

## **Organizing Precarious Workers in the CIO Era: The International Fishermen and Allied Workers of America**

### **Introduction: Work in the Pacific Coast Fishing Industry**

In July 1950, labor organizer and radio host Jerry Tyler accompanied Phil Lasich on his nighttime shift fishing for salmon on the Columbia River. Lasich had worked in the industry since the age of 16 and rented a boat from the Columbia River Packers Association (CRPA), a salmon canning corporation. As part of the rental agreement, he sold his catch exclusively to the company. The two left the docks at 6:45 in the evening, taking advantage of reduced visibility for salmon during nighttime. Lasich had spent the day painstakingly preparing 1,200 feet of net, which he owned and was worth roughly a dollar per foot. Once on the River, they quickly deployed it. Secured by buoys and drifting alongside, the net and boat remained in place all night. At dawn, Lasich hauled in his catch and returned to shore.

That night he netted three salmon weighing a total of 85 pounds and received around seventeen dollars from the CRPA for the catch - a pittance considering the hours of preparation, the long night on the river, the investment in the net, and the boat rental. Thanks to his membership in the Columbia River Fishermen's Protective Union, an affiliate of the International Fishermen and Allied Workers of America, Lasich was at least guaranteed a pre-negotiated price per pound. Concluding that Lasich's yearly earnings were about the same as an unskilled wage laborer, Tyler asked him why he stayed in the tiring and dangerous work of fishing. Tyler recalled that the fisherman "squared his shoulders and threw his head back and

grinned a grin that spoke volumes,” responding “I got in it because I grew up in it. I stay in, well...no boss, no time clock.”<sup>1</sup>

His succinct answer is a revealing insight into the lives and attitudes of West Coast commercial fishery workers during the era. They greatly valued their independence, which gave them control over the rhythms of their work and kept out the rigid discipline of the factory floor. Nevertheless, West Coast fishermen had long understood themselves as workers for corporations like the Columbia River Packers Association, and used collective action since the 1880s to gain a share of the profits derived from their labor. Like many fishermen, Lasich came from a close-knit immigrant community that was deeply tied to the industry. Five of his family members worked as fishermen, and the older members had fished in Eastern Europe before they came to Oregon. This essay explores how Lasich and his compatriots came to be part of a militant working-class movement of fishermen and cannery workers that stretched from San Diego to the Bering Sea, and joined up with the Congress of Industrial Organizations to fight for better conditions in one of the most iconic industries on the West Coast.

There has been virtually nothing written about the International Fishermen and Allied Workers (IFAWA) since their dissolution in the early 1950s. Geoff Mann authored the only scholarly study of the union, published as an article and later as a chapter in his book *Our Daily Bread*. His work focuses on the relationship of the union to common property management and waged work.<sup>2</sup> This essay builds upon Mann’s work to create a fuller chronology of the union’s history, and address questions like ethnicity and gender that he suggested for further study. My

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<sup>1</sup> *Reports from Labor*, August 1, 1950, Jerry Tyler Papers, University of Washington Special Collections, accession number 5553-001. < [http://depts.washington.edu/dock/tyler\\_audio/August\\_1\\_1950.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/dock/tyler_audio/August_1_1950.pdf) >

<sup>2</sup> Geoff Mann, “Class Consciousness and Common Property: The International Fishermen and Allied Workers of America,” *International Labor and Working-Class History* 61 (2002): 141-160; Geoff Mann, *Our Daily Bread: Wages, Workers, and the Political Economy of the American West* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 115-141; Geoff Mann, “International Fishermen and Allied Workers,” in *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-Class History* ed. Eric Arnesen (New York: Routledge, 2007), 674-5.

information is mostly drawn from the “International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union Fishermen and Allied Workers Division, Local 3 Records,” housed in Special Collections and the Labor Archives at the University of Washington. The collection contains the surviving documents from Joseph Jurich, President of IFAWA from formation to dissolution and longtime staffer of an ILWU fishermen’s local in Seattle afterwards. This includes local minutes, International records and meeting notes, annual conventions, and correspondence. The records for Puget Sound are particularly well preserved, and the overall collection varies greatly from the material used by Mann at UC Berkeley. This essay focuses on Washington State and Alaska, with a lesser focus on Oregon. Brief outlines of IFAWA history in California are presented for context. The paper also draws on the union’s newspaper published from 1944 to 1951, a book on the union published by the California CIO in 1947, and a smattering of items from the era’s labor and corporate press. Because the sources for this essay were mostly produced by the union, and its leadership in particular, there are limits to the interpretations presented. Facts have been checked whenever possible, and I have tried to read between the lines of the materials produced by paid officers and staff.

Drawing on these primary resources, I hope to make small but important modification to the historiography of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). IFAWA was one of the eleven unions expelled from the CIO for connections with the Communist Party, yet is absent from much of the literature on the CIO, including studies of left-led unions. When it is mentioned, the references are brief and erroneous.<sup>3</sup> However, IFAWA was an important part of

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<sup>3</sup> Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin, *Left Out: Reds and America’s Industrial Unions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 17. Incorrectly puts IFAWA in a list of unions that stayed in the National CIO when Communist officers were removed before an expulsion trial was held; Harvey Levenstein, *Communism, Anti-Communism and the CIO* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 69. Dates the IFAWA-ILWU merger to 1949, not 1950, and makes an overly broad characterization of IFAWA and the Marine Cooks and Stewards as ‘minor outposts of Bridges’ empire.’

the CIO on the West Coast, helping to make the waterfront a crucial space of labor action and radicalism. The union was also active in the national CIO and co-authored the infamous 1949 minority report that staunchly opposed the leadership of the federation. Contained within the story of IFAWA is the broader history of the CIO; from the successful organization of new sectors through industrial unionism, to the support of the war effort and the cannibalistic expulsion of eleven unions. IFAWA never exceeded 30,000 members, but it achieved a critical mass of union density in a strategic and primary industry of the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. Further, IFAWA is a case study in CIO civil rights unionism and multiracial labor unity.<sup>4</sup> This essay describes the struggles of Bristol Bay Alaska Native cannery workers and their alliance with Asian-American workers from the Pacific Northwest. In doing so, another dimension is added to the emerging scholarship on Filipino cannery workers and civil rights unionism more broadly.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, this paper reveals the crucial role played by Yugoslavian immigrants in the formation and politics of the union, adding to analyses that foreground immigrants in the history of the CIO.<sup>6</sup> Outside of labor history, this paper adds a new perspective to the sparse set of literature on commercial fishing and canning in Puget Sound and Alaska, which is dominated by company histories, studies of regulatory regimes and historical studies that focus either on the inception of the industry in the late 1800s or its decline after the 1950s.<sup>7</sup>

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Steven Rosswurm, ed., *The CIO's Left-Led Unions* (New Brunswick, N.J. : Rutgers University Press, 1992), 3. Mentions IFAWA only once and pegs its membership at less than half its size around the time of expulsions. This number may have slightly over-accounted for the split with the Alaska Fishermen's Union.

<sup>4</sup> Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of American History* 75, no. 3 (1988): 786-811

<sup>5</sup> Chris Friday, *Organizing Asian American Labor: The Pacific Coast Canned-Salmon Industry, 1870-1942* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994); Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, "Filipino Cannery Unionism Across Three Generations 1930s-1980s." <[http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/Cannery\\_intro.htm](http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/Cannery_intro.htm)>

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Göbel, "Becoming American: Ethnic Workers and the Rise of the CIO," *Labor History*, 29, no. 2 (1988): 173-198

<sup>7</sup> David Arnold, *The Fishermen's Frontier: People and Salmon in Southeast Alaska* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1986), 139-155. An excellent overview of labor history in Alaska salmon canning, but one that oddly fails to name IFAWA but describes it indirectly through references to the CIO. Mistakenly identifies Joe Jurich as representing the Alaska Fishermen's Union, and I would argue that the Alaska Salmon Purse Seiners

For the 1930s and 1940s, the period during which the International Fishermen and Allied Workers flourished, the section briefly describe the physical and ethnic geography of the Pacific Coast fisheries, cannery work, the corporate structure of the industry, and the misclassification of fishermen as independent contractors instead of workers. Immigrant communities that dotted the West Coast formed the backbone of the industry and it is appropriate to begin an overview from this vantage point. During spring in South Bellingham, the smell of tar wafted up from the docks as fishermen dipped their cotton nets in a pungent mixture that reinforced the gear for use in saltwater. The gendered term ‘fishermen’ is used throughout this essay because it was the emic term used by the union and is reflective of the gendered nature of on-board labor. Gear was the common term for the type of net or other equipment used to fish, and was shorthand for distinguishing between different methods of fishing. After months of preparation, the entire community would turn to see a portion of the fleet leave for Alaska for the summer fishing season.<sup>8</sup>

The Croatian enclave of South Bellingham housed the world’s largest cannery and was just one of many immigrant communities that revolved around the commercial fishing industry.

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Union was not organized independently but was a split from the Puget Sound-based Salmon Purse Seiners Union (see: Alaska Purse Seiner’s Union Convention September 11, 1937, Local 3 Records, box 11). Nevertheless, a succinct and sharp analysis; August Radke, *Pacific American Fisheries, Inc.: History of a Washington State Salmon Packing Company, 1890-1966* (Jefferson, N.C. : McFarland & Co., 2002), 151. Contains a discussion of labor including the Alaska Fishermen’s Union and the Cannery Workers and Farm Laborers Union; Irene Martin and Roger Tetlow, *Flight of the Bumble Bee: The Columbia River Packers Association & A Century in the Pursuit of Fish* (Long Beach, WA: The Chinook Observer, 2011). Contains some discussion of the Columbia River Fishermen’s Protective Union, International Seamen’s Union and Pacific Coast Fishermen’s Union; Karen E. Hébert, “Wild Dreams: Refashioning Production in Bristol Bay, Alaska” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2008). Picks up the labor history of the area in 1951, just after IFAWA’s demise; Richard Cooley, *Politics and Conservation: The Decline of the Alaska Salmon Industry* (New York, Harper & Row, 1963). Contains the most extensive discussion of labor in the Alaskan salmon industry; Patricia Roppel, *Salmon from Kodiak: A History of the Salmon Fishery of Kodiak Island, Alaska* (Anchorage: Alaska Historical Commission, 1986); Arthur McEvoy, *The Fisherman’s Problem: Ecology and Law in the California Fisheries, 1850-1980* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 173-4.

<sup>8</sup> Steve Kink, “Bellingham’s Croatian Community and Commercial Fishing: A Reminiscence by Steve Kink,” Historylink: the Free Online Encyclopedia of Washington State History. <[http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&File\\_Id=8384](http://www.historylink.org/index.cfm?DisplayPage=output.cfm&File_Id=8384)>; Radke, *Pacific American Fisheries*.

In 1939, the Pacific Coast industry employed roughly 34,642 fishermen and 33,913 workers in marine transportation, processing and canning.<sup>9</sup> When mass production of canned salmon first began on the Columbia River second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Norwegian, Finnish and other Scandinavian immigrants with maritime traditions did the extremely dangerous work of fishing. Workers from these same immigrant groups worked alongside Asian-Americans in the grueling cannery assembly lines, albeit often in segregation. In the ensuing decades, Yugoslavian immigrants became increasingly important in the fishing section of the industry and Filipinos became the main form of Asian-American labor after Chinese exclusion. In Southern California, Italian predominated and significant numbers of Japanese immigrants established themselves as fishermen.<sup>10</sup>

The Croatian fishermen of Puget Sound usually worked on purse seiners, boats designed to use purse seine nets. Each boat had a crew of nine to eleven. While on the fishing grounds, a lookout carefully watched for signs that a school of fish was nearby. When fish were spotted, a small skiff was deployed. Vessel owners began to add outboard motors to the skiffs in the 1940s, but the usual form of propulsion was rowing. The boat towed the net - which was up to 2,000 feet in length and 40 feet tall - away from the skiff to form a wall. To keep the net fanned out in the water, small pieces of cork were attached to the top of the net and small lead weights to the bottom. Once fish gathered behind the net, the skiff moved in a circle and met up with the boat. The 'purse' in the name came about because ropes attached to the bottom of the net which were

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<sup>9</sup>R.H. Fielding, *Fishery Industries of the United States 1939* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Fisheries, 1941) 475-491; 542

<sup>10</sup>Sverre Arestad, "Norwegians in the Pacific Coast Fisheries," *Norwegian-American Studies* 30: 96-129. < [http://www.naha.stolaf.edu/pubs/nas/volume30/vol30\\_04.htm](http://www.naha.stolaf.edu/pubs/nas/volume30/vol30_04.htm)>; Connie Chiang, *Shaping the Shoreline: Fisheries and Tourism on the Monterey Coast* (Seattle : University of Washington Press, 2008).

This paper uses the term 'Yugoslavian' because it was often used in union record as a self-identifying term. The terminology used to describe migrants from the Balkans in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century was slipshod and often erroneous. They were sometimes called 'Austrians' because of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, or Slavs or Slovenians. The majority of Yugoslavians in the West Coast fishing industry were from the coast and islands of Croatia.

tightened to create a seal, like closing a purse with a drawstring. Now, the fish were trapped and the crew pulled the net back into the boat. As with the skiffs, motorized tools appeared in the 1940s to haul the net but physical labor remained the main method until the 1950s.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to purse seines, the main types of nets were gillnets, trawls and reefnets. Gillnetting was briefly explained in the introduction. Boats were generally smaller than purse seiners and required one to four people as crew. Fish attempted to swim through the net and were trapped by their gills. The other main form of net fishing on the West Coast was trawling. A trawl net is attached to long ropes and dragged near the seafloor. The most common form in the 1930s and 1940s was otter trawling, named as such because of ‘otter boards,’ two pieces of wood on opposite sides of the net that kept it open. Trawl nets tapered to a closed end. The method grew quickly in the early 1940s and mostly caught flounders. Reefnetting was unique to the Puget Sound and concentrated near Lummi Island. Two boats positioned themselves above shallow underwater reefs and stretched a net between them to intercept a fish run.<sup>12</sup>

The nature of fishing on Puget Sound was altered in 1934 when fixed trap fishing was banned and more sites, like those used by reefnetters, became available.<sup>13</sup> Traps varied in size, but the most important ones were large ones owned by cannery companies. Located near rivers and bays where fish migrated, these traps consisted of a long, fence like structure that extended outward, sometimes several hundred feet. The fence blocked the movement of the fish, who would swim through a series of increasingly small enclosures until becoming trapped in a small pot. These structures required relatively little labor input, just a few watchmen to prevent stealing

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<sup>11</sup> Carl Wick, *Ocean Harvest: The Story of Commercial Fishing in Pacific Coast Waters* (Seattle, Wash., Superior Pub. Co., 1946), 63-68; Bret Lunsford, *Croatian Fishing Families of Anacortes* (Anacortes, Wash.: American Croatian Club of Anacortes, 2011), 95-136. ; Felix Montes *Alaska Fishermen and the Anti-Trust Laws* (master’s thesis, University of Washington, 1947), 44.

<sup>12</sup> “Working Agreement of the Puget Sound Reefnetters Local Union No. 4 booklet,” Lummi Island Community Club Archives. <<http://content.statelib.wa.gov/cdm/compoundobject/collection/lummi/id/43/show/38/rec/1>>

<sup>13</sup> Arestad, “Norwegians in the Pacific Coast Fisheries.”

and a few workers to collect the fish, but a very high capital investment was needed for construction and could only be mustered by large canning corporations. This greatly angered fishermen, who felt that traps undermined their earning power and unfairly intercepted their catch.<sup>14</sup> Traps continued to be allowed in Alaska until statehood in the late 1950s. In Alaska, white and Native residents staffed traps, while in Puget Sound it was mostly a Norwegian endeavor. The Washington ban precipitated a shift toward greater numbers of Yugoslavian fishermen, but Norwegians continued to operate in the industry as troll fishing grew in popularity.

Trolling was the predominate form of fishing with lines. Trollers had sturdy poles, usually six in total, which extended from the deck. Each pole had a line attached to it with baited hooks, and a pulley to reel in the line. Troll boats slowly dragged the lines behind them and could be manned by one or two people. Halibut were caught further offshore using long lines that lay on the seabed, held in place by anchors and floats. Almost the entire halibut fleet was based out of Seattle, and remained strongly Norwegian. The most unique method of fishing in this era was used for tuna. When a school was spotted, some of the crew would begin to throw bait into the water to keep the school in the same area. Meanwhile, the rest of the crew used bamboo fishing pools with short lines and live bait to bring the tuna aboard by hand. Tuna could also be purse seined and were mainly caught off California, along with a smaller Northwest fishery.<sup>15</sup>

With proper adjustment, different gears could be used to catch multiple types of fish. For example, purse seining was normally used to catch salmon in Washington and Alaska, but in California was used to fish for sardines. Salmon was the most important of the West Coast

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<sup>14</sup> Montes, *Alaska Fishermen*, 52-56.

<sup>15</sup> Wick, *Ocean Harvest*.

catches. Alaska produced 54% of the world's canned salmon in 1939, or some 251 million pounds after processing, with the rest of the Coast contributing another 4%.<sup>16</sup> The catch fluctuated greatly – the previous year Alaska produced over 235 million pounds and the West Coast outside Alaska represented 7% of world production – but these numbers are illustrative of the scope of the industry. The West Coast accounted for roughly half of the fish caught in the United States in any given year in the 1940s. Moreover, high-value, high-quality products like salmon and halibut set it apart and ensured that fishing remained an integral part of the regional economy. The pilchard, or Pacific sardine, was also an important catch, though it was of lower quality than salmon or halibut. Much of it was canned, but just as sardine was used for fish oil and meal, or supported other fishing operations by providing bait. The catch in California exceeded the rest of the Pacific Coast in size, but unlike Alaska and the Northwest was based on lower-quality fish like sardines and mackarel. Tuna, herring and flounder were the other important catches of the Pacific Coast in terms of value and quantity. Unique to the 1930s and 1940s was an explosion of shark fishing. It was discovered that sharks concentrated vitamin A in their livers, providing a substitute for cod liver oil that became extremely valuable when World War II cut imports from Scandinavia.<sup>17</sup>

The varying life cycles and habitats of these catches meant that many fishermen worked far from their homes. Of the 25,000 people who worked in the Alaska fishing industry, 75% lived the rest of the year in Washington.<sup>18</sup> These fishermen and cannery workers were accordingly termed ‘non-residents.’ There was recurring tension with the Alaska Native and

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<sup>16</sup> Washington State Bureau of Statistics and Immigration, *Washington, Its People, Products and Resources* (Washington: Secretary of State, 1940), 90; Fiedler, *Fishery Industries of the United States 1939*, 540-6. A case of canned salmon meant 48 one-pound cans. See: Montes, *Alaska Fishermen*, 27.

<sup>17</sup> Secretary of the Interior. *Fishery Resources of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1945), 3-41; An excellent overview of the Pacific Coast fishing industry that synthesizes much of the same sources used here is: “Report of the Federal Trade Commission on Distribution Methods and Costs, Part IX: Costs of Production and Distribution of Fish on the Pacific Coast,” (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1946).

<sup>18</sup> *Washington, Its People, Products and Resources*, 89.

white ‘residents’ that made up the rest of the workforce. Alaska was not yet a state and remained a territory of the federal government. It is most accurate to say that Alaska was a colony administered from Seattle. The Jones Act of 1920 mandated that all shipping to the Territory be handled by American companies, which in practice meant that all vessels had to pass through Washington State.<sup>19</sup> Fishing was the driving economic force of Alaska and generated 70% of its meager tax revenues, with the rest being repatriated stateside by absentee canning corporation and non-resident workers.<sup>20</sup> I will return to this shortly, but first it is important to map the major fishing sites of the Pacific Coast.

Commercial canning in the West Coast began on the Columbia River, and in the 1940s continued to be an important salmon site plied by gillnetters and a growing number of trollers. The vast territory of Alaska was more often understood as four distinct districts than as a single unit. The first was Bristol Bay, a large inlet on the Bering Sea connected to several salmon spawning rivers around Dillingham. Here, a peculiar situation arose in which only gillnet sailboats were allowed until 1951, even though fishermen on the rest of the Pacific Coast relied on motors. The canning companies consistently lobbied for regulatory rules banning motors in the name of conservation, but most observers concluded that the companies, in contrast to their behavior elsewhere, wanted to keep control of the workforce and feared motorized boats would lead to restive owner-operators.<sup>21</sup> Bristol Bay was the main site of production for sockeye salmon, the best of the species for food consumption. To the Southwest of Bristol Bay was the ‘Westward’ area, comprising the Aleutian Islands and the Alaskan Peninsula, including Kodiak.

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<sup>19</sup> Chris Friday, “Competing Communities at work : Asian Americans, European Americans, and Native Alaskans in the Pacific Northwest, 1938-1947,” in *Over the Edge: Remapping the American West*, ed. Valerie Matsumoto and Blake Allmendinger (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), Page 308; Eric Gislason, “A Brief History of Alaska Statehood (1867-1959).” <<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~cap/bartlett/49state.html>>

<sup>20</sup>Cooley, *Politics and Conservation*, 182. ; Secretary of the Interior, *Fishery Resources*, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Tim Troll, *Sailing for Salmon: The Early Years of Commercial Fishing in Alaska's Bristol Bay, 1884-1951* (Dillingham, AK : Nushagak-Mulchatna/Wood Tikchik Land Trust, 2011), 39.

To the East was the Central district, centered on Cordova, where motorized gillnets fished near the Copper River. Finally, there was the Southeast District that comprised the Alaska panhandle running alongside the Canadian Yukon near Ketchikan. Alaska was overwhelmingly focused on salmon. The values of the Alaskan salmon catch exceeded the next biggest catch, halibut, by a factor of almost thirty. Herring was the third most important, and was worth only half the total value of halibut. Like pilchard, it was used for food consumption as well as reduction into oil and non-food products.<sup>22</sup> The catch of salmon in Washington and Oregon paled in comparison to Alaska, but the two states were an important source of chinook salmon, the largest of the species and well suited to canning and food consumption.<sup>23</sup>

The rhythms of fishing varied greatly. Gillnetters on the Columbia returned to port every night, while Bristol Bay gillnetters found sheltered inlets and slept on-board. Regulations generally allowed for fishing from early Monday to late Friday or Saturday. On Puget Sound purse seiners, crews slept on board for a few hours a night before working shifts of more than fourteen hours. They returned to port on the weekend to mend nets and rest. To allow the boats to stay on the most advantageous fishing grounds and waste precious time by sailing to a cannery, companies directly owned tender boats. These larger vessels allowed the fishing boats to offload their catch, which needed to be processed or canned within twenty-four or forty-eight hours of being caught. If fishermen were near a cannery or were returning for the weekend, they gave their catch to scows which brought it to the cannery gate. In contrast, deep sea fishing like halibut and tuna required voyages of up to three weeks.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Fielding, *Fishery Statistics of the United States*, 194-9  
Secretary of the Interior, *Fishery Resources of the United States*, 9-10

<sup>23</sup> Secretary of the Interior, *Fishery Resources of the United States*, 4

<sup>24</sup> Secretary of the Interior, *Fishery Resources of the United States*, 21

Industrial fishing in the 1930s and 1940s was oriented toward canning, an easy method to mass manufacture, preserve, transport and sell the product. Especially in Alaska, it was more advantageous to build many small canneries than a few large facilities, in order to maximize proximity to fishing grounds. In 1938, there were 116 cannery facilities in Alaska and an additional 114 plants engaged in reduction, curing, filleting, freezing and other processing activities. In Washington, there were a total of 117 canning and processing facilities.<sup>25</sup>

‘Shoreworkers’ was often used to describe all fish processing workers, not just those in canneries. In salmon canning, the number of facilities mirrored the disparity in catch size and geographic scope, with 83 canneries in Alaska in 1943 and 19 in Washington, Oregon and California.<sup>26</sup> At canneries, fish were offloaded from tenders or scows onto a conveyer belt or chute. From there, the fish were sorted by type or size and placed one-by-one on a conveyor belt. The ingloriously named Iron Chink, so-called because it replaced the manual work originally performed by Chinese migrant workers, automatically chopped off the head and tail, and cut open the belly. Next, workers called ‘slimers’ washed the fish and made sure the guts were taken out. A large portion of the cannery workforce was women, usually from the same immigrant communities as fishermen, and slimers were usually all female. Moving along the assembly line, machines cut the fish into standard lengths corresponding with the size of a can. Most canneries manufactured their own cans from flat sheet metal. Empty cans were filled with the cut pieces of fish and vacuum sealed. Finally, the sealed cans were placed inside large pressure cookers.<sup>27</sup> The process, the amount of mechanization and shop floor gender divisions varied by time and place.

