of the war---the invasion of the French coast in June of 1944.

They had an important role in landing the 2,500,000 troops, the 17 million tons of ammunition and supplies and the half million trucks and tanks that were put ashore there in the first 109 days after D-Day.

There were myriad tales of heroism as SIU ships steamed their embattled way across sub-infested seas.

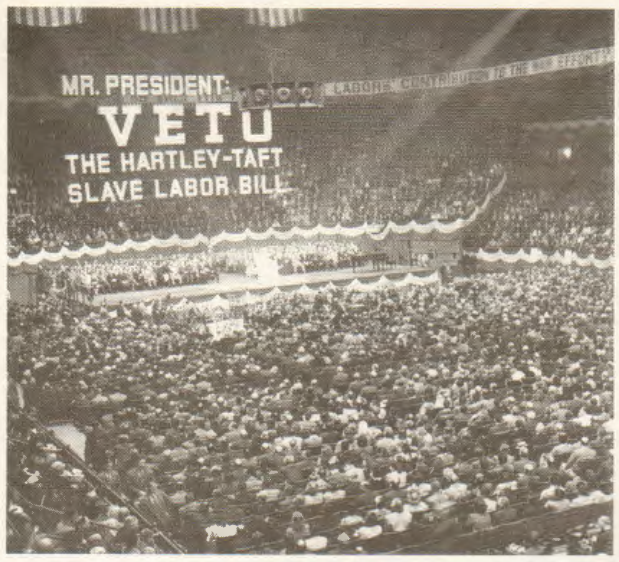
Take the case of the *S.S. Angelina* of the Bull Line. This SIU freighter was westbound in October of 1942 across the North Atlantic where it became separated from the rest of its convoy in a violent storm. Wind driven waves over 30 feet high continuously wracked the ship. Just before midnight on the 17th, a German torpedo exploded in the engine room, killing the black gang and flooding the engine spaces.

Only one boat could be launched and, being overloaded with crewmen and Navy armed guard gunners, it was soon capsized in tremendous seas. Some managed to hold on to the grab rails on the bottom of the boat, but one by one they were swept away by the numbing cold and the battering waves, until only a few remained.

These would have died, too, were it not for the heroic efforts of the ship's carpenter, Gustave Alm. It was Alm who urged the weary desperate men to "hang on... hang on." When one of them would drop away from exhaustion, he would bring him back and help to hold him on until he revived. When someone said, "I've had enough," and wanted to die, Alm would slap him on the face and yell, "Keep on... keep on."

When a destroyer finally found them many hours later, it was Alm who grabbed the lines thrown from the warship's deck and made them fast around his exhausted companions so they could be hoisted onboard. Alm was the last to be saved.

The hiring hall was threatened by the Taft-Hartley Act.



An FOC hiring hall.

Unlike the U.S. fleet, Soviet shipping experienced a rapid expansion after World War II.

Chapter Eight:

SIU Faces Ominous Post-War Trends

For most Americans, the post-war era loomed large with possibilities. The United States was now the most powerful nation in the world. In 1945, it accounted for half of the world's industrial output.

Seamen, however, were not so lucky. They could no longer take their job security for granted. Hundreds of American-flag vessels were laid up when World War II ended.

Moreover, seamen were not eligible for the same kind of education and job retraining benefits that enabled millions of veterans to enter the middle class.

A seaman who had served his country in World War II—who had been onboard a vessel that was torpedoed by a German U-boat and survived the chilly waters of the North Atlantic—could not apply for a G.I. loan for his college education. He was ineligible for low-cost mortgages. And yet only the Marines had suffered a higher fatality rate during the war.

Despite these and other disturbing developments, the seaman's life had changed dramatically from the dark days of the mid '30s. As a result of gains won by seamen's unions in collective bargaining negotiations, members of the SIU and other maritime unions were beginning to achieve a standard of living comparable to their counterparts on shore.

Taft-Hartley Poses Threat to Hiring Hall

Towards the end of World War II, American corporations began campaigning for a law to restrict the rights of labor unions. In 1947, after a spate of post-war strikes, Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act. The legislation sent a shiver throughout the labor movement.

For 12 years, the Wagner Act had created a favorable legal climate for unions to organize new members. Enactment of Taft-Hartley marked a major political shift.

Taft-Hartley made organizing more difficult by allowing states to enact right-to-work laws. It tightened restrictions against secondary boycotts and outlawed the hiring of workers through hiring halls.

In order to preserve the seaman's hiring hall, SUP President Lundeberg met with Robert Taft, one of the sponsors of the legislation, to secure an exemption from the ruling.

Saving the seaman's hiring hall was one of Lundeberg's most important contributions to the maritime industry, said Paul Hall, who succeeded Lundeberg as president of the SIUNA. "Taft-Hartley posed a special threat to seamen. The hiring hall had been at the heart of all their gains."

Ship Sales Act and EUSC Doctrine Decimate American Fleet

In a sense, the post-war maritime industry was out of sync with the rest of the country. By 1980, the wholesale transfer of American companies overseas would become a commonplace occurrence. But in 1945, the only factory that was easily transferrable overseas was an ocean-borne one, an American-flag vessel.

Congress started this process by enacting the Ship Sales Act of 1946, which authorized the sale of American vessels abroad at cut-rate prices. Now that World War II was over, there was a surplus of American vessels.

Policy-makers tended to equate the Ship Sales Act with the foreign aid programs like the Marshall Plan. Maritime unions felt that the program posed a serious threat to the job security of their members.

Between 1946 and 1948, foreign buyers snatched up 1,159 American ships. These vessels enabled many foreign fleets to start up at rock-bottom prices. In effect, Congress had subsidized maritime's competition.

Ironically, foreign competition was not the most serious threat to the job security of American seamen. It was the actions of American owners and the federal government.

In 1947, the government decided to offer War Risk Insurance to American companies which had reflagged their vessels under the registries of countries deemed "under the effective control of the United States." This later became known as the EUSC Doctrine.

Under it, the companies promised to make their vessels available in case of any international emergency. The nations under whose registries they reflagged agreed to that condition.

The rationale for this was that American shipping companies could no longer compete against the merchant fleets of other nations—merchant fleets that the American government had rebuilt from scratch with enactment of the Ship Sales Act of 1946!

The EUSC Doctrine was supposed to be a way to balance the nation's security needs with the economic needs of the owners. Yet, as Irwin Heine, a former official in the Maritime Administration, has noted, "the fact that (EUSC) registries play an important role in U.S. mobilization planning is based upon agreements, not treaties, with Panama, Honduras and Liberia. Under international law, only the state of registry has the right to requisition and document under flag-of-convenience registries."

A good many of the ships sold overseas under the Ship Sales Act found their way to these newly-formed FOC fleets. The transfer of American vessels overseas had a dynamic all its own. It began over the heated protests of American maritime unions. Once it started, it proved impossible to stop.

Easily Exploitable

Neither Panama nor Liberia had particularly impressive maritime traditions. They did, however, possess certain qualifications that made them attractive to American corporations.

Both were poor and easily exploitable. Americans have always looked upon both countries as "de facto" colonies. When setting up an open registry system to evade American standards, it was not surprising that the shipping companies would have chosen these countries.

A lax system of registration already existed in Panama. After World War II ended, American shipowners and former government officials met with the leaders of Liberia and drafted a Liberian registry tailored to the demands of American shipowners.

Soviet Build-Up

The post-war decline of the American fleet coincided with a build-up of the Soviet maritime industry. Starting with a few of our lend-lease vessels in World War II, the Soviets have built their fleet to more than 7,000 vessels.

The decline in the American-flag merchant marine was so quick that by the beginning of the Korean War there were only 1,700 vessels under our registry, roughly 40 percent of what we had during the height of World War II. This was just enough to meet our sealift needs during that conflict.

Meanwhile, there was an explosive growth in the number of vessels registered under flags of convenience. This would have profound consequences for seamen, not just in this country but all around the globe.

Seamen Were the First to be Abandoned

The wholesale exodus of American shipping companies after the war was a prototype for something that would become commonplace throughout the American economy during the 1980s. Writing about the decline of the American auto industry, Pulitzer prize-winning author David Halbestram had some keen observations to make about the motives of American automobile companies in the early part of the decade. He could just as easily have been writing about the shipping industry of the late '40s.

"The Japanese challenge had given many American companies an excuse to do something they had always longed to do, which was to relocate their factories in underdeveloped countries beyond the reach of American labor unions. Until then only the most labor-intensive industries, such as the garment industry, had been able to escape the nation's borders. Abandoning the American worker had been socially and politically unthinkable. But now, because of the coming of the Japanese, the tactic had become acceptable."

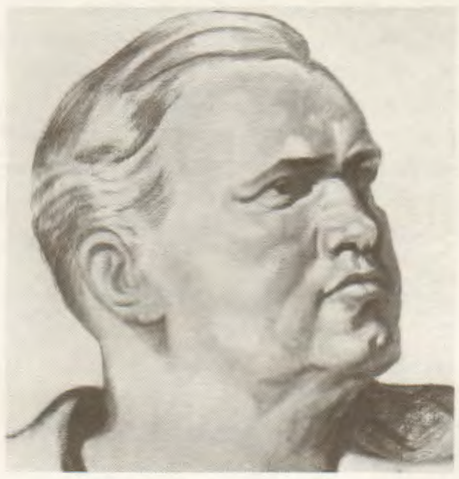
Chapter Nine:

Paul Hall Takes Over the Helm of SIU

Paul Hall is to the SIU what John L. Lewis was to the Mineworkers: an inspirational leader who shaped the union in his image.

The SIU's rise to power during the post-war era was largely a result of his determination and foresight. After he was named director of organizing in 1945, the union began to play a leading role on the waterfront.

It was Hall's leadership qualities that made the difference for the SIU. Although World War II had made it possible for the A&G District to survive and even prosper, it was not particularly well placed to assume a leadership role in the maritime industry.



Reader's Digest **said Hall was "morally, intellectually and physically superior."**

The membership of the NMU still outnumbered the A&G District by a large margin. It had most of the big companies and a near-lock on the lucrative passenger vessel and tanker trades.

Shipping Gave Him a Break

Like many other charter members of the SIU, Hall's early years were filled with poverty. His father, a railroad conductor, died when he was just 11 years old.

He was forced to leave home at 14 years old to seek employment. He worked at numerous odd jobs, none of which paid very much.

He lied about how old he was and boxed men twice his age for a quarter a fight. His brother Pete, 12, was his manager.

He often told friends that his first big break came when he decided to ship out. His oldest brother, whom everyone knew as "Sailor," had been the first in the family to take the plunge.

Seamen Were His Family

As bad as economic conditions were in the maritime industry 60 years ago, they were infinitely better than the ones that Paul Hall had to cope with as a fatherless transient roaming a South plagued by economic collapse.

He had a Southerner's sense of the extended family. When he joined the merchant marine, seamen became part of his bloodlines. Even after he became maritime's leading spokesman, every old-timer was his brother and every trainee his son.

Though he was intensely proud of his Southern heritage, he was no bigot. His life had been too hard, he had seen too much, for him to look down on anyone.

Moved to Integrate the SIU

Immediately after he became head of the SIU in 1948, he took steps to integrate the union. Until that time black members were confined to one department.

It was not a popular stand by any means, and it could have cost Hall his position. But by 1951 the process was complete: the SIU was no longer a "checkerboard union."

Like the good boxer that he was, he knew how to improvise, how to learn from his competitors. The NMU's strong stand on racial equality was one of its most important contributions to the maritime industry.

Besides, Hall's family history—his father had been a union member in a region and at a time when unions were frowned upon—had made a strong impression on him. In those pre-CIO days, the union that Hall's father belonged to, the Brotherhood of Local Engineermen, was one of the few to take an unequivocal stand in support of desegregation.

While poverty and family tragedy cut short Hall's formal education, it did not cut short his life-long quest for knowledge. During World War II, he sailed as an oiler, even though he had received a second engineer's rating.

First Union Position

In 1943, he was elected to his first important union position—dispatcher in Baltimore. Speaking of Hall's first election, Ted Babkowski had this to say:

"A few of us—Red Baron, Alex Jakowski, myself—motioned Paul for the dispatcher's job in Baltimore.

"It was the ideal spot. Baltimore was just about the biggest shipping port in the country. Everyone went through there. You could get to know everybody."

Boxing Strategy

Hall's campaign for dispatcher was marked by an astute sense of timing and a strong attention to detail that became his trademarks.

Invariably, the one image that people use to describe Paul Hall is that of the boxer, the lonely warrior who goes one on one with his opponent. The good boxer is almost by definition a good strategist because if he isn't he has to endure immediate pain, immediate punishment.

"Paul loved to talk strategy," said Bobby Pomerlane, special assistant to the SIU president. "He used to say that the one thing a boxer should have is a good left hook, because your opponent can't see it coming."

The Chief

Many of the officials who worked with Paul Hall called him "the Chief," though in many respects he was more like a general.

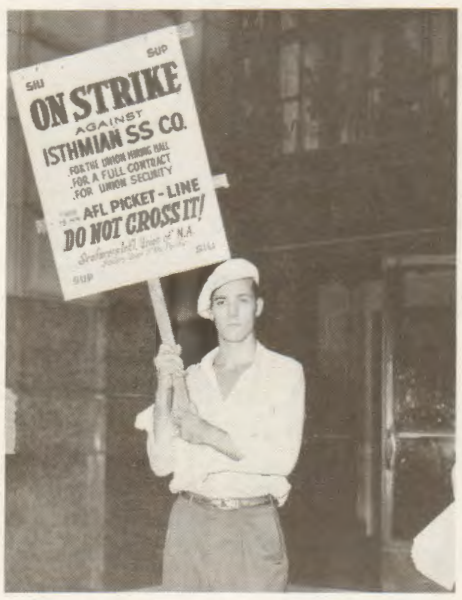
He had a great fondness for Civil War history. In his later years, he would collect antique books on the strategies of Robert E. Lee. Like Lee, he stood alongside his troops on the front lines of battle.

