



ROBERT MINOR

Emanuel Pickmosa, an early day leader of the Oregon Communist Party, died before the Establishment could figure out how to get rid of him. His modest stone at Greenwood reads simply: *Our Comrade*. His friends feared to say more lest the Immigration Service disinter his bones and deport them. Efforts were being made at the time the stone was placed to deport one of Pickmosa's pallbearers.

A deportation case that began in the 1930s and carried over until the 1950s was that of the late Longshore leader, John J. Fougereuse. Other famous cases centered around Filipino members of the ILWU Local 37 (the Alaska Cannery Workers). The Immigration Service at one time tried to deport all of the titled officers and executive board members of that Local, headquartered in Seattle with a sub-Local in Portland. These cases were won because ILWU (International Longshore & Warehousemen's Union) members closed ranks behind their targeted brothers — as they did in the Harry Bridges case, which lasted for more than 20 years — realizing that it was the Union itself that was under attack. The only Filipino worker deported was the government stoolie; but one defendant died of a heart attack during the proceedings, and another committed suicide.

Two cases which were lost were those of Bill Mackie, a Finnish housepainter, and Hamish Scott MacKay, a Canadian born descendent of a signer of the Declaration of Independence. They were torn from the arms of American born relatives on the same day in the 1950s — Thanksgiving Day — and hustled aboard planes at the Portland International Airport for countries one of them had not seen since he was an infant and the other since he was a young man of 19.

The attorney who represented most of these defendants over the years, including the sewer digger Ben Boloff, was the late Irvin Goodman. So great was his fame among the disinherited and damned that his phone number was carved in a booth at the Portland City Jail.

The Establishment in the 1950s mounted attacks against labor under a section of the *Taft-Hartley* law which made it illegal for a member of the Communist Party to hold union offices. And what is a Communist? The definition by Harry Bridges (a classic on my side of the tracks) comes to mind: "Anyone who wants a nickel more than the boss is willing to pay."

That section of *Taft-Hartley* has since been repealed, as has the section of the *McCarran Act* under which Japanese-Americans were sent to concentration camps during World War 2. The Portland Local of the International Woodworkers of America fought to save its Japanese members from being herded off to the Idaho desert and Tule Lake. Under the leadership of Stanley Earl, a city commissioner at the time of his death several years ago, the Local beat back the efforts of Portland mill owners to drive the Japanese off the job. The employers were still smarting over the testimony these workers had given at National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) hearings during the 1937-38 lockout in lumber⁵. The Union's battle to save its Japanese members was carried to the Portland City Hall and to the Oregon State Capitol in Salem, but was lost when the federal government moved in and moved the Japanese out, first to the Portland stockyard and then to the Idaho desert.

The jailing of the Japanese and confiscation of their property was an act of blatant discrimination. Racism south of the Columbia River has long roots, going back to the days when the Willamette Valley was settled by the younger sons of Southern slaveowners and Oregon barely escaped entering the Union a slave state⁶.

In Astoria in the 1890s the fish packers brought in Chinese to break a fishermen's strike. The bones of these unwitting scabs are said to litter the bottom of the Columbia from Pillar Rock to Desdemona Sands. But it was the packers who murdered them, not the strikers, when you think about it. Just as it was the packers who wanted unionization stopped in Alaska and slave conditions continued on their cannery ships; and the packers in the heyday of the Portland Police Bureau's Red Squad who gave the late Captain Keegan and Big Bill Browne money to bug the hotel room of Harry Bridges; and the packers who gutted the Pacific Coast Fishermen's Union with an injunction in 1939, and broke the gillnetters' strike in September 1951 with an injunction that stopped picketing of the canneries.

In 1952 the employers and their henchmen in Congress forced through the *McCarran-Walter Act*, under which 3 million non-citizens were forced to carry registration cards reminiscent of Nazi Germany and the pass system in South Africa.

Deportation of the foreign born and denaturalization of citizens of foreign ancestry rose to a peak in the 1950s, the era of Joseph McCarthy. It was during this period that the hapless Mackie and MacKay were sent into exile.

When Labor, with the aid of the few Christians among the clergy, tried to get the vicious *McCarran-Walter Act* repealed the Establishment hurled new troops into the battle in the guise of the House UnAmerican Activities Committee (HUAC), and a witchhunt was begun against the American-born defenders of their foreign born neighbors and shopmates.

The HUAC hearings were accompanied by an outburst of hysteria in the press. Headlines such as the following were typical: "RED HEARING: ILWU Leader Ousted From Courtroom"; "Woman Labor Reporter Branded A Chief Propagandist For The Communist Party"; and so on.⁷

The HUAC hysteria followed the "conviction" under the *Smith Act* of the top leadership of the American Communist Party and the self-maiming CIO, which sought to save itself from the Red label by expelling some of its strongest unions.

These events were roughly paralleled by the U.S. entry into the Korean War in 1950. One of the labor leaders jailed for

speaking out against U.S. involvement in this war was Harry Bridges. Reporters from newspapers all over the country, expecting the Longshore leader would be dumped by his union, converged on a coastwide caucus of Longshore, Walking Boss and Ships' Clerks Locals held in the isolated port of Coos Bay. But instead of turning him out, the caucus delegates sent Bridges a long telegram of greeting and support.

One of the witchhunting devices used against workers during the Korean War was the waterfront screen, which required dockers, seamen, fishermen and workers in waterfront related industries to secure Coast Guard passes. The gillnetters, at least at first, refused to have anything to do with the screen. The ILWU, which early on was split on the issue, tried it out before deciding the screen was a blacklisting attempt at gagging the union leaders, splitting the ranks and running workers off the job to starve.