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<sup>25</sup> Fielding, *Fishery Statistics of the United States*, 544; 480.

<sup>26</sup> A.W. Anderson, E. A. Power and the Department of the Interior, *Fishery Statistics of the United States 1943* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1947), 23

<sup>27</sup> Wick, *Ocean Harvest* 60-63; Louise Otten, “Reporter Visits Salmon Cannery in Anacortes,” *International Fisherman and Allied Worker*, September 1945, 10. Hereafter, the *International Fisherman and Allied Worker* will be abbreviated as ‘International Fishermen and Allied Worker.’

Work in reduction plants could be particularly unpleasant. Fish like herring were pressure cooked, making a pulp that separated into oil and solid material. The solid material was dried over flames and the water removed from the oil by centrifuge. The smell of both processes, and particularly the drying of the solids, was indescribably pungent.<sup>28</sup>

The ethnicity of the workforce varied greatly. Cannery workers in Puget Sound were mostly European immigrant women.<sup>29</sup> On the Columbia River, there were significant numbers of Asian-American and Mexican workers alongside white immigrants. In Alaska, the seasonal nature of the work, the small local population and the scattered, inaccessible isolation of the canneries led companies to contract Asian-American male laborers, a majority of whom were Filipino, and seasonally ship them north from Seattle, Portland and San Francisco.<sup>30</sup> Alaska Natives were mostly shut out of the industry, but served as a reserve pool of labor. This changed dramatically during World War II when travel restrictions restricted the Asian-American workforce. Alaska Natives soon composed up to half the cannery workforce, a proportion that stuck after the war.<sup>31</sup>

The constant pace of the industrial assembly line in a cannery and the more variable rhythm of work on fishing boats differed greatly, but two things tied these workers together: safety hazards and a relationship with a large corporation. In the canneries, machines posed a constant safety problem and repetitive stress injuries were common. Both fishermen and cannery workers had to be careful to avoid fish poisoning caused by bits of guts or other material coming into contact with small cuts. By the 1930s, mortality among fishermen had decreased since the

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<sup>28</sup>City of Richmond, "Herring Reduction," In Their Words: The Story of BC Packers, <[http://www.intheirwords.ca/english/canning\\_herring.html](http://www.intheirwords.ca/english/canning_herring.html)>. Also contains an excellent overview of the salmon canning process and the different gears.

<sup>29</sup> Kathleen Young, "The Diversity of Croat-Dalmatian Ethnic Identity in Northern Puget Sound" (PhD. Diss., Simon Fraser University, 1994), 204.

<sup>30</sup> Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, "Filipino Cannery Unionism."

<sup>31</sup> Friday, "Competing Communities at Work," 314; James VanStone, *Eskimos of the Nushagak River: An Ethnographic History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967), 80.

early days of the West Coast commercial fishery, but shipwrecks continued and serious injury always loomed. Problems ranged from acute injuries due to engine fires and falls to chronic problems from fuel vapor inhalation, and the combined stress of long hours, irregular sleep, meager on-board diets and physical labor.<sup>32</sup>

By forming a union, fishermen and cannery workers sought to change these conditions. To do so, fishermen first had to assert themselves as workers entitled to collective bargaining. Boat and gear ownership varied by area and catch, but a relatively small number of companies controlled canning, processing and distribution. These companies received profit based on the labor of fishermen, with whom they had a lopsided relationship. After an initial explosion of Pacific Coast canning companies in the 1870s, there was a trend toward consolidation. The Columbia River Packers Association and the San Francisco-based Alaska Packers Association began as loose combines for the purpose of joint ventures but eventually became single companies.<sup>33</sup> The Alaska Salmon Industry, referenced throughout this paper, was not a single company but an employer's association that bargained with unions. Other companies expanded to the West Coast, like the New England Fish Co. from Boston or Booth Fisheries from Chicago. Pacific American Fisheries was based in Bellingham but financed and sometimes controlled from Chicago.<sup>34</sup> There were also medium-sized companies that started on the Puget Sound, like Washington Fish and Oyster Co. or the Fishermen's Packing Corporation. The latter was formed

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<sup>32</sup> 'Fourth Convention IFAWA, December 1-4, 1942, Seattle,' box 12, folder 2, Page 56, International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union Fishermen and Allied Workers Division, Local 3 Records 1935-1981, University of Washington Special Collections, accession number 3466-001. ; Hereafter referred to as "Local 3 Records."

Paul Pinky, Sanford Goldner and Philip Eden, *Fisheries of California: The Industry, the Men, their Union* (San Francisco, CA: California CIO Council, 1947), 37.

<sup>33</sup> Western Washington University, "Guide to the Alaska Packers Association Records 1841-1989" <<http://nwda.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv77299>>

<sup>34</sup> University of Washington Special Collections, "Guide to the New England Fish Company Records 1902-1983," <<http://digital.lib.washington.edu/findingaids/view?docId=NewEnglandFishCompany3996.xml>>; Martin and Tetlow, *Flight of the Bumble Bee*.

by vessel owners, and despite their name functioned like any other corporation.<sup>35</sup> Most large and medium companies had operations in Alaska, and formed a stateside clique of absentee capital that profited off the natural resources of the territory. Their relationship with fishermen was not much different. The CIO estimated that American packers and wholesalers made a gross profit of around \$50 million in 1945, while fishermen received an average income of \$1,000.<sup>36</sup> ‘Packers’ will be used throughout this essay as a blanket term for large fish product corporations, although ‘canners’ and ‘operators’ were also used at the time.<sup>37</sup>

Unionizing as workers to make demands of the packers was complicated by the lack of uniformity in employment relationships in the industry. Purse seiners in Puget Sound were owned by individuals who did not fish and often owned several boats. These vessel owners hired the crew and paid them in pre-set shares of the money received from the packers for their catch. In Bristol Bay, gillnet fishermen were direct employees of packers that furnished them with boats and gear. In the Copper River and Prince William Sound area, non-resident fishermen were compensated for travel expenses and rented boats and gear from the company. In contrast, resident fishermen in nearby Cook Inlet usually owned boats because marine transport was the main form of travel between isolated areas during the off-season. Workers on tending boats were always direct employees of the packers. Despite this patchwork of relationships, every boat delivered exclusively to a single company. From the beginning of the Pacific Coast fishery, informal and formal agreements of this nature were made before the season began. Packers policed fishermen to ensure that they did not sell their catch to another company, though this was

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<sup>35</sup>Ed Dinger, “Ocean Beauty Seafoods, Inc.,” in *International Directory of Company Histories* 68, ed. Tina Martin (Detroit, Mich.: St. James Press, 2005).

<sup>36</sup>Pinsky, *Fisheries of California*, 54

<sup>37</sup>Dealers was another term, indicating a company that sold fresh fish. Large packing companies often had a smaller division engaged in fresh fish dealing, and there were many medium and small businesses—especially in Southern California – that were exclusively dealers.

often not necessary because of the long distances between canneries and the need for quick delivery to prevent spoilage. By misclassifying fishermen as non-employees, packers minimized the risk taken on by the company for bad seasons and accidents. However, many packers advanced credit to fishermen to buy or rent boats and gear, thereby creating a relationship of dependency. Whether the money came from a packing company or the bank, fishermen that owned their own boats could rarely expect to ever get out of debt. Of equal importance was the fact that the earnings received by fishermen, whether owner-operators or crew hired by a vessel owner, were directly tied to the price set by the packers. Before unionization, packers had complete control to set prices and change them without notice, to arbitrarily reject deliveries over quality or to tell fishermen who had promised to fish exclusively for their company that a quota had been met and they should dump their catch and receive no payment. Packers became infamous for price collusion, backdoor deals and mergers that unfairly distort the market.<sup>38</sup> These conditions in the fishing industry led fishermen to understand themselves as de facto workers for the packers and band together to demand accountability.

## **II. Early Unionism in the Pacific Coast Fisheries**

Unionism in the West Coast commercial fishing and canning industry has a long history, though until industrial unionism in the 1930s it was constrained by craft, geographic and racial divisions.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, this pre-1930s period showcases a deep-seated belief among West Coast fishermen that they were workers with the right to collectively bargain. The first union began on the Columbia River in the 1870s, not long after the first cannery was established in

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<sup>38</sup> Pinsky, *Fisheries of California* 170-180; 52-8; Courtland Smith, *Salmon Fisheries of the Columbia* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1979), 57-58; Montes, *Alaska Fishermen*, 1-26; Radke, *Pacific American Fisheries, Inc.*, 136-163.

<sup>39</sup> George North and Harold Griffin, *A Ripple, A Wave: The Story of Union Organization in the BC Fishing Industry* (Vancouver, BC: Fishermen's Publishing Society, 1974), 9.

1867.<sup>40</sup> The Fishermen's Benevolent Aid Society was formed in 1875 to pool money for burials and exclude Chinese immigrants who worked in the canneries from expanding into fishing. Leaders of the Society went on to form the Columbia River Fishermen's Protective Union (CRFPU) in 1880, which affiliated with the American Federation of Labor and led a major 1896 strike that was crushed by the National Guard. From this defeat grew a cooperatively owned cannery that successfully operated until 1950.<sup>41</sup> Between 1896 and 1926, the CRFPU underwent several cycles of decline and reorganization. Craft unionism and racial exclusivity, manifested in intense opposition to purse seine fishermen, and a failure to organize even white cannery workers limited its success.<sup>42</sup>

Meanwhile in 1902, 700 non-resident fishermen from San Francisco and Seattle staged a wildcat strike aboard company-owned boats while fishing near Bristol Bay, Alaska. A promised pay increase never manifested, but the dispute led to the formation of the Alaska Fishermen's Union. By 1904 it had 5,000 members and affiliated with the International Seamen's Union-AFL (ISU).<sup>43</sup> For the next three decades, it was the strongest fishermen's union on the Coast.<sup>44</sup> A similar union, the Copper River and Prince William Sound Fishermen's Union, formed a few years later and joined the ISU.

In the early 1930s, two factors dramatically altered fishery worker unionism on the West Coast. First, fish prices dropped dramatically in 1931. Secondly, industrial unionism spurred

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<sup>40</sup> "Fishermen's Union Grows Old on Good Ideas" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, January 1948, 4;

N.D. Jarvis, "Curing and Canning of Fishery Products: A History," *Marine Fishery Review* 50, no. 4 (1988): 183

<sup>41</sup> Greg Jacob, "Union Fishermen's Cooperative Packing Company," Oregon Encyclopedia.

<[http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/entry/view/union\\_fishermen\\_s\\_cooperative\\_packing\\_company/](http://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/entry/view/union_fishermen_s_cooperative_packing_company/)>;

"Columbia River Fisheries," Columbia River Fishermen's Protective Union (Astoria, OR: G.W. Snyder, 1890).

Available via University of Washington Digital Collections, <<http://content.lib.washington.edu/u/?salmon,318>>;

"Fishermen's Union Grows Old on Good Ideas" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, January 1948, 4.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.; Henry Niemela, "Columbia River Fishermen's Protective Union," in 'Yearbook Second Convention IFAWA, 1940,' box 12, folder 2, page 11.

<sup>43</sup> Andrew Vigen, "Alaska Fishermen's Union – Early History" in 'Yearbook Second Convention IFAWA, 1940,' box 12, folder 2, page 9.

<sup>44</sup> Pinsky, *The Fisheries of California*, 75-6; Martin Hegeberg, "Vice President on the Benefits of Affiliation," in 'Yearbook Second Convention IFAWA, 1940,' box 12, folder 2, page 6

organization on a grander scale. The idea of coastwise union to represent all workers from catch to cannery was introduced by a Communist Party-led union, the Fishermen and Cannery Workers Industrial Union. It did not create such an organization in its short existence, but created the networks which built the International Fishermen and Allied Workers. First though, the 1931 price drop led to wildcat strikes and the reinvigoration of old unions. Strikes generally took the form of ‘tie-ups,’ so called because the fishermen left their boats tied to the dock until a settlement was reached. The actions were often defensive, taken against packers that were providing lower prices than their competitors, and were often short in duration.<sup>45</sup>

The Fishermen and Cannery Workers Industrial Union (FCWIU) was launched in 1931 as a project of the Trade Union Unity League, a Communist Party effort launched in 1929 to build independent unions instead of agitating inside the AFL. The mostly unorganized and disgruntled workforce of the fishing and cannery industry proved fertile ground. The first big success came in 1931 when leftist dissidents gained control of the Vancouver, Canada local of the British Columbia Fishermen’s Protective Association.<sup>46</sup> The local was expelled and purse seine fishermen throughout British Columbia joined them to form four locals of the Communist FCWIU.<sup>47</sup> Like other fishing unions, they faced tough resistance from packers who would alter prices in response to pressure but were loathe to sign agreements. The Canadian Fishermen and Cannery Workers successfully signed one contract around 1935 with the Deep Bay Packing and Fishing Company, but it was abrogated two years later when the cannery burned.<sup>48</sup> Meanwhile, FCWIU organizers were busy in the Puget Sound and Columbia River building a network of

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<sup>45</sup> Pinsky, *The Fisheries of California*, 77; North and Griffin, *A Ripple, A Wave*, 9.

<sup>46</sup> Percy Gladstone and Stuart Jamieson, “Unionism in the Fishing Industry of British Columbia,” *The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science*, 16, no. 2 (1950): 162.

<sup>47</sup> Gladstone and Jamieson, “Unionism in the Fishing Industry of British Columbia,” 163.

<sup>48</sup> “Shoreworkers and the UFAWU Organization” in *Uncommon Property: The Fishing and Fish-Processing Industries in British Columbia*, Patricia Marchak, Neil Guppy and John McMullan ,eds (Toronto: Methuen 1987), 272; North and Griffin, *A Ripple, A Wave*, 19.

workers and agitating within existing unions. This dual-union strategy mixed pre- and post-1929 Communist Party approaches to labor organizing.<sup>49</sup>

On May Day 1933, the Columbia River Fishermen's Protective Union called a strike of gillnet fishermen in Astoria and the Lower Columbia. Between 2,500 and 4,000 fishermen ceased working and shut down operations in the area. In the Upper River area, a majority joined the strike.<sup>50</sup> Within days, roughly 1,000 cannery workers walked out in support. To show support, the Pacific Coast Fishermen's Union (PCFU), formed by the International Seamen's Union in 1932 to capitalize on the upsurge of unrest in the industry, tied-up salmon trolling vessels in Puget Sound and Alaska. Trollers in the radical Fishermen and Cannery Workers in British Columbia followed suit.<sup>51</sup> For the first time, fishermen across craft and watershed lines were gaining a sense that their struggles intersected. The sympathy strike was also strategic move by the troller fishermen. Following the settlement of the Columbia dispute, 4,000 American and Canadian trollers, including 600 in Puget Sound, struck.<sup>52</sup> Within a week, they settled with companies in Vancouver, BC and Astoria, Oregon that returned the majority of the fleet to work. Packers in Seattle refused to settle, so the trollers simply redirected deliveries to the other ports.<sup>53</sup>

The other base of support for the Fishermen and Cannery Workers Industrial Union was in San Pedro, where it became part of the radical ferment that exploded in the 1934 maritime and longshore strike. In fact, the FCWIU was the first group of workers to go on strike in the Los

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<sup>49</sup> "Fishermen Win Strike, Will Get Demand of 8 cents," *Voice of Action*, June 14, 1933, 1; "55 Columbia River Cannery Workers and Fishermen Meet," *Voice of Action*, March 13, 1934.

For some scant details on TUUL organizing among Puget Sound fishermen, see: House Un-American Activities Committee, "Investigation of Communist Activities In the Seattle, Wash., Area," March 17-18 1955, 262-7.

<sup>50</sup> "Strike Demands Refused; Salmon Plants to Close" *Seattle Times*, May 4, 1933, 13; "Fishermen's Strike Spreads North: Packers and Netters Refuse Peace" *Lewiston Morning Tribune*, May 7, 1933.

<sup>51</sup> Gladstone and Jamieson, "Unionism in the Fishing Industry of British Columbia," 164.

<sup>52</sup> "Fishermen Win Strike, Will Get Demand of 8 cents," *Voice of Action*, June 14, 1933, 1.

"Fishermen Will Return to Work; Boycott Seattle." *Seattle Times*, June 22, 1933.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

Angeles harbor in 1934, tying up San Pedro, Wilmington and Long Beach for a week in January.<sup>54</sup> It also led a raucous organizing drive at a Van Camp cannery in San Diego that culminated in a lockout and violent clashes with police in May 1934, against the backdrop of the longshore strike.<sup>55</sup> In July, San Pedro fishermen enthusiastically pledged their support for a general strike after Blood Thursday.<sup>56</sup>

The Communist Party shifted its strategy in 1935, opting for a popular front alliance with liberals. The Trade Union Unity League and its affiliates were dissolved. Former locals of the Fishermen and Cannery Workers (FCWIU) quickly regrouped into localized craft unions. The Salmon Purse Seiner's Union (SPSU) was formed to regroup the FCWIU locals in British Columbia and the network of sympathizers on Puget Sound. In Washington State, the Herring Fishermen's Union was also formed. The new units applied for affiliation with the International Seamen's Union (ISU), part of the American Federation of Labor. The International was acutely aware of the leftist foundations of the applicants and stalled the process for several months. Conrad Espe, Secretary-Treasurer of the Salmon Purse Seiners, lobbied for the admission of the two new unions in Washington. Meanwhile, his union underwent an enormously productive period of organizing. In spring 1935, the SPSU had locals in Tacoma, Anacortes and Bellingham. By July, there were new locals in Seattle and Everett, and membership stood at around 800. This represented 60% of the Sound salmon purse seiner workforce.<sup>57</sup> Union headquarters were established in South Bellingham, an ideal location for the union to put down

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<sup>54</sup> "Pedro Sardine Fishermen on Strike Under FCWIU," *Voice of Action*, January 22, 1934, 3; "San Pedro Fishermen Win Strike Under Leadership of the FCWIU," *Voice of Action*, January 29, 1934, 2; Todd Titterud, "January in San Pedro," *My San Pedro*, January 8, 2011. <[http://www.mysanpedro.org/2011\\_01\\_01\\_archive.html](http://www.mysanpedro.org/2011_01_01_archive.html)>

<sup>55</sup> Rudy Guevarra Jr., *Becoming Mexipino: Multiethnic Identities and Communities in San Diego* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012.), 120-1.

<sup>56</sup> "Fishermen Ready to Join Strike," *Seattle Times*, July 7, 1934.

<sup>57</sup> "Conrad Espe to Victor Olander, Secretary, ISU, letter, July 25, 1935, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 14; Olander to P.B. Gill, telegram, July 25, 1935, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 14; R.H. Fiedler, *Fishery Industries of the United States 1937*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1938), 372.

roots community roots that went beyond the workplace. The strength of the SPSU in South Bellingham and the FCWIU in San Pedro, both Croatian strongholds, draws attention to the importance of Yugoslavians in the move toward industrial unionism in fishing. The first SPSU strike was called in July and members stayed home during the start of the Sound salmon season. There were no picket lines, but the silence on the docks contrasted to the festive atmosphere that normally accompanied the first day of the season. More than just a labor dispute, it was a collective community refusal to live at the whims of the packers. The fishermen were highly skilled workers with a knowledge of the fishing grounds and salmon that could not be taught, making it difficult to recruit replacement workers on short notice. 454 members participated in the strike authorization vote, including a massive turnout of 235 at a meeting in Tacoma. The action bore fruit later in August when the SPSU signed its first contracts.<sup>58</sup>

I argue that the leadership of Fishermen and Cannery Workers Industrial Union consciously thought of dissolution as a strategic move, and planned from the beginning to build a new and united fishermen's union within the shell of the International Seamen's Union.<sup>59</sup> A call for a conference of all West Coast union fishermen was endorsed at the first SPSU convention in December 1935.<sup>60</sup> Espe immediately went to work on the idea. During the effort to gain admission to the Seamen's Union, he built relationships with existing affiliates like the Alaska Fishermen's Union. An invitation to the January 1936 Seamen's Union Convention gave him an additional opportunity to conduct outreach. There, the Salmon Purse Seiners, Herring Fishermen, and the union of former FCWIU locals in California were admitted to the International. A

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<sup>58</sup> Special Meeting at Headquarter July 9, 1935, Local 3 Records, box 2, folder 25.

<sup>59</sup> Espe to Jurich, letter, January 19, 1936, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 11; Jurich to Espe, letter, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 11; There is no 'smoking gun' showing a plan, but the close personal friendship between Espe, Jurich, Dale, George Ivankovich (San Pedro) and other Party members/union leaders is apparent, and they discuss the plans for a fishermen's conference in these letters during the Convention. The sustained efforts of former FCWIU leaders to tie together fishermen's unions and eventually join the CIO strongly suggested it was concerted and intentional.

<sup>60</sup> Conrad Espe to Andrew Vigen, Secretary, AFU, letter, December 13, 1935, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 14

resurrected Copper River and Prince Williams Sound Fishermen's Union was readmitted under an old charter. Though the key goal of admission was achieved, the ensuing Convention was a disaster. It was the first Seamen's Union Convention since 1930, and was to be the last. The ISU had been virtually inoperable since the early 1920s when membership shrank by more than 100,000 and it lost the ability to control the conditions of seafaring work. Political, personal and geographic factionalism thrived. At the 1936 Convention, the newly admitted fishermen caucused with a group of West Coast progressives that, although outvoted 2-1, could block any motion.<sup>61</sup> Espe left two weeks into the marathon convention when he secured funds to travel to San Pedro to assist in an organizing drive.<sup>62</sup>

1936 continued to be a tumultuous year for the Salmon Purse Seiners Union. In June the union signed its first closed shop agreement, which guaranteed that a cannery would only buy from SPSU fishermen at an agreed-upon price. The victory proved to be ephemeral when a weak salmon run forced many to fish for pilchard instead of salmon. In fall, they were locked out by salmon packers, but the SPSU held strong for the entire season and refused to settle.<sup>63</sup> Workers may have fished for other catches or taken non-fishing jobs during this time. Reflecting after the close of the season, union officials concluded that "the buyers themselves still do not realize the strength of the fishermen's union or organized labor, and our action this fall has again proved to those who control the industries that they are not the sole bosses. It is admittedly true that the purse seine fishermen lost some money, but they have gained enough in prestige to make up in the coming season for what they have lost and more."<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, the situation in cannery

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<sup>61</sup> Hyman Weintraub, *Andrew Furuseth: Emancipator of the Seamen* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1959), 191-9.

<sup>62</sup> Espe to Jurich, letter, January 19, 1936, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 11  
Espe Report on 33<sup>rd</sup> ISU Convention, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 11

<sup>63</sup> Salmon Purse Seiners Union Executive Board, October 24, 1936, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 15; 'Salmon Purse Seiners Union of the Pacific, Second Convention,' December 1, 1937, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 1.

<sup>64</sup> Salmon Purse Seiners Union Executive Board, January 3, 1937, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 10.

unionism heated up when leaders of the Cannery Workers' and Farm Laborers' Union Local 18257 (CWFLU), which represented Filipino non-resident cannery workers who worked in Alaska, were mysteriously murdered in December. Espe was increasingly involved in the CWFLU, resigning from the Salmon Purse Seiners in August 1937. He would later become an International Vice-President of the CIO's United Cannery, Agricultural, Packinghouse and Allied Workers of America.<sup>65</sup> His resignation cleared the way for Joseph Jurich, Business Agent from Tacoma, to become Secretary-Treasurer of the SPSU. Meanwhile, Astoria-born Communist Party organizer Paul Dale continued to head the Herring Fishermen's Union.

Membership in the International Seamen's Union (ISU) granted the ex-FCWIU unions the legitimacy needed to assume a position of leadership among the disparate fishery unions of the Pacific Coast. Further, the deterioration of the Seamen's Union into a paper entity after the Convention ensured that there was no interfere with their efforts. An ISU Fishermen's Unions Conference was held December 7-8, 1936 and a constitution was drafted for a Federated Fishermen's Council of the Pacific, ISU-AFL (FFC). Matt Batinovich, Business Agent of the Deep Sea and Purse Seine Fishermen's Union, an outgrowth of the FCWIU in California, was elected President. Martin Olsen of the Alaska Fishermen's Union was selected as Secretary-Treasurer, cementing unity between the newly admitted unions and longtime ISU affiliates.<sup>66</sup> The preamble of the Constitution was remarkable, showcasing an awareness of ecological issues and a commitment to working class struggle. It is worth quoting at length:

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<sup>65</sup>Cannery Workers and Farm Laborers Local 7, Inventory, University of Washington Special Collections, <<http://www.lib.washington.edu/static/public/specialcollections/findingaids/3927-001.pdf>> Meeting minutes, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 6; Espe to Jurich, letter, August 10, 1937, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 22; Salmon Purse Seiners Union Executive Board-Board, December 6, 1936, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 10.