The first thing he did at the start of every campaign was to assemble a closely-knit team. He instinctively realized that every person had some skill or idea that could be utilized. More often than not, he said, it was the person everyone else overlooked who made the crucial difference.

In 1943, he was virtually unknown outside a small circle of friends. Within a decade, he would be attracting nationwide attention.

Writing about Hall in a widely-publicized *Reader's Digest* article that appeared in 1953, labor reporter Victor Reisel made the following observations:

"Paul Hall, husky six foot secretary-treasurer of the Seafarers, stands out physically, mentally, morally and intellectually. At 39, this blondish Viking from Alabama has shown old-line unionists how to keep faith with the rank and file and at the same time roll up millions of dollars in assets... he is one of the few honest labor leaders on the New York waterfront."



Isthmian was his most important campaign.

The people who worked with Paul Hall called him "the Chief." Like the good general he was, he stood alongside his troops on the front lines.

CHAPTER TEN:

The SIU Becomes a Waterfront Power

Paul Hall and the other officials of the SIU set the union's strategy for the post-war era at a port agent's conference in March of 1946. Isthmian and Cities Service were targeted for action.

With more than 100 vessels, Isthmian was the largest American-flag steamship company. It was a worldwide operator whose parent firm was the huge U.S. Steel Corporation.

Cities Service was singled out because it had 16 tankers representing 300 potential jobs under its corporate seal. As such, it marked an inviting target for the SIU's entry into the tanker industry.

The NMU had tried to organize these companies for years, with little success. Within four years, both were to sign contracts with the SIU.

By organizing Isthmian and Cities Service, the SIU was able to establish itself as a power on the waterfront. "Who would ever have thought that a handful of rag-tag sailors could have taken on two of the largest conglomerates in the world and won?" said SIU Secretary Joe DiGiorgio.

Both campaigns were stirring, the stuff of labor history. But neither company exists under the American-flag today, which highlights the most important lesson of both campaigns. No union can be content to rest on past victories and survive. It has to continually organize new companies or else face extinction.

Cities Service a Dogfight All the Way

"In some ways," wrote John Bunker, former head of the SIU's Historical Research Department, "the Cities Service campaign was tougher than the Isthmian campaign that came along about the same time. The Isthmian fleet was many times larger than Cities Service and its ships were engaged in worldwide trading, which posed more challenging organizational problems. But with Cities Service, the SIU was up against an outfit that was bull-headedly anti-union and was determined to throw every roadblock and baffle that it could before signing on the dotted line.

"Organizing efforts on Cities Service began in 1946... signing up the men on the ships was the easy part of it. The real fight came against company shenanigans.

"There were no Marquis of Queensbury rules in this organizing drives. No punches were held back by either side. It was a dogfight all the way.

"Cities Service had become so fearful of SIU men infiltrating its ships through its New York hiring hall that it began hiring crews from such places as the Red Lantern Cafe in Boston, the Rialto Cafe in Bayonne, Paddy Keane's gin mill in Bayonne and other such joints, where men frequently even paid to get shipped on Cities Service tankers." And in another desperate attempt to keep SIU sympathizers out of its fleet, the company built up an elaborate spy system.

Cities Service Sets Up Spy System

"A former Coast Guard officer, John Dugan, was hired to set up this spy system in an attempt to spot SIU men on the ships. One private eye hung around the Citco hiring hall in New York, fingering any SIUers who came in applying for a job. Another detective shadowed the company's own marine employment manager because higher-ups didn't trust him. They even tapped the phone in his office and his home."

The company's tactics were so unorthodox that the United States Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare felt compelled to hold hearings into the matter.

The committee, which was headed by Sen. Warren Magnuson (D-Wash.), reached the following conclusion:

"It is almost unbelievable that any union could continue in the existence of this combination of legal stalling and violent anti-union activity. Certainly a smaller, poorer and less persistent union would have been destroyed."

Isthmian Was the Typical Paul Hall Campaign

As colorful and exciting as the Cities Service Campaign was, Isthmian remains the prototypical "Paul Hall campaign." It was the one where Paul Hall put together his first "closely-knit team."

Writing about this campaign, John Bunker noted, "New York Port Agent Paul Hall had been named... to head up the drive.

"Earl 'Bull' Shepard was in charge of the field work, assisted by Cal Tanner, Lindsey Williams, Per Lykke and Eugene Dauber. Secretary-Treasurer J.P. Shuler was also part of the team (as were *LOG* editor Herb Brand and Hall's administrative assistant Rose Siegel, who coordinated the voluminous flow of information). Among the others who deserved credit were organizers Johnny Arabasz, Al Kerr, E.S. Higdon, William Rentz and Charles Sterling. They worked 18-hour days, seven days a week during this vital campaign.

"(But Paul Hall always said that the real heroes were the SIU seamen who) rode the Isthmian ships despite their lower wages and lack of other benefits. These men would infiltrate the Isthmian fleet as volunteer ship organizers.

Cities Service hired seamen from bars and tapped phones.

The SIU came to the aid of striking Wall Street workers in 1948 (below and top-right). The beef made front page news.

The Isthmian campaign put the union on the map. The SIU beat out the NMU in signing up the largest unorganized company.

"(One of many SIU members to come to the aid of the union) was SIU Vice President Angus 'Red' Campbell, who rode Isthmian's *SteelInventory* as a volunteer organizer on a five-month trip from New York to Shanghai and back. He remembers having all of 28 hours in overtime and paying off with $750."

Headquarters Turned Into a Battlefield

The important thing in any campaign is to instill people with a sense of mission. Hall did this by putting the entire New York union hall on war footing. No matter where you turned, you could not escape the Isthmian campaign. Writes Bunker:

"The Isthmian drive was directed from Paul Hall's organizational headquarters at 51 Beaver Street in New York, where the operations resembled field headquarters for a wartime military command.

"Here complete reports were received daily on the position of Isthmian ships all over the world and detailed information on those in American ports or due shortly to arrive. There was a file on each ship, including such things as the names of key men aboard and the reaction of crew members to SIU organizing; when and where the SIU literature had been placed on board; where and when the ship had been contacted by SIU organizers; effectiveness of the NMU competition on board; attitudes of crewmen toward the company, and similar useful data.

"Large charts on the walls in this operations center showed the status of the drive in colorful graphics, so that headquarters would have a daily picture of the worldwide effort. If one port seemed to be falling behind in the drive, organizers could be shifted from strong to weak points on short notice. The tempo of activity never slackened. The New York combat information center, as it could be called, operated 24 hours a day, with someone always on hand to take messages, give orders and make decisions.

SIU white caps march in behalf of Detroit phone workers.

Hall Lays a Blueprint for the Future

Yet the Isthmian and Cities Service campaigns were just the tip of the iceberg. During the same time, Hall was laying a blueprint for the SIU's future.

In 1946, the SIU came up with its first training program. This was particularly important to Hall, who regretted that his own education had been cut short.

Throughout the rest of Hall's career, education would remain a priority. He would continually improvise, moving the union's training facilities first to Mobile, then to Brooklyn and finally to Piney Point, where they remain today.

Maritime Strike of 1946

Despite the drop-off in post-war shipping, the SIU was able to win important increases in contract negotiations with Waterman and Mississippi Shipping in July of 1946. These gains were threatened later that year when the National Wage Stabilization Board cut the union's wage scale down to a lower level won by the NMU.

A general strike was called in September 1946, which the union won. "This strike," said John Hawk, "is being directed against the National Wage Stabilization Board and their autocratic infringement of the rights of free labor unions to bargain collectively with the operators for wages, hours and working conditions."

MTD Established

As the A&G District gathered strength, it began to play a more prominent role in the SIUNA's national campaigns. The SIU was no longer a weak link in the AFL seamen's movement; it was a strong ally for SUP President Harry Lundeberg. In August of 1946, the SIU and the SUP jointly established the Maritime Trades Council of the American Federation of Labor. Later, under the direction of Paul Hall and Pete McGavin, it would develop into the powerful Maritime Trades Department, a constitutional department of the AFL-CIO consisting of 44 international trade unions representing 8.5 million members.

The MTD and its numerous port councils gave the SIUNA a strong grassroots presence around the country. It played an important role in securing support for seamen in their organizing drives and legislative battles.

Affiliates Established

Hall was elected to the SIU's top post, secretary-treasurer, in 1948. Building on the union's commitment to organizing, he worked with Lundeberg in chartering three new SIUNA affiliates, each of which represented an important area of growth for the union.

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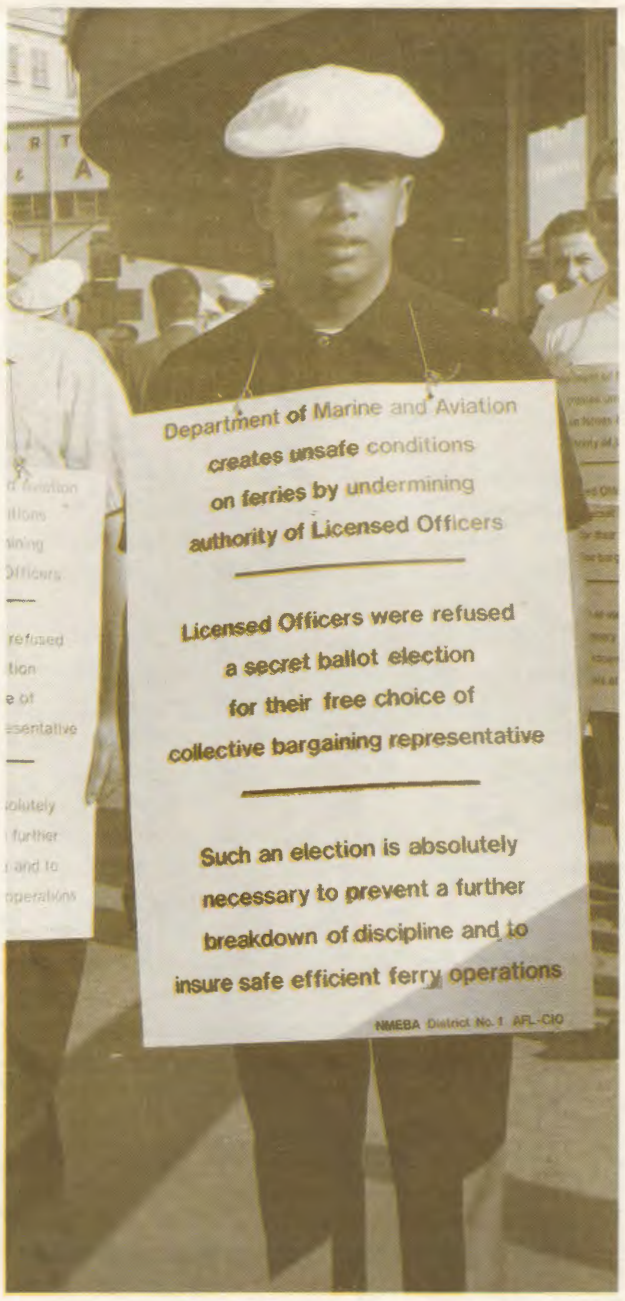
The New York Times praised "the white-capped Seafarers" during this 1948 rally. The ILGWU was fighting organized crime.

The SIU gained attention by helping more than 100 other trade unions in the post-war years.

Paul Hall showed solidarity.



Seafarers marched on behalf of their licensed brothers.

The 1946 General Strike enabled the SIU and other maritime unions to achieve gains.

In 1949, the Inland Boatmen's Union of the Pacific was formed. This gave the international its first entry into the tug and barge field.

In 1949, the SIUNA chartered the Brotherhood of Marine Engineers and the Marine Allied Workers Division (MAWD).

The BME was formed to create an alternative to licensed seamen who did not want to be part of the CIO-affiliated Marine Engineers Beneficial Association and who were still working for unorganized lines.

From its inception, the MAWD was perceived as being the organizing arm of the SIU (it was unique in that it was chartered under both the international and the Atlantic and Gulf District). In order to be fully effective, the A&G District needed to establish a base among shore-side workers.

Helping Other Unions

Increasingly throughout the decade, the SIU began to establish a nationwide reputation by supporting other unions in their beefs and organizing drives.

Working through the SIUNA and the MTD port councils, the SIU supported striking members of the United Financial Employees Union, Local 205, AFL, during the bitterly-contested Wall Street Strike of 1948. In 1946, the union went to the aid of the Masters, Mates and Pilots, the Marine Firemen, Oilers and Watertenders, the International Longshoremen's Association and the CIO Shipbuilders.

When organized crime tried to infiltrate the Ladies Garment Workers Union, white-capped SIU seamen stood by their union brothers at a rally, held in midtown Manhattan, that was attended by more than 50,000 people.

"Scattered through the crowd," said *The New York Times*, "were hundreds of white-capped Seafarers who drew enthusiastic cheers and applause for the aid they were giving the ILGWU in its war on the gangster hoodlums."

And when Canadian shipowners asked SIUNA President Harry Lundeberg to help them fight the Communist element on the Canadian waterfront, SIU seamen joined their SUP brothers as full partners in this campaign.

Canadian Beef

Conditions for Canadian seamen deteriorated rapidly after World War II. Although still sizeable, the Canadian deep-sea fleet was being decimated by that country's colonial relationship with Great Britain. Canadian shipping companies were free to reflag under the British flag, and they did.

This sad state of affairs was exacerbated by the actions of the Canadian Seamen's Union, which was dominated by the Communist Party. The union was wreaking havoc on the waterfront.

International Trade Unionism the Key

Speaking of the troubled situation on the Canadian waterfront at the SIUNA's 1947 Convention, William McLaughlin of the British Columbia Seamen's Union had this to say:

"It is a period of foreseen and unforeseen events. It is a period that will make exacting demands on the endurance... and the common sense of each member of the movement.

"We in Canada look forward... to a militant movement awake and alive to the working class needs. We see it in the nature of the values of international trade union solidarity, and, say, speed the day when all labor will be in the one house, with one set of ideals and principles, and united under the one banner.