Some amusing (or not so amusing) incidents occurred when the screen was in force. An oldtimer who had worked cargo during two World Wars was rated as too subversive to load flour in Astoria but rated safe to put ammunition over the ship's rail at Beaver. And the Irish dock leader Matt Meehan, hero of the union's 1934 strike, was called to settle a beef at the ammo dock (he was representative for the International at the time) and had the satisfaction of telling the Coast Guard, "I can't get through the gate at Beaver. You screened me, remember?"

The employers found the screen a costly gimmick. Gangs sent out to load and unload ships were constantly losing their passes. Gang members sent out to replace the uncleaned workers frequently misplaced their own passes or left them in yesterday's pants.

And so the waterfront screen, undercut also by court actions initiated by union lawyers, faded into history. But not before a number of militants in the seagoing unions had been driven onto the beach for good.

The deportations, the *Taft-Hartley* cases, HUAC witch-hunts and the waterfront screen of the 1950s were reminiscent of the Palmer Raids 30 years earlier. On the night of January 2, 1920, according to labor historians Boyer and Morais, "both aliens and citizens, most of them tradeunion members, were hauled from their beds, dragged out of meetings, grabbed on the streets and from their homes and thrown into prison by federal police acting under the jurisdiction of U.S. Attorney General Mitchell Palmer and his aide J. Edgar Hoover."

In Portland, several hundred persons were jailed in the raids which extended to the Labor Temple, where several trade-union officials, including the late S. P. Stevens, business agent of the Shipyard Riggers, Laborers & Fasteners Union, and the late Teamsters leader Phil Brady (later a state representative) were seized at their desks. Stevens, an ex-logger who had come to Oregon a few years earlier, later served as chairman of the defense committee which the Federation of Woodworkers, "heirs of the Wobblies," set up to get Ray Becker out of Walla Walla State Penitentiary. Brady, too, served on that committee, as did Beatrice Stevens (no relation to S.P.), and Paul Gurks, then with the Street Car Men's Union.

The Palmer Raid victims were defended in part by the late Colonel Charles Erskine Scott Wood, writer, poet and attorney. He had two law offices at the time, one in which he practiced corporation law for such clients as Southern Pacific Railroad, and one in which he represented the damned and dispossessed.

The economic establishment and its allies in the legislature and the courts, in Oregon and elsewhere, had many other devices for hamstringing Labor and attempting to silence protesters against the *status quo*. One of these was the criminal syndicalism law. Dirk deJongg, a leader of the unemployed who persuaded Portland's jobless not to scab on the 1934 waterfront strike, was sent to prison under this law⁷. The law which sent deJongg to prison was repealed by the Oregon Legislature after it was ruled unconstitutional by the Supreme Court and after hearings in Salem which found spokesmen for the Communist Party and tradeunion officials, including the late Ben Osborne, head of the State Federation of Labor, on the same side of the issue.

Laws relating to riot and conspiracy were also invoked against working people to slow their revolt against long hours, low pay and the high death and accident frequency rate in heavy industry. Some of the court actions were brought under laws originally designed for the people's protection, such as the *Sherman Antitrust Act*.

Pickets were jailed on riot charges stemming from a logger's strike at Seaside where two union members were killed and another was maimed for life by soft-nosed bullets from a scab's gun. Neither the scab nor his employer were indicted.

Strikes were often broken without any semblance of court action or any weakening of the workers, as at Florence, Oregon, when IWW members striking a railroad construction job were marched to Eugene over tracks they had laid by troopers called out by Governor Oswald West. A leaflet from that time has survived. It depicts a worker stumbling along over the track ties with his blanketroll on his back, and had this caption: "He built the road / With others of his class / He built the road / Now o'er its many weary a mile / He packs his load / Spurred on by hunger's goad / And wonders why in Hell / He built the road."

Two decades later another Oregon governor, "Ironpants Martin", called out troopers in the 1935 lumber strike to march pickets at bayonet point from Bridal Veil to the Multnomah County Courthouse.

The *National Industrial Recovery Act* and the *Wagner Act* by this time had made it illegal for workers to organize in unions of their own choosing, to bargain collectively, and to

FOOTNOTES

1. This committee was headquartered in Portland. Its chairman was S. P. Stevens. E. B. Weber, then treasurer of the Federation of Woodworkers, was its treasurer. Julia Ruuttila (then Julia Bertram) was its secretary.

2. With the exception of a professor at the University of Wisconsin at Greenbay, who has written a novel based on some of the events which led up to and followed the Centralia raid.

3. This occurred when workers who had chartered a boat in Seattle to go to Everett to express solidarity with a shingle weavers' strike were gunned down as the boat approached the dock.

4. Hartwig was responsible for getting Oregon's first employers' liability law passed in the State Legislature.

5. The heroine of the lockout of workers at the West Oregon Mill was Mary Fujiyama, wife of a Japanese greenchain worker who testified that the mill foreman threatened to deport the Japanese workers unless they went through the picketline. All of them remained faithful to the union and did not scab, but a few white workers did scab.

6. Several volumes could be written on discrimination against minority racial members, including not only blacks but against Mexican workers and Native Americans, deprived of their fishing and land rights, and many others, including exploitation of Southeast Asians who have settled in this country.

7. For strikebreaking purposes the employers were forced to bring in students from Oregon State University, then known as the "Cow College". Strikebreakers during Oregon's longest labor beef, the Portland newspaper strike which began in 1959 and lasted five years, were imported largely from other states. Many were professional scabs.

—J.R.

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