<sup>66</sup> Minutes CIO National Maritime Unity Conference, Chicago August 30-September 1, 1937, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 22; First Annual Convention Federated Fishermen's Council of the Pacific Coast. Astoria, December 13-18, 1937, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 21

[We commit to] justly share the products of our labor...dedicate ourselves to the conservation of natural resources and maintenance of the fisheries through artificial propagation and elimination of destructive agencies. We deplore selfish and wanton waste and unreasonable demands on our fisheries' resources. Knowing that we are at all times dependent on the well-being of our fellow men, that we may share in the production of our industry only in direct proportion to our ability to control the operations within the industry, and that it does not in itself suffice that we establish efficient leadership, but that each and every member must become conscious of his importance to the welfare of the whole industry and carry on with a willing and unselfish spirit in maintaining the welfare of the many, it shall be our wish to aid all laboring people to better their conditions to the common end that all laboring people may enjoy the fruits of their labor. We are aware that our struggle for economical betterment carries with it the responsibility of bettering our political and social conditions.<sup>67</sup>

Batinovich's union was joined by the Alaska Fishermen, Salmon Purse Seiners, Herring Fishermen, the Pacific Coast Fishermen's Union, and the Copper River and Prince William Sound Fishermen's Union as founding members of the Council. The Columbia River Fishermen's Protective Union and the Deep Sea Fishermen's Union, which represented halibut fishermen out of Seattle, chose not to join but maintained friendly relations with the new body.<sup>68</sup> The combined membership of the Council was around 12,000.<sup>69</sup> At the meeting, they discussed common struggles with obstinate packers, ethnic divisions that undermined unionism and the lack of coordination between unions. The Conference also featured a productive discussion with the Inlandboatmen's Union, another ISU affiliate, which agreed to relinquish jurisdiction over fish cannery workers in favor of the Council.<sup>70</sup>

The formation of the Federated Fishermen's Council greatly facilitated coordinated collective bargaining. The Salmon Purse Seiners Union and the Herring Fishermen's Union jointly negotiated contracts with vessel owners concerning on-board conditions, and the Deep

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<sup>67</sup> Federated Fishermen's Council of the Pacific, ISU-AFL Constitution, Local 3 Records, box 1, folder 1.

<sup>68</sup> Pinsky, *Fisheries of California*, 79.

<sup>69</sup> First Annual Convention Federated Fishermen's Council, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 21; On shifting membership numbers and per capita, see, for e.g: Executive Board Meeting of Federated Fishermen's Council, August 23-25, 1937, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 22.

<sup>70</sup> International Seamen's Union Fishermen's Unions Convention, December 7 1936, Local 3 Records, box 1, folder 7; Salmon Purse Seiners Union Executive Board, January 17, 1937, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 10.

Sea and Purse Seine Fishermen's Union negotiated with Monterey-based packers on behalf of the Herring Fishermen. All three unions signed a master contract with both vessel owners and cannery companies covering the sardine catch.<sup>71</sup> In July 1937, the newly formed FFC Executive Board dispatched Batinovich and Olsen to a meeting of the Committee for Industrial Organization (CIO). The CIO was beginning the difficult task of building a full labor federation, after its main affiliates were expelled from the AFL in fall 1936. At the meeting, CIO leaders floated the idea of a charter for fishermen, and longshore leader Harry Bridges attended a meeting of the Federated Fishermen's Council afterwards to advocate for CIO membership. In the wake of another CIO meeting in August, the Fishermen's Council asked its affiliates to conduct referendums on affiliation. The vote was stalled because of the fall fishing season and political maneuvering between pro-AFL and pro-CIO factions.<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile, the three outgrowths of the Communist FCWIU - the Deep Sea and Purse Seine Fishermen's Union, the Salmon Purse Seiners and the Herring Fishermen - held internal votes on a merger. They amalgamated shortly before the Federated Fishermen's Council Convention in December 1937, thereby consolidating the most pro-CIO sectors of the Council and creating a coastwise, multi-catch union of seine fishermen. The newly created United Fishermen's Union of the Pacific (UFU) was technically still a craft organization of seine workers, but was a crucial step in pushing for industrial unionism. Commemorating Emil Linden, first Secretary of the FCWIU, the United Fishermen's merger convention approved a resolution vowing that fishermen would

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<sup>71</sup> Minutes of the Negotiations Committee of the Herring Fishermen's Union of the Pacific, Salmon Purse Seiners; Union of the Pacific with the Pacific Coast Boat Owner's Association, May 26, 1937, Local 3 Records, box 6, folder 2; Minutes, Herring Fishermen's Union of the Pacific, May 13, 1937, Local 3 Records, box 6, folder 2; Minutes, June 7, 1937, Cannery, Unions and Boat Owners Organizations, Local 3 Records, box 6, folder 2; Conference on the Working Agreement and Other Mutual Union Problems of DSPSFU, SPSU, HFU, Monterey March 19, 1937; Conference on the Sardine Agreement, the Price of Sardines and Fishing Legislation, Attached to: SPSU HQ Mtg, Anacortes. July 24, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 10

<sup>72</sup> Pinsky, *Fisheries of California*, 80; Alaska Purse Seiner's Union Convention, September 11, 1937, Local 3 Records, box 11.

“soon be united in one powerful coastwise union as visioned by Brother Linden.”<sup>73</sup> At the Council Convention, the feeling was generally pro-CIO, and affiliation enjoyed the endorsement of Vice-President and Alaska Fishermen’s Union member Martin Olsen. A renewed call was made for internal ballots among Federated Fishermen’s Council affiliates on the question of CIO membership.<sup>74</sup> At the end of the Convention, Batinovich declined nomination for another term as head of the FFC, likely because he was first in line to lead the United Fishermen’s Union. This cleared the way for Joe Jurich to take over as leader of the Fishermen’s Council. Industrial unionism was moving from an aspirational concept put forward by a scattered Communist Party union to an actionable form of organization supported by most Pacific Coast fishermen.

### **III. A Coastwise, Industrial Union**

After some initial delays, the United Fishermen’s Union (UFU) moved forward in 1938 with the merger and formed a California District, a Puget Sound District and an Allied Trades Department.<sup>75</sup> The latter included the Fish Reduction Workers, Salters and Gibber’s Union that joined the UFU-Puget Sound alongside a growing number of cannery locals in places like Anacortes. The Puget Sound District incorporated other new groups, including a local of reefnetters from Lummi Island. This represented concrete process in building an organization that knit together geographically disparate fishermen, different gears, and shoreworkers. Not long after, the International Fishermen and Allied Workers of America (IFAWA) came into

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<sup>73</sup> Merger Convention of the DSPSFU-CA, SPSU-Pac, HFU-Pac., Astoria, OR, December 6-12, 1937, Local 3 Records, box 6, folder 4.; Salmon Purse Seiners Union Executive Board, October 16, 1937, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 10

<sup>74</sup> First Annual Convention Federated Fishermen’s Council of the Pac Coast. Astoria, December 13-18 1937, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 21, 8; 11; 26;

<sup>75</sup> Minutes, Herring Fishermen’s Union of the Pacific February 17, 1938, Local 3 Records, box 6, folder 2; Minutes, Herring Fishermen’s Union of the Pacific March 3, 1938, Local 3 Records, box 6, folder 2; Special Meeting Minutes, Herring Fishermen’s Union of the Pacific, March 10, 1938, Local 3 Records, box 6, folder 2; Salmon Purse Seiners Union All Agents, March 11, 1938, Local 3 Records, box 3, folder 2; Salmon Purse Seiners Union Executive Board, March 21, 1938, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 10; United Fishermen’s Union-Puget Sound Pro Tem Secretary-Treasurer Jurich to All Locals, April 5, 1938, Local 3 Records, box 3, folder 2.

being as a truly industrial and coastwise union that asserted a widely held belief among fishermen that they were misclassified workers. A base among Yugoslavians facilitated its formation through networks that reached up and down the coast, but ethnic divisions weakened IFAWA's power. The unions that united to create IFAWA decided not to fully merge their internal structures, and Canadian affiliates did not join the new union. Both were barriers to institutionalization that had serious consequences in the late 1940s. From the outside, there were immediate and severe attacks by the packers and the state. This challenge failed to halt expansion, which was built on creative organizing methods tailored to the unique aspects of fishery work. Growth soon converted into stronger contracts and more legislative action.

The initial expansion of the United Fishermen in 1939 suggests that organizing was not forgotten amidst the maneuvering at the national level over alignment with the CIO or AFL. However, it damaged nascent efforts in Alaska when some members resisted CIO affiliation and union staffers were diverted from organizing to union politics.<sup>76</sup> By the time the Federated Fishermen's Council held its Convention in December 1938, the United Fishermen's Union and Alaska Fishermen's Union had completed voting in favor of the CIO. Together, they represented 80% of the Council's membership. On the other hand, the Pacific Coast Fishermen's Union (PCFU) opposed CIO affiliation and many small Council affiliates had failed to complete internal referendums.<sup>77</sup> The PCFU had a more conservative bent than the other affiliates, and wanted to preserve the broad jurisdiction granted them by the Seamen's Union, even though they were mostly a union of trollers. A representative of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, which had held its founding convention just weeks earlier, spoke to the assembly and was followed by Harry Bridges, now president of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union

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<sup>76</sup> Alaska Purse Seiner's Union Convention September 11, 1937, Local 3 Records, box 11

<sup>77</sup> Second Annual Federated Fishermen's Convention, San Francisco December 12-19, 1938, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 22, 5-7; 10

(ILWU) and Western Regional director of the CIO. The fishermen operated out of many of the same ports as the ILWU and often worked as longshore casuals between fishing seasons.<sup>78</sup> The delegates voted 17-1, with the Pacific Coast Fishermen's Union dissenting, to accept the CIO's offer of a charter under the name International Fishermen and Allied Workers of America.

After approving the CIO charter, the Federated Fishermen's Council went straight to work approving a Constitution for IFAWA and designated Seattle as the new body's headquarters. 300 copies of the convention minutes were printed to ensure that all locals and members had access to the discussion.<sup>79</sup> Fifteen nominations were made for President, but only Matt Batinovich and Joe Jurich, both from the United Fishermen's Union, accepted. Jurich carried the vote. George Hecker and Martin Olsen, both of the Alaska Fishermen's Union, became the Vice-President and Secretary-Treasurer respectively. As the Convention ended, the birth of IFAWA still hung in the balance while the Columbia River Fishermen's Protective Union and the Copper River and Prince William Sound Fishermen's Union pledged to hold votes on affiliation. Both decided in favor of the idea, and the PCFU later reversed course. With that, the first Executive Board meeting of IFAWA was held on May 2, 1939.<sup>80</sup>

The autonomous British Columbia branches of the Salmon Purse Seiners and the Pacific Coast Fishermen's Union expressed interest in potentially joining the new International, but a separate process of fishery union consolidation in BC quietly prevented it. Instead, BC fishermen coalesced into an industrial union in 1945 under the name United Fishermen and Allied Workers

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 10; In 1936, the SPSU aided Tacoma longshoremen by donating fish during their strike: Salmon Purse Seiner's Union Executive Board, March 26, 1937, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 10.

<sup>79</sup> Second Annual Federated Fishermen's Convention, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 22.

<sup>80</sup> Pinsky, *The Fisheries of California*, 80-82; Pacific Coast Fishermen's Union Annual Convention, Tillamook, Oregon, January 5- 11, 1939, Local 3 Records, box 4, folder 38. First IFAWA Convention. Bellingham, WA, December 4-8, 1939, American Labor Unions Constitutions and Proceedings: Part I, 1836-1974, 11.

Union (UFAWU).<sup>81</sup> The BC unions maintained warm relations with their US counterparts, sending fraternal delegates to every convention until the late 1940s, when US Border Patrol denied entry to individuals associated with the Communist Party.<sup>82</sup> In 1938, the BC Salmon Purse Seiners Union conducted one of the most dramatic fishing strikes on record. They waited until the salmon fleet was together on the water to call the strike, ensuring that no union boat could sneak out of harbor and scab. Demanding minimum prices and a union recognition from the association of salmon packers, they sailed in formation toward Vancouver to return the nets they rented from the packers – but not before sabotaging the gear by cutting it up. They continued to tour ports around BC, stopping to negotiate with the companies and visiting a lumber worker strike, before returning to Vancouver to block scab boats from offloading their catch.<sup>83</sup> The dramatic ‘sail-in’ strategy was never to be repeated.

The effective use of the strike by these fishermen, and the working-class solidarity with lumber workers illustrates a strong belief among fishermen that they were workers. In the historically and geographically specific period examined in this essay, the working-class status of fishermen was self-evident and compatible with strong notions of independence and self-reliance.<sup>84</sup> Failures in fishery worker unionization are often attributed to these attitudes, because they contrast with the collective solidarity inherent to unionism. In reality, work aboard fishing boats required precise coordination, and constant reliance on other members of the crew. This cooperation on-board was an extension of the social networks of ethnic fishing communities, and the two built upon each other. Fierce independence was less about individualism than the ability

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 19; 27; Gladstone and Jamieson, “Unionism in the Fishing Industry of British Columbia,” 166.

<sup>82</sup> See, for e.g.: Proceedings, Second Convention IFAWA, December 9-13, 1940, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, 21.

<sup>83</sup> North and Griffin. *A Ripple, A Wave*, 19; Alan Haig-Brown, *Fishing for A Living* (Madeira Park: Harbour Publishing),104.

<sup>84</sup> Arnold, *The Fishermen’s Frontier*, 154-5, concurs with the self-identification of workers, citing: Lauren Casaday. *Labor unrest and the labor movement in the salmon industry of the Pacific Coast*. Thesis (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1937).

to self-determine working patterns, methods and where to fish. Further, this independent streak nurtured an oppositional attitude toward the packers. Collective association emerged as the best strategy to prevent attempts by packers to regulate and discipline their labor.<sup>85</sup>

Whether formalized or not, ethnic separation and discrimination was a far worse barrier to organization than the misclassification of fishermen by packers. At times, union locals operated in practice as ethnic associations that engaged in collective bargaining. In these cases prejudice precluded organizing, or made those outside of the CIO fishermen's base among Yugoslavian and Scandinavian immigrants wary of joining an organization led by another group.<sup>86</sup> This had grave consequences in San Pedro, where Yugoslavians were the majority. In the rest of Southern California, Italians were the dominant group. The packers split the Japanese and Italians from the United Fishermen's Union in the port of San Pedro, convincing the two groups to fish during 1939 lockout that temporarily busted the local.<sup>87</sup> The Italians later formed the basis for a breakaway AFL local.<sup>88</sup> Compelled by an anti-discrimination policy of the International Seamen's Union to organize a Japanese auxiliary to the union in Monterey, Matt Batinovich once expressed with some surprise that "many of the Japanese proved to be just as good [unionists] as any other race."<sup>89</sup>

This kind of prejudice damaged broad-based organizing, but ethnicity was a double-edged sword. San Pedro was a stronghold of the communist Fishermen and Cannery Workers

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<sup>85</sup> See, for e.g.: J. Stephen Thomas, David Johnson and Catherine Riordan, "Independence and Collective Action: Reconsidering Union Activity among Commercial Fishermen in Mississippi" *Human Organization* 54, No. 2 (1995); E. Paul Durrenberger, "Psychology, Unions, and The Law: Folk Models and the History of Shrimpers' Unions in Mississippi" *Human Organization*, Vol. 51, No. 2, 1992; On self-reliance, workplace control and working class identity, see: Reports from Labor, August 1, 1950, Jerry Tyler Papers, <[http://depts.washington.edu/dock/tyler\\_audio/August\\_1\\_1950.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/dock/tyler_audio/August_1_1950.pdf)>.

<sup>86</sup> In 1936, the Italian Fishermen's Association in San Pedro sought an injunction against SPSU closed shop agreements: Salmon Purse Seiners Union Executive Board, November 30, 1936, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 10.

<sup>87</sup> Second Federated Fishermen's Council Convention, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 22, 9

<sup>88</sup> IFAWA Executive Board, April 16, 194, box 12, folder 14, 8-14

<sup>89</sup> Merger Convention, December 6-12, 1937, Local 3 Records, box 6, folder 4, 3.

Industrial Union and later IFAWA, in part because of ethnic and familial networks that became a conduit for organizing. A case in point is the Zuanich family, based out of Bellingham and an important part of the Puget Sound fishing community. Phil Zuanich immigrated to the US and began fishing on the Columbia River in 1907, becoming an active member of the Columbia River Fishermen's Protective Union. He later moved to Bellingham and was active in the early days of the Salmon Purse Seiners Union alongside Pete Zuanich, who later served a 43 year term as the city's port commissioner. Many members of the clan lived in San Pedro and maintained close communication and ties with Puget Sound. Vince Zuanich, and probably others, worked aboard vessels in both areas.<sup>90</sup> Networks like this one were probably an important aspect in the creation and maintenance of a coastwise union. The family remained involved with and tied to the union throughout IFAWA's history. Nick Maratinich, former President of IFAWA Local 33 in San Pedro, moved to Bellingham in 1946 after marrying a member of the Zuanich family. Maratinich's sister also married a member of the family in San Pedro, and the two were active in the union. When Maratinich arrived in Bellingham, one of his first outings was to accompany Phil Zuanich and Louise Otten, a writer for the union newspaper, in soliciting advertisements from local businesses.<sup>91</sup>

Cooperatives proved to be an even more problematic than ethnic exclusivity for IFAWA and its affiliates. The cooperative approach conceived of fishermen as independent entrepreneurs who could band together to sell their product, in direct opposition to the idea of fishermen as misclassified and marginalized workers. Often, the cooperatives took the form of 'marketing associations' that pooled resources to improve their gear and obtain favorable deals with the

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<sup>90</sup> RaeJean Hasenoehrl, *Everett Fishermen* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), 16; "Bellingham News Notes," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, December 1946, 9.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*; See also: "Our Story," Pure Alaska Salmon Industry Co. <<http://www.purealaskasalmon.com/our-story-pure-alaska-salmon-company>>. Note that one of the Zuanich family's seiners, still in operation, is named the 'Marshal Tito.'

packers. In the latter aspect, cooperatives were similar to unions in that they leveraged collective association to improve income, but the relationship of cooperatives and packers was thought of as one business to another. This made cooperatives averse to confrontation and wary of closed shop agreements. At a tense meeting with fishing union representatives in 1938, the Fishermen's Cooperative Association argued that it was better to join a cooperative than strike, because the cooperative had the resources to freeze and store fish during an impasse in negotiations. The Cooperative filed for an injunction against the Pacific Coast Fishermen's Union after it demanded Cooperative members join as individual members if they wanted to fish for closed shop canneries. Earlier, the Cooperative had been open to becoming a PCFU affiliate, but the meeting devolved into accusations that the union blacklisted cooperative members. Union representatives fired back that "Cooperatives should realize they are not organizations entirely separate but are part of the working class movement."<sup>92</sup> As a result of divisions like this one, cooperative members often scabbed on strikes or otherwise undermined the negotiation of prices.<sup>93</sup> The early formation of a cooperative cannery on the Columbia River is an important but unique example of a cooperative based on working class consciousness. In San Pedro during the late 1930s, the United Fishermen's Union attempted to form a union-backed cooperative, but the packers conspired to destroy it by raising prices paid to non-union fishermen and artificially depressing local consumer prices, squeezing the nascent cooperative into insolvency.<sup>94</sup>

The existence of anti-union cooperatives shows that a section of West Coast fishermen identified as petty capitalists, but IFAWA's sizes suggests that the vast majority thought of

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<sup>92</sup> Minutes, Fifth Annual Convention, Pacific Coast Fishermen's Union, Astoria, Oregon, January 5-15, 1938, Local 3 Records, box 4, folder 38; Federated Fishermen's Council Conference, Executive Committee, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 22: February 2, 1-3.

<sup>93</sup> Executive Board Meeting, July 26, 1939, Local 3 Records, box 1, folder 9; Federated Fishermen's Council Executive Board May 5, 1938, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 22; Second Annual Federated Fishermen's Council, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 22, page 11

<sup>94</sup> *Fisheries of California*, 69.

themselves as workers. Faced with frequent price and weight gouging, arbitrary prices, and permanent debt there was little mystery clouding true nature of fishermen and packers.<sup>95</sup> For union organizers, the task was less about overcoming the myths of self-sufficient and entrepreneurial fishermen – which most workers easily recognized as false given the concentrated economic power of the packers – and more about convincing them that the benefits of unionization outweighed its risks. In doing so, IFAWA and its forerunners gave structure to the spontaneous impulses among fishermen to take collective action and provided them with a sustainable way to build power and change the conditions of the overall industry.

Successful coastwise organization meant recalibrating union organizing to account for the rampant misclassification of fishermen. One of the biggest breakthroughs made by IFAWA was to abandon the practice of denying membership to owner-operators, men who owned the boats they fished on and hired a crew to help out. A simplistic vision of class struggle and control of the means of production led the Fishermen and Cannery Workers Industrial Union to deny owner-captains membership, but IFAWA identified the crux of labor-capital relations as the exchange between fishermen and packers.<sup>96</sup> However, the admission of owner-operators, often deeply indebted to the packers, was a hotly debated topic throughout the history of IFAWA. The union was careful to provide for methods by which owner-operators could be expelled and

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 58-64

<sup>96</sup> Working Agreement for Salmon Purse Seine Boats July 1943, Local 3 Records, box 3, folder 10; Salmon Purse Seiners Union of the Pacific, Second Convention, December 1, 1937, 84 Seneca St, Seattle, Purse Seiners Hall, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 1, page 26; First Annual Convention Federated Fishermen's Council of the Pac Coast. Astoria, December 13-18 1937, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 21, page 38; United Fishermen's Union of the Pacific, Puget Sound District, Northwest Conference, Nov 28, 1938, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 1, page 4; IFAWA, Pacific District Local 3 Executive Board April 6, 1946, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 11, page 1; Minutes of the First Annual Conference of the Pacific District Local No. 3, December 20, 1946, box 12, folder 11, page 4; Local 3 Executive Board February 19, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 10, page 14

strictly prohibited membership to owners who did not work aboard their vessels.<sup>97</sup> In many areas and gears like purse seining, an association of vessel owners negotiated contracts with the union covering working conditions.

Creative organizing and membership engagement tactics that accommodated the idiosyncrasies of the fishing industry were essential to the formation and growth of the International Fishermen and Allied Workers.<sup>98</sup> The structure and geography of fishing work presented a myriad of challenges. First, fishermen were seasonal, and sometimes lived and found off-season work in a different city from the port where they gained employment, which could also be in a different place from where they fished. Second, some catches required long periods at sea while others allowed the boat and its workers to return to port daily, weekly or on a semi-regular basis. The most important union tactic formed to fit the industry was boat clearing. A boat and its crew had to be approved by a union representative to leave port, or face sanctions. This made closed shop agreements particularly important because if a cannery signed such an agreement, the union could bar boats that failed to clear from selling to the facility. In many cases, representatives gave cleared boats union flags or signs to easily indicate to canneries, tenders and other boats that it was union approved.<sup>99</sup> To be cleared, all crew had to be union members who were up to date on their dues, and a shop steward called a boat delegate was selected. Boat delegates were a particularly important part of this system. Union representatives

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<sup>97</sup> Working Agreement for Salmon Purse Seine Boats July 1943, Local 3 Records, box 3, folder 10; Local 3 Executive Board February 19, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 10, page 14; Local 3 Executive Board May 28, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 10, page 4.

<sup>98</sup> 1940 United Fishermen's Union Convention, Report by Paul Dale, Secretary-Treasurer, Local 3 Records, box 1, folder 1.