"International representation in the final analysis, is the only guarantee that will assure seamen the world over of the maintenance and success of any struggle in the defense of their rights."

Battle of Halifax

Writing about the battle to establish an independent Canadian affiliate of the SIU, SIU historian John Bunker had this to say:

"The Canadian District of the SIU was formed in September of 1948.

"When the contract between the Canadian Shipping Federation, which included most of the Canadian operators, and the Canadian Seamen's Union expired, the Federation signed contracts with the new SIU.

"As the SIU began taking over the ships according to the agreement, the CSU called a strike in March 1949. About 80 ships were affected... The strike spread as far as Great Britain, Europe, Australia and New Zealand as left-wing longshore unions were brought into the beef in support of the CSU.

"The famous battle of Halifax erupted on April 8, 1949, when some 300 SIU and CSU men came together in a head busting confrontation on the waterfront there, with a number being hurt by shotgun blasts, bricks, rocks, bottles and other missiles.

"The SIU finally prevailed and the CSU faded away in what one writer called 'one of the worst defeats to be suffered by communism in North America.' "

With the Canadian beef, the SIU had come full circle. It had started the decade under the trusteeship of the SUP. Within 10 years, it had become a full-fledged partner in the international and was able to offer support to other affiliates when they needed it.

Seafarers relish a quiet moment during the General Strike of 1946. Hundreds hit the bricks.

A Canadian union hall. The SIU of Canada enabled seamen to win important gains.

SIU supports striking New Orleans telephone workers. The help was much appreciated.

Chapter Eleven:

NMU Embroiled In An Internal Fight

The SIU's rise as a power on the waterfront was greatly helped by internal problems that were embroiling its main competitor, the NMU.

The Communist Party had played an important role in the administration of the NMU since its inception in 1937. Yet relations between Joe Curran and the Party started to sour towards the end of World War II.

Publicly, at least, Curran took great pains to underplay the differences. And the *Daily Worker,* the official organ of the Communist Party, continued to write glowing pieces about him.

"Curran worked at his job as few of the others did," wrote Murray Kempton. "The Communists still held him up as a stately monument of the proletarian. But in those years, he must have felt that his office as president of the NMU had about it aspects of reign without rule."

Yet behind the scenes, there was a byzantine struggle for control of the union.

In 1946, a number of high ranking NMU officials were expelled from the Communist Party. At the same time, a number of Communists were dropped from the NMU's higher echelons.

By the summer of 1948, not one Communist remained on the NMU's executive council. Despite these developments, "the Communists... continued to exalt Curran as a symbol," wrote Kempton. "They thought of themselves as his creator."

At one time, five out of six members of the NMU's executive council held cards in the Communist Party. The only one who didn't was NMU President Joe Curran, center at bottom.

The Inevitable Showdown

Eventually, Curran was forced into a public showdown with the Communist members of the NMU's higher echelons. The political realities of the post-war era—the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, the rising tide of anti-communism in this country—made such a confrontation inevitable.

Ideology aside, the most devastating charge that could be levelled against the Communists who played a leading role in the NMU was that they were less militant than their AFL counterparts in fighting for the rights of their members. According to Kempton:

"Nobody noticed that somewhere at the core, people were going soft and that it was harder and harder even to pay men to go out and organize whatever ships remained outside the union. For there were things that you could not buy. Blackie Meyers spent $170,000 to unionize the Isthmian Steamship Line and ended up with nothing. A reformed and resurgent AFL sailor's union was shaming the NMU wherever there was a contest."

Communist domination of the NMU was broken once and for all at the union's 1949 convention. According to Shannon Wall in the May 1987 edition of the *NMU Pilot,* the battle came to a head over a resolution which stated: "Resolved that this convention of the American seamen reaffirms its faith in the United States and what is stands for and makes it clear that we will defend our country against any enemy including the Soviet Union."

The delegates adopted this resolution by a vote of 448 in favor, 56 against with 53 abstentions.

A second vote was taken on expelling Communists from the NMU. Although it failed to gain the necessary two-thirds vote, it marked the end of the Communist Party as a major force on the waterfront.

Today, it would be unconstitutional to expel a member for his political beliefs. Yet the fact remains that roughly 20 percent of the delegates to the 1949 NMU Convention refused to vote for an innocuous resolution saying that they would defend their country.

To a country that was about to be engulfed in a bitter confrontation in Korea, this was bad news. Had such a state of affairs been allowed to continue, the whole justification for government subsidies to the maritime industry would have been undermined.

The NMU was not the only CIO union to go through this kind of ordeal. In 1949, the leadership of the CIO expelled 11 unions because they were "masquerading as labor unions" and were "effectively Communist-dominated." The NMU was not expelled because by this time Curran had already won his fight with the Party.

In the eyes of many, though not all, AFL labor leaders, the issue wasn't the beliefs of the individual members. After all, many of the early members of the SIU had been former members of the IWW.

The real issue was the wisdom of handing over the administration of a union to non-democratic forces. Speaking of the practical effect of that decision, Shannon Wall said in the May 1987 edition of the *NMU Pilot:*

"In the beginning, the professed principles of the Communists seemed to line up with the idea of working seamen—like wanting a strong union and wanting to wipe out discrimination. As long as the Communists said that they wanted the same thing the rank-and-file members knew they wanted, there seemed to be no problem.

"But by the beginning of World War II, the goals of the Communists began to openly diverge from the goals of the membership. The working seamen naturally wanted England and France to win the war. But when Russia and Nazi Germany briefly became allies, NMU Communists, utilizing petty strikes and isolation slogans, tried to put every obstacle in the way of aid to the democracies."

Chapter Twelve:

SIU Seamen Mount Sealift in Korea

The following is an excerpt by John Bunker from his 26 part series on the history of the SIU which appeared in the Seafarers LOG.

Less than five years after the end of World War II, the United States was suddenly faced with another major conflagration. On June 25, 1950, more than 60,000 North Korean troops crossed the 38th parallel behind a phalanx of Russian tanks and invaded South Korea.

The United States reacted immediately, dispatching troops and supplies from bases in Japan to aid the Republic of South Korea. The United Nations supported the American action and some of its members later sent combat forces to Korea, too.

This Korean invasion emphasized, probably more than any other in history, the vital importance of a merchant fleet being ready to support a war effort. It proved that the "bottom line" in an emergency is not a fleet on blueprints but a fleet that is already in service and ready for "full speed ahead."

Even though our involvement in World War II was gradual, there was enough lead time to prepare sea transport for ourselves and our allies. The invasion of South Korea came suddenly and without any warning. In order to keep South Korea from falling into Communist hands, war supplies of all kinds had to be sent quickly.

Reversal of Fortunes

During the summer of 1950, United Nations forces threw the (North Korean) invaders back across the 38th parallel and pushed them all the way back to the Chinese border at the Yalu River.

Then in November of 1950, more than 200,000 Chinese troops crossed the Yalu and drove back the UN forces, with the merchant marine preventing the UN retreat from becoming a military disaster. When it appeared that the UN forces

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SIU crews carried American troops and arms (left) to safety in a huge sealift in Korea. At right, an SIU crew takes care of displaced civilians and army personnel.

Seafarers provided the United States with a reliable source of sealift during the Korean War.

would be overwhelmed, every available ship was sent to Hungnam and other North Korean ports to evacuate civilians, troops and military supplies.

SIU-Manned Vessels Part of Amazing Sealift

American-flag ships, including many manned by the SIU, accomplished one of the most amazing sealifts in the world at Hungnam. In only two weeks time, freighters without any regular troop or passenger accommodations evacuated 105,000 troops, 100,000 civilians, 14,500 vehicles and 350,000 tons of guns, tanks, ammunition and other battle equipment. This was a tremendous logistical achievement, the full scope of which seemed almost unbelievable.

The last ship to leave the embattled port of Hungnam was the *Madaket* of Waterman S.S. Company, carrying a full SIU crew. She steamed out of the shell spattered harbor carrying no less than 11,000 men, women and children. The Waterman Line's *Choctaw* left just a few hours before the *Madaket*, jammed with troops and supplies.

Able Seaman Florenz Paskowski of the *Madaket* said that the night sky was lit up like the Fourth of July. "It was like the Normandy beachhead," he recalled. "Refugees and troops streamed onboard while shells from our warships thundered overhead toward the enemy. Dead-tired soldiers and marines came up the gangplanks with hand grenades still pinned to their uniforms. They were covered with dust and mud."

SIU Crews Sail Well Prepared

All SIU ships crewed up and sailed on time. This was because of the union's foresight in setting up manpower committees. The committee accumulated a list of skilled sailors to man the ships soon after the war broke out. SIU-manned ships won many plaudits from the military for a job well done in the Korean War supply efforts.

One example was the *Sea Wind*. "Your performance," wrote Vice Admiral C. T. Joy, commander of naval forces in the Far East, to the ship's captain, "has been notable throughout the Korean campaign. The merchant mariners who performed for you did so silently, but their accomplishment speaks loudly. The cooperation and assistance of the merchant marine adds but one more page of glory in our maritime history."

Chapter Thirteen:

The Fifties: SIU Makes Rapid Progress

The 1950s were a period of tremendous growth for the SIU. The union was working on many different levels to protect the interests of its membership. The union continued to pick up new work. While the NMU still had most of the subsidized operators, the Korean War had given the SIU an opportunity to grow.

"The Korean War swung it around for the SIU," said Ray McKay, president of District 2-MEBA. "It created an opening for small operators, entrepreneurs who otherwise wouldn't have had a chance. Some of the companies that got started during this period developed into important sources of jobs for SIU and BME seamen. Morris Weisberger, who was then the SUP's Port Agent for New York, had a lot of contacts with these people. He was instrumental in helping the SIU sign up new work."

The union explored all kinds of new areas for growth. In 1954 it became one of the first unions to recognize the potential of Puerto Rico. Keith Terpe, the union's director of organizing, was sent to that island to establish the Puerto Rico division of the A&G District. By 1970, the unit had 20,000 members employed in 82 different industries.

SIU Moves Into New Headquarters Building

The union's new position on the waterfront was underscored by its move to a new headquarters building. The union had outgrown the old facilities at 51 Beaver Street.

Paul Hall directed a top assistant, Alphonse "Frenchy" Michelet, to find a new building and oversee the move. Michelet spotted a building on the corner of Twentieth Street and Fourth Avenue in Brooklyn, N.Y. "Formerly Public School Number 60, this large, three story building was gutted and renovated to become one of the finest union halls and union administration centers in the country," wrote SIU historian John Bunker.

Job opportunities for SIU members expanded so rapidly that the union was forced to move to a new headquarters building in Brooklyn. "Frenchy" Michelet oversaw the repairs (inset).

"In addition to offices and hiring hall, the new building featured a bar in the shape of a Viking ship, a cafeteria seating 250 with a modern, stainless steel galley designed for use in a stewards training program. The hall also had a barbershop and a slop chest where seagoing gear was available to members at cost prices. For a while there was also a nightclub, with dancing and entertainment for union members and their friends."

The new headquarters building was in a constant state of motion. "Paul understood how important it was for seamen to have a place they could call their own. Back then, a union hall was a seaman's second home," said Secretary Joe DiGiorgio, who in his early days used to run the Sea Chest.

"The union hall was where a seaman went to play cards on his time off, where he connected with old friends. Paul was constantly making improvements—tearing this wall down or putting a new carpet in, anything to make things better for the membership."

Welfare Plan Started

The Fifties had barely begun when the SIU signed a contract with nine operators which authorized the formation of a new welfare plan. This was part of a larger national trend. For the first time ever, unions began targeting benefits as a priority in contract negotiations.

Throughout the decade, the union would win impressive gains in this area. Since the benefits furthered an important national goal—better health, not only for the members but for their dependents—they were not taxed as income. As required by law, the activities of the welfare plan were overseen by a board of trustees, which was composed of an equal number of representatives from labor and management.

Vacation Plan, Scholarship Program, Clinics

Other benefits were introduced. A vacation plan was started in 1952. And in accordance with Paul Hall's commitment to education, a scholarship program for SIU members and their dependents was started.

In 1955 the union signed another agreement with its operators to set up a nationwide system of clinics. Dr. Joseph Logue, a retired admiral who served in World War I, was named to head the new program. The first clinic opened in 1957. The whole operation was geared towards the needs of the seaman. "Doctor Logue had a special rapport with the membership," said Florence Penny, his administrative assistant. "They felt comfortable with him. Seamen no longer had to put up with long delays at hospitals. They weren't dependent upon the whims of a company doctor. Moreover, the clinics stressed preventive medicine. We weren't specialists, but we could catch something early on. We had a close connection with certain hospitals, like Lutheran Medical in Brooklyn, so a seaman just wasn't another face in the crowd.

"Doctor Logue was a deeply compassionate man. But he ran a tight ship. If a member had to lose weight or get his blood sugar count down, the Doc told him in no uncertain terms. For a lot of seamen, it was almost like having their own personal physician."

Improved Conditions

Throughout the decade, conditions for seamen onboard ship were upgraded. Barely 20 years earlier, seamen were forced to sleep in one large forecastle. In 1956, the *Cities Service Baltimore* became the first American-flag vessel to give unlicensed seamen their own private rooms.

Towards the end of the decade, Paul Hall started the Food Services Plan, a training program for stewards. The program served a two-fold purpose: to help cut costs for the operators and to improve the quality of life onboard ship.

The union also started a lending library that it put on all ships. In their spare time, seamen could now read anything from Zane Grey westerns to the classics.

Meanwhile, in Washington D.C., the union argued for improved safety standards onboard ships. It went one-on-one with government agencies like the Coast Guard in protecting minimum manning standards. It tried to make sure that the job security of its membership wasn't jeopardized by some arbitrary regulatory change.

Cargo Preference Act of 1954

Still, improvements in wages, benefits and conditions would have been impossible without a steady source of cargo. "You can have the best contract in the world," said Frank Drozak, the late president of the SIU, "but if you don't have any work it doesn't mean a thing."

An SIU dependent wins 1955 scholarship.

