Longshoremen's Local 4 Federal Credit Union

Summer 2026 Newsletter

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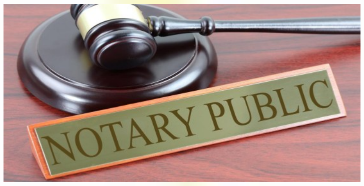

Our Notary's
Suzi Davis
Travis Anson

ILWU STRONG

SOLIDARITY WILL PREVAIL

Remembering July 5, 1934 - Bloody Thursday

Before 1934, dock work was considered employment of last resort. Working conditions were brutal. Maritime workers were treated as expendable. Employers had no concern for safe working conditions. There was little in the way of worker's compensation or healthcare, and those who reported injuries were blacklisted and denied work. In any given year, there were as many recorded accidents as there were Longshoremen employed. Maritime workers began organizing in the mid to late 19th century.

Dockworkers founded the International Longshoremen's Association in 1892 and early strikes achieved gains in pay and improved working conditions. Industrial Workers of the World began organizing workers on the West Coast around 1892. They organized workers regardless of race, nationality, or trade. Their slogan: "An Injury to One is an Injury to All."

The employers realized the danger of work solidarity and launched an all-out campaign to reverse the gains won by the militant , united union movement. Employers capitalizing on patriotism from WWI, started propaganda campaigns in the press labeling unions as un-American and their members as dangerous foreigners. Vigilante violence was encouraged.

The members of both Longshore and Seafaring Unions voted to strike in May 1934. In response, employers mobilized private industry, state and local governments and police agencies to smash the union and their picket lines. When it became clear that the unions were not going to give up their struggle for justice on the waterfront, employers decided to open up the striking piers by using guns, goon squads, tear gas, and the National Guard. They provoked battles in Portland, Seattle, San Francisco, and San Pedro.

Hundreds of strikers and bystanders were arrested, and injured. On July 5th, known ever after as Bloody Thursday. Two workers were, shot and killed. A total of 6 workers on the West Coast were shot or beaten to death and hundreds were wounded by the goons hired by employers during the West Coast strike.

Instead of breaking the strike, these terrible events galvanized public support, and prompted the unions of San Francisco to declare a short but historical General Strike. They supported the Longshoremen's and Maritime unions and protested strikebreaking by the employers. The federal government intervened and the union agreed to arbitrate all issues, and won in principle each of it's major demands.

References: "The ILWU Story: Six Decades of Militant Unionism", published by ILWU 1997

"The Men Along the Shore & Legacy of 1934", published by ILWU, 2008

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