<sup>99</sup> United Fishermen's Union Northwest Conference November 27, 1939, Local 3 Records, box 3, folder 2, page 5; United Fishermen's Union- Puget Sound Executive Council May 1, 1943, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 1, page 2; Reports from Oscar Rodin, IFAWA Puget Sound representative, 1942, Lummi Island Heritage, <<http://content.statelib.wa.gov/cdm/compoundobject/collection/lummi/id/1031/show/1021/rec/20>>; Exhibits presented in the PSRN #4 case against Paulsen, 1942, Lummi Island Heritage, <<http://content.statelib.wa.gov/cdm/compoundobject/collection/lummi/id/921/show/913/rec/7>>

and staff covered larger areas, meaning they were usually not immediately available, and most boats spent days or weeks away from land. Even more than in other industries, stewards were the first line of defense to ensure that the contract was followed. Grievances were dependent upon their ability to carefully compile evidence so a complaint could be filed upon the return to port.<sup>100</sup> Clearing provided organizers with time to talk face-to-face with members, a rare opportunity to build union identification among members that did not or could not attend meetings. It was also the backbone of the union's card signing and new member outreach, providing fishermen who had never worked under a union contract with an in-person introduction. Dues collection was entirely hand-to-hand because payroll deductions were not possible, and clearing was a crucial time to keep members in good standing. In addition to providing predictability in prices, IFAWA made itself relevant and visible to the rank and file by ending widespread weight gouging by packers. The exact method varied by contract and cannery, but agreements always required some form of verification of catch weight by someone outside of management. In some cases, a union representative or worker selected by his coworkers did the weighing, or management and a union member jointly oversaw the process.<sup>101</sup>

In addition to being the cornerstone of the union, boat delegates were the main method by which ballots and information were distributed to members.<sup>102</sup> These items, including union newsletters, bulletins and updates were important in making up for the geographic and seasonal limitations on union meetings. IFAWA first relied on the *Voice of the Federation*, a publication of the CIO's Maritime Federation of the Pacific, and *The Fisherman*, jointly published by the Pacific Coast Fishermen's Union and the Salmon Purse Seiner's Union, in addition to smaller

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<sup>100</sup> Reports from Oscar Rodin, IFAWA Puget Sound representative, 1942. Lummi Island Heritage.

<sup>101</sup> Everett Local 3. July 6, 1939, Local 3 Records, box 1, folder 8; Working Agreement for Salmon Purse Seine Boats July 1943. box 3, folder 10, page 2

<sup>102</sup> August 30, 1937 Jurich to Boat Delegate, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 15

newsletters and written updates.<sup>103</sup> The *Voice* and *Fisherman* ceased production around 1940, and IFAWA began publishing its own news bulletin, *IFAWA Views the News*. In 1943, it upgraded to a monthly, tabloid-style newspaper with extensive original content. *The International Fisherman and Allied Worker* grew to a high quality, illustrated product with over twenty pages of original content by dedicated staff and volunteer writers. It not only provided union news and updates, but practical information about fishing runs, seasons, employment, technological changes, conservation, and government policy. Additionally, the paper carried social items and entertaining accounts of events in the lives of IFAWA members. This fluid combination, which avoided a didactic focus on unionism and politics, helped build an imagined community of fishermen despite their separation. This kind of mutuality was, in turn, a building block of a stronger union.

No matter the skills and effective tactics of an organizer, their fellow workers need to be receptive. The milieu of waterfront militancy, the predominance of Eastern and Northern European immigrants with links to radical and labor traditions, and the experiences of fishermen in off-season industries laid the groundwork for unionization. The West Coast waterfront was one of the most important sites of left-led, democratic unionism, birthing unions like the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and the Marine Cooks and Stewards. As shown in San Pedro fishermen for the 1934 longshore strike, fishermen were an essential – if often unrecognized – participant in the emergence of radical unionism in the ports of the West Coast. In addition to off-season longshoring, fishermen gravitated toward the lumber industry and trucking, where they did not have to commit to year-round employment. They likely carried over the ideas instilled in them by struggles in these other industries, including trucker fights

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<sup>103</sup> 1940 United Fishermen's Union Convention, Report by Paul Dale, Secretary-Treasurer, Local 3 Records, box 1, folder 1.

against misclassification. Finally, the fishing industry was dominated by Scandinavians, Slavs and other immigrants from the peripheries of Europe. Many of these communities had radical traditions, like the Finnish community in Astoria that was a stronghold of the Socialist Party.<sup>104</sup> The International Workers Order (IWO), a Communist Party-backed network of ethnic fraternal organizations, made significant progress among Eastern and Southern Europeans. There were also significant numbers of Communist Party members and radicals in more mainstream organizations like the Croatian Fraternal Union.<sup>105</sup> In immigrant communities like South Bellingham, the entire community was tied to the industry, making community politics an essential and valuable base for worksite action.

Anton Susanj showcases some of these elements. He immigrated to Washington State from Croatia in 1913 and found work in logging, mining and smelting. In the coal industry, he participated in unionization struggles in Cle Elum. In Bellingham he was a member of the Croatian Fraternal Union and is fondly remembered for his promotion of Croatian music and culture. In 1927, he began to work in the fishing industry and later became a charter member of the United Fishermen's Union. He went on to serve as Business Agent, Executive Council member and Secretary-Treasurer.<sup>106</sup> Susanj's trajectory perfectly shows how union activism was not an activity that occurred in a vacuum or purely because of material conditions. Instead, it was part of a vibrant process of interaction and everyday life in the overlapping communities of laborers and immigrants. This process intertwined with the intervention of Communist Party organizers like Paul Dale, head of the United Fishermen's Union in Puget Sound. He was born in

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<sup>104</sup> Paul Hummasti, *Finnish Radicals in Astoria, Oregon, 1904-1940: A Study in Immigrant Socialism* (New York: Arno Press, 1979).

<sup>105</sup> House Un-American Activities Committee, "Report on the American Slav Congress and Associated Organizations," June 26, 1949, page 74; John Kraljic, "The Croatian Section of the Communist Party of the United States and the United Front: 1934 - 1939." *Croatian Institute of History*. 2009.

<sup>106</sup> "Tamburitza," *Croatian Heritage*, < <http://www.croatians.com/EVENT-TAMBURITZA.htm>>; "Thumbnail Sketch of a Union Leader," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, September 1948, 8.

Finland and immigrated at a young age to Astoria with his parents. He attended the University of Oregon, and perhaps influenced by the radical traditions of Astoria became a Communist Party member. In the early 1930s, he organized farmers on behalf of the Party before being transferred to Puget Sound to organize the Fishermen and Cannery Workers Industrial Union.<sup>107</sup>

Strong community roots and adroit organizing were needed as AFL raiding and the first round in attacks by packers and the US government threatened the new International Fishermen. A particular benefit of CIO membership was membership in the Maritime Federation of the Pacific (MFP), a longshore-led alliance of waterfront unions that fostered joint negotiations and cooperation. In particular, the Federation bolstered joint negotiations with the Alaska Salmon Industry (ASI), the business association of packers with operations in the Territory.<sup>108</sup> Joint negotiations with ASI had begun in 1935, but a new degree of unity was achieved after most unions representing ASI workers went CIO, including the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers Local 7, which represented non-resident, seasonal Alaska cannery workers.<sup>109</sup> Because the headquarters of most ASI companies were in Puget Sound, non-resident fishermen and cannery workers could exert pressure before the season started. The Maritime Federation did so in 1939 by holding pickets at ASI-connected sites in Puget Sound during pre-season negotiations. The United Fishermen's Union (UFU), now an affiliate of IFAWA, turned out in force for the pickets, but the packers succeeded in an effort to separate the UFU from the joint negotiation process. As a result, the UFU had to sign a contract with no gains after the joint negotiations concluded. Meanwhile, IFAWA efforts to expand in Alaska were stymied in 1939

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<sup>107</sup> "Paul Dale Veteran Leader of UFU Dies" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, June 1944, 5; House Un-American Activities Committee, "Investigation of Communist Activities in the Pacific Northwest Area."

<sup>108</sup> Previously named the Alaska Canned Salmon Industry before changing to ASI; United Fishermen's Union Northwest Conference November 27, 1939, Local 3 Records, box 3, folder 2, pages 3-4; All-Alaska Labor Convention, January 12-15, 1940, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 1; Statement of Policy of the Labor Coordinating Committee, The Alaska Salmon Industry, November 24, 1943, Local 3 Records, box 3, folder 32

<sup>109</sup> Agreement, April 14, 1938, Local 3 Records, box 3, folder 32

because staff and officers were concentrated on setting up the office headquarters in Seattle.<sup>110</sup> On the Puget Sound, the Business Agent position remained vacant for a month when Paul Dale took over Jurich's old post as head of the UFU Puget Sound district.

The Business Agent was an important position as the AFL stepped up attempts to raid the union.. Nick Mladinich soon took over as Business Agent and made Anacortes his base of operations for the summer salmon season. Anacortes was the flashpoint of conflict between CIO and AFL fish cannery unions, a division that prevented both sides from gaining good contracts.<sup>111</sup> Mladinich successfully organized almost all workers on tender boats operating out of Anacortes— a key chokepoint in the fish supply chain.<sup>112</sup> In salmon, the UFU achieved a joint agreement for the fall season in the Sound and got closed shop agreements for canneries in La Conner, Blaine and Point Roberts, but lost four cannery worker elections by the end of the year.<sup>113</sup> Meanwhile, the Seafarers International Union-AFL (SIU) attempted to wrest control of tendermen in Puget Sound and Alaska, the latter being represented by another IFAWA affiliate, the Alaska Fishermen's Union. The raid was unsuccessful but Seafarer interference prevented Bristol Bay fishermen from achieving a closed shop agreement.<sup>114</sup> The Seafarers Union also targeted California, gaining inroads in Monterey and San Pedro. In the latter, packers retaliated against a UFU strike by locking them out in summer 1938, greatly damaging the union and later providing SIU organizers with a foothold. The lockout had reverberations throughout Southern California as the United Fishermen's Union launched an ill-fated strike demanding recognition.

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<sup>110</sup> First IFAWA Convention. December 4-8, 1939, pages 13-14.

<sup>111</sup> Anacortes Local 2, June 29, '39, Local 3 Records, box 1, folder 8; United Fishermen's Union-Puget Sound District Northwest Conference November 27, 1939, Local 3 Records, box 3, folder 2, page 5

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>113</sup> First IFAWA Convention, page 12; Report of Nick Mladinich, Second Annual Convention of the United Fishermen's Union, December 11-14, 1939, Local 3 Records, box 4, folder 38

<sup>114</sup> First IFAWA Convention, page 12; 36

A fishermen's affiliate of Seafarers gained the support of a majority of fishermen in Monterey. It was the first round in several years of bitter combat in the city between IFAWA and the AFL.<sup>115</sup>

The rise of a militant coastwise union greatly alarmed the packers. They turned to injunctions to stop collective bargaining, leveraging the misclassification of fishermen. The courts were generally receptive to the injunction requests despite the practical dynamics of an industry in which the packers set prices, and thereby the fishermen's take-home pay, and asked that boats exclusively sell to one company. The first injunctions hit the Pacific Coast Fishermen's Union (PCFU), an IFAWA affiliate based in Oregon, which was on the verge of a closed shop agreement for the Northwest tuna fleet that operated out of Astoria. In 1939, Oregon packers filed an injunction against the union to prevent any price negotiations or a union clearing system. They argued that the PCFU did not constitute a labor union, and was therefore exempt from the Norris-La Guardia rules limiting injunctions and affirming the freedom of association. An initial federal court ruling concurred.<sup>116</sup> The case worked its way through the judicial system for several years until it was settled in 1942 in favor of the packers.<sup>117</sup> The tuna injunction was closely followed by a broader one filed by the Columbia River Packers Association that prevented price negotiations by the Pacific Coast Fishermen's Union. Moral was damaged, allegiance fell and dues payment plummeted. Legal fees and the need to concentrate the court case pulled resources away from organizing new or existing members, and the stress exacerbated internal division within the union. The injunctions legally prevented the Executive Board from making any decisions, and a new 'General Organizing Committee' was created using a loophole in the court order. The Committee demanded that IFAWA transfer the new Puget Sound

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<sup>115</sup> Minutes of California District Executive Board Meeting, January 5, 1939, Local 3 Records, box 2, folder 30; First IFAWA Convention, page 66-9; Pinsky, *Fisheries of California*, 83.

<sup>116</sup> "Packers Hit Tuna Fishermen by Injunction," *Washington New Dealer*. July 13, 1939, 1.

<sup>117</sup> Fourth IFAWA Convention, December 1-4 1942, Seattle, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 12

Gillnetters Union into the PCFU, in a blatant play for dues money that proved counterproductive.<sup>118</sup> In 1940, a plan was formulated to reorganize the PCFU as several direct locals of IFAWA. The reasoning was twofold. First, the injunction only prevented the PCFU from operating as a union, but did not apply to any other organization of Oregon fishermen. Secondly, IFAWA was struggling to become more cohesive than the loose Federated Fishermen's Council. The strong identity and organizational structures of the founding affiliates made this difficult. The head of the Oregon Fishermen's Council, set up to carry out reorganization, wrote in 1940 that it was "no longer necessary to maintain an International within an International as under the International Seamen's Union set-up."<sup>119</sup>

Meanwhile, the situation for the United Fishermen's Union in Southern California had deteriorated. The AFL had gained effective control of Monterey, San Pedro and San Diego. Membership in the California UFU District fell from 4,500-6,000 to less than 2,000 members by late 1940. It paralyzed the union's ability to perform its basic functions like grievance and contract servicing and District leadership was uncommunicative about the problems.<sup>120</sup> The International pledged to financially support a rebuilding process, but the California UFU District proved unable to implement the plan. After this, IFAWA designed a new and more comprehensive plan to reorganize the area by pooling the financial and human resources of IFAWA, the California State Industrial Union Council and the ILWU.<sup>121</sup> The effort successfully reorganized 3,000 fishermen into ten IFAWA locals in 1941.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> First IFAWA Convention. Bellingham, WA December 4-8, 1939, page 43

<sup>119</sup> Yearbook Second Convention IFAWA. December 9, 1940. Astoria, OR, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 12.

<sup>120</sup> IFAWA Executive Board April 16, 1941, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 14, page 8; Proceedings, Second Convention, December 9-13, 1940, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 79;

<sup>121</sup> Proceedings Third Convention, December 1-5, 1941 San Francisco, box 12, folder 2, age 15; 23-4

<sup>122</sup> Minutes of Drag Boat Fishermen's Meeting October 19, 1940, Local 3 Records, box 18, folder 30; Proceedings Third Convention, December 1-5, 1941 San Francisco, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 15; IFAWA Executive Board April 16, 1941, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 14, page 8.

An important actor in the reorganization of California was Jeff Kibre. He was a former leader in the dissident movement of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE), an undemocratic and mob-run union of Hollywood studio workers. Kibre is an example of the importance of timely intervention by leftists to the success of IFAWA. In IATSE, he led a failed 1937 strike by rank and file members against the studios and corrupt union leadership. Kibre's faction fought their opponents to a standstill and laid groundwork for the prosecution of the mob leadership, but he was blacklisted and agreed to a deal whereby he would leave the industry if IATSE promised to not attack his supporters.<sup>123</sup> By 1940, he was an IFAWA Business Agent in Southern California. He later became an at-large organizer and served as IFAWA Secretary-Treasurer for several years. His strong organizing skills and connections to the California labor-left community, including the ILWU, were crucial to the reorganization of Southern California fishermen. These connections were built through the Communist Party, which he had belonged to since agitating in the student movement at UCLA.<sup>124</sup>

To the north, the Alaska Fishermen's Union (AFU) and the United Fishermen's Union worked together to build IFAWA in the Territory. The AFU increasingly organized resident Alaskan fishermen on the basis of industrial unionism, but non-resident fishermen continued to dominate the union from its stateside branches.<sup>125</sup> IFAWA also worked with the Maritime Federation to hold an All-Alaska Labor Convention in early 1940. The Convention facilitated the creation of the United Trollers of Alaska, an amalgamation of existing IFAWA locals, members

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<sup>123</sup> "Kibre Blast Red-Baiting," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*. December 1947, 3.

<sup>124</sup> David Scott Witwer, *Shadow of the Racketeer: Scandal in Organized Labor* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 121-2, 288.

<sup>125</sup> All-Alaska Labor Convention, sponsored by the Maritime Federation of Pacific, Juneau, Alaska, January 12-15, 1940, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 1, pages 10-11

of the United Fishermen's Union and small independent unions.<sup>126</sup> There were now 39 direct locals of IFAWA, and at least an equal number of locals housed within affiliates like the UFU.<sup>127</sup> Growth meant more financial resources and allowed the hiring of a full-time staffer for Northern Puget Sound gillnetters, among other expansions.<sup>128</sup>

New member organizing continued to be most successful in Washington, Oregon and California. Significant organizing took place in Alaska, but a planned organizing push to be led by Secretary-Treasurer George Lane was cancelled when he resigned in 1941. The resignation had a cascading effect in which President Jurich had to take over Lane's duties, preempting him from travelling to the Gulf Coast to explore organizing there in conjunction with the expansion plans of the ILWU and National Maritime Union.<sup>129</sup> The fluid nature of membership and the inevitable challenges of hand-to-hand dues collection make it difficult to pin down the exact size of IFAWA.<sup>130</sup> Reflecting the fractured, federation-like nature of the International, affiliates like the United Fishermen's Union continued to use separate membership and dues books. Until the post-war period, per capita membership – the total number of members upon which dues to the International had been fully paid – was between 9,000 and 12,000. This number was artificially low because of California United Fishermen's Union and the Pacific Coast Fishermen's Union defaulted on payments during their troubles. The union estimated that real membership, meaning everyone covered by IFAWA contracts and paying some dues, was 20,000.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> All-Alaska Labor Convention, sponsored by the Maritime Federation of Pacific, Juneau, Alaska, January 12-15, 1940, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 1; Proceedings, Second Convention, December 9-13, 1940, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, pages 11-13

<sup>127</sup> Directory, Yearbook Second Convention IFAWA. December 9, 1940. Astoria, OR, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 18

<sup>128</sup> Proceedings, Second Convention, December 9-13, 1940, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, pages 9-14.

<sup>129</sup> Proceedings Third Convention, December 1-5, 1941 San Francisco, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 17

<sup>130</sup> For a discussion of the various formulas to calculate 'per capita' (not actual) membership and their varying degrees of accuracy vis a vis total membership, see: Proceedings Third Convention, December 1-5, 1941 San Francisco, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, pages 8, 25.

<sup>131</sup> Proceedings Third Convention, December 1-5, 1941 San Francisco, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 13.

With growth, there was significant movement toward price stabilization and better industry-wide working conditions. The UFU-Puget Sound signed 64 price and work agreements in 1941.<sup>132</sup> There was particular improvement in the working agreements with vessel owners. Clauses were added that ensured transparent accounting by boat owners to prevent crew wages from being diverted to pay for repairs, to establish clear work duties, and to ensure the provision of adequate medical supplies – a must given the dangerous nature of onboard work.<sup>133</sup> In many catches like salmon purse seining, a share system was standardized that divided profit between the vessel owner, crew and costs. For example, in 1943 purse seiner vessel owners on the Puget Sound agreed to subtract diesel costs from gross profit and then divide it into equal parts. Two shares were kept by the owner, two paid for the gear, and one share each went to the crew and the captain.

The California and Oregon reorganization projects raised difficult questions about the role and function of the International. In 1940, the IFAWA Secretary-Treasurer wrote that “The organizational work on Puget Sound has at last been built to a point where it can be said that we have in this district a form of industrial organization.” However, he continued, “It remains for this convention to take action to consolidate the strength of the International affiliates in the Puget Sound area into a type of coordinated body that can give to all groups their proper strength in the economic and legislative problems being faced.”<sup>134</sup> IFAWA chose its organized all gears and stages of fishing and canning on the basis of industrial unionism, but fell short in functioning as an industrial union. Structurally, Puget Sound was a patchwork of direct IFAWA locals, the

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<sup>132</sup> UFU-PS Conference November 22, 1941, Local 3 Records, box 3, folder 2.

<sup>133</sup> Sardine Working Agreement 7/18/40, Local 3 Records, box 3, folder 18; Working Agreement for Salmon Purse Seine Boats July 1943. box 3, folder 10; Wick, *Ocean Harvest*, 175.

Other examples of contracts: Tendermen’s Agreement 1946, Local 3 Records, box 3, folder 23; Herring Agreement June 23, 1942); Fish Reduction and Saltery Plants operating in Territory of Alaska (‘Company’) and UFU-PS, Local 3 Records, box 3, folder 10

<sup>134</sup> “Secretary Treasurer [George Lane] on the Role of the International,” Yearbook Second Convention IFAWA. December 9, 1940. Astoria, OR, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, pages 4-5

United Fishermen's Union and the Alaska Fishermen's Union. All were vertically connected to IFAWA, but horizontal ties between the units were lacking. Overtures about unity between cannery workers and fishermen abounded, but proved difficult to implement in practice.<sup>135</sup> Nevertheless, the degree of unity far exceeded the system used by the International Seamen's Union. Its successor, the Seafarer's International Union, continued to use a setup in which small and geographically bounded unions affiliated directly with the International without mechanisms to coordinate coastwise or on the basis of craft or industry.

Supporters of a strong International argued that only such a body could lead to price stabilization through joint negotiations, coordination of demands and simultaneous action. The UFU-Puget Sound, which included Jurich, Dale and other important leaders of the International, was one of the strongest supporters of this theory. An effort to improve unity was launched at the 1940 IFAWA Convention, leading to the establishment of the Washington State Fishermen's Council.<sup>136</sup> The Council became an important venue for information sharing and brought fish and cannery leaders into closer communication, but failed to become a space for decision-making or joint action.<sup>137</sup> Dale, head of the United Fishermen's Union in Puget Sound and an International Board member, became President of the new group and IFAWA Secretary-Treasurer George Lane doubled as Secretary-Treasurer of the Council. This did little to dispel any feelings among smaller and rural locals that the Council was a method of centralizing and extending the control of the International and the UFU.<sup>138</sup> Tensions manifested in 1942, when the reefnetters, a direct IFAWA local, mounted a sustained effort to fire the International's at-large

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<sup>135</sup> Proceedings, Second Convention, December 9-13, 1940, box 12, folder 2, page 62.

<sup>136</sup> Proceedings, Second Convention, December 9-13, 1940, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 59.

<sup>137</sup> UFU Bulletin May 1941, No. 6

UFU Bulletin. April 1941, No. 5

<sup>138</sup> Washington State Fishermen's Council, UFU Hall, February 16 1941, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 14  
WA State Fishermen's Council March 28, 1942. Attached to: UFU-PS Executive Council April 4, 1942, Local 3 Records, box 3, folder 2

UFU-PS Executive Council June 5, 1943, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 1

Puget Sound organizer Kaare Paulsen. They felt he spent inadequate time on small locals that did not belong to the UFU.<sup>139</sup>

Unity was easier on the legislative front, where common issues were less fraught with issues of jurisdiction and internal politics. In the early 1940s, IFAWA pushed for fishermen to have access to social services. Due to misclassification, fishermen were excluded from the bulk of New Deal welfare legislation, including unemployment benefits. IFAWA chose the share system instead of hourly payment because it generally meant better earnings, but it also allowed boat owners to call the crew ‘partners’ instead of employees and not pay unemployment premiums.<sup>140</sup> IFAWA actively lobbied the Washington State Legislature for rule changes, and filed grievances with the State Unemployment Commission requesting prosecutions of vessel owners when crew filed for benefits only to find that no premium had been paid. The fight heated up in the post-war period, when boat owners moved to permanently bar crew access to benefits.<sup>141</sup> The union was also legislatively active in advocating for better funding of regulatory bodies like the Bureau of Fish and Wildlife. In 1939 four government employees based in Seattle were tasked with the scientific monitoring of fish on the entire Alaskan coast.<sup>142</sup> Often, regulatory agencies were funded exclusively by taxes on packers, which the union felt compromised impartiality.<sup>143</sup> IFAWA consistently demanded greater public funding of these agencies to expand their scope and independence. In the meantime, they lobbied to overturn regulations they thought were based on limited research. Finally, efforts to improve regulation of

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<sup>139</sup> Proceedings Third Convention, December 1-5, 1941 San Francisco, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 16 Exhibits presented in the PSRN [Puget Sound Reefnetters] Local #4 case against Paulsen, 1942.

<http://content.statelib.wa.gov/cdm/compoundobject/collection/lummi/id/921/show/913/rec/7>  
Reports from Oscar Rodin, IFAWA Puget Sound representative, 1942. Lummi Island Heritage.

<sup>140</sup> Jurich to Houghton, Cluck & Coughlin, March 8, 1946, Local 3 Records, box 14, folder 1

<sup>141</sup> IFAWA Pacific District Local 3 Conference December 17, 1948, Local 3 Records, box 7, folder 1, page 3

<sup>142</sup> Cooley, Politics and Conservation: The Decline of the Alaska Salmon Industry, page 153.