SIU seaman makes good use of the union's new clinic by passing an EKG with flying colors.

The NY mermaid became an SIU landmark.

The union played an instrumental role in enacting the Cargo Preference Act of 1954, which set aside 50 percent of all government-generated cargo for American-flag vessels. The bill was sponsored by Sen. Warren Magnuson (D-Wash.), maritime's leading spokesman on Capitol Hill. A good portion of all the work that remains available to the American-flag merchant marine today is generated by this one piece of legislation.

The AFL and CIO Merge; NMU and SIU Still Battle

In 1955, George Meany engineered an historic merger between the AFL and the CIO. This marked a new era for the labor movement.

Throughout the next 30 years, the SIU and NMU would intermittently enter into merger talks. On several different occasions the two unions came close to tying the knot, but they were never able to surmount their differences. Throughout the '50s and early '60s, the NMU and SIU were embroiled in numerous beefs: Robin Lines, Moore-McCormack. American Banner Line. But probably the famous, and certainly the most unusual, was the one involving the American Coal Company.

American Coal Beef

The American Coal Company was established by Mineworkers President John L. Lewis. According to SIU historian John Bunker:

"The new company was a means whereby Lewis hoped to get a strong foothold in maritime because if the predictions about the coal boom became true it would have required hundreds of Liberty ships a year to supply the European demand for coal. This would mean a huge fleet of ships and thousands of jobs.

"In order to acquire ships from the government's reserve fleet, it had to show that it was in the shipping business, so it brought a Liberty ship called the *China Trader* and renamed it the *Coal Miner.*

"But more impressively, it also bought out the 68-year-old Bull Line, one of the SIU's oldest companies. Bull operated 15 ships at the time.

"While MEBA and the MM&P were negotiating with the new outfit for a contract, the company signed an agreeement for officers with the Brotherhood of Marine Officers (BMO), which was affiliated with a UMW catch-all union called District 50.

"For unlicensed men, the company signed a contract with the NMU, although it didn't have a single ship at the time of the signing."

The battle between the two unions would rage on for several years. Responding to a request for labor unity from AFL-CIO President George Meany, the SIU offered to give up the right to crew these vessels. In exchange, the NMU had to recognize the right of MEBA and the MM&P. "When the NMU's Joe Curran tried to make it appear that the SIU had refused to cooperate," wrote John Bunker, "Meany sent him a strong rebuke." A drastic decline in the coal industry in the early '60s rendered the whole beef moot.

Old-Timers Come Out of Retirement To Help Their Union

But before that happened, "a federal judge entered the dispute with a ruling that all hiring must be done through the unions and that the crewmen had to be hired on a seniority basis," wrote Bunker.

"This unusual situation turned union hiring halls at Savannah, Norfolk, Philadelphia and New York into old-timers conventions. Both the SIU and NMU beat the bushes for old-salts with wads of discharges."

SIU members as old as 79 came out of retirement to man the ships. The average age of most crews was well over 60. Said retired official Ted Babkowski:

"Paul Hall told me to look out for the old-timers and get them onto the ships. Those characters didn't need any nursemaids. They were as salty as sea biscuits and tough as old marlin. I offered to help one old SUP guy up the ladder with his gear. He acted like I had called him a fink. 'Hey junior,' he said. 'I could lift you and the sea bag, too.' "

The union gained new benefits for Seafarers and their families throughout the decade.

The SIU and NMU fought FOC vessels.

Living conditions onboard ship improved.

NMU and SIU Unite To Fight FOCs

In one important area, the SIU and NMU were able to overcome their differences and forge a united front. Towards the end of the decade they formed a joint union, the International Maritime Workers Union, to organize flag of convenience vessels.

By the mid-1950s, the EUSC Doctrine had decimated the American maritime industry. Most of the work that remained to American-flag operators was in the protected Jones Act trade or was generated by the Cargo Preference Act of 1954.

Throughout the decade both the SIU and NMU had tried to draw attention to this issue. Hearings were held on Capitol Hill, but no action was ever taken.

Both unions tried to organize the FOCs on a ship by ship basis. This posed a unique legal question. Could unions organize vessels owned by American companies if those vessels were technically registered under foreign flags?

Supreme Court Finds in Favor of FOCs

The NLRB grappled with this question. By the early part of the 1960s a definite trend had emerged. The courts applied a "contacts-test" to the vessel.

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The fewer contacts that an FOC vessel had with the nation of registry, then the more likely the NLRB would say that it fell under the jurisidiction of American labor laws.

For example, if a vessel registered under the Panamanian flag paid no taxes, had a British crew and was owned by a company that was incorporated in Delaware, the NLRB was more likely to say that it was governed by American laws than if it employed Panamanian citizens and paid taxes to Panama.

This whole promising trend was stopped dead in its tracks in 1963 when the Supreme Court handed down a decision, *Belzer vs. United States*, which said the NLRB had no jurisidiction over FOC vessel regardless of what kind of contacts they had with the nation of registry.

SIUNA Continues to Gain Strength

Throughout the decade, the SIU remained actively involved in the affairs of its international, the SIUNA. Under Ludeberg's leadership, the SIUNA continued to gain strength.

By 1951, the SIU of Canada had established itself as a full-fledged member of the international. The union's membership had grown from 200 to 6,000.

The union now had 80 companies under contract. It was able to improve conditions and wages for Canadian seamen. Hal Banks, who headed the union, began an organizing drive aimed specifically at French-speaking seamen, many of whom remained unorganized.

The Marine, Cooks and Stewards attended its first SIUNA Convention in 1953; the MFOW in 1955.

The MCS was headed by a protege of Harry Lundeberg, Ed Turner. The union had been chartered to compete against the communist-dominated National Union of Marine Cooks and Stewards. After a heated organizing drive, Turner and his AFL allies re-established order.

At the 1953 SIUNA Convention, Turner talked about the union's early growth:

"On April 5th, 1952, the Marine Cooks & Stewards, AFL, opened an office and hiring hall at 100 First Street, San Francisco. We had trouble for some time keeping this office open, due..to the..goon squad from the NUMC&S. But we were successful.

"At the time the office was opened we had a membership of 200. (Today, a year later)...we have issued 2,600 membership books. The organizers who worked on this drive up and down the coast for the Marine Cooks & Stewards had to work under the most adverse conditions.

"The organizing drive as it exists today would not have existed were it not for... the various branches of the international."

One of Turner's major accomplishments during this early period was the establishment of a training school in Santa Rosa, Calif. Paul Hall would later use this as a prototype for the Harry Lundeberg School in Piney Point, Md.

Harry Lundeberg Dies

In 1957 the man who had guided the SIUNA from its inception died. Harry Lundeberg was mourned by seamen from one coast to another.

Morris Weisberger was named president of the SUP. Paul Hall was elected head of the SIUNA. Speaking of the man he had replaced: Paul Hall had these things to sayat the 1959 SIUNA Convention, "Before the convention gets under way, I would like to do something I did at the last convention, which is to read an article pertaining to Harry Lundeberg which appeared in one of the San Francisco papers upon his death. It is called, 'The Dignity of a Man.'

"Dignity is not always a matter of manners or dress or a cultured speech. There is also the dignity that comes to him who stands on his own two feet, looks the world in the eye and takes on all comers in the battle for what he might believe is just.

"Such a dignity belonged to Harry Lundeberg of the Seafarers International Union of North America and the Sailors Union of the Pacific. His speech was as salty as the seas he sailed, and his manner matched his speech. Hats and coats were not for him: a cap and shirtsleeves or a sweatshirt were his trademarks.

"He went to sea in the age of sail and left in the age of steam—but he never left his shipmates. For them he stood always ready to fight against the shipowners to win fair wages and decent working conditions and, later, against the Communist Party, who infested the waterfront.

"Because he fought with whatever weapons were at hand, thousands of his fellow seamen found a new pride in their calling and a dignity denied to them before.

"Harry Lundeberg left a mark on San Francisco, indeed on every American ship that sails the seven seas, a mark his death did not erase and cannot erase. Maybe he was not a gentlemen in the shallow and generally accepted use of the term; but dignity he had in plenty, and no one could say that he was not a man."

Sen. Warren Magnuson (D-Wash.) introduced the Cargo Preference Act of 1954.

SIU seaman reads the *Seafarers LOG* to learn about the important maritime issues of the day.

The SIU started a book drive for all ships.

New job opportunities became available because of the union's political action program.

The new headquarters building became a second home to many seamen. It was where they ate, met their friends and threw in for a job.

Chapter Fourteen:

SIU Fights for a Democratic Movement

Few leaders leave such an impression on history that their names become synonymous with a movement or a cause. George Meany, the earthy, cigar-smoking plumber from the Bronx, was such an individual. For many, he remains the personification of the American labor movement.

The members and officials of the SIU served as footsoldiers in one of his most stirring campaigns. Throughout the 1950s, Meany fought for a democratic trade union movement. The fight began on the New York waterfront, where corruption had become so pervasive that it threatened the integrity of the entire labor movement.

"We have to have a clean movement in these United States," he said, "and not only because we think it proper but also because of the paramount obligation to serve the members."

Waterfront Commission Highlights Abuses

In 1951, the New York Waterfront Commission began investigating crime on the waterfront. It uncovered an extensive pattern of graft and intimidation. After much soul-searching, Meany moved to expel the main culprit, the International Longshoremens Association, from the AFL. "That was the first time that the AFL had ever injected itself in any way into the internal affairs of a union," he said. Although autonomy was the most fundamental principle of trade unionism, "we were not going to let them use it as a cloak for things that were wrong, basically corrupt."

After expelling the ILA, Meany chartered a new union, the American Federation of Longshoremen (the name was later changed to the International Brotherhood of Longshoremen). SIU Secretary-Treasurer Paul Hall was named director of the new organization.

John Dwyer

According to SIU historian John Bunker, "a key figure in the new union was 38-year-old John Dwyer, a rank-and-file leader in Village Local 895, a second generation longshoreman on the Manhattan docks and a long-time fighter for a clean and democratic union.

"The alliance of dissident longshoremen with the SIU occurred at a meeting at the St. George's Hotel in Brooklyn, where Dwyer (and several other members of the ILA) met with Paul Hall and Morris Weisberger.

" 'I told them we would help all we could, provided they would go with us all the way,' said Dwyer. 'We go all the way on everything,' Hall told us. 'The SIU never quit a fight yet. We go to the last bell.' "

On the Waterfront

Dwyer, who later came to work for the SIU as an official, was the inspiration for the Marlon Brando character in "On the Waterfront." A writer, Bud Schulberg, became interested in Dwyer's struggle. He wrote a series of articles which he later adapted into a screenplay.

SIU organizers began signing pledge cards for the new union in large numbers. In December 1953, an election was held, but the new union fell short: 7,568 votes to the ILA's 9,060. But there was so much violence and coercion that the NLRB ordered a new election.

Thousands Gather at the SIU Hall

"Intimidation, beatings and murders dominated this whole campaign, for the racketeers were fighting for survival on the waterfront," wrote Schulberg. "But on election night, May 26, 1954, the rebels were in a victory mood. With no union hall of their own, thousands of them gathered at the Seafarers Union Hall in Brooklyn to await the election returns. Paul Hall, the formidable ex-sailor president of the SIU, was the ranking AFL officer in this war against the ILA.

"Beer was on the house that night for the men who had stood up to the danger, ostracism and starvation in their effort to wrench control of the waterfront from the racketeers."

Yet the new union was to lose by a small margin out of the more than 16,000 votes cast. "A mere 319 votes separated the old order from the new," wrote Schulberg. "In Jersey City alone, buses scheduled to carry anti-ILA dockworkers to the polls mysteriously failed to show up. One of the AFL organizers responsible for this transportation was promptly rewarded by the ILA—promoted to hiring boss. That one defection—and there were others—cost this tragic photo-finish defeat."

John Dwyer, left, was the inspiration for the Marlon Brando character in *On the Waterfront*. He's talking to Bill McMahon, whose brother was found dead in the Hudson River (1953).

SIU official Ted Babkowski reads about corruption on the waterfront in an old AFL paper.

The battle between the SIU and the ILA was to continue for several more years. In June 1958, Paul Hall met with Captain William Bradley, the new leader of the ILA, and reached an agreement to end the five-year dispute. A year later, the ILA was readmitted into the AFL-CIO.

"We gave it all we had," said Hall. "Like anything we go in for, we go in 'til the final bell. For the sake of peace on the waterfront we took off the gloves.

"We didn't win the vote, but we fought for a clean union for waterfront workers and that was worth the fight."

Paul Hall and George Meany Cement Their Friendship

The new ILA that emerged from this fracas was a cleaner, more democratic union. Certain locals of the ILA have emerged as important allies of the SIU in fighting for the rights of seamen. And as a result of the beef, Paul Hall and George Meany formed a close, life-long friendship.

Meany knew that anytime he had a tough campaign, he could depend on Paul Hall's support. And Hall was a strong admirer of Meany, perhaps because the two of them shared a common quality: leadership. Speaking about the AFL president years after this beef, Hall said: "George was ideally equipped at a time when he was called upon to put together varying personalities. You give me one good guy on a ship who knows what he is doing, and I'll give you a united crew with a single purpose.

"If Meany comes into the room and nobody knows who he is, he has the quality to attract the attention of other men. If you go aboard a ship and meet in the mess hall over a cup of coffee, you'll soon see who the leader is. They call that built-in leadership quality, and this Meany has."

Fighting the Teamsters

The ILA beef wasn't an isolated incident. Meany would battle corruption in the trade union movement throughout the rest of the decade. The issue had aroused considerable publicity, and Sen. John L. McClellan was holding hearings on the matter.

There was a political dimension to the issue. As UAW President Walter Reuther noted, "Failure to eliminate corruption would lead to a law that would make Taft-Hartley look like a liberal, pro-labor law by comparison."

The McClellan Committee uncovered extensive abuses in the Teamsters. In 1957, by a 25-4 vote, the executive council voted to expel the union.