IFAWA Views the News. Aug 15, 41. 1, 4

<sup>143</sup> First IFAWA Convention. Bellingham, WA December 4-8, 1939, *Labor Union Constitutions and Proceedings*.

industrial pollution near waterways continued.<sup>144</sup> In 1943, lobbying efforts were expanded when organizer Oscar Rodin served as a full-time representative in Olympia during the legislative session.<sup>145</sup> This ability to operate in workplace, community and political spheres demonstrates the maturation of IFAWA following its 1939 formation.

#### **IV. The Transformation of IFAWA: From Gender and Civil Rights to War and Modernization**

This section ties together several processes that constituted and transformed the International Fishermen and Allied Workers. The union was rooted in the efforts of the Communist Party, and a relationship continued to determine the politics of the union. As with other Party-linked organizations, mean an about-face on American entry into World War II and the restraint of labor action to support the war effort. However, the leftist character of IFAWA goes beyond the level of leadership. The union's Yugoslavian base supported the Communist-led efforts to liberate their home country from fascism, and IFAWA connected politics with workplace struggles in several areas like Japanese fish imports. Meanwhile, the war brought internal sea changes to the union as women and Alaska Natives made up greater numbers of the membership and leadership. Both groups encountered challenges in a union that was previously dominated by male European immigrants, many of whom were non-resident Alaskan fishermen. Despite these contradictions, IFAWA became an advocate for civil rights and anti-colonialism in Alaska, and proactively integrated women into leadership. After the war, IFAWA launched an ambitious plan to modernize and stabilize the fishing industry, drawing attention to the union's complex relationship with ecological conservation.

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<sup>144</sup> UFU Bulletin March 41, No. 4

<sup>145</sup> January 23, 1943 letter from Martin Hegerberg, Lummi Island Heritage.

The expansion of US defense spending and activities began to impact the union in 1941 when union members started to shift into defense industries like shipbuilding, or the military.. The Communist Party connections of the union led it to advocate for peace during the Hitler-Stalin pact era that ended in December of that year. However, the United Fishermen's Union approved a resolution six months before the collapse of the pact in which the membership pledged that they were "willing at any time to go the defense of their country" and volunteering time to act as a Naval auxiliary.<sup>146</sup> This was in part motivated by the union's vehement animosity toward imperial Japan, which wedded practical concerns and anti-fascism. Opposition to imports of cheaper Japanese fish and the encroachment of Japanese boats into Alaskan and deep sea areas off the West Coast had long been a pillar of unity in IFAWA.<sup>147</sup> Just days before Pearl Harbor, the union's Convention passed a resolution decrying the use of underpaid "slave" labor by Japanese fishing companies and stating that "several years ago our union warned of the invasion of our fishing grounds in the North Pacific by the Japanese fascists and lodged protest after protest with the State Department."<sup>148</sup> This anger at foreign Japanese competition and a general failure to build relationships with significant numbers of Japanese-American fishermen, primarily in California, caused the union to be silent on internment. In its newspaper, the union coldly concluded that "since [Japanese fishermen] comprised less than 10 per cent of the total number of workers [in San Pedro], the industry will not suffer serious dislocation."<sup>149</sup> However, evidence suggests that a fully quarter of fishermen in California, including Japanese and non-

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<sup>146</sup> Resolution 34, Proceedings of the Convention of the United Fishermen's Union of the Pacific Puget Sound District, Monday December 2nd, through Wednesday, December Fourth, 1940, Seattle, Washington. CIO, Local 3 Records, box 4, folder 38

<sup>147</sup> Executive Board SPSU October 16, 1937, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 10 First Annual Convention Federated Fishermen's Council of the Pac Coast. Astoria, December 13-18 1937, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 21, page 32, 41.

<sup>148</sup> Third Convention, December 1-5, 194, Local 3 Records, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 13

<sup>149</sup> IFAWA Views the News, February 10, 1942, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 15.

citizen European immigrants, were barred from working during the war.<sup>150</sup> It took two full years after the end of the war for IFAWA in the Puget Sound to officially resolve “that the Interned Japanese Fishermen who were members in good standing on December 7, 1941 and who have not violated the Constitution of IFAWA or the United States, shall be given the right to reinstate and again become members of IAWA upon payment of the current year’s dues.”<sup>151</sup>

The fishing industry immediately experienced problems when the US entered World War II. Several ports and fisheries in California and Alaska were shuttered for security reasons, and additional regulations were placed on fishing times and the movement of boats.<sup>152</sup> IFAWA successfully lobbied to reopen California, but major restrictions continued in Alaska for fear of a Japanese invasion.<sup>153</sup> Meanwhile, some 30% of the union’s membership joined or was drafted into the military.<sup>154</sup> As early as April 1942, the UFU-Puget Sound was experiencing financial problems and levied an additional assessment on top of dues.<sup>155</sup> Similar problems with dropping membership and financial reserves were experienced throughout IFAWA.<sup>156</sup>

International Fishermen and Allied Workers enthusiastically supported the war effort and maximum production in the fishing industry to feed the troops and home front. For example, a 1942 conference declared that “our responsibilities are clear, necessitating our imposing upon ourselves a strict Union discipline to carry through our tasks. We want greater efficiency, greater production. No obstacle can be allowed to stand in the way. Production must be stepped up to the maximum, commensurate with the conservation of our fisheries, and to this end we must

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<sup>150</sup> Chiang, *Shaping the Shoreline*, 105-8.

<sup>151</sup> Local 3 Executive Board, May 10, 1947, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 8, page 2.

<sup>152</sup> “In the Net,” IFAWA Views the News. January 23, 1942, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 15; IFAWA Views the News. February 27 1942, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 15.

<sup>153</sup> Fourth Convention, December 1-4 1942, Seattle, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 10.

<sup>154</sup> “Fishermen Free For Other Jobs.” *Washington State CIO News*, November 1942.

<sup>155</sup> United Fishermen’s Union- Puget Sound, Executive Council, April 4, 1942, Local 3 Records, box 3, folder 2.

<sup>156</sup> Fourth Convention, December 1-4 1942, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 18.

critically examine existing methods and regulations.”<sup>157</sup> The statement was intended to showcase the patriotism of fishermen while pushing for their right to work without restriction. In addition to lobbying on geographic restrictions, the union adapted its grievance handling procedures to advocate for members in front of draft boards.<sup>158</sup> In a letter to a board on behalf of a member who had caught the equivalent of 38,000 half-pound flats of canned fish the prior season, Jurich wrote that “now the question quite naturally arises: can he best serve by producing food fish, or remaining in the armed forces and forgo producing this or a like amount of essential food next year?”<sup>159</sup> IFAWA was successful in getting many fishermen classified as ‘essential’ defense workers that were thereby exempt from the draft. Additionally, the union convinced the government to allow members who had been classified as essential defense workers in their off-season jobs to have the option of temporarily leaving these positions to fish.<sup>160</sup> In spite of the rule change, many skilled fishermen remained in defense plants and the availability of experienced crewmembers was limited throughout during the war.<sup>161</sup>

The union followed the labor movement’s wartime policy of maintaining industrial peace so as to support the war effort, but was not entirely acquiescent. Two months after Pearl Harbor, the IFAWA newspaper opined that “Production of food in the fight for freedom requires full and complete cooperation between labor, government, the industry and the War Department if maximum production is to be achieved.”<sup>162</sup> IFAWA and other unions that represented workers of the Alaska Salmon Industry (ASI), the employer’s association of most packers operating in the

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<sup>157</sup> IFAWA Views the News, March 27, 1942, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 15

<sup>158</sup> “Coordination is Needed to Protect Fishing Industry,” *IFAWA Views the News*, February 27, 1942, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 15.

<sup>159</sup> Letter to IFAWA RE: deferment status of experienced fishermen, 1942, Lummi Island Heritage, <<http://content.statelib.wa.gov/cdm/compoundobject/collection/lummi/id/876/show/874/rec/8>>

<sup>160</sup> “Fishermen Free For Other Jobs.” *Washington State CIO News*, October 1942, 1.

<sup>161</sup> “Fishermen’s News” *Washington State CIO News*, December 1943.

<sup>162</sup> “IFAWA Proposes Fishing Industry Council Plan.” *IFAWA Views the News*. January 23, 1942, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 15.

Territory, proposed a joint-labor management steering committee to set business practices and policy. The permanent committee would have had equal numbers of labor and corporate representatives, with a tie-breaking vote going to a government mediator. The ASI strongly opposed the idea and would only accept an ad-hoc committee to address issues directly related to the union. The Alaska Fishermen's Union also used the new opportunity structure to push for a radical shift in labor relations with the ASI, asking for a monthly wage and profit-sharing in which a percentage of the season's earnings would be distributed to workers.<sup>163</sup> They were similarly rebuffed. The United Fishermen's Union had more success with the Puget Sound salmon packers, who agreed to a joint union-industry council that held framework talks on price agreements.<sup>164</sup>

The membership was not always in agreement with the leadership about a restrained wartime stance on industrial relations. In July 1943 the membership voted down a recommendation by the Executive Council of the United Fishermen's Union to roll-over the previous Puget Sound Salmon Agreement. At that year's convention there was reticence about endorsing the CIO no-strike pledge.<sup>165</sup> Attacks on the union had not stopped with the war, and workers were reticent to give up their strongest tool – the strike – when the packers and government continued to use legal suppression. Attacks on the associational rights of fishermen continued with a federal anti-trust indictment against the Columbia River Fishermen's Protective Union in 1942. Additionally, the Office of Price Administration (OPA), tasked with rationing and oversight of consumer goods during the war, imposed harsh and artificial limits on the earnings of fishermen. Despite debate over the proposition, there was never any real question about IFAWA's compliance with the no-strike pledge. Without the strike, the union turned to

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<sup>163</sup> IFAWA Views the News. February 10, 1942

<sup>164</sup> IFAWA Views the News . March 13, 1942.

<sup>165</sup> Fifth Convention, December 6-9, 1943, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 22

government regulation to protect working conditions. If an impasse was reached in negotiations, the union could seek mediation by the Department of Labor's Conciliation Service. Next, it could ask the War Labor Board to impose a favorable settlement on a company.<sup>166</sup>

The union remained internally cohesive as the politics of the Yugoslavian membership base converged with those of the Communist Party-connected leadership. In 1941, the Balkans were occupied by Germany and a united resistance known as the Partisans was formed by the regional Communist Party and its leader, Josip Tito. Working-class Yugoslavian immigrants, who on the West Coast concentrated in the fishing industry, often supported the Partisans.<sup>167</sup> In 1944, the United Fishermen's Union Executive Council authored a "Resolution Supporting Yugoslav Peoples Liberation Armies" urging the US government to support the Partisans, and gained support for the measure from the Seattle and San Francisco Industrial Union Councils.<sup>168</sup> IFAWA locals raised money to support the Yugoslavian people and the Partisans throughout the war, and longtime IFAWA leaders like George Ivankovich and Joe Jurich doubled as officers of solidarity organizations.<sup>169</sup> After Yugoslavia was liberated, its delegate to the United Nations met with IFAWA members, and the union newspaper proudly proclaimed that "Fishermen Helped to Liberate Jugoslavia."<sup>170</sup> After the war, IFAWA members successfully demanded the US investigate allegations that Tito was diverting food aid to the Army, charges which had suspended humanitarian aid through the United Nations. The investigation led to a reinstatement of aid.<sup>171</sup> These struggles united Communist leaders with rank and file members who possessed a

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<sup>166</sup> United Fishermen's Union Executive Council May 1, 1943, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 1

<sup>167</sup> IFAWA Views the News, November 1, 1941, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 15; *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, September 1945, 4.

<sup>168</sup> Resolution Supporting Yugoslav Peoples Liberation Armies, Local 3 Records, box 6, folder 1

<sup>169</sup> "Pedro Raises Jugo-Slav Fund" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, August 1944, 8; "Free Yugoslavia Group Elects Jurich to Office" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, February 1945, 19; "Ivankovich is Reelected" March 1946, *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*.

<sup>170</sup> "Fishermen Helped To Liberate Jugoslavia," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, June 1945, 3.

<sup>171</sup> "Yugoslavia Cleared of False Charges by UNRRA" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, September 1946.

strong sense of transnational solidarity, and further cemented the cohesion created during the organizing struggles of the late 1930s.

IFAWA was a Communist-led union that had its roots in Party organizing. Beyond that, the records do not permit solid conclusion on the extent to which the Party tried to control the union or the attitude of the rank and file toward leftism. Several leaders of IFAWA were Party members with no background in the industry, like Jeff Kibre. Paul Dale was a first-generation immigrant that grew up in the fishing community of Astoria, but was also a college-educated Party organizer.<sup>172</sup> It is unclear if Joe Jurich, the Tacoma-born President of the International, was ever a Party member.<sup>173</sup> He was accused during some Red Scare hearings of supporting the Party, but not of actually being a member. The only evidence presented in the hearing was actions Jurich took in compliance with Convention resolutions, for example publicly opposing the imprisonment of Communist Party USA leader Earl Browder.<sup>174</sup> It was routine for Conventions and other conferences and meetings to support causes and front groups linked to the Communist Party, and there was rarely dissension. Progressive and leftist delegates probably self-selected to attend these meetings, but in affiliates and locals conducted votes on the proposed resolutions beforehand and instructed their delegates on how to vote. On the Earl Browder resolution, a delegate of the Columbia River Fishermen's Protective Union voted

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<sup>172</sup> "Paul Dale Veteran Leader of UFU Dies" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, June 1944, 5.

<sup>173</sup> House Committee on Un-American Activities, "Investigation of Communist activities in the Los Angeles Area"; House Committee on Un-American Activities; Communist infiltration of Hollywood motion-picture industry : hearing before the Committee on Un-American Activities, Subcommittee to Investigate the Administration of the Internal Security Act, "The Alliance of Certain Racketeer and Communist Dominated Unions in the Field of Transportation as a Threat to National Security," 1958.

<sup>174</sup> House Committee on Un-American Activities, "Report on Civil Rights Congress as a Communist Front Organization," 15; House Committee on Un-American Activities, "Report on the American Slav Congress and Associated Organizations," June 26, 1949, 89.

against the resolution saying his local had instructed him to oppose it, but noted that he personally supported the measure.<sup>175</sup>

Most evidence of Communist connections comes from the upper level of the union. The union's lawyer, George Andersen and his firm were deeply tied to the Party. Paul Pinsky, who assisted IFAWA on legal issues while a staffer for the California CIO and later defended the union in front of a CIO board that expelled the union from the federation for Communist influence, was named as a Party member.<sup>176</sup> The experience of solidarity with the Partisans suggests a left-leaning membership, at least among the union's base of Yugoslavians. However, the extent of radicalism among the rank and file is impossible to ascertain, and support of Tito may have had more to do with anti-fascism and ethnic nationalism than leftism. There was never public discontent with the politics of the leadership until the Red Scare began to build and the union entered a difficult period in the late 1940s. Even then, opposition was limited and isolated.<sup>177</sup> IFAWA was a platform for agitating on many Communist causes like the Civil Rights Congress or the International Labor Defense, and the newspaper carried occasional stories like "Soviet Fishermen's Union Controls Vast Industry," which glorified union democracy and workplace control in the USSR.<sup>178</sup> However, the union's main business was always bread and butter improvements and it consistently delivered. Leadership was opaque about their Party

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<sup>175</sup> Third Convention, December 1-5, 1941, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2.

<sup>176</sup> IFAWA Executive Board July 17-19, 1947, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 4, page 1; Preliminary Report on CIO Trial of IFAWA, Paul Pinsky, Local 3 Records, box 11, unfolded; House Committee on Un-American Activities "Communist Legal Subversion: The Role of the Communist Lawyer: Report," February 16, 1959, 28; Sydney Roger, Jessica Mitford and Julie Shearer, *A Liberal Journalist On the Air and On the Waterfront: Labor and Political Issues, 1932-1990* (Berkeley: Bancroft Library, 1990 (New York: Knopf, 2005) 296-7; Kai Bird and Martin Sherwin, *American Prometheus: The Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 336-7.

<sup>177</sup> Report of the Secretary-Treasurer to the Local 3 Executive Board, March 15, 1947, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 8; "Another Anti-Trust Suit – By Disgruntled Former Member." *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, November 1947, 8; "Shipman Fails to Appear at Meeting of Eureka Local" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, January 1948, page 21.

<sup>178</sup> "Soviet Fishermen's Union Controls Vast Industry," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, May 1946, 14; Fourth IFAWA Convention, December 1-4 1942, Seattle, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 15.

affiliations out of necessity but never hid their political leanings and seemed to have a relationship with the rank and file that went beyond workplace issues.

On another front, the war brought important internal changes to the composition of the union when large numbers of women entered the industry for the first time. Many women worked in the canneries before the war, but had faced discrimination in hiring, job assignment and pay. The constriction of the male workforce led to expanded opportunities in canneries, and soon manifested in a growing cohort of women union leaders. A handful of cannery women had been union leaders, representatives and delegates before the war, but their influence was limited by the almost all-male fishing workforce. As of 1940, only one woman had ever been member of the United Fishermen's Union who was not a shoreworker. She was Betty Lowman, a resident of Bellingham who paid for her education at the University of Washington by reefnetting off Lummi Island and crewing halibut boats in Alaska. Lowman had been active in the union as a representative of her local, but remained an anomaly in the commercial fishing section of the union outside a few women who fished alongside their families.<sup>179</sup> Women made up a large number of the voting delegates from cannery locals at the 1943 IFAWA Convention and one served as the official delegate to the CIO Convention.<sup>180</sup> A resolution at the prior year's Convention brought by six female delegates, Jurich and Vice-President Hecker is exemplary of the progress made, as well as its contradictions. The resolution stopped short of recognizing women's right to work outside of wartime and advocated that single women be hired before

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<sup>179</sup> United Fishermen's Union of the Pacific, Northwest Conference, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 1, page 5 First Annual Convention of the United Fishermen's Union, December 5-9, 1938, Local 3 Records, box 4, folder 38, page 17; Second Annual FFC Convention, San Francisco December 12-19 1938, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 22, page 18; Lottie Edelman, discussed later, is another important exception: March 1948, *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, 8; CRFPU Business Agent Florence Plumb: "Notes from the Umpqua," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, February 1946; Ruth Weijola of the CRFPU: Proceedings, Second Convention, December 9-13, 1940, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 33; Rosalie Norton, Secretary of IFAWA Local 35: *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, June 1946, 6.

<sup>180</sup> Fifth Convention, December 6-9 1943, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 32.

those who were married and therefore likely had children. Nevertheless, the resolution also took a progressive stance in favor of childcare, equal pay and training programs for cannery positions from which women had traditionally been excluded. Despite the continued articulation of a patriarchal attitude toward women's participation in the workforce, these measures were groundbreaking. The resolution concluded by stating that "we further call upon our unions to recognize the presence of millions of women workers in industry and devote special study to the problems of such workers, to the opportunities created by their employment, and make full use of the qualities of initiative and leadership that they can bring to IFAWA."<sup>181</sup> On the latter, the union succeeded in incorporating women as equal members and leaders of the union, but there is no evidence of a concerted attempt to end unequal pay, which persisted for some cannery workers until the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>182</sup>

Winnie Thomson is the most striking example of female leadership in this period. She was an active member and staffer of the UFU's Fish Reduction and Saltery Workers Local 7, a member and trustee of the International Executive Board, IFAWA representative to the Washington State Industrial Union Council, Secretary-Treasurer of the Northwest Cannery Workers Conference, and an active member of the Northwest IFAWA Council.<sup>183</sup> Although there was not meaningful progress on pay equity, the equal footing given women as leaders at all levels of union vindicated their work in the canneries against devaluation and marginalization.

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<sup>181</sup> Fourth Convention, December 1-4 1942, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 36.

<sup>182</sup> Puget Sound Salmon Cannery Workers Agreement, Local 3 Records, box 7, folder 3: this document shows some of the complexity of unequal pay—men and women with the same job classifications had different pay, but also different duties. This was used to justify the pay regime. Some agreements like this one guaranteed "male" pay for women workers if they performed the duties of the "male" classification; "Costs of Production and Distribution of the Fish on Pacific Coast," Federal Trade Commission, 13; 68; Agreement 1948 Grays Harbor Shoreworkers, Local 3 Records, box 7, folder 3; Muszynski, *Cheap Wage Labour: Race and Gender in the Fisheries of British Columbia*, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996.

<sup>183</sup> Local 3 Executive Board, September 24, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 10; Northwest Cannery Workers Conference December 7, 1946, Local 3 Records, box 7, folder 3; *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, May 1948, 5; NW IFAWA Council, March 26, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 16.

Women often worked some of the hardest and more manual jobs like sliming – washing down the fish – while men were given the supposedly more skilled positions tending machines.<sup>184</sup>

During the war, the CIO's newspaper often carried pin-up photos, and the practice stuck after the war. IFAWA's newspaper was in the habit of reprinting these photos or printing their own, but unlike the *CIO News* it was common to see women in photos of union meetings and the shop floor. The juxtaposition of these images in the pages of the *International Fisherman and Allied Worker* embodied the union's mixed record on gender, which moved toward the valuation of women's work and leadership but failed to fully break free of gender norms.

As the war dragged on, IFAWA continued to need intervention by government agencies to gain minimum standards. In 1943, the War Labor Board awarded a 7% pay increase to IFAWA members working for Alaska Salmon Industry companies. However, the ASI steadfastly refused to pay the mandated pay rate. The hardened stance of the ASI pushed the limits of the Board's power, whose orders were simply ignored by the packers. The case dragged on until after the summer Alaska fishing season ended, and its resolution is unclear. The silence of IFAWA sources on the case suggests they lost.<sup>185</sup> Once again, the United Fishermen's Union found it easier to win in the Puget Sound than against the massive Alaskan industry. They successfully won back pay for tendermen and cannery workers whose wages had been frozen at 1942 levels by the Federal War Labor Board.<sup>186</sup> At the same time, the UFU suffered a major loss in May 1944 when Secretary-Treasurer and longtime organizer Paul Dale died suddenly from a heart attack.<sup>187</sup> Jurich stepped in to fill his position until Anton Susanj was elected to Dale's

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<sup>184</sup> Muszynski *Cheap Wage Labour*, 12.

<sup>185</sup> Report to all locals, April 25 1944. Involvement of War Labor Board in Alaska Salmon Industry Inc negotiations. box 1, folder 6; UFU Executive Council, April 8, 1944, Local 3 Records, box 6, folder 1; IFAWA Executive Board September 29-30, 1944, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 12.

<sup>186</sup> "Sound Workers Win Pay Award" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, February 1944.

<sup>187</sup> "Paul Dale Veteran Leader of UFU Dies" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, June 1944, 5.

former position. Susanj was a skilled and committed leader, but lacked the extraordinary zeal of Dale, who carried out with unflagging energy the internal management of the UFU, member organizing, contract negotiations, and endless leadership meetings from the local level to the International.<sup>188</sup>

After the initial shock of the war, IFAWA regained its balance and began using the changed conditions as an opportunity to expand. A smaller workforce allowed it to boost union density and laid the foundation for post-war growth. One important example of the union's extension is the formation of IFAWA Local 46, which represented Alaska Native cannery workers in Bristol Bay. Before the war, Alaska Natives had been systematically discriminated against in hiring. When they did manage to secure cannery jobs, they were treated and paid as second class workers. With the constriction of the available workforce, exacerbated among cannery workers because of the restrictions on work and travel by Asian-Americans, canneries hired Alaska Natives in significant numbers.<sup>189</sup> A construction boom of infrastructure like roads, in the interest of defense, facilitated better Native access to the far-flung canneries dotting the coastline.<sup>190</sup> Whereas in 1937 the Bristol Bay cannery workforce was comprised of 194 Alaska Natives and 4,238 non-resident workers, some wartime canneries employed mostly Natives.<sup>191</sup>

The conditions faced by Alaska Native cannery workers are a stark illustration of the colonial relationship between the Territory and the absentee packing corporations that operated with little regard for the area or the welfare of its people. The non-resident cannery workers, mostly Filipinos and Asian-Americans, faced tough conditions like cramped bunkhouses and

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<sup>188</sup> See, for e.g. Dale's last UFU meeting before his death: UFU Executive Council Minutes May 6, 1944, Local 3 Records, box 6, folder 1; February 23, 1944 communication to all locals, Paul Dale, Local 3 Records, box 1, folder 6; Second Annual Federated Fishermen's Council Convention, December 12-19, 1938, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 22, page 39

<sup>189</sup> Friday, "Competing Communities at Work," 314

<sup>190</sup> Fourth Convention, December 1-4 1942, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 33; VanStone, *Eskimos of the Nushagak River*, 80.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 79

daily discrimination by white management. But their problems paled in comparison to those of the residents. The resident Native workers received lower pay when they performed the same jobs and non-residents, and often worked before and after the season, yet still received lower take-home earnings than the non-residents. This was particularly egregious because of the higher cost of living in Alaska, where manufactured goods had to be shipped from the lower 48 states. The Native workers, especially before the war, functioned as a reserve pool of labor in the case of an unusually big fish run or an inadequate number of non-resident workers. As such, they were not given company housing and lived in self-constructed shacks that one former manager compared to Hoovervilles. The isolation of the canneries meant that the only source of food and supplies were company stores. As traditional lifestyles that incorporated seasonal migration and self-subsistence eroded, Natives increasingly stayed in these small company towns. Company stores trapped them in debt cycles and guaranteed their presence during the next season as a cheap pool of reserve labor. When working in the canneries, Natives were segregated to a separate section of the cafeteria.<sup>192</sup> The packers were responsible for most of these aspects, but the Alaska Fishermen's Union and other non-resident unions were complicit in this set-up. For example, packers in Bristol Bay would hire a certain number of fishermen per cannery assembly line. The AFU long maintained contract clauses that required thirteen non-resident fishermen be hired per line before a single resident. In addition to the direct effect of shutting Native fishermen out of work on boats, it indirectly reinforced the resident community as reserve labor making cannery work the only available source of income.<sup>193</sup> Discrimination in the Alaska

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<sup>192</sup> It is necessary at times to read between the lines, given his position in management, but Jonathan Hughes presents an important overview of the conditions facing Alaska Native residents in: "The Great Strike at Nushagak Station, 1951: Institutional Gridlock," *The Journal of Economic History*, 42, No. 1 (1982); Karen Hébert, "Wild Dreams," 177-92; "Far North Unionists Plan 1950 Wage Boost Campaign" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, December 1949, 9.

<sup>193</sup> Cooley, *Politics and Conservation*, 148.

Fishermen's Union subsided somewhat in the IFAWA years, and they organized resident fishermen and some cannery workers. Nevertheless, branches located in the Territory complained of being ignored and sidelined by the lower 48 leadership, and in 1949 they were still barred from voting for the leaders of the AFU.<sup>194</sup>

These problems faced Native cannery workers throughout Alaska, but were most pronounced in Bristol Bay, where isolation allowed an even greater degree of company control and manipulation. There, IFAWA Local 46 took root as one of the union's most dynamic and unique sections. The Local is the strongest piece of evidence that the union was genuine in its rhetoric that opposed absentee exploitation of the Territory. As the union representing workers in the largest and most strategic industry of Alaska, IFAWA was in a prime position to challenge the exploitation of the Territory, but was hamstrung by residency issues.<sup>195</sup> IFAWA long supported statehood as a tool for the Alaskan people to reclaim control of their resources, and enthusiastically supported industrialization and modernization as an alternative to absentee extraction and underdevelopment. This produced a complex relationship with Alaska Natives. IFAWA's pro-development stance respected Native wishes to regain control of their communities and lands, but also pushed for assimilation to keep pace with modernization and staunchly opposed tribal sovereignty that might restrict where white fishermen could operate.<sup>196</sup> At the same time IFAWA was first organizing Native cannery labor, it was working with the Alaska Salmon Industry to oppose overtures by the federal Department of the Interior to give Indian groups reservations and exclusive fishing rights. The union walked a thin line in opposing the measure. IFAWA argued that the measures were a form of segregation or even "glorified

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<sup>194</sup> Local 3 Executive Board, January 31, 1948, Local 3 Records, box 12, page 8; IFAWA Convention 1949, Labor Union Constitutions and Proceedings, 61-65.

<sup>195</sup> Proceedings IFAWA convention December 6, 1944. Aberdeen, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 17

<sup>196</sup> Eighth Convention IFAWA, January 24, 1946, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 25, page 5

concentration camps,” that the industry was based on cooperation not racial exclusivity, and that the union opposed special privileges for any group of “Americans” but was wholly ready to support legal action by Natives to receive compensation for past injustice.<sup>197</sup> IFAWA was a diehard opponent of fish trap use in Alaska, which continued to allow this low-labor, high-capital fixed gear to be used long after it was banned on the rest of the Pacific Coast. Perhaps more than any other issue, it tied IFAWA’s membership together. The opposition was against the large packer-owned traps that caught up to 44% of the Alaska catch, not traditional Native traps for personal use.<sup>198</sup> However, a racialized rhetoric was sometimes adopted in opposing corporate traps, calling it an uncivilized and barbaric practice. Conversely, the union occasionally inserted called for proposed bans to not apply to Natives who used traditional traps for subsistence.<sup>199</sup> The variance of this rhetoric and the coexistence of Local 46 with exclusivist elements in the Alaska Fishermen’s Union suggest that IFAWA was deeply, if quietly, divided on the rights of indigenous peoples and Alaskan anti-colonialism.

The quick change in the composition of the Alaska cannery workforce led to a complicated fight between IFAWA, the CIO cannery workers union, the Alaska Native Brotherhood and the AFL for the ability to represent the burgeoning group. The Brotherhood was a pan-Native organization that engaged in collective bargaining as well as civil rights issues. It initially had a friendly relationship with the United Fishermen’s Union, and Native Brotherhood leader William Paul spoke at the IFAWA-led conference of Alaskan CIO unions in

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<sup>197</sup>“Secretary Ickes Plunks Indians on Reservations,” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, August 1945, 3; United Fishermen’s Union Executive Council Minutes November 11, 1944, box 6, folder 1; November 15, 1944 letter from Oscar Rodin, attached to: United Fishermen’s Union Executive Council, December 2, 1944, Local 3 Records, box 6, folder 1.

<sup>198</sup> Montes, *Alaska Fishermen*.

<sup>199</sup> Resolution # 11. First Convention United Fishermen’s Union, December 5-9, 1938, Local 3 Records, box 4, folder 38.; Resolution #2 ISU Fishermen’s Unions Convention, December 7 1936, Local 3 Records, box 1, folder 7.

1940.<sup>200</sup> Both groups pursued a similar strategy that focused on fishermen instead of the relatively small number of Native and white resident cannery workers. UCAPAWA Local 7, the union of Asian-American non-resident cannery workers based in Seattle, resented the Alaska Native cannery workers in the pre-war era because they were cheap reserve labor that could undermine their bargaining power.<sup>201</sup> Gender dynamics may have played into these choices as well, as fishermen and non-resident cannery workers were exclusively male groups and pre-war Native cannery workers were usually women.

Because Local 7 had exclusive rights to represent all non-resident cannery workers under a National Labor Relations Board election, and because the Alaska Fishermen's Union, United Fishermen's Union and IFAWA were the more popular organizations among non-resident fishermen, the AFL pursued organizing among resident cannery workers years before World War II. They met with limited success, and only represented 1,300 of 4,500 resident cannery workers in 1939. The AFL, like IFAWA, rhetorically positioned itself as the defender of Alaskan interests. However the Alaskan AFL did not have to answer to a sizeable non-resident membership pursued a more aggressive strategy summed up by its oft-used slogan 'Alaska for Alaskans.'<sup>202</sup> Initially used to build a strong base among white residents in fishing and other industries like construction, it was later adapted to organize Native workers.

All four actors– IFAWA, various Seafarer or other AFL affiliates, the CIO cannery workers union and the Native Brotherhood - scrambled to snap up the new and unorganized group of Alaska Native cannery workers. IFAWA was at odds with the CIO cannery workers,

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<sup>200</sup> Salmon Purse Seiner's Union Executive Board, November 14, 1937, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 15; Fifth Convention, December 6-9 1943, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 73; All-Alaska Labor Convention, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 1, page 8.

<sup>201</sup> Friday, "Competing Communities at Work," 311

<sup>202</sup> First Convention Federated Fishermen's Council, December 13-18 1937, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 21, page 16; Fifth Annual Convention, Pacific Coast Fishermen's Union, January 5-15, 1938, Local 3 Records, box 4, folder 38, page 24.

who had undergone a name change from UCAPAWA to the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers of America (FTA). Though tensions were high, they remained committed to settling jurisdictional disputes within the CIO. The two unions had the most momentum, leading the AFL and the Native Brotherhood to form an alliance around their common enemy, the CIO as another tool of outside interests.<sup>203</sup> The National Labor Relations Board held several regional and plant-specific elections between 1945 and 1947. IFAWA won an election to represent all resident cannery workers in Bristol Bay, and the FTA gained a majority in a similar election for the Alaskan Peninsula. There was no master election for the Southeast Alaska area. It appears that the AFL and Native Brotherhood split up the area on a company-by-company basis.<sup>204</sup>

The cannery dispute was just one of many challenges accompanying the end of the war. At the December 1944 Convention, Vice-President Hecker argued that “The battle for freedom and democracy the world over will soon be won, but the battle for decent wages and working conditions the world over is just beginning, and now more than ever it becomes the responsibility of the large labor unions to see that we at least retain the gains that we have made over a period of years.”<sup>205</sup> With chilling foresight, he predicted that big business was preparing to attack labor as soon as the war was over. For the time being, IFAWA scored a major victory when the War Labor Board ruled that “Fishermen - independent and company - in reality are laborers (not entrepreneurs) who furnish in a variable degree the tool of their trade... in the view of the fact

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<sup>203</sup> IFAWA Executive Board, February 10, 1945, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 7, page 3; United Fishermen’s Union Conference, February 11, 1945, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 3; Report of the Officers to the Seventh Annual Convention, 1945, Local 3 Records, box 11, unfolded, page 5; “Off the Hook” and “Officer’s Report,” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, February 1945; .Special Section Regarding Jurisdictional Dispute Between IFAWA and FTA, Eighth Convention IFAWA, January 24, 1946, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 25, page 3.

<sup>204</sup> “Fish Workers to Vote on Unions,” *Seattle Times*; April 11, 1945, 11; “Cannery Union Vote Announced” *Seattle Times*, October 22, 1945, 10; For a slightly different interpretation of the ANB and AFL, see: Arnold, *The Fishermen’s Frontier*, 149-50.

<sup>205</sup> IFAWA Convention, December 6, 1944, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 17.

that fishermen are essentially a labor force, it is recommended that for purposes of negotiations and bargaining relationships, any dispute between fishermen (company and independent) and industry shall be regarded as a labor dispute.”<sup>206</sup> IFAWA also made significant progress on harmonizing contract standards between locals.<sup>207</sup>

The main priority for 1945 was to make commercial fishing a priority in the creation of a post-war economy. For over three years, the American economy had been oriented toward a single goal: winning the war. As it became clear that Allied victory was inevitable, the watchword became ‘reconversion,’ the process of adjusting the economy back to a normally functioning state. Fishermen and cannery workers had chafed under the restrictions set forward by the Office of Price Administration (OPA), which created ceilings on the prices paid to fishermen based on the 1942 season, an unusually poor one with below average prices. The union argued that the ceiling did nothing to reduce consumer costs, and existed solely as a drain on the livelihoods of fishermen.<sup>208</sup> The speedy removal of the limit upon reconversion became a major demand for IFAWA.<sup>209</sup> Additionally, the union saw reconversion as an opportunity to end the inequities of the past, when commercial fishing occupied a marginal position in US food production. Even before peace was settled with Japan, Jurich travelled to Washington, D.C. to lobby for greater government attention to the industry.<sup>210</sup> The argument presented to lawmakers and the public was two-fold. First, fishing had been essential to winning the war, and fishermen

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<sup>206</sup> “Salmon Packers Must Sign Contracts” March 1945, *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, 5; Montes, *Alaska Fishermen Laws*, 68-69.

<sup>207</sup> United Fishermen’s Union Executive Council, April 7, 1945, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 3; United Fishermen’s Union Executive Council, September 29, 1945, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 3.

<sup>208</sup> United Fishermen’s Union – Puget Sound, Executive Council, May 1, 1943, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 1. Ibid., July 31, 1943, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 1; IFAWA Executive Board September 29-30, 1944, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 12; “Regional Meetings Plan Stabilization,” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, February 1944, 6.

<sup>209</sup> IFAWA Executive Board, October 11-13, 15, 1945, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 7

<sup>210</sup> July 1945, *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*; United Fishermen’s Union Executive Conference, February 11, 1945, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 3, page 5; “We Must Plan Now For Postwar Period,” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, February 1945.

had greatly sacrificed to maximize production. Second, fishing deserved to be subsidized the same as agricultural food production. The union's argument gained the support of the House Subcommittee on Fisheries, but no action was ever finalized.

Despite these setbacks, in November 1945 President Truman issued a proclamation and strategic plan for the American fishing industry. It lavished praise on the workers of the industry and met several of their demands on regulation and the ability to fish in international waters, but neglected to address the role of the industry in reconversion.<sup>211</sup> Additionally, a rare victory was achieved when IFAWA worked with progressive Seattle congressman Hugh DeLacey to force the Office of Price Administration to abandon its price ceiling for Alaska.<sup>212</sup> IFAWA remained hopeful that it could score other victories, especially, with the end of the no-strike pledge, and decided to re-open all contracts in 1946 to "straighten out [the] many inequalities and injustices which have existed in our Agreements."<sup>213</sup> However, the end of the war also meant that sizeable government and Army purchases of fish declined rapidly. IFAWA asked that this de facto subsidy be maintained at wartime levels and redirected for use as foreign aid in reconstruction efforts. In another example of the fusion of practical and leftist concerns, IFAWA joined other waterfront unions in advocating for normalized trade relations with communist China to create new economic opportunities.<sup>214</sup>

In 1946, the union redoubled its efforts to carve out space for fishing in the American economy. A Convention opened the year with a focus on 'streamlining' and 'modernizing' the industry. The approach mixed boosterism, including joint advertising campaigns with the

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<sup>211</sup> "What Follows Fishery Proclamation," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, November 1945.

<sup>212</sup> "IFAWA Blocks Alaska Salmon Price Cut," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, August 1945, 1.

<sup>213</sup> United Fishermen's Union of the Pacific, Conference December. 20 & 21 1945. box 4, folder 37

<sup>214</sup> Seattle United Fishermen's Union Local 4, January 9, 1946, Local 3 Records, box 1, folder 5; "News From International Office," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, June 1946, 20; "A Million Jobs Hinge on Trading With New China," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, February 1950, 13.

packers to educate the public about the health benefits of seafood, with redistributive demands for a greater share of profits. The union believed the packers were more interested in short-term profits than long-term success, and argued that the companies intentionally kept commercial fishing and canning marginal to the overall American economy. A member of the International Executive Board argued that the packers planned “on taking care of everything by cutting down on production and lowering wages. Solving some of these problems will make for progress in the industry. I reiterate, IFAWA should take the lead.” This rhetoric portrayed workers as the more responsible part of the sector, interested in the common good and the improvement of all workers and consumers. A detailed plan was created to expand the use new technology like radar, refrigeration and freezing, and to reduce waste in processing by utilizing non-food byproducts.<sup>215</sup>

In this way, technological upgrades and modernization were linked with the betterment of life and work in fishing. The union declared that “The time is here to put up or shut up in the fight for a modern industry and a square deal for producers and shoreworkers.” The statement continued in ever more dramatic terms, “This union has an historic mission virtually unparalleled in the labor movement; the job of helping to modernize an industry. Nor is this merely a crusade; we either modernize and expand production or our fishing fleet is doomed to bankruptcy.” IFAWA was frank about the challenges of the post-war fishing industry, and explained that “Hard economic facts compel this convention to dedicate itself to fighting for an industry that will ‘make every day fish day’ for producer, shore worker, operator and consumer.”<sup>216</sup> Out of this approach grew a peculiar alliance with Nick Bez, colorful vessel owner, Croatian immigrant

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<sup>215</sup> “Steps Toward Modernizing Our Industry,” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, March 1946, page 1; Report of the Officers, Seventh IFAWA Convention, 1945, Local 3 Records, box 11, unfolded, page 3; “IFAWA Plans Overall Industry Program” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, December 1945, page 1.

<sup>216</sup> Report of Officers, 8<sup>th</sup> Annual IFAWA Convention January 21-24 1947, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 17; Tell Your Friends, Mrs. Fisherman,” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, September 1946, 11; Booklet, Fishermen’s Fiesta, October 6, 1946, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 17

and millionaire. He was a consummate industrialist with investments in mining, airlines and canneries, but Bez also had liberal sympathies and served alongside Jurich on the Free Yugoslavia solidarity committee.<sup>217</sup> Bez pioneered the use of massive ships froze and processed fish onboard. This allowed for longer offshore trips that became necessary with the ecological depletion of the West Coast fishery. One of his first boats, the *Pacific Explorer*, plied the waters off Costa Rica using a union crew. The venture ignited a firestorm of criticism over potential violations of international law and ecological destruction. Jurich leapt to the defense of Bez, testifying before Congress on the virtues of the project.<sup>218</sup>

The *Pacific Explorer* highlighted the complex relationship between IFAWA and conservation. The union tried to balance the immediate material needs of its members with long-term sustainability that would guarantee jobs in the future. They had no interest in ecological diversity for its own sake, and often advocated for the wholesale elimination of predators like sea lions. An IFAWA affiliate once asked the Army to bomb seals out of existence near the entrance to the Copper River.<sup>219</sup> Nevertheless, the union was a constant supporter of greater scientific research to protect fish stocks.<sup>220</sup> In 1947, it decried studies of salmon that examined each part of the life cycle in isolation, and the general “horse and buggy” style of conservation research. They made the common sense assertion that “studies should guide the development of fisheries, not follow in the wake of exploitation.”<sup>221</sup> Given the massive underfunding of government research, IFAWA was often justified in questioning arbitrary regulatory restrictions imposed without

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<sup>217</sup> “Free Yugoslavia Group Elects Jurich to Office” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, February 1945. On leftist sympathies see: “Washington Scene: Gen Vaughn and the Salmon Man.” *Milwaukee Sentinel*, October 25, 1951, 10.; “Nick Bez,” *Harbor History Museum*, <<http://harborhistorymuseum.blogspot.com/2012/06/nick-bez-nikola-bezmalinovic.html>>

<sup>218</sup> “The Case of the Pacific Explorer,” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, May 1947, 3.

<sup>219</sup> United Fishermen’s Union Executive Council Minutes January 8, 1944, Local 3 Records, box 6, folder 1, page 4 Resolution #31 First Convention United Fishermen’s Union, December 5-9, 1938, Local 3 Records, box 4, folder 38.

<sup>220</sup> “University of Washington Research Agreement,” Local 3 Records, box 14, folder 43

<sup>221</sup> Report of Officers, 8<sup>th</sup> Annual IFAWA Convention, January 21-24, 1947, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 17

adequate data collection or consultation with the fishermen who knew the catch best. However, pure self-interest was at play in most of these disputes.

IFAWA targeted its conservation efforts at outside factors that might damage fish runs. It strongly opposed pulp mills, industrial pollution, agricultural land reclamation that destroyed streams, and the massive dams that were constructed in Northwest during the 1930s and 1940s. The unofficial artistic voice of the CIO, Woody Guthrie, may have lauded the Northwest dams, but IFAWA remained firmly opposed.<sup>222</sup> Initially, union outright opposed dams, but it became clear that the union lacked the leverage needed to stop the projects. By the 1940s they shifted toward a strategy of negotiating compensation in the form of fish ladders, hatcheries and other restorative measures.<sup>223</sup>

Any semblance of support for the regulation of catch size was abandoned amidst the union's 'win-the-war' program of 'all-out production,' but this also came at a time when crews and canneries were chronically understaffed, creating informal catch limits. When the war ended, the focus on modernization meant evermore efficient methods put greater stress on fish stocks. Some methods like trawling created a large 'bycatch' of unintentionally captured marine wildlife that was discarded. However, the union placed a good deal of focus on the elimination of wasteful methods and advocated that the bycatch be used in whatever commercial way

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<sup>222</sup> Jeff Brady, "Woody Guthrie's Fertile Month on the Columbia River," NPR, July 13, 2007  
<<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=11918998>>

<sup>223</sup> Resolution #11, ISU Fishermen's Unions Convention, December 7, 1936., Local 3 Records, box 1, folder 7; Resolution #29 United Fishermen's Union - Puget Sound, Convention, December 2-4, 1940, Seattle, Washington. CIO, Local 3 Records, box 4, folder 38; Salmon Conservation in the State of Washington, Yearbook, Second Convention IFAWA, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, pages 14-15; Second IFAWA Convention, December 9-13, 1940, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 44; Third IFAWA Convention, December 1-5, 1941, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 2, page 64; Resolutions #3, 4, 6, 7, 8 & 12, Eight IFAWA Convention, January 21-24, 1947, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 19; Northwest IFAWA Council, March 26, 1949; "We Can Have Power and Salmon – With Proper Planning," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, January 1948, 9.

possible.<sup>224</sup> IFAWA expressed concern about the increasing number of boats in the post-war period, though concern arose mostly from the fear that more fishermen meant lower earnings. By then, the writing was on the wall for the West Coast fishing industry. Overfishing had long been evident and fish stocks would begin to rapidly worsen in the mid-1950s. In 1948, sardines became the first West Coast fishery to fully collapse. Though it is now believed that the collapse was cyclical, it failed to spur the union to change its conservation approach.<sup>225</sup>

Meanwhile, the diligent approach toward organizing during the war paid off after 1945. Membership recovered to over 20,000 and the union proved itself an attractive option for fishermen who wanted to organize. For example, 300 Puget Sound crab fishermen organized independently but were unable to convince their employers to bargain, so they joined United Fishermen's Union (UFU) to gain the necessary leverage to be recognized.<sup>226</sup> Additionally, the UFU conducted a major cannery worker drive in 1945 that added 450 members.<sup>227</sup> Since its California wing had collapsed in the early 1940s, the United Fishermen's Union of the Pacific was in reality a Washington State organization with a few members that worked as non-residents in Alaska. In 1946, it changed its name to IFAWA Pacific District Local 3, hoping to bolster unity and identification with the International. In practical terms, this had little effect. Locals became known as units, but they functioned exactly as before.<sup>228</sup> Susanj continued as Secretary-

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<sup>224</sup> Report of Officers, Eighth IFAWA Convention, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 17; IFAWA Views the News, March 27, 1942, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 15.

<sup>225</sup> "What Happened to Our Sardines Last Season?" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, April 1946; Ninth Convention IFAWA, January 20-23, 1948, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 24, page 19; IFAWA Executive Board August 26, 1948, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 6.

<sup>226</sup> November 9, 1946, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 11; First Conference Pacific District Local No. 3, December 20, 1946, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 11, page 21.

<sup>227</sup> United Fishermen's Union report, booklet, in: Eighth Convention IFAWA, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 25, page 44.

<sup>228</sup> Resolution No. 1, Authorizing the Transfer of the Property and Funds, box 12, folder 11.

Treasurer and Reduction Worker representative Robert Alvestad took over from Oscar Rodin as President.<sup>229</sup>

The UFU's new name reflected a general sense of post-war optimism. 'Pacific District' implied that there could soon be districts for the Atlantic, Gulf and Great Lakes. There was some initial progress on this front when around 175 Lake Erie fishermen who belonged to the International Longshoremen's Association, the more conservative counterpart to the ILWU, defected and joined IFAWA.<sup>230</sup> Forming IFAWA Local 63, they launched a hard-fought strike less just months after joining and stayed out for 235 days.<sup>231</sup> In the Gulf Coast, the CIO's National Maritime Union facilitated a meeting that drew 125 fishermen and established a new IFAWA local.<sup>232</sup> Additionally, Jeff Kibre travelled the Gulf Coast and South Atlantic to court several federations of fishermen's organizations, which had a combined membership of 10,000.<sup>233</sup> Though halting, these were important steps that accompanied significant expansion among West Coast shoreworkers and Alaskan fishermen.<sup>234</sup> Seven new locals of IFAWA were chartered in 1946, including two in Alaska, and the Alaska Trollers doubled their membership.<sup>235</sup>

The lifting of the no-strike pledge unleashed a wave of militancy in IFAWA and across the nation. One of the most important actions by shoreworkers was a joint strike of IFAWA Local 46, representing Alaska Native cannery workers in Bristol Bay, and Local 7 of the Food, Tobacco Agricultural and Allied Workers, which represented the mostly Filipino cannery workers who shipped out of Seattle, Portland and San Francisco. The strike began on April 20<sup>th</sup>,

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<sup>229</sup> IFAWA, Pacific District Local 3 Executive Board April 6, 1946, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 11; "Robt. Alvestad is Elected" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, April 1946.