Teamsters Raid AFL-CIO Unions

Unlike the ILA beef, the AFL-CIO made no attempt to set up an alternative union to the Teamsters. "It would have been impossible for us to take on the Teamsters and try to destroy their union," said Meany.

The federation's courageous decision to expel the Teamsters came at a high cost. Outside the "House of Labor," the Teamsters were free to engage in raids on other unions, which they did with increasing frequency.

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Thousands gather at an outdoor rally held at the SIU hall in Brooklyn in support of the newly-formed AFL Longshoremen's Union. The fight for a free labor movement was in full swing.

Paul Hall pledges to support the dissident longshoremen.

The SIU came to the aid of small unions who were being raided by the Teamsters. Below, the Chicago taxi fleet.

When this happened, AFL President George Meany and the heads of small, vulnerable unions who didn't want to be gobbled up by the Teamsters knew that they could turn to the Seafarers for support.

Battle Lines Drawn in Puerto Rico

The battle lines were drawn in Puerto Rico when Meany and Luis Munoz, governor of Puerto Rico, requested help from the SIU. The fight continued stateside, in Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit and St. Louis, where the SIU was on the front lines in the fight to keep AFL-CIO unions from being raided by the Teamsters.

Wrote John Bunker, "In the early part of the '60s, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters had more than one and a half million members, plus a bank roll that even Chase Manhattan would have envied. The membership of the SIU at the time did not exceed 75,000, including all its affiliates.

"Compared to Jimmy Hoffa's mighty Teamsters, Paul Hall's SIU was a David with a slingshot. But little David took on Goliath and stung him with defeats from Puerto Rico to San Diego and other points in between.

"The Teamsters' most decisive and embarrassing confrontation with the SIU came in Chicago where the sailors helped rebellious cab drivers (from being swallowed up by the Teamsters)." Joe Abata formed the Democratic Union Organizing Committee to oust Teamster Local 777 from control. After a hard and bitter campaign, the SIU and Abata won.

"For the first time in 12 years," wrote Bunker, "the drivers received an increase in pay, plus benefits. And for the first time each driver received a copy of the union contract and could attend regular monthly membership meetings."

In Puerto Rico...

"In Puerto Rico the SIU took on the biggest with a directive from Meany to 'stop Hoffa.' Hoffa retaliated with 'Bust the SIU in Puerto Rico!'

"The Seafarers soon discovered that the Teamsters were muscling in on SIU contracts and the fight was on. Before it ended some nine years later there were hundreds of bitter confrontations between SIU and the Teamsters all over the island, with head-busting picket line battles where white-capped sailors and green-capped Teamsters mixed it up with clubs, chains, fists and baseball bats. There were bullets and fire bombs, too.

"SIU Representative Keith Terpe once stepped out of his house in the morning to be met by shots from a waiting car that then quickly sped away. The bullets missed him by inches."

Hoffa Wanted to Control the Waterfront; Great Lakes Seamen Endangered

In Chicago...

"Hall's outspoken opposition to the Teamsters' chief almost cost him his life in Chicago in 1960. After a meeting of the AFL-CIO Executive Council, Hall and Steve Leslie, head of the Operating Engineers, were seated at a restaurant table when the head of a Chicago Teamster local came up, took out a gun concealed in his hat and said to Hall 'Do you want it now or outside?'

"Leslie distracted the gunman's attention and brushed his arm aside, enabling Hall to take the gun. When they managed to get around the table and grab the intruder, other Teamster goons invaded the joint and a real donnybrook erupted.

" 'We fought our way out,' said Leslie, 'but it was a close call—a real knuckle-busting brawl.'

"Later that evening Hall walked into a meeting of Teamster big-wigs at a nearby hotel, gave them a revolver and said, 'Here's your gun. I don't want any Teamster property!' "

"It should be remembered," wrote Bunker, "that Paul Hall and the SIU had a special reason for wanting to climb into the ring against the Teamsters. In 1960 Hoffa cooked up a grandiose scheme to bring all longshoremen and marine workers into the Teamsters through a proposed Conference of Transportation Unity. This plot included alliances with Joe Curran's National Maritime Union and Harry Bridge's International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Association.

"As part of this plan, Hoffa moved into Lakes shipping and tried to take over one of the SIU fleets there. He also set up the Marine Officers Association to raid the Masters, Mates and Pilots and the Marine Engineers Beneficial Association jurisdictions. He was unsuccessful...but it was a strong signal of his overall intention.

" 'James Hoffa,' said the *Chicago American*, 'is determined that the Teamsters shall boss the waterfront workers and the seamen, thus controlling all of the nation's transport facilities for freights except the railroads and the airlines.' "

Defection in Philadelphia

One of the biggest fights against the Teamsters occurred in Philadelphia, where Steve "Blackie" Cardullo, national director of the United Industrial Workers Union (the new name for the Marine Allied Workers Division), defected to the Teamsters.

At stake were the democratic rights of hundreds of UIW members working in such shops as Hussman Refrigeration. It was a tough and bitter fight, but the SIU won. The SIU almost won another fight. It had backed the Voice of the Teamsters Organizing Committee (VOICE), a dissident group of Teamster members committed to securing a democratic local in the Philadelphia area. The SIU was given practically no chance of winning this one. But the final vote was 3,870 to 3,274. "It was," said *Business Week*, "the first real challenge to Hoffa."

The battle for a democratic trade union movement had several important consequences. Most were good; one, unfortunately, was not, and it still plagues trade unionists today. In 1959 Congress enacted the Landrum-Griffin Act, which imposed severe new regulations on the labor movment and created a bureaucratic nightmare.

"The entire labor movement was punished for the actions of a few," said Archie Robinson. The SIU was luckier than most. Under the watchful eye of Howard Schulman, a one-time president of the 12,000 member Labor Law section of the American Bar Association, the SIU was able to minimize the effects of "harassment" suits that became commonplace after enactment of the legislation.

Hall Named to the Executive Council of the AFL-CIO

In 1962, Paul Hall was named to the executive council of the AFL-CIO. Hall's courageous actions during this period played an important part on his elevation to labor's highest council. "The battle for a democratic trade union movement was one of the most stirring in this union's history," said current SIU President Mike Sacco.

"Many of the people who participated in those battles are still alive today. Whenever I come across someone who was active in one of those beefs, I think to myself, here is someone who was willing to risk his life for the trade union movement.

"Ultimately," said Sacco, "it all boils down to the actions of one individual. A lot of young people today take a lot of things for granted. They just don't understand the sacrifices that the people who came before them made."

In Philadelphia...

"About noon time on Feb. 24, 1962, Red Campbell was waiting for lunch and watching a basketball game on t.v. Suddenly there was a shattered glass and a bottle came sailing through the big front window of the union hall.

"Moments later there was a crash and a shock that rocked the building as the rest of the window splintered in all directions and the front end of a truck nosed into the hall, followed by a barrage of bricks and bottles.

"George McCartney had been there sitting a few feet away writing a report and wishing he could be home that night for his wife's birthday.

" 'I knew right away what had happened,' he said. 'The Teamsters had come to call. I grabbed a bat and rushed out the door—like the charge of the Light Brigade. I ran into four gorillas loaded with bricks and bats. I swung my bat and they backed away. Then I realized I was the only one in McCartney's charge. I got back inside somehow without catching any bricks or bottles.'

"By that time big Ralph Quinnonez had charged out the door with Tom Gould, Steve Troy and some others. The Teamsters jumped into a car and sped away."

Teamsters Re-admitted To AFL-CIO

Even though the battle with the Teamsters had been long and bitterly fought, SIU President Frank Drozak in 1988 joined a united executive council of the AFL-CIO in voting to re-admit the Teamsters into the "House of Labor."

"Times change and so do priorities," said Frank Drozak. "If any union had the right to vote against admitting the Teamsters, it was this one.

"And yet it was vitally important for the Teamsters to be re-admitted. During the '50s, the big battle was to clean up the labor movement. George Meany, Paul Hall and others did so.

"And now the federal government wants to go far beyond the Landrum-Griffin Act in its fight against the Teamsters. They say that this is a special case: don't worry.

"If the labor movement has learned anything these past eight years of the Reagan administration, it is that if there is any kind of loophole it will be abused.

"If Ronald Reagan can appoint James Watt as Secretary of the Interior or put Ann Buford in charge of the Environmental Protection Agency, then sure as I stand here, any precedent taken in connection with the Teamsters will be abused. In the early '60s, we went to war with the Teamsters to protect the concept of democratic trade unionism. It's now the '80s, and we'll support them every inch of the way for the same reason."

In 1957, George Meany expelled the Teamsters to ensure a democratic labor movement.

Paul Hall and George Meany joined forces in the battle for a democratic labor movement.

As a result of the sacrifices made by the SIU, Chicago taxi drivers made important gains.

Chapter Fifteen:

Fight to Save the Maritime Industry

By the early '60s, technological advances were so rapid and far-reaching that they posed a serious challenge to the job security of American seamen.

The rise of cross-Atlantic air travel killed off the lucrative passenger vessel industry. Eight of the few remaining American-flag passenger vessels were sold overseas or laid up in 1969. They were all under contract to the NMU, and their demise put a serious strain on that union's pension plan.

In 1958, the SIU had made an attempt to create new work for its members in this area when it became involved in the American Banner Lines beef. The union implemented an innovative training program, but the company lasted only one year.

Containerization Changes Maritime

Other changes were just as far-reaching. In 1957 a new era in shipping was ushered in when the *Gateway City* became the first fully-containerized vessel in the world. The technology had been pioneered by two North Carolina trucking brothers, James and Malcolm McLean, who had bought Waterman Steamship Company in 1955.

Containerization changed completely the face of the maritime industry. It placed a premium on space, which rendered ports like Manhattan obsolete. By wedding trucking and shipping it ushered in a new era of intermodalism. And it drastically cut down the amount of time that a ship needed to spend in a port.

Other changes were revolutionizing the maritime industry. Automation cut down the number of people needed to crew a vessel. It also put a premium on workers who could handle sophisticated computerized equipment.

Generous subsidies and favorable tax laws enabled foreign fleets to get a jump start with diesel technology. This substantially reduced their operating costs, making them more competitive. The first American company to introduce that kind of sophisticated equipment was the Falcoln Group, an SIU-contracted company headed by the visionary C.C. Wei.

Vietnam War Creates New Jobs for American Seamen

American shipping was given a reprieve of sorts by the Vietnam War. Once again, demand for shipping increased. Once again, it was a mad scramble to provide properly trained crews for all the vessels. Manpower became the catch-all phrase among port officials. "We didn't actually shanghai anybody," said one SIU official, "but there were times when I wished it were a viable option."

The battle to man all the vessels was two-fold. If vessels consistently sailed short-handed, an operator would argue that the manning scales were out of line. And if the work were done by licensed officers, the SIU would lose the slot altogether.

A lot of new members came into the SIU during this time. The demand for shipping made it possible for many members to gain 'A' books and advanced ratings in record time. Bobby McKay became the youngest deck officer in the history of the maritime industry. He had started with the SIU as a teenager and worked his way up.

Other members made good use of the opportunities. John Adams was from Southern Maryland. "I was hanging around with no place to go. If it hadn't been for the SIU and the opportunities it presented me, I don't know what would have become of me," he said. He became a captain in 1986. In order to handle this increased demand for shipping, the SIU and District-2 MEBA opened a joint training school in Brooklyn, N.Y. In 1968, the SIU got into a beef with District 1-MEBA over an apprentice engineer rating that District 1 wanted to have introduced on its Delta ships. The SIU said that it violated its jurisdiction; after a brief confrontation the rating was dropped from all SIU-contracted vessels.

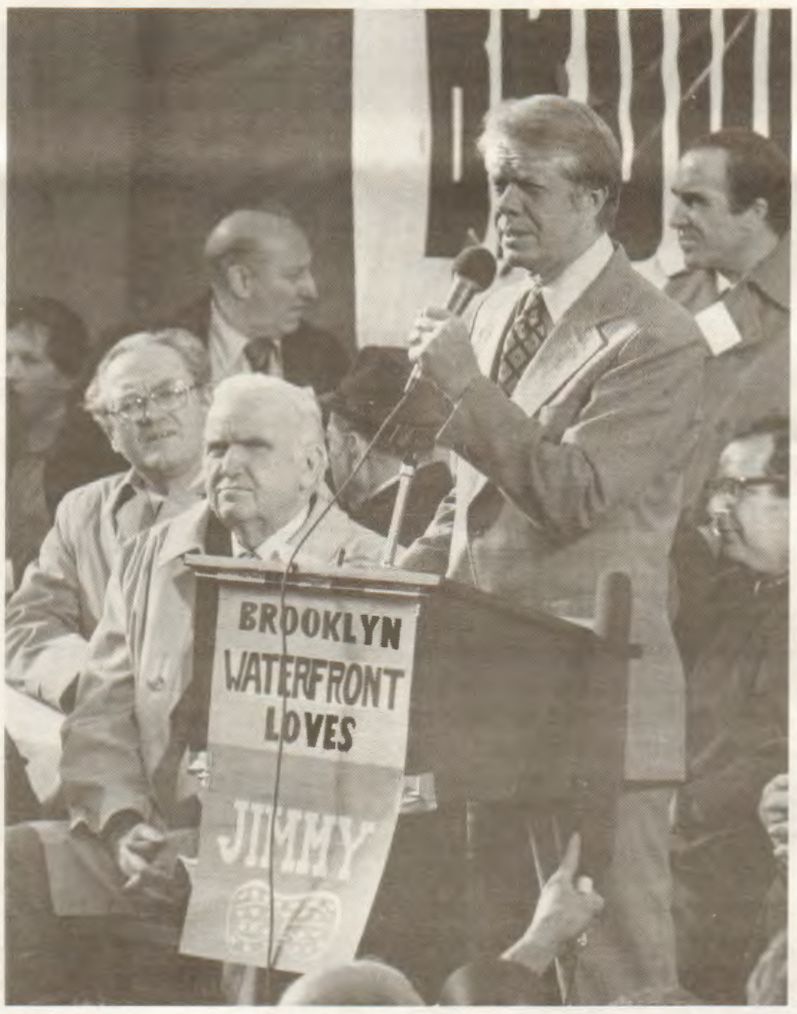
The apprentice engineer rating was particularly important because it represented an attack against the SIU's future. The SIU had introduced a new rating in the engine room, the QMED. During the Vietnam War there were plenty of jobs for all American seamen. But everyone knew that once the war ended, the decline in shipping would resume unabated. FOC fleets did not pay taxes, nor did they have to meet the same kind of minimum safety and health standards that American companies were required to meet. Coupled with automation and other technological advances, this meant that the number of jobs available to American seamen would inevitably shrink.