<sup>230</sup> "Lake Erie Fishermen Join New IFAWA Local," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, August 1946.

<sup>231</sup> "Local 63 Strike On Lake Erie," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, November 1946, 24; "First Victory Won in Great Lakes Strikes," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, June 1946, 17. The long-term existence or success of this local is unclear.

<sup>232</sup> "Gulf Coast Organizing," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, May 1946, 17

<sup>233</sup> "Survey of Gulf and So. Atlantic Fisheries," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, June 1946, 1

<sup>234</sup> Eighth Convention IFFAWA January 24, 1946, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 25, page 21

<sup>235</sup> "IFAWA Is Growing," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, January 1947, 3.

shortly before the date when Local 7 members would normally begin to ship out. In addition to the work stoppage, pickets in Puget Sound and Alaska prevented the shipment or unloading of cannery equipment. The impact of this blockade was compounded by an 18-day longshore strike in Alaska that ended April 22<sup>nd</sup>.<sup>236</sup> The partnership of Local 46 and Local 7 proved extremely valuable when the two devised a plan to allow some shipments of food to Alaska on April 25<sup>th</sup>, staving off a food shortage.<sup>237</sup> The strike was lifted April 27<sup>th</sup> with a 10% wage increase and an extra \$25-50 in standby pay during times of inactivity for Local 7 members. Residents in IFAWA Local 46 achieved an hourly minimum of \$1.06, up from 96 cents, and an increase of \$50-\$90 in guaranteed earnings for the season.<sup>238</sup> The show of strength allowed Local 46 to keep negotiating throughout the season, and by July it negotiated additional gains that increased the pay of the lowest classification to \$1.10 an hour, with top classified cannery workers earning \$1.35. They also achieved a closed shop, an eight hour day, and company recognition of shop stewards. In a very rare victory, unequal pay was eliminated for women. The contract barred the packers from paying women ‘Class B’ wages when they performed work consistent with ‘Class A’ male workers. This is the only IFAWA contract examined by this study in which discrimination in pay and classification is directly prohibited.<sup>239</sup> The campaign was also a remarkable example of CIO civil rights unionism and working class unity between two disparate groups – Alaska Natives and Filipino migrants – who shared common experiences with American empire and exploitation by capital. The specifics of their encounters with global

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<sup>236</sup> “Food Shortage Alarms Alaska,” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, April 22, 1946, 9.

<sup>237</sup> “US Faced With New Shutdowns,” *Painesville Telegraph*, April 25, 1946, 1.

<sup>238</sup> “Alaska Canner Victory by CIO,” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, May 1946, 18; On the strike, see also: “Alaskan Territorial Governor Ernest Henry Gruening telegram regarding the demands of cannery workers during a strike in Alaska, April 20, 1946,” Cannery Workers & Farm Laborers Union Local 7. Accession No. 3927-001, Local 3 Records, box 23/40, University of Washington Special Collections <<http://content.lib.washington.edu/u/?pioneerlife,10650>>; “Alaska Sailings On; Strike Ends,” *Seattle Times*, May 1, 1946, 15.

<sup>239</sup> “Bristol Bay Residents Get More Cannery Pay,” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, July 1946, 6.

imperialism were different, but the underlying commonality of their two experiences is strong. Within the CIO, the two groups had found a home and, more importantly, the tools and support network needed to fight back against the grueling conditions of the canneries. Together, they challenged companies that presumed to run Alaska by fiat and tried to use race to divide and conquer their workforce.

Above the local level, the strike was important because it allowed IFAWA and the FTA to set aside growing tensions and work together. The contentious debate over the representation of resident Alaska cannery workers opened up longstanding jurisdictional gray areas in the CIO.<sup>240</sup> To iron out the issue, the leadership of IFAWA and the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers (FTA) formulated a merger proposal and brought it to the fishermen's 1946 Convention. The idea failed to gain traction. Convention delegates complained that the proposal was a quick-fix which was not motivated by fraternal feelings of unity. Accusations flew that the FTA and its predecessor, UCAPAWA, had ignored resident cannery workers for several years, even though the same could be said of IFAWA. Proponents argued that a merger would give IFAWA a better foothold in the Gulf of Mexico and East Coast, and that a single union could rebuff the alliance between the Alaska Native Brotherhood and the AFL.<sup>241</sup> Ultimately, the idea was tabled and no action was taken.<sup>242</sup>

While the two unions were winning in Alaska, they were facing problems in California. The FTA lost a major battle with the Teamsters over fruit and vegetable canneries, and Southern California continued to be the weak point of IFAWA. The same was not true in the other part of the state. In 1944, IFAWA signed the Northern California Fish Stabilization Agreement, its first

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<sup>240</sup> IFAWA Executive Board February 10, 1945, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 7, page 3; United Fishermen's Union Conference February 11, 1945, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 3, page 2

<sup>241</sup> Special Report Regarding Jurisdictional Dispute Between IFAWA and FTA, Eighth Convention IFAWA, January 24, 1946, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 25, pages 1-5 (day 1).

<sup>242</sup> United Fishermen's Union Executive Board, February 9, 1946, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 11.

master price agreement.<sup>243</sup> It covered prices for all fish that was sold fresh instead of being canned. IFAWA Local 36, the consolidated representative for all Southern California fresh market fishermen, tried to follow this lead and proposed a Southern California Market Fishermen's Master Agreement in spring 1946. Thirteen dealers – the term for fresh market companies – refused to negotiate and 1,100 members of Local 36 struck in response. As with many IFAWA tie-ups, a portion of the membership continued to fish for less antagonistic employers. After two weeks, Local 36 and the obstinate dealers came to a compromise in which a minimum price would be established and negotiations would take place daily concerning payment above the minimum. The compromise included a promise from the dealers to negotiate a master agreement for Southern California if the Northern California agreement was legally certified.<sup>244</sup> However, the dealers and the government filed an anti-trust case against Local 36, some of whom were boat owners. They argued that their strike did not constitute a dispute under labor law and was an unlawful attempt to induce negotiations.<sup>245</sup> The anti-trust case came in the form of criminal charges brought by the Department of Justice via grand jury against the officers of Local 36 and International Secretary-Treasurer Jeff Kibre.<sup>246</sup> It was a dangerous alteration of the old anti-trust strategy. Previous anti-trust suits had been civil injunctions against organizations that barred them from bargaining, and allowed groups like the Pacific Coast Fishermen's Union to reorganize under a new name. The new anti-trust strategy criminalized unionism and made officers vulnerable to punishment and jail time. The reverberations of the lawsuit worsened a difficult situation for the rest of IFAWA, which was only beginning to see

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<sup>243</sup> ASI negotiations were jointly conducted, but each union signed a separate agreement and prices and standards usually varied

<sup>244</sup> Pinsky, *Fisheries of California*, 96-106; "So. California Strike Wins Minimum Prices," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, July 1946,

<sup>245</sup> "California CIO Council is Accused," *Seattle Times*, August 8, 1946, 1.

<sup>246</sup> "IFAWA Fights Anti-Union Moves by Justice Dept.," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, August 1946, 25; Pinsky, *Fisheries of California*, "CIO Resolution", Unnumbered first page.

the end of Office of Price Administration restrictions in fall 1946.<sup>247</sup> A small victory was achieved when the Assistant Attorney General refused to bring criminal charges against the Alaska Fishermen's Union as requested by the Alaska Salmon Industry.<sup>248</sup> This joined other successes like the 1946 cannery workers strike and the expansion of membership, which helped to balance the frustrations in making commercial fishing a central part of the post-war economy. These strengths and weaknesses were about to be put to the test as post-war labor relations became a battleground in 1947.

## **V. Struggle, Strikes and Collapse**

1946 saw one of the largest strike waves in the annals of the American labor movement, and business interests hit back beginning in 1947. Above and beyond the challenges facing other unions, and especially left-led ones amid the Red Scare, IFAWA had to contend with a systematic strategy of anti-trust suits that used their position as precarious workers to bust their union. At the same time that the state and the packers conspired against IFAWA, the CIO took a rightward turn and expelled it and eleven other unions tied to the Communist Party. This unique combination of attacks ended the International Fishermen and Allied Workers as a coastwise entity by 1952. Before this happened, however, IFAWA made some of its biggest gains and carried out its two most raucous and successful strikes. Puget Sound fishermen used picket lines for the first time in 1949 and held strong against the packers. The next year, an alliance of militant waterfront unions led by Alaska Native cannery workers in IFAWA smashed the regime of unequal pay for Native workers. Because of its rapid dissolution, history has forgotten IFAWA. This section completes an overview of the key role that fishermen and cannery workers played in the CIO and the post-war fight for economic justice.

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<sup>247</sup> Local 3 Executive Board, October 2, 1946, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 11.

<sup>248</sup> "California Says 'Do' Anti-Trust Says 'Don't'" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, January 1946, 33.

Reflecting on 1946, IFAWA leadership concluded that “At the close of the year we saw monopoly capital take over the driver’s seat from a fumbling Truman administration.”<sup>249</sup> Shortly thereafter, a grand jury in California initiated a trial of Local 36 officers on anti-trust charges. IFAWA’s lawyers mounted an impassioned defense, arguing fishermen were exempt from the Sherman anti-trust act because they sold their labor like any other worker. However, the officers of Local 36 were convicted in May 1947 and received \$12,000 in fines.<sup>250</sup> IFAWA designed a multi-pronged strategy to appeal the decision and take the battle outside the courtroom. “Such an understanding of this so-called anti-trust case will enable us to mount an all-out counter-offensive,” the union wrote. “Once we see this attack for what it is – an attack on all workers – we will realize that we are not alone in fighting back. The millions of organized labor will join with us in moving through the higher courts, in going to Congress, and, above all, appealing to the people for a reversal of this unjust and vicious verdict.”<sup>251</sup> The situation worsened a month later when Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act. With a single stroke, union rights were curtailed and labor movement’s gains from 1930s were threatened. IFAWA explicitly linked the anti-trust attack with Taft-Hartley, identifying them as two parts of a broader assault.<sup>252</sup> The new law doubly threatened IFAWA. First, it excluded misclassified fishermen from using the National Labor Relations Board to defend their associational rights, which were reduced under Taft-Hartley. Secondly, it required union leaders to sign affidavits that they were not communists.

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<sup>249</sup> Report of Officers, 8<sup>th</sup> IFAWA Convention, January 21-24, 1947, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 17.

<sup>250</sup> “Fishermen Convicted as “Monopolists,”” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, May 1947, pages 1 & 3; Local 3 Executive Board May 10, 1947, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 8; Pinsky, *The Fishermen of California*; Robert Kenny, “The Battle of America’s Primary Producers,” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, June 1947, 1.

<sup>251</sup> “Message to the Membership on the Anti-Trust Case,” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, June 1947, 15

<sup>252</sup> IFAWA Local 3 Conference, December 19, 1947, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 20, page 9; Kibre, “What to do About the Taft-Hartley Act,” December 19, 1947, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 20; IFAWA Executive Board July 17-19, 1947, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 4.

Meanwhile on Puget Sound, packers had stockpiled the previous year's surplus catch in refrigeration facilities and overall consumer demand for fish was falling.<sup>253</sup> Together with Taft-Hartley, this allowed local packers to delay negotiations for the fall salmon season for six weeks after the date on which the two parties normally first met. To the south, the Columbia River Packers Association refused to sign any agreement.<sup>254</sup> These developments compounded a bitter internal fight over the merger of the large Local 3 (the former United Fishermen's Union) and the smaller Local 53, representing Puget Sound Otter Trawl fishermen. The International had mandated a merger in the spirit of industrial unionism, but Local 53 fought hard against the move. They levied accusations of corruption against Local 3 Secretary-Treasurer Anton Susanj, and even threatened to add a company to a list of unfair products because it signed a contract with Local 3. Local 53 believed that the company fell under its jurisdiction.<sup>255</sup> In retaliation, Local 3 urged the International to revoke Local 53's charter and charged that it included more captains and boat owners than workers, and even had small-time fish dealers as members.<sup>256</sup> In spite of this distracting fight, Local 3 continued to grow in size and represented 2,500 of the 4,000 fishermen in Puget Sound. This power became essential in 1947 when the union had to fight off an attack by non-professional sport fishermen, who launched a petition to make Puget Sound a recreational preserve in which purse seining would be banned. The move ruptured a longstanding alliance between commercial and sport fishermen, who had worked together against traps and pollution for more than a decade under the umbrella of the Salmon Conservation League.<sup>257</sup> The reasons for this move are unclear, but IFAWA identified it as a part

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<sup>253</sup> IFAWA Local 3 Executive Board, February 8, 1947, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 8.

<sup>254</sup> Report of the Secretary-Treasurer to the Local 3 Executive Board, August 23, 1947, Local 3 Records, box 7, folder 18.

<sup>255</sup> IFAWA Executive Board July 17-19, 1947, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 4, pages 7-8.

<sup>256</sup> Local 3 Executive Board February 28, 1948, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 12

<sup>257</sup> Local 3 Conference, December 19, 1947, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 20, pages 20-30; Local 3 Executive Board November 29, 1947, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 8; 1940 Report by Paul Dale, United Fishermen's Union

of the wider reactionary turn, calling proponents of the seine ban “economic royalists, masquerading as sportsmen.”<sup>258</sup>

The International faced other problems. It cost \$10,000 to appeal the ruling against Local 36, and the union established a Fishermen’s Freedom Fund to raise at least \$50,000 for the anticipated court costs if the appeal moved forward.<sup>259</sup> They also launched an unsuccessful effort to convince the Department of the Interior, with whom they had a working relationship on regulatory issues, to lobby the Department of Justice to drop all anti-trust suits. With the Local 36 ruling, new cases were being brought in places like Northern California.<sup>260</sup> As with Local 3, it is important to contextualize these tough fights and setbacks within the growth and maturation of the union. In 1947, the union had 18,000 per capita members and an additional 7,000 workers upon which partial per capita was paid. This meant that IFAWA had an absolute minimum membership of 25,000 and was likely more than 30,000 strong because of continuing issues with per capita payments. At this time, there were about 42,000 fishermen on the Pacific Coast.<sup>261</sup> The number of shoreworkers is unclear, but in the 1940s there were usually equal numbers of fishermen and shoreworkers.<sup>262</sup> This means IFAWA may have exceeded 30% union density in the Pacific Coast fishery. This is a significant milestone in the US, where overall union density has never surpassed 30%.<sup>263</sup> Outside of the Pacific Coast, 600 members comprising five locals in

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Convention , Local 3 Records, box 1, folder 1; United Fishermen’s Union Executive Council May 5, 1945, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 3.

<sup>258</sup> Ninth IFAWA Convention, January 20-23, 1948, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 24, page 2

<sup>259</sup> Local 3 Executive Board, July 1, 1947, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 8; IFAWA Executive Board, July 17-19, 1947, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 4, page 7.

<sup>260</sup> Local 3 1947 Conference December 19, 1947, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 20, page 27.

<sup>261</sup> Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the United States 1951* (82<sup>nd</sup> Congress, Serial Set No. Serial Set No. 11544), 665.

<sup>262</sup> There were 12,242 fishermen and 15,948 shoreworkers in Alaska in 1947. See: *Fisheries of Alaska: Annual Summaries 1942-1966* (Washington, D.C. : U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service).

In previous years, there were more fishermen than shoreworkers in Washington, Oregon and California, leaving the totals for each group roughly equal. See: Fielding, *Fishery Industries of the United States 1939*, 475-491; 542.

<sup>263</sup> Gerald Mayer, “Union Membership Trends in the United States,” (Congressional Research Service, 2004).

North Carolina were been added, and a sizeable shrimp fishermen's union in the Gulf Coast joined the CIO and was willing to affiliate with IFAWA.<sup>264</sup>

1948 began strong when Local 33 in San Pedro held its ground during a five week lockout and achieved a closed shop agreement.<sup>265</sup> In Puget Sound, the Northwest IFAWA Council was formed by Local 3 and other affiliates that represented reefnetters, gillnetters, otter trawlers, crab fishermen and shoreworkers.<sup>266</sup> Branches of the Alaska Fishermen's Union in Bellingham and Seattle were later integrated.<sup>267</sup> The Council became an important point of encounter as relations with Puget Sound packers worsened. The most egregious situation faced crab fishermen, who faced rolling lockouts and sudden price. The workers responded with unity, and 90% of the crab fishing workforce regularly attended union meetings.<sup>268</sup> Meanwhile, the Alaska Fishermen's Union achieved its highest ever price increase in negotiations with the Alaska Salmon Industry.<sup>269</sup> Local 3 also took tentative steps toward forming a gillnet division, after the IFAWA local representing these workers declined. A gillnetter Organizing Committee was formed and a strike in Willapia Bay successfully reversed a price decrease.<sup>270</sup>

The formation of the Northwest IFAWA Council was part of a wider strategy formulated at the January 1948 Convention to strengthen the union through joint councils and greater International involvement in negotiations. The ultimate goal was coastwise contract

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The Department of the Interior sometimes designated Washington, Oregon and California as the 'Pacific Coast' and separated Alaska, but I use the term to describe all four areas.

<sup>264</sup> Ninth IFAWA Convention, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 24, page 20. It does not appear that affiliation ever took place.

<sup>265</sup> "San Pedro Local 33 Wins Over Taft-Hartley" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, February 1948, 16.

<sup>266</sup> Northwest IFAWA Council, February 14, 1948, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 17; Northwest IFAWA Council Constitution, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 15.

<sup>267</sup> Northwest IFAWA Council, December 18, 1948 Seattle, Local 3 Records, box 7, folder 1

<sup>268</sup> Local 3 Conference, December 17, 1948., Local 3 Records, box 7, folder 1.

<sup>269</sup> Memorandum on Claims made against International Fishermen and Allied Worker by those advocating disaffiliation of AFU, Local 3 Records, box 11, unfolded.

<sup>270</sup> "Plan Gillnetting Organizing," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, December 1948, 3; Northwest IFAWA Council, December 18, 1948, Local 3 Records, box 7, folder 1, page 7.

harmonization.<sup>271</sup> In March, a conference of Alaskan IFAWA affiliates was held and the Westward Area Fisheries Council (WAFC) was formed to cover the remote but high-fishing areas of the Alaskan Peninsula and Aleutian Islands. John Wiese, a member of the Cordova District Fishermen's Union (formerly the Copper River and Prince William Sound Fishermen's Union), became its energetic President and used a weekly radio broadcast to knit together the far-flung membership.<sup>272</sup> Originally from Northern California, where he was Secretary of the Shasta Tunnel and Construction Workers Union-CIO, he later moved to Seattle and worked as a reporter before moving into the fishing industry.<sup>273</sup> Lottie Edelman, an Alaska Fishermen's Union Business Agent and working fisherwoman, became the Council's Secretary.<sup>274</sup> The Council strove to "give the common people more voice in their fishery" and build democracy and respect for residents in the Territory. They also continued the longstanding IFAWA effort to ban traps in Alaska.<sup>275</sup>

In the political arena, IFAWA stuck to its principles in the face of increased repression of the left. The union strongly backed the campaign of Henry Wallace, a former Vice-President under Roosevelt who left the Democratic Party to run on the Progressive Party ticket. The International Executive Board, Local 3, Local 33 and various locals like Bellingham Cannery Workers Local 6 – in a unanimous vote at a membership meeting – endorsed Wallace.<sup>276</sup> In his

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<sup>271</sup> Ninth Convention IFAWA January 20-23, 1948, box 11, folder 24, pages 6 & 13; Resolution # 36, "District Organization" at Ninth Convention. Not contained in records, see: NW IFAWA Council February 14, 1948, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 17, page 2.

<sup>272</sup> "Anchorage Conference Welds Unity," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, March 1948, 1; IFAWA Executive Board August 26, 1948, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 6, page 2.

<sup>273</sup> "Anti-Picketing Law Upheld at Redding," *Seattle Times*, February 28, 1939, 14; UFU E-Conference February 11, 1945, Local 3 Records, box 5, folder 3; Hearing Subcommittee Ed and Labor - Communist Infiltration of Maritime and Fisheries Unions, page 34.

<sup>274</sup> *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, August 1949, 7; *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, March 1948, 8.

<sup>275</sup> IFAWA Executive Board, August 26, 1948, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 6, pages 9; 3.

<sup>276</sup> Local 3 Executive Board August 28, 1948, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 12; IFAWA Executive Board July 17-19, 1947, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 4, page 3; "Bellingham for Wallace," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, October 1948, 4

written greeting to the January 1948 IFAWA Convention, Wallace went beyond boilerplate to discuss the anti-trust attack on IFAWA in great detail.<sup>277</sup> The same Convention took a strong stand against the Marshall Plan and Truman's foreign policy.<sup>278</sup> There was isolated opposition, including the resignation of a longtime member in San Pedro who had been involved in wartime solidarity with Yugoslavia, but the union membership was largely behind the defiant program.<sup>279</sup> Additionally, the union backed the 1948 maritime and longshore strike that directly challenged Taft-Hartley. IFAWA gave food to strikers, donated to their strike fund and marched on the picket lines. At the National CIO Convention in November 1948, Jurich joined the leaders of these same unions and other progressives to write the minority report opposing the National leadership's support for Truman and his foreign policy, new limits of union autonomy and the investigation of Communist influence in CIO unions.<sup>280</sup>

As the Red Scare gathered steam, IFAWA was increasingly the target of these investigations. Leaders of the Cordova District Fishermen's Union and John Wiese were brought before a travelling Congressional hearing held in Alaska on 'Communist Infiltration of Maritime and Fisheries Unions.' A former Secretary of the CDFU deftly sidestepped interrogation by saying "We have a lot of radicals – left wingers – who don't like the way things are going, but Communists, never."<sup>281</sup> On the anti-trust front, a fleeting victory came in July when a court ruling found that contracts with fishermen were valid, but master contracts were not.<sup>282</sup> The Local 36 case continued on appeal. The Freedom Fund had collected \$54,000 in donations and

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<sup>277</sup> Ninth Convention IFAWA, January 20-23, 1948, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 24, page 57.

<sup>278</sup> Local 3 Executive Board, January 31, 1948, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 8, page 4.

<sup>279</sup> "King Resigns in San Pedro" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, August 1948, 4.

<sup>280</sup> Local 3 Conference, December 17, 1948, Local 3 Records, box 7, folder 1, page 5; Preliminary Report on CIO Trial of IFAWA, submitted by Paul Pinsky, Local 3 Records, box 11, unfolded; IFAWA Convention, Labor Union Constitutions and Proceedings, 22-2.

<sup>281</sup> House Committee Education and Labor, "Communist Infiltration of Maritime and Fisheries Unions," Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1948), 52.

<sup>282</sup> "New Ruling Upholds IFAWA Stand on Our Collective Bargaining Rights," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, July 1948, 9.

voluntary assessments on top of dues, and an additional \$8,000 from outside IFAWA, but legal costs had surpassed \$75,000. The union had to withdraw funds from an organizing drive on the East Coast to cover the difference.<sup>283</sup> Complaints surfaced that fishermen in the collapsing sardine sector and cannery workers were being de-prioritized as resources became scarce.<sup>284</sup>

At the 1949 IFAWA Convention, leadership proposed a merger with the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, arguing that a merger would provide more resources for the anti-trust fight. The officers noted that “The complexity and intensity of the struggles of the past year also revealed the basic shortcomings of IFAWA. More and more we saw that our organization lacks the facilities, resources, and personnel which are now essential to maintain the fighting trim, and to carry through successful battles.”<sup>285</sup> The union could adequately bargain, as seen by massive price increases that came with the lifting of price ceilings by Office of Price Administration, but leadership felt they lacked the research and public relations expertise.<sup>286</sup> The proposal for a merger with the ILWU was not a new one. It was first floated in 1946 as an alternative to the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers and the San Francisco IFAWA local had symbolically proposed it every year since.<sup>287</sup> ILWU Vice-President Louis Goldblatt attended the 1949 Convention, answering questions about local autonomy and the integration of IFAWA as a division with equal standing to the longshore and warehouse sections. The delegates seemed satisfied with these answers, and the recent organizing of Hawaiian sugarcane workers into the ILWU provided an example of diversification outside shipping.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> IFAWA Executive Board August 26, 1948, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 6; Local 3 Executive Board August 28, 1948, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 12

<sup>284</sup> Ibid.