SIU President Paul Hall realized that the long-time job security of American seamen depended on just two things: political action and education. Throughout the sixties and seventies, he made both a priority.

Richard Nixon gave maritime a reprieve with the 1970 Merchant Marine Act.

Ford vetoed cargo preference, Paul Hall vetoed Ford.

In 1976, Jimmy Carter pledged support for a cargo preference bill .



SIU lobbyist Phil Carlip was a fixture on Capitol Hill.

SPAD Gets Results for American Seamen

Under Hall's direction, the SIU developed one of the most effective political action programs in the country. A new program, the Seafarers Political Action Donation program, or SPAD, was introduced. The members were told that their

job security depended on political action. Under American law the general funds of a union could not be used for lobbying; this meant that seamen had to make direct contributions to a separate fund. "Politics is Porkchops" ran the headlines in the SIU LOG. The union made an all-out effort to communicate to its membership the importance of political action.

The members responded in style, making voluntary contributions to the union's political action program. Thanks to their generosity, SPAD became one of the largest programs of its kind. The SIU then used it to lobby for programs that would create a steady source of cargo for American seamen.

The government challenged the legality of SPAD in the courts. A federal judge eventually dismissed the case, saying that the government's actions amounted to "legal harassment" of the union, thus clearing the way for further action. The program continues to give the SIU a solid political base in Washington, D.C.

place the Maritime Administration into the Department of Transportation, where he felt it would get lost in the shuffle.

Like the Isthmian and Cities Service fights, Hall made political action an all-out campaign. The MTD was turned into a war room, complete with charts and graphs showing how a particular senator or congressman had voted on an important issue. He again assembled one of his famous "teams." The MTD team consisted of Pete McGavin, Jean Ingrao, Phil Carlip, O.W. "Bill" Moody, John Yarmola, and a few others.

New Research Center Formed

In this new ballpark, knowledge was power. Hall then persuaded SIU-contracted companies to develop an independent research center, known as the Transportation Institute. It opened in 1969 under the direction of Herb Brand, one-time editor of the Seafarers LOG.

Paul Hall with two members of his "MTD team." Jean Ingrao, center, John Yarmola, right. In the '70s, the MTD played a pivotal political role.

SIU Becomes Leading Political Player

Hall became a leading player on the national political scene. AFL-CIO President George Meany asked him to direct Hubert Humphrey's presidential campaign in California. A confident of New York Governor Hugh Carey, Hall was ranked among the 10 most powerful people in the stateh by *New York Magazine.*

On the executive council of the AFL-CIO, Hall was a consistent supporter of George Meany. He broke with Meany just once: in 1973 when the council voted to impeach Richard Nixon. Meany understood why: aside from Franklin Delano Roosevelt, no president in this century had done more to promote the American-flag merchant marine.

Nixon had signed into law the Merchant Marine Act of 1970, an ambitious shipbuilding program which extended Title XI loan guarantees to tankers and inland equipment. Hall's role in passage of the bill earned him the title of "Father of the modern American merchant marine."

The SIU developed a sophisticated political action program.

Paul Hall talking to industrial workers at a UIW membership meeting.

Merchant Marine Act of 1970 Only Half of the Solution

The Merchant Marine Act of 1970 was supposed to have created 300 new ships. Fewer than one-third that amount were actually built. "People forget," said MTD Secretary-Treasurer Jean Ingrao, "that Paul Hall envisioned the Merchant Marine Act of 1970 as one-half of a comprehensive program. The other half was securing a steady source of cargo for the American-flag merchant marine."

Hall spent the last nine years of his life pursuing this one goal. He came close to achieving it in 1974 when Congress enacted the Energy Transportation Act, which would have set aside a certain percentage of petroleum and bulk cargoes for American-flag vessels. He had received an assurance from President Gerald Ford that he would sign the bill into law if it passed both houses of Congress. But when it did, Ford reneged on his promise.

"For years," wrote Victor Reisel, "Hall dealt in presidents and with presidents. He knew Jerry Ford when most labor leaders didn't know the Michigan congressman from a Pinto. In 1976 Hall could have re-elected Ford because he always played arithmetic politics. He had the votes to throw to his old friend Ford. But the ex-president, after having invited Paul to Vail, Colo. for a conference, refused to back a cargo preference bill which would have put considerable oil and grain tonnage in American vessels.

"Jerry Ford vetoed that on principle. Hall vetoed Ford, as he had vetoed other presidents... Hall made certain that Jerry Ford would lose New York state. But first, Hall got candidate Jimmy Carter to sign a long letter at the Park Sheraton Hotel promising to deliver a cargo preference bill."

Hall urged Congress to implement bilateral trade agreements and to develop steady sources of cargo for American-flag vessels. During the early years of

MTD Plays an Increasingly Important Role

During this time the Maritime Trades Department played an increasingly important role in protecting the job security of American seamen. Under the direction of MTD President Paul Hall and Secretary-Treasurer Pete McGavin, the MTD was a major player on the national political scene.

The MTD consisted of 44 international unions representing 8.5 million members. Hall had realized that there was little that 100,000 seamen could do alone. But by engaging shore-side workers into the struggle for a stronger, more secure merchant marine, the battle lines were more evenly drawn.

Throughout the sixties and seventies, the MTD became a leading voice in the fight to secure a steady supply of cargo for American companies. It was on the front lines in preventing the government from closing down the USPHS hospital system. Lyndon Johnson once complained that the only man he couldn't beat on Capitol Hill was Paul Hall. Hall had continually frustrated Johnson's attempts to

Officers of the SIUNA are sworn in at the 1975 convention. Throughout the decade. the SIU remained active in the affairs of the international by helping other affiliates and pursuing mergers.

detente, the United States and the Soviet Union signed a bilateral trade agreement allowing the American-flag merchant marine to carry one-third of all grain cargo to the Soviet Union.

Pension Plan Adopted

There was much more than just politics during these years. In 1961, in negotiations with deepsea companies, the SIU got its first pension plan.

"If you ask me, this was the most important thing that Paul Hall ever did," said Vice President Red Campbell. "The other maritime unions had their pension plans long before we did. Paul waited until he knew that ours would be financially secure. He took a lot of heat on that one. But he was right, and today the members have the finest pension plan in the industry."

"Paul's mother had been left destitute after a union pension plan she was supposed to have received went bust," said Rose Hall, his widow. "This made him determined to make sure that any benefit he offered the membership be secure. He didn't want his membership to be in the position that his family was put in. They had relied on the pension for their sole means of support, and when it went under they were left virtually penniless."

ERISA

During this period the whole nature of union administration was changing. Congress and the government were piling one regulation on another. Sometimes, the regulations flatly contradicted one another. "On Labor Day of 1974," wrote Caroline Gentile, former administrator of the SIU Pension Plan, "Congress passed a revolutionary piece of legislation that would have a profound effect on the way employee benefit funds such as pension plans and medical plans were run. The statute was called the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA). It was obvious from the beginning that ERISA was a very complicated statute that would require a good deal of examination and careful analysis before any action could be taken, but within 12 months of the Act's passage each Seafarers employee benefit plan would have to be changed.

"Unlike many other plans that would require major amendments, the Seafarers' plan had already provided for many of the protections that Congress sought to guarantee by the passage of ERISA... Although many of the rules (mandated by ERISA) seem simple and familiar today, the statue was confusing and difficult to interpret when it was first enacted. The problems were worsened by disagreements about the meaning of the legislation between the Department of Labor and the Internal Revenue Service."

SIU Active in International's Affairs

The union continued to be active in the affairs of the international. Throughout this period, the A&G District actively pursued merging with other affiliates. In 1976, the Inland Boatmen's Union became part of the A&G District. A similar agreement was reached in 1978 with the Marine, Cooks & Stewards. The SIU continued to offer support to the other affiliates. It strongly supported the SUP and the MFOW in their dispute over the manning of the *Valerie F.* And when the SIU of Canada was embroiled in the bitterly-contested Upper Great Lakes beef, the A&G District did everything it could to help its sister affiliate.

United Industrial Workers Union Continues to Grow

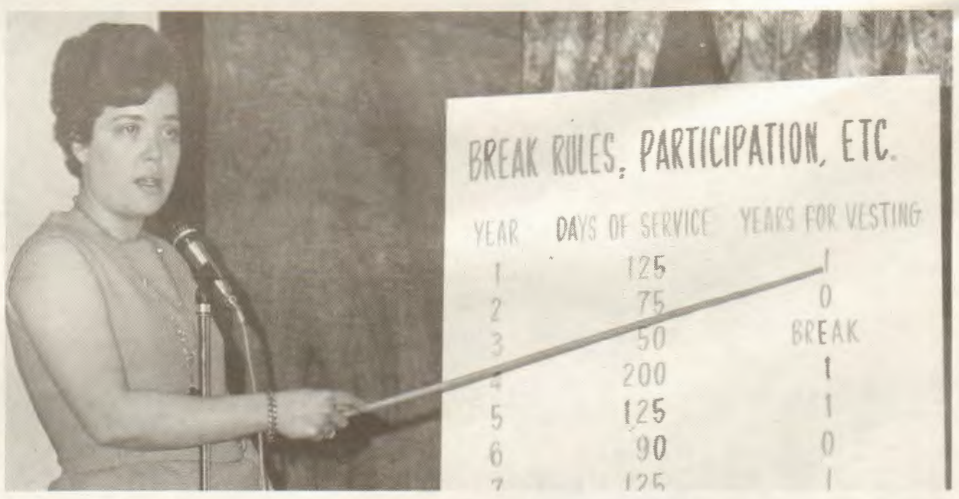
Throughout this period, Hall supported development of the United Industrial Workers Union, which was directly affiliated to both the international and the A&G District. It had been chartered in 1949 under the name of Marine Allied Workers Division, but changed its name in 1961 to reflect a change in the composition of its membership. For the first few years of its existence, the UIW concentrated its efforts on signing up workers in marine allied trades. Gradually, however, it began to sign up more and more workers in industrial shops. In 1962, it played a pivotal role in Hall's campaign against the Teamsters.

The UIW gave the SIU an important base among shore-side workers whose support seamen needed if they were to continue to remain an important political force. Some locals of the UIW, such as the one in Columbus, Ohio, were quite active in grassroots activities. In 1970, under the direction of Frank Drozak, the UIW's national director, and Ralph Quinnonez, the union's Atlantic Coast director, the UIW was able to sign up more than 2,000 new members on the U.S. Virgin Islands. Later in the decade, the UIW was active in getting the Brooklyn Navy Yard reopened.

The facility was forced to close when ship construction from the Merchant Marine Act of 1970 failed to meet projected goals. Still, the project had earned the respect of trade unionists and civil rights leaders around the country. It served as a model for other programs aimed at promoting minority employment in the highly skilled construction trades. After the SIU entered into a merger agreement with the Marine Cooks and Stewards, hundreds of culinary workers employed on the Queen Mary Hotel joined the UIW. This marked a turning point in the UIW's efforts to sign up new workers in the service sector.

SIU Vice President Lindsey Williams, left, presents SIU member with his pension check.

Caroline Gentile, former administrator of the SIU Plans, outlines ERISA for the trustees.



The SIU made sure that all benefits offered under the Pension Plan were secure.

Throughout the '60s and '70s, wages and benefits for UIW members continued to improve. In a sense, the UIW's growth was proof that the seamen's age-old struggle for equality and justice could stir workers outside the maritime industry. Later, in the 1980s, the UIW would serve as a focal point for the union's fight for legislation to promote fair trade in the international marketplace.

Chapter Sixteen:

Lundeberg School Gives Thousands Of Seamen a Chance for a Better Life

In 1967, a small group of teenagers became front-line soldiers in a campaign that would occupy Paul Hall's attention for the last 13 years of his life. None had ever been employed onboard an American-flag vessel.

Some had been born and raised in New York City ghettoes; others were from Appalachia. Few had any real job prospects for the future. They were the first group of trainees to be admitted to the union's new training school in Piney Point, Md.

They were greeted by union officials who had spent nearly two years preparing for this moment. After signing in, the trainees were issued regulation uniforms—jeans, work boots, levi shirts. Their heads were shaven and they were put up in a makeshift dormitory in a rundown motel. They got up at dawn, marched in formation, learned how to tie knots and earned their lifeboat certificate.

After six weeks, they were given their first job onboard an American-flag vessel. Their careers as merchant seamen had officially begun.

Came Upon the Land By Chance

This marked the beginning of the Harry Lundeberg School of Seamanship. For several years, the union had been exploring ways of consolidating its various training programs. The drastic changes that were engulfing the maritime industry had convinced Paul Hall that the union needed to upgrade its commitment to education.

The SIU had come upon the land for the school by chance. New York Port Agent Joe DiGiorgio had gone to Piney Point to meet with a representative of Steuart Petroleum. Close by was a rundown vacation resort that had once been a torpedo testing station for the Navy.

The union bought the land through a trust set up by its contracted companies. Frank Mongelli and Tom Soresi were sent down to get the school in shape. For several months, they did nothing but hard labor, bulldozing land, draining the swampy land and working on making the facilities habitable.

They were soon joined by other SIU officials: Bob Matthews, Mike and Joe Sacco, Bob Clinton, Tom Brooks, Bill Hall and others. When the school was ready to accept students, Ken Conklin, a retired marine, was put in charge of the trainees.

It was rough duty. Work days lasted 14 hours or more. Officials were separated from their families for months at a time. And yet for many it was the high point of their careers. Within a few years Piney Point had become a showplace for the SIU and the maritime industry.

The growth was gradual. At first, the school taught only lifeboat and basic seamanship. But by the mid '70s, the school had a full-fledged curriculum.

"Hundreds of SIU members and officials have a special feeling for the school," wrote John Bunker, "because they helped to build it in the hot, humid days of summer and in the frigid winter when the base was swept by winds from ice-choked St. Mary's Bay. Many a youngster who sweated there as a trainee is now sailing as a mate or engineer.

"They all have a special memory of Paul Hall. He met personally with every upgrader and trainee. He oversaw every detail of construction.

"SIU men remember seeing him tour the base for hours on end in his electric golf car: checking, prodding and sparing no rebuke to get things done."

The Harry Lundeberg School at Piney Point was the culmination of a dream for Paul Hall.

SIU trainees were given the tools to compete in an increasingly complex maritime industry.

Educate the Whole Person

From the beginning, Paul Hall had a clear perception of what he wanted the school to become. "We want to train seamen to meet the job opportunities of the future," he said. "We have to educate the whole person."

In 1970, the school began offering courses in basic education. Within eight years, more than 1,000 seafarers were able to receive their high school equivalency diplomas. Many were in their fifties and sixties; some had put off upgrading for years because they were embarrassed to admit that they couldn't read.

In 1978, the school reached an agreement with St. Charles Community College to offer college-level courses. By 1985, the school had developed its own degree program so that students could earn associate in arts degrees in Nautical Science Technology and Marine Technology.

Yet Piney Point was not just another school. Its curriculum was fashioned with two goals in mind: to make the American-flag merchant marine more competitive and to enable seafarers to take advantage of any new job opportunities in the maritime industry.

New Programs, New Job Opportunities

In 1972, the Lundeberg School recognized the need for trained personnel aboard the tugs, towboats and inland barges. In order to provide seamen with the training to take advatage of these new opportunities, a special program was designed. When job opportunities arose onboard LNG ships and diesel powered vessels, it crafted a program of study to promote job opportunities in those areas.

In recent years, emphasis has been on training seafarers for employment onboard military vessels, which have provided the only new jobs in the maritime industry. A large cargo handling crane was installed, enabling the school to offer a comprehensive sealift mobility course. The Army and Navy began sending people to the school to take advantage of these facilities.

A multi-functional bridge deep-sea and inland simulator is now in operation, one of the few in the nation. This gives seafarers a chance to accumulate necessary, realistic, "hands-on" experience while still in the classroom.

The most important thing about the school is its adaptability. When the union signed a contract to crew S.S. *Independence* and *Constitution*, the SHLSS was able to train skilled chefs and food-handlers to make these passenger vessels a culinary delight for their passengers.

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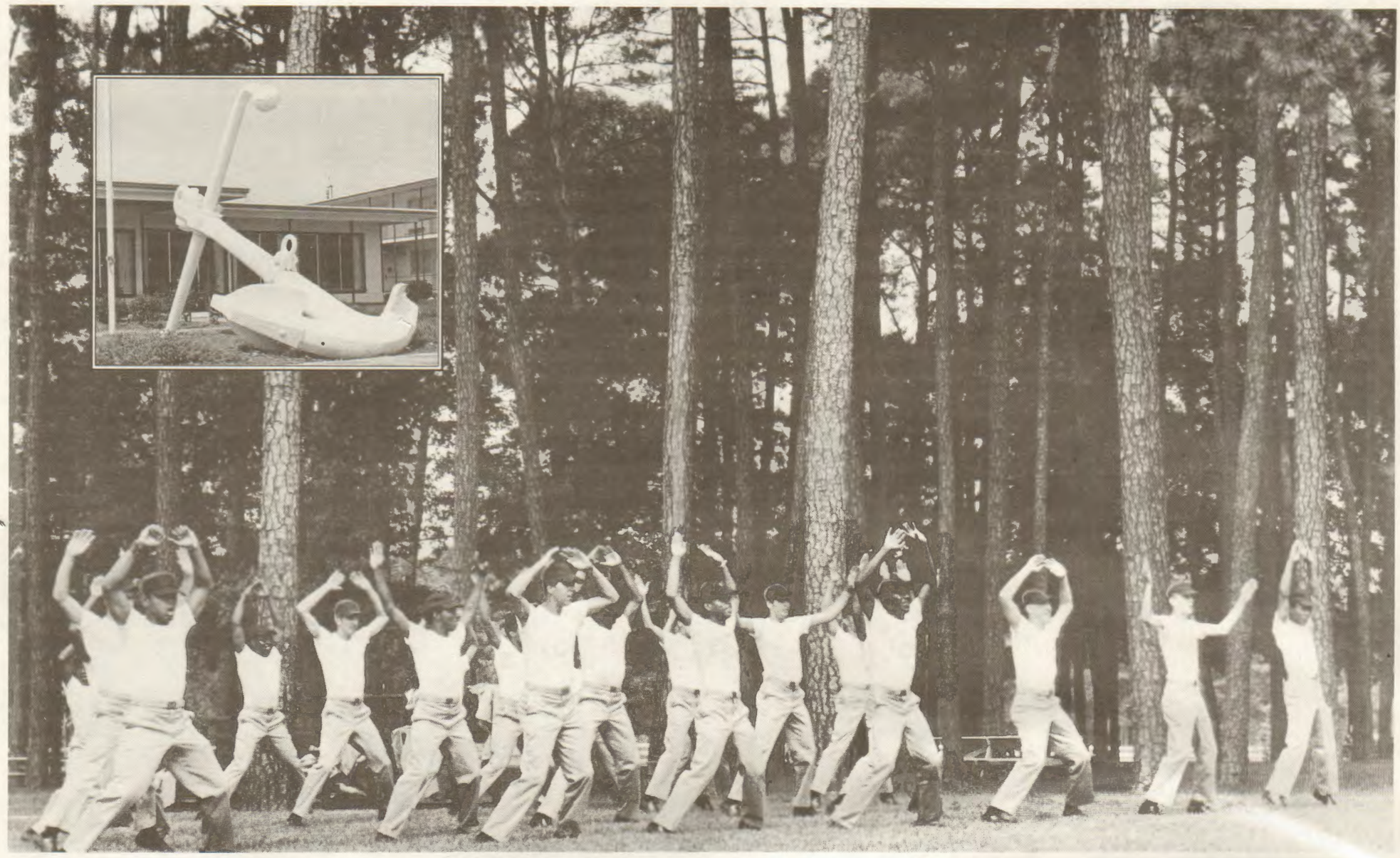

The Lundeberg School was conceived with the aim of "educating the whole person." The anchor in front of the hotel, center, became a symbol for the entire school.

"The union's commitment to education has been carried on through three different administrations," said Ken Conklin, vice president of the school. "First with Paul Hall, then with Frank Drozak and now with Mike Sacco."

ARC Program

The SIU was one of the first unions in America to recognize the serious threat posed by drug and alcohol addiction. More than 700 seafarers have regained their sobriety and drug-free status by making use of the Addictions Rehabilitation Center in nearby Valley Lee.

The union ran a series of conferences on alcohol abuse at Piney Point in 1974 to publicize this problem. There was a lot of resistance to the new program, especially from those who needed it the most. Yet as a result, lives have been saved.

"When I came to the ARC," said Bill Eglinton, who now is a counselor there, "I was down to 150 lbs. I was in bad shape. I had a bleeding ulcer and was experiencing black-outs.

"I started losing jobs. I was written up a few times. Finally, I just couldn't take it any more. I got off a ship and went straight to the union hall.

"I talked to Philadelphia Port Agent Joe Air. He had someone pick me up and drive me down to Baltimore, where I went into a detox center.

The union's Addictions Rehabilitation Center provides recovering seamen with support .

"I then went to the ARC. We were one of the first groups. There were 12 others guys. Afterwards, I took the A.A. books with me onboard ship. They gave us tapes to listen to.

"There usually was another guy onboard ship who had been through the program. No matter what port we hit, we were usually able to get to an A.A. meeting."

No Longer Hard Duty

Piney Point is no longer hard duty. A beautiful new hotel and recreation center was constructed in 1981. A library, named after Paul Hall, opened at the same time. The Lundeberg School is located in an historic section of Southern Maryland. The school's crowning glory is its waterfront section: Piney Point is located close to where the Potomac River empties into the Chesapeake Bay. Outside organizations now book conventions and seminars at the school. Two years ago, SIU pensioners started living there on a full-time basis.

Culmination of a Dream

For Paul Hall, the Lundeberg School was a culmination of a dream. Deprived of an education, he enabled thousands of seamen to gain theirs.

In 1979, a few days before he was to give the seconding speech for Lane Kirkland at the convention of the AFL-CIO, he had a seizure. It was an inoperable brain tumor.

He fought off death for several months. He drifted in and out of a coma; he barely knew where he was. The last year of his life had been one of his happiest. He had nurtured his beloved wife Rose to health after a serious illness. Her recovery had brought him great joy.

When he fell ill she rarely left his side. Every day for eight months, 12 hours a day, sometimes more, she was at the hospital guarding him. Long after he lost consciousness, members of the hospital staff came to visit, for he had mesmerized them with his presence. In SIU union halls across the nation, old-timers would grab officials and ask, "How is Rosie? How's the Chief?"

When he died, there was a sense of loss at the hospital. Even people who had barely known him could feel their lives diminished in some unexplained way.

In many ways, that last, tragic campaign was his finest. Once, when he came out of a coma, he gave a speech, one of the best he had ever delivered. He was going to build a town for seamen, a place that they could call their own, where they could live and work in dignity.

Of course, he had already done that. It was called Piney Point.

His last lucid moment came in January 1980. A picture of George Meany flashed on the television screen. The Grand Old Man of Labor was dead at 85.

"There's George," he said right before he slipped back into a coma. It was truly the passing of an era, for maritime and for labor.

At his funeral, Lane Kirkland said it best. "That big, red Alabama heart of Paul Hall is now still, but the strong beat of it carries on in the love of his family, in the memories of his friends, in the union he built, in the solid works that he did, and in the brighter and richer lives of thousands of young people who got a better chance in life because of him."

Chapter 17

The '80s: SIU Adjusts to Sweeping Changes, Plants Seeds of Hope

By 1979 Paul Hall had reached the zenith of his career. As senior vice president of the AFL-CIO, he was one of the most influential labor leaders in the nation.

He had taken the small, struggling affiliate that Harry Lundeberg established on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts and built it into one of the most powerful unions in the nation. He had battled organized crime on the waterfront and beaten the world's largest conglomerates. The wages and working conditions of American seamen, who had been among the most exploited of workers, now compared favorably with their counterparts on shore.

Just one accomplishment had escaped his grasp: persuading Congress and the American people to implement a national maritime policy.

1980 Presidential Election Pivotal

He viewed the upcoming presidential election as maritime's last chance to gain a steady supply of cargo. He was gearing up for the election when tragedy struck. Just before he was to deliver Lane Kirkland's seconding speech at the AFL-CIO Convention, he was felled by an inoperable brain tumor.

Frank Drozak, his long-time associate, immediately stepped in and gave the union a strong presence during a potentially troubling period. Because of their close association, there was a smooth transition.

Within months, Drozak was playing a leading role in securing support for Jimmy Carter, who was publicly committed to signing a cargo preference bill.

Carter lost the 1980 election by a wide margin, in part because of a sense of national frustration brought about by the Iranian hostage crisis. Control of the Senate passed to the Republican Party for the first time in more than 20 years. The combination of these two events helped pave the way for the so-called Reagan Revolution, which transformed the face of American politics.

The *Keystone State*, one of the union's first military vessels.

At first, many in the maritime industry had great hopes for the new administration. During the campaign, Reagan had issued a seven-point program to "revitalize" the American-flag merchant marine. Yet this turned out to be nothing more than an empty campaign promise.

Reagan Revolution Sweeps America

The labor movement was faced with a new environment distinctly hostile to its interests. The administration made its intentions clear early on when it broke the Professional Air Traffic Controllers (PATCO) Union in a bitterly contested strike. Ironically, PATCO had been one of the few unions to support Reagan during the 1980 election.

Federal programs which had provided a minimum safety net for millions of American workers were axed. The National Labor Relations Board was packed with conservative appointees, which made it difficult for unions to receive an impartial hearing. Business groups began holding seminars on how to break unions. The percentage of the American workforce holding membership in a union dropped below 20 percent for the first time in the post-war era.

Pension funds were under attack. Companies sought to pull out of secure, multi-employer plans and establish their own single-employer plans. Not one multi-employer plan has ever filed for bankruptcy, but in the three-year period between 1974-1977 alone, more than 8,000 single-employer plans went under.

The *S.S. Constitution*, one of two SIU-crewed passenger ships.

Maritime Programs Axed

Initially, many maritime officials believed that their programs would escape the axe because of the Reagan administration's strong commitment to defense. After all, they reasoned, the American-flag merchant marine plays a pivotal role in providing sealift.

They were wrong. The American-flag merchant marine was hard hit. Funding for the Construction Differential Subsidy program was halted. In addition, the administration tried to gut the Title XI Loan Guarantee Mortgage Program and the Capital Construction Fund.

The USPHS hospital system, which had provived seamen with quality medical care for nearly 200 years, was shut down. The administration procrastinated in coming up with a new liner subsidy program, even though the program, which was central to the continued survival of the American maritime industry, had begun to expire. The program it eventually unveiled has failed to generate much enthusiasm.

Maritime's Survival is at Stake

In 1980, when the Reagan administration took power, there were 600 deep-sea vessels registered under the American flag, which was barely enough to meet this nation's sealift needs. Today, on the eve of the union's 50th anniversary, that number has fallen to just 360.

The maritime industry has undergone a wrenching restructuring. Once-proud companies like U.S. Lines no longer exist. Automation has reduced manning scales.

Conditions have been made worse by a decade-long depression in the shipping industry. In order to stay afloat, shipping companies and labor unions have been forced into frenzied bidding wars.

Worldwide trends for seamen and other maritime workers are ominous. In order to compete with open registries, traditional maritime nations like Norway have begun setting up their own second registries.

Clearly, the continued survival of the American-flag merchant marine presents the members of the SIU with their greatest challenge as the union faces its second 50 years.

Chaos in the Tug and Barge Industry

Deep-sea sailors were not the only maritime workers to experience difficulties during this period.

A depression in the oil industry and an explosion of corporate takeovers created a desperate situation in the tug and barge industry as well. A pattern soon emerged. A company that had a long-standing relationship with the union (ACBL, SONAT Marine) would be taken over by a conglomerate. Almost immediately, the new management team would start making moves to break the union. That way they could gain access to the funds stored in multi-employer plans, reduce wages and welfare benefits and eliminate job descriptions, work rules, the seniority system and other improvements the union had won.

Tug and barge companies began unilaterally reclassifying certain groups of workers as "supervisory personnel." This made good-faith bargaining nearly impossible and threw what should have been routine negotiations into the courts. Workers were left in limbo while the appeal process took two, three years to play itself out.

"It used to be that you would sit across the table from an owner and talk to him as one human being to another," said SIU Vice President John Fay. "Now, he has his lawyers and his accountants, and you have yours. Everything has to be in writing; even if you trust a particular management team you know that any company today can wind up being a pawn in some takeover bid. The flexibility and trust has gone out of labor-management relations."

Jones, Cargo Preference Acts Attacked

During the Reagan years, repeated attacks have been made against the two most important maritime promotional programs—the Jones Act and the Cargo Preference Act of 1954.

In 1985, agriculture groups mounted their most serious challenge to the Cargo Preference Act of 1954. Right before one critical vote, SIU President Frank Drozak flooded Capitol Hill with whitecapped seamen who made unannounced visits to their elected representatives.

He later played a leading role in bringing about a compromise between maritime and agricultural groups on this issue. This led to the restructuring of the Cargo Preference Act. Certain types of cargo were removed from the act's

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jurisdiction. In return, the cargo preference requirements for other types of government-impelled cargo were raised from 50 to 75 percent over a three-year period.

Administration Seeks to Export Alaskan Oil

The administration made no secret of its desire to export Alaskan oil overseas despite a ban contained in the Export Administration Act. This would have had the effect of laying up 40 tankers in the domestic trades. The maritime industry was able to garner enough support in Congress from preventing that from happening.

Many Gains Recorded

Under Drozak's direction, the union looked into imaginative ways of dealing with a radically changed maritime industry. The abrupt closing of the USPHS hospitals created a crisis for most welfare plans. The trustees effected savings in the Seafarers Welfare Plan without having to cut back on the benefits provided seamen. In New Orleans and Seattle, for example, a preferred provider system was set up which guaranteed seamen in those ports better medical coverage for less money.

As president of the 8.5 million member Maritime Trades Department of the AFL-CIO, Drozak led a successful 11-year fight to gain recognition for the role that American seamen played in World War II. He worked tirelessly for ratification of ILO Convention 147, which set minimum international standards for seamen. It was the first ILO Convention to be signed by the United States in 35 years.

The SIU worked for passage of a port development bill to stimulate activity in the dredging industry and opposed the imposition of user fees, which were viewed as posing a serious threat to the economic health of the inland waterways industry.

It supported efforts to reduce the burdensome requirements heaped on the maritime industry, which is regulated by more than 75 agencies. At the same time, the union opposed the administration's broader policy of deregulation, on the grounds that it would lead to a breakdown of safety standards in the transportation industry.

The union joined others in the maritime industry in strenuously opposing the reflagging of 11 Kuwaiti tankers. Rep. Helen Bentley (R-Md.) summed up the feelings of many in the industry when she said that the administration had debased the maritime laws of the country and turned the American registry into a flag of convenience.

In order to protect the rights of New Bedford fishermen, the SIU called a strike against the Seafood Producers Association in 1985. A settlement was finally reached two years later. In announcing the agreement, SIU Vice President Jack Caffey noted that management and labor could now mount a united front to resolve thorny problems relating to vessel safety, liability insurance and fishing rights in disputed international waters.

Services Beefed Up

Shortly after taking over the helm of the SIU, Frank Drozak took steps to improve services to the members. In order to give the union a more visible presence in the nation's capital, he relocated the headquarters building to Camp Springs, Md. He completely computerized the union's records. Not only did this facilitate the processing of claims, but it laid the foundation for a stronger, more efficient Manpower Department. Building upon the legacy of Paul Hall, Drozak made education a priority. He continued to upgrade the facilities at the Seafarers Harry Lundeberg School. In his speeches, columns and taped messages, he urged SIU members to upgrade their skills.

Unfair Trade Plagues America

It was Frank Drozak's belief that the problems facing the American maritime industry were part of a larger problem. He felt that the international trading system was inherently unfair and that something needed to be done to protect the security of American workers.

He called upon Congress and the administration to enact an industrial policy. If they didn't, he predicted a mass exodus of jobs overseas. All the American workers would be left with, he said, "were Mickey Mouse jobs in places like McDonald's paying minimum wage rates." The prototype for this, he said, was the formulation of the Effective U.S. Control Doctrine, which decimated the American-flag merchant marine and the fleets of our NATO allies.

During his long career in the maritime industry—he had started sailing in the deck department in the waning days of World War II— Drozak had witnessed drastic changes in technology and automation. Unless the SIU and the members of the union adapted to the rapid changes which were engulfing the industry, he said, they would be left behind.

Absent help from the federal government, he believed that the only avenue of growth was in the military sector. He repeatedly called upon the federal government to contract work out to the private sector. This would have a three-fold effect. It would increase the sealift capability of this country by securing an adequately-sized pool of skilled mariners. It would save the American taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars. And it would save the American-flag merchant marine.

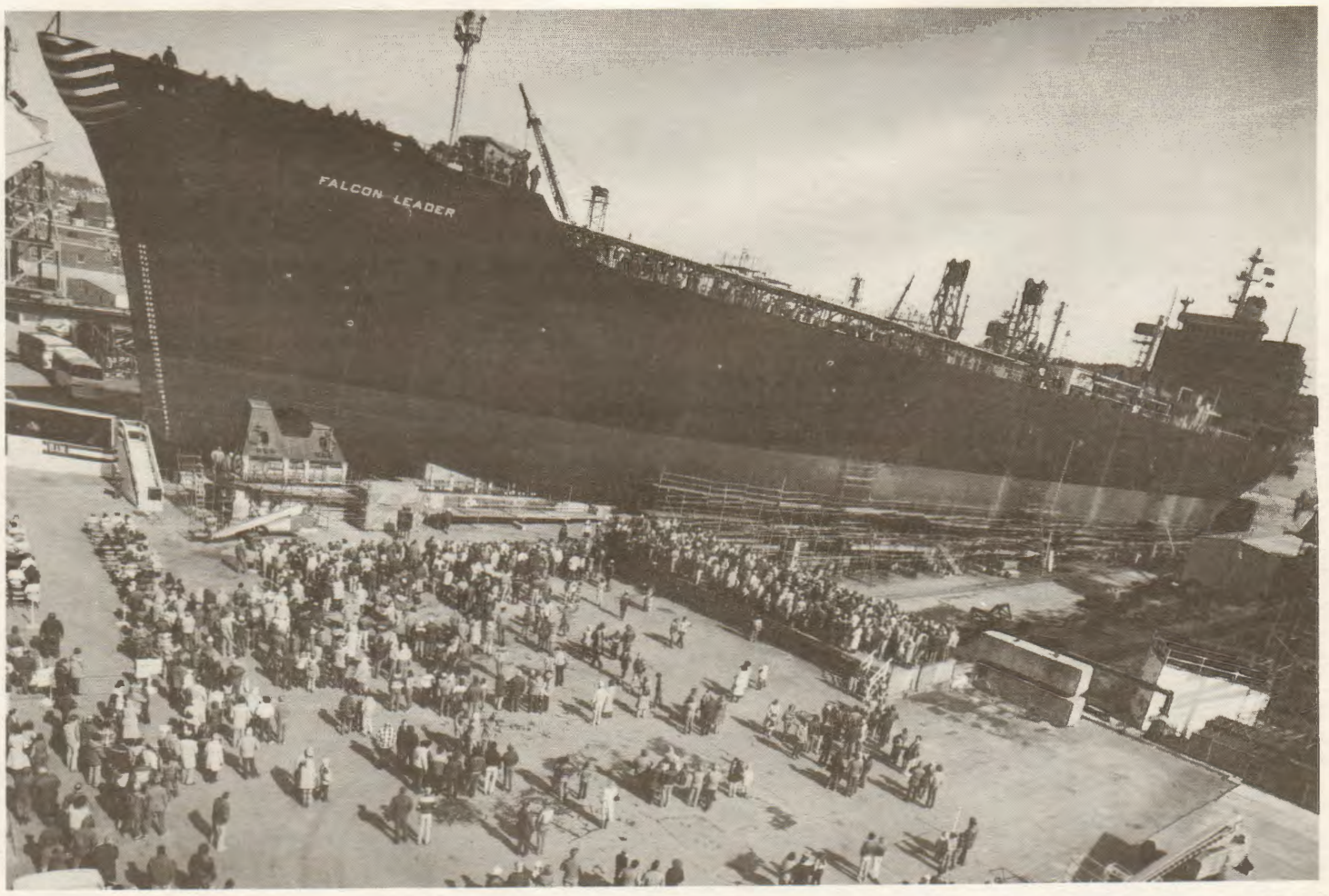
SHLSS Vice President Frank Mongelli (left) met with representatives of the Army and Navy.

SIU Garners Military Work

During a period of industry-wide decline, the SIU was able to sign up hundreds of new jobs for its members

The SIU-contracted *American Eagle* was part of the convoy for the Grenada invasion.

Member shows souvenir from invasion.



The SIU-contracted *Falcon Leader* was one of the last vessels to be built with CDS funds. Shipbuilding came to a virtual halt in U.S. yards.

onboard military vessels that had been contracted out to the private sector.

The turning point came in 1984, when an amendment attached to the Department of Defense authorizations bill mandated that the Military Sealift Command go through an A-76 bidding process.

It was a slow process made possible by the high quality of SIU crews. In 1984, for example, an SIU crew onboard the *Southern Cross* made a strong impression on the military, earning a letter of commendation for its flawless performance in NATO exercises.

The SHLSS retooled its curriculum to include a sealift course incorporating training for helicopter operations and underway replenishments. Students admitted to the school were trained to chores onboard deck and in the engine room. Drozak brought management, labor and government together at a sealift conference, the first of which was held in May 1986 in Piney Point.

Frank Drozak Dies

The various affiliates of the SIUNA met in August 1987 at one of the international's regularly scheduled conventions to deal with the many problem's facing the maritime industry. On the first day of the convention, SIUNA President Frank Drozak fell ill.

It was cancer. By April 1988, his condition had become so grave that he called SIU Executive Vice President Michael Sacco to headquarters to begin taking over the helm of the union. Speaking at the union's April membership meeting, Sacco praised Drozak for his many accomplishments. He also urged the membership to reflect upon the meaning of the union's upcoming 50th anniversary.

He said that the labor movement had enabled American seamen to materially improve the quality of their lives. The wages and conditions that workers now take for granted were gained over the course of several decades. People had given their "blood, sweat and tears" so that future generations would have a better way of life.

Seamen's Struggle Enters a New Phase

The struggle, said Sacco, is not over. It is just entering a new phase. Today's members are writing a new chapter. History will record their sacrifices and battles, just as it has recorded those made by the SIU members who served in World War II and built a new union out of the ashes of the ISU.

In June 1988, Frank Drozak died. His agenda had been shaped by an historical accident. He assumed office during the 1980 presidential campaign. He died just as the "Reagan Revolution" was winding down, when the shipping industry was still mired in a decade-long depression.

Red Campbell, vice president in charge of contracts, put his career in perspective. "Frank Drozak's enduring legacy is that he enabled this union to stay afloat during one of the darkest periods in the history of the maritime industry. The union signed up hundreds of new jobs in the military sector and upgraded its services and training program. Unlike others in the maritime industry, it never gave up hope."

Frank Drozak

Michael Sacco

A Plan For Maritime's Survival

"The point is rapidly approaching when the United States will have to decide once and for all if it wants a merchant fleet capable of meeting its security needs," said Campbell. The same conclusion was reached by the Commission on Merchant Marine and Defense, which recently released a seven-point program aimed at revitalizing the maritime industry.

"There is a clear and growing danger to the national security," said the report, "in the deteriorating condition of America's maritime industries.

"There is today insufficient strategic sealift, both ships and trained personnel, for the United States using only its own resources as required by the defense planning assumptions, to execute a major deployment in contingent operations in a single theater such as Southwest Asia. Without decisive action, the situation will worsen substantially by the year 2000.

"Major government effort is urgently required, indeed overdue, to revise our national objectives, policies and commitments in order to reverse the decline of the maritime industry."

Maritime Must Unite

In his first report to the membership, SIU President Michael Sacco had this to say on the matter:

"We are now at the brink of a new administration. At this point, no one can tell what's in store for U.S. shipping. In these days of non-issue campaigning, no one knows where candidates stand on specifics.

"But that doesn't mean that the industry can afford to sit still and wait. It had better get itself together, and I mean all of it—all of management and labor—and begin discussing and examining ways and means of using all resources available, to be certain U.S. shipping is not allowed to continue downward without a mighty effort on our part to turn things around.

"It can be done, it's been done before. It's going to take good sense and hard work on the part of every section of the industry. The alternatives make it an absolute must for us to take a good hard shot at the challenge. We of the SIU stand ready to do our share!"

SIU President Frank Drozak was able to improve SIU services during a period of industry-wide decline. The new headquarters building.

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Charles Svenson, Editor
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Anniversary Supplement Editor
Max Hall

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"We have an educated and informed membership. Together we will forge new programs to meet the challenges of the future."

—Michael Sacco