<sup>285</sup> IFAWA Convention, Labor Union Constitutions and Proceedings, 3.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., Page 67; IFAWA Executive Board January 23-25, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 6; Report on Alaska Herring Industry and Puget Sound Canned Salmon Industry, National Labor Bureau, April 29, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 2.

<sup>287</sup> IFAWA Convention, Labor Union Constitutions and Proceedings, 61.

<sup>288</sup> Local 3 Executive Board February 19, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 10, page 13.

Once the proposal was on the Convention floor, however, the Alaska Fishermen's Union (AFU) delegation came out against it. They argued that not enough time had been provided to consider the idea since its initial proposal in December 1948. AFU delegates, including IFAWA Vice-President Oscar Anderson, voted against the idea. Goldblatt and the ILWU delegates withdrew the merger proposal for fear of causing a split in IFAWA. Later in the Convention, Anderson and another Alaska Fishermen's Union delegate announced they were switching their votes to 'yes,' and a resolution was passed recommending a merger and asking affiliates to conduct internal balloting on the idea.<sup>289</sup> As the process began, the major sticking point became per capita payments. Many affiliates, especially small, direct locals were concerned that a merger would mean increased dues obligations, and the possibility of having to pay a full year's per capita to the ILWU on seasonal members. Despite repeated assurances to the contrary, the concerns were never fully allayed.<sup>290</sup> However, there was openness to the idea because of the longstanding closeness between longshore and fishing workers.<sup>291</sup>

Throughout the International, there was a recognition that a go-it-alone attitude that treated IFAWA as a federation rather than a union would no longer suffice. The Convention formulated a strategy that asked locals to form joint negotiation committees with other IFAWA affiliates and mobilize for each other's demands.<sup>292</sup> In 1949 the Northwest IFAWA Council continued to thrive, but the Westward Areas Fisheries Council and a Northern California Council were the only other coordinating bodies that had been formed. In Puget Sound and Alaska, a

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<sup>289</sup> IFAWA Convention 1949, Labor Union Constitutions and Proceedings, 65-79; Background of Discussions on Merger, To All Locals and Delegates from International Officers, February 2, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 7, folder 1; Gettings to Editor, *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, February 9, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 7, folder 2

<sup>290</sup> IFAWA Executive Board January 23-25, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 6, pages 3-4; Local 3 Executive Board, February 19, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 10, pages 14-24; Eleventh IFAWA Convention, 1950, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 13, pages 4-5.

<sup>291</sup> IFAWA Executive Board January 23-25, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 6, page 5.

<sup>292</sup> "Convention Adopts Fish Price and Wage Program for 1949," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, February 1949, 7.

breakthrough on joint action came in March when representatives of IFAWA and the Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers, including John Wiese, President Jurich and FTA Regional Director Bob Kinney met to discuss upcoming cannery negotiations with the Alaska Salmon Industry (ASI). In a notable meeting, the two unions resolved outstanding questioning of jurisdiction, agreed to joint negotiations with the ASI and decided to demand full wage parity for resident and non-resident workers. They also formulated a plan to engage in an unfair labor practice strikes if necessary, in spite of the no-strike clause in the existing ASI contract.<sup>293</sup>

IFAWA Local 46 President Joe Nashoalook, representing Alaska Native cannery workers in Bristol Bay, became a member of the International Executive Board in 1949 and was an active participant in union business, travelling to Washington, D.C. on a legislative trip and garnering a great deal of support among the rank and file.<sup>294</sup> A hard-line stance by the Alaska Salmon Industry again prevented full wage parity, but the two unions preserved their unity throughout negotiations.<sup>295</sup>

The biggest battle of 1949 took place in Puget Sound, where salmon fishermen went on strike in fall. Numerous work stoppages called ‘tie-ups’ have been omitted from this essay because they were usually short and taken against a specific cannery or company. In 1949, fishermen moved beyond the passive tie-up tactic, a mobilization-free withdrawal of labor, to directly confront and picket the packers. Puget Sound negotiations began in spring with the herring fishermen, who rejected a series of ‘last, best and final’ offers from the packers between March and June, even when it became clear that continuing to rebuff them would mean no

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<sup>293</sup> Juneau Conference of IFAWA and FTA Representatives, March 18, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 18; “Alaska Cannery Workers Forge Unity for Action,” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, April 1949, 6.

<sup>294</sup> “News From Nashoalook” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, June 1949, 12; IFAWA Executive Board October 10-11, 1949, Seattle, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 6

<sup>295</sup> “AFU Accepts Bristol Bay Agreement in Close Vote,” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, June 1949, 7.

herring season that year. Ultimately, only 125 of the 500 herring fishermen were dispatched that year after a limited deal was reached for late-season operations in Alaska.<sup>296</sup>

At the time, there were two separate salmon fishing seasons, one from late July until September, and another in October and November. In June and July, salmon fishermen, tendermen and cannery workers voted down proposals from the packers for 18 cents per pound for sockeye salmon and 8 cents per pound for pink salmon. On the opening day of the fishing season, July 19<sup>th</sup>, fishermen stayed home. They wanted 25 cents per pound for sockeyes and 12 cents for pinks, not the 20 cents and 10 cents now offered by the packers. The Department of Labor's Conciliation Service intervened on July 21<sup>st</sup>, but a reduced union offer after mediation of was rejected by the packers. On July 25<sup>th</sup>, mayors around Puget Sound were on the verge of holding a summit on the situation when Local 3 and Local 4, representing reefnetters, voted to accept the 20 cent, 10 cent formula. This meant no gains for fishermen, but tendermen staved off an attack on their vacation time, expanded the definition of overtime, and gained raises. Additionally, the packer's offer for cannery workers contained favorable vacation time accrual and a five cent hourly raise across all job classifications.<sup>297</sup> The offer for tendermen and cannery workers was given by the packers on July 24<sup>th</sup>, and the fishermen likely looked at the broader picture of the membership and compromised. Elsewhere during July, there was 23 day tie-up on

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<sup>296</sup> Herring Fishermen Materials, Local 3 Records, box 10, folder 17; "Herring May Operate" and "Not So Happy," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker Worker*, July 1949, 3; 11; IFAWA Local 3 Executive Board January 7, 1950, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 10.

<sup>297</sup> "IFAWA Wins Gains for Season on Puget Sound," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, August 1949, 3; "Salmon Price Offer Rejected," *Seattle Times*, July 8, 1949, 12; "Puget Sound Purse Seiners Remain Ashore," *Seattle Times*, July 19, 1949, 4; "Canneries Offer Wage Increase," *Seattle Times*, July 24, 1949, 10; "Fish Workers Accept Contract," *Seattle Times*, July 26, 1949, 7; July 25, 1949 Special Salmon Meeting, Tacoma, Local 3 Records, box 7, folder 24; Telegrams, July 18, Local 3 Records, box 10, folder 18.

the Columbia River and a short joint strike by the Alaska Fishermen's Union and the Cordova District Fishermen's Union against the Alaska Salmon Industry.<sup>298</sup>

As the summer Puget Sound salmon season began to wind down in early September, negotiations for fall began in earnest. The packers wanted floor prices of 8 cents for chum salmon and 15 cents for silvers, with some offering a verbal promise to set opening prices two cents higher than the floor. The prior year, they had agreed to 18 cents for chums and 23 cents for silvers, and the union refused to accept a decrease of more than 22%. In turn, the packers rejected a union proposal that would put canned salmon and fresh salmon prices on separate tracks. Companies that operated in both markets, like the Washington Fish and Oyster Co., Whiz Fish Co., and the Fishermen's Packing Corporation insisted that the price be uniform and that they retain decision-making over how to process and sell the fish they bought. To pressure the union, they leveraged a declining price for canned salmon and the devaluation of Canadian currency, which made imports from British Columbia cheaper. They also claimed that Puget Sound canneries could continue to function in the case of a strike by processing Alaskan fish from large freezer ships and taking on product from Southeast Alaska, where no canneries were operational for the season.<sup>299</sup> By October 3<sup>rd</sup>, it was clear that the packers would not make a new offer, and Local 3 began strike preparations. Emergency meetings were held that night and a strike notification went out to all members the next day. A plan was made to completely shut down the operations of Puget Sound canneries by preventing any tender or fishing boat from

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<sup>298</sup> "Fishermen's Strike Spreads in Alaska," *Seattle Times*, July 1, 1949, 4; "Fishermen Reject Packer's Offer," *Seattle Times*, July 3, 1949, 14; "Columbia River Fishermen Win 17 ½ For Chinooks" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, August 1949, 11.

<sup>299</sup> JN Planich, Fishermen's Packing Corporation to IFAWA Local 3, September 30, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 16

unloading. Picket committees were formed in Seattle, Tacoma, Gig Harbor, Everett, Anacortes and Bellingham, and deployed at 4am on October 5<sup>th</sup>.<sup>300</sup>

It was the first time IFAWA fishermen had launched an all-out strike, what they called a strike on an “industrial basis.”<sup>301</sup> The strategy of attempting to prevent the delivery of any fish was also a new one. As the pickets began, Jurich asked members of the Alaska Fishermen’s Union to not deliver to Puget Sound ports and contacted British Columbia fishermen, who had consolidated in the United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union (UFAWU). Now, the failure to build a cross-border union came back to haunt Local 3. The idea of unification had been discussed from time to time, including at the 1948 Convention, but was always preempted by more pressing concerns.<sup>302</sup> The short shipping distance and an exchange rate that favored American businesses made Canadian fish most serious threat to the strike. Had UFAWU and IFAWA been united, Canadian fishermen may have been able to extend a short strike that they had held in September until the Puget Sound negotiations were settled.

Despite the looming threat of imports breaking the strike, the pickets met early success and the strike was observed by the over 2,000 members of Local 3. This idled 200 purse seine boats along with gillnet boats and other salmon-catching vessels.<sup>303</sup> The adhesion to the strike was remarkable given that it meant risking an entire season of work. Additionally, no strike benefits were paid unless a member pled hardship in front of a review board. Fishermen were strongly asked not to seek out other employment during the strike, and would have 10% of their

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<sup>300</sup> Recommendation from the Negotiating Committee to the Special Meeting of October 3<sup>rd</sup>, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 16; Local 3 Emergency Meeting, October 3, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 16; Robert Cummings to all Members, October 4, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 16; Recommendations of Strike Committee Local 3, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 16.

<sup>301</sup> Secretary Treasurer Report to Executive Board and Strike Committee, October 17, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 16.

<sup>302</sup> Ninth Convention IFAWA, January 20-23, 1948, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 24.

<sup>303</sup> Citizens of Anacortes, Pamphlet, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 16; “Sound Salmon Fishermen Will Strike Tomorrow” *Seattle Times*, October 4, 1949, 1.

earnings fined after the strike if they failed to appear before a review board to justify their choice. Notions of solidarity and the hope that a short-term loss would mean long-term income gains were important, but the heavy penalties established by the union likely played a role. Failure to do picket line duty was a \$50 fine, and various fines were established for other failures to comply with union orders. For example, a boat that failed to send a representative to a mandatory emergency meeting was prevented from fishing for two days if and when operations resumed and had to appear before a trial committee.<sup>304</sup> At the time, average yearly income for American workers was only two or three thousand dollars, meaning \$50 meant over a week's worth of income and compounded the income losses from being on strike.<sup>305</sup> Fishermen earned much of their yearly income during the short seasons, meaning a strike was even more difficult than it was for hourly workers. Outright opposition to the strike, like one member that accosted a picket line and accused the leadership of being communists, meant likely expulsion from the union.<sup>306</sup> Expulsion barred a fisherman from delivering to any cannery that had closed shop agreement with Local 3 or being cleared to work on any union boat. These tough penalties make it difficult to gauge how many members observed the strike because of union loyalty and how many decided that it was easier to do so than face steep fines and the loss of access to fishing jobs. On the other hand, during the July dispute over 1,000 members directly voted on a contract offer, and in the midst of the fall strike, more than 500 members voted on the content of the proposal that the union would make during a bargaining session.<sup>307</sup> That a full quarter of a union would participate in crafting a bargaining proposal – which even if accepted by the

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<sup>304</sup> To all Crew Members, November 2, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 16; Policy Committee, October 5, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 16; To All Members October 4, 1949, Robert Cummings, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 16.

<sup>305</sup> US Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census, "Current Population Reports: Consumer Income," (1951), <<http://www2.census.gov/prod2/popscan/p60-007.pdf>>.

<sup>306</sup> Robert Cummings to Ben Brockman, October 11, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 16

<sup>307</sup> Jurich telegram, Local 3 Records, box 10, folder 18; "Seiners to Be Freed If Cannery Agree on Prices," *Seattle Times*, October 19, 1949, 9.

packers could be overturned in a contract vote – indicates a high level of participation, democracy and member investment in the union.

On October 10<sup>th</sup>, the packers offered 20 cents for silvers and 10 cents for chums, but were again voted down by the membership.<sup>308</sup> The primary message of the workers was simple: “We strike only for a living wage. We fishermen are the best conservationists, because we want to protect our source of livelihood. The high price you pay for salmon is due to profiteering by packers and middlemen.” As the strike gathered steam after October 5<sup>th</sup>, they increasingly sought to expand their message beyond prices and make it an action against the misclassification of fishermen and the importation of cheap foreign fish.<sup>309</sup> Local 3 Secretary-Treasurer Bob Cummings stated in an October 17<sup>th</sup> interview that “We’ve got two objectives in mind right now. First, of course, is to get a decent contract and get the boats out fishing. All we are asking is a decent wage so we can make a living. The second objective is to fight with every weapon at hand against the importation of Canadian fish.”<sup>310</sup> They were careful to express their solidarity with Canadian fishermen, who received only a fraction of the profit made by the packers, but were vitriolic in their opposition to imports.

Beginning on October 15<sup>th</sup>, the union began to settle with small fresh fish dealers and smaller, independent processing facilities that normally did not buy from purse seine vessels. This allowed gillnetters to return to work, receiving 14.5 cents for chums and 20.5 cents for silvers. Local 3 pledged to dispatch fishermen for any company that agreed to the same price. They also invoked a clause in the previous contract about prior warning of cannery shutdowns, promising to lift pickets on a plant if the company legally promised to cease operations for the

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<sup>308</sup> “Purse Seiners Reject New Offer,” *Seattle Times*, October 12, 1949, 8.

<sup>309</sup> Transcript, Reports from Labor, October 17, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 16

<sup>310</sup> *Reports From Labor*, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1949, Jerry Tyler Papers.

duration of the season.<sup>311</sup> The reopening of small facilities created an option to divert Alaskan and Canadian fish if such product was brought to the Sound. This was particularly important because the threat of injunctions forced Local 3 to back off its attempt to block all deliveries. At an October 17<sup>th</sup> meeting, Local 3 Secretary-Treasurer Bob Cummings noted that “We can’t picket fish. The fish cannot be declared unfair unless it is caught or processed by scab workers behind our picket lines. No fish that has yet come in can be declared unfair or ‘hot.’” The union re-framed its pickets as informational attempts to convince cannery workers not to process fish, and under injunction agreed not to block any deliveries of fish caught outside the Sound.<sup>312</sup> Union leaders claimed there was widespread sympathy among AFL cannery workers. This was borne out in Anacortes, where AFL workers finished processing frozen salmon from Alaska delivered before the strike and then walked off the job.<sup>313</sup>

Beginning on October 20<sup>th</sup>, the united front of packers began to crumble. More and larger companies began to accept the price offered by the union, and the rate of such cave-ins accelerated.<sup>314</sup> On the 25<sup>th</sup>, some of the biggest packers offered a deal. They agreed to the two-track system, with 10 per pound paid for chums that would be canned, 12 cents for chum that would be sold fresh, and 20 cents across the board for silvers. By now, the runs of silvers had declined to a point where the latter offer was largely moot.<sup>315</sup> The offer was rejected and the union held strong to its demand for 14 cents for chums. Meanwhile, an agreement covering all fresh fish dealers was reached at this price. This returned 25 boats to work, adding to the 50 that had already been cleared to fish for smaller dealers and canneries.<sup>316</sup> By early November, only

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<sup>311</sup> JN Plancich to Local 3, October 20, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 16; Secretary Treasurer Report Executive Board and Strike Committee, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 16, page 3.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 2-3

<sup>313</sup> Reports from Labor, October 17, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 16, page 3.

<sup>314</sup> Agreements, Local 3 Records, box 10, folder 40.

<sup>315</sup> Report to the Membership, October 25, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 11, folder 16.

<sup>316</sup> “Fresh Fish Pact Reached,” *Seattle Times*, October 27, 1949, 2.

some big packers including Whiz Fish Co., Washington Fish and Oyster Co., Sebastian-Stuart Fish Co., and Farwest still refused to settle. Other major companies like Booth Fisheries, and San Juan Fishing & Packing Co. had already capitulated.<sup>317</sup> For many in Local 3, the strike continued until the scheduled end of the season on November 20<sup>th</sup>, although the intensity of picketing and other activities subsided after November 1<sup>st</sup>.

All in all, the strike was a victory. The fishery workers were not unnerved by the possibility that their strike and their union could be broken by imports or companies that would rather lose a season's worth of profits than capitulate. The structure of salmon purse seining on the Puget Sound, in which most boats were owned by third parties and not fishermen or packers, insulated Local 3 from anti-trust threats but the specter of Taft-Hartley hung in the background. Despite this, IFAWA broke any semblance of unity among the packers. Of equal importance, the strike cemented unity within Local 3 between fishermen and cannery workers, and between fishermen in different gears. This shared struggle and experience was imperative if the union was to withstand the many challenges it faced. Around this time, Local 3 was at the height of its membership with 2,269 total members, up from around 1,700 in 1946.<sup>318</sup>

At other points in the history of IFAWA, the Local 3 strike would have been the most important event to take place on the Coast. However, there was no time to savor the victory. The December 1949 Conference of Local 3 learned that the National CIO was moving to expel IFAWA and barely discussed the strike.<sup>319</sup> Though angered by the CIO's actions, many felt that it was better to stay inside the federation and fight the charges than leave and be exposed to

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<sup>317</sup> George Hecker, Booth Fisheries Corp to Seine Boat Frisco and Owners, October 29, 1949, Local 3 Records, box 10, folder 40; San Juan Fishing & Packing Co. to Boat Captains, October 21<sup>st</sup>, 1949, box 11, folder 16.

<sup>318</sup> Local 3 Executive Board January 7, 1950, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 10; United Fishermen's Union Conference, December. 20- 21, 1945, Local 3 Records, box 4, folder 37.

<sup>319</sup> Statement of Delegates of IFAWA at National CIO Convention, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 6, page 3; Local 3 Conference December 15-17, 1949 Seattle, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 10.

raiding by other CIO unions. The threat of raiding brought the merger proposal to the fore once again. The deadline for internal referendums on amalgamation with the Longshore and Warehouse Union was repeatedly extended and it was finally settled that ballots would be completed by the January 1950 Convention. Several locals were plagued by low participation. In Local 3 just 500 members turned in ballots and an additional round of voting only increased the total vote in the Local to 838.<sup>320</sup> This contrasted with the high levels of participation in strike meetings and votes.

The Convention in 1950 came at an extremely tough time for the union. The Circuit Court of Appeals ruled on the Local 36 case and set a strong precedent against any strike, picket or boycott activity by fishermen. The only remaining option was to appeal to the Supreme Court and argue that the Fishermen's Collective Marketing Act of 1934 protected associational rights. It was not a particularly good option; the Act concerned cooperatives and did not have any explicit language related to unionism. It was pursued nonetheless.<sup>321</sup> The case continued to drain the union's finances, and IFAWA was now \$12,000 in debt over the case. Funding was withdrawn from the Westward Areas Fisheries Council and a staff position in Northern California eliminated.<sup>322</sup> Frustration ran high at the Convention, especially over the question of the merger. The membership of several small locals and the Columbia River Fishermen's Protective Union had voted internally against the idea. The opposition was known before the gathering, so the International leadership carefully crafted a proposal that called for increased cooperation with the ILWU and left the door open to a merger, but did not effectuate one.<sup>323</sup> The Alaska Fishermen's Union was increasingly discontented and clashed with delegates from other

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<sup>320</sup> IFAWA Local 3 Executive Board January 7, 1950, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 10.

<sup>321</sup> "'We Have Only Begun to Fight the Anti-Trust Case,'" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, October 1949, 1.

<sup>322</sup> Eleventh IFAWA Convention, 1950, January 28, Afternoon Session, Local 3 Records, box 11, unfolded.

<sup>323</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

affiliates.<sup>324</sup> Tensions on the floor reached a boiling point when Matt Batinovich, the original President of the Federated Fishermen's Council, launched an attack on Kibre and Jurich for dereliction of duty. He claimed that they had prioritized good relations with packers like Nick Bez over worker interests, and had restrained a crew from engaging in a work stoppage.<sup>325</sup> Nevertheless, even Batinovich ardently opposed the National CIO and returned to the fold to strategize about the looming expulsion.<sup>326</sup>

Not long after the Convention, Oscar Anderson of the Alaska Fishermen's Union resigned as IFAWA Vice-President and encouraged his union to leave the International. Abe Lehto, a pro-IFAWA member of the Alaska Fishermen's Union, replaced him as International Vice-President.<sup>327</sup> With a trial of the union by the National CIO scheduled for late May, the International leadership renewed their efforts to merge with the ILWU, which was also pushed out of the CIO.<sup>328</sup> The trial ended as expected with IFAWA's expulsion.<sup>329</sup> Immediately afterwards, a unanimous vote was taken by the Executive Board to merge with the ILWU under the resolution passed at the January 1950 convention. Meanwhile, elements in the Alaska Fishermen's Union moved for an internal referendum on disaffiliation.

The merger came at a fortuitous time. The Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers, similarly expelled from the CIO, had already joined the ILWU. This put Local 46 members, who composed half the Bristol Bay cannery workforce, under the same roof as the non-resident cannery workers now in ILWU Local 7-C.<sup>330</sup> The two locals signed a pact to not

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<sup>324</sup> Ibid., January 27<sup>th</sup> Afternoon Session, Discussion of Resolution #28.

<sup>325</sup> Ibid., 4-6.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid., 6-8

<sup>327</sup> IFAWA Executive Board April 4-5, 1950, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 13; Policy Statement on Alaska by IFAWA Executive Board., In: IFAWA Executive Board April 4-5, 1950, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 13.

<sup>328</sup> Jurich to Affiliates, May 2, 1950, Local 3, May 25<sup>th</sup>, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 13.

<sup>329</sup> Preliminary Report on CIO Trial of IFAWA, Paul Pinsky, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 13.

<sup>330</sup> "Far North Unionists Plan 1950 Wage Boost Campaign," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, December 1949, 9.

settle until both had agreeable contract offers and Local 46 President Joe Nashoalook travelled to Seattle on May 3<sup>rd</sup> to negotiate alongside Local 7-C leaders like Ernesto Mangaoang.<sup>331</sup> After the Alaska Salmon Industry refused to negotiate with or recognize Local 7-C and attempted to sign a contract with the National CIO's Packinghouse union, 7-C refused to dispatch members to Alaska and on May 10<sup>th</sup> set up picket lines at facilities owned by ASI companies around Puget Sound.<sup>332</sup> Local 46, Local 3 and the pro-IFAWA faction of the Alaska Fishermen's Union backed the action and attended the Puget Sound pickets.<sup>333</sup> International Secretary-Treasurer Jeff Kibre enthusiastically declared "Unity of resident and nonresident on a common beef – with united support! For the first time we have mobilized the fighting strength of the organizations that have a stake in Alaska, and what has happened – Industry is screaming!" He continued, arguing that "In this struggle is contained a program for Alaska; victory in this beef is going to be the signal to the people in the Territory, and the rank and file of AFU to get behind the correct program."<sup>334</sup> In a bizarre incident, Nashoalook was deceived into signing what he believed to be a mutual aid pact with the AFU. Instead, it was a pledge to align Local 46 with the AFU splitters, and the alleged defection of Nashoalook made headlines across Seattle before he could disavow the rumor.<sup>335</sup> Picketing continued until May 30<sup>th</sup> when the ASI filed a successful injunction arguing Local 7-C was conducting a secondary boycott by preventing shipments of cannery

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<sup>331</sup> "IFAWA Convention Takes Bearing on Fishing Industry," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, January 1950, 1; *Reports from Labor*, May 18, 1950, Jerry Tyler Papers; IFAWA Executive Board, April 4-5, 1950, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 13, page 10.

Special Broadcast June 8, Jerry Tyler Papers, "June 5-8, 1950, AFAWA" folder.

<sup>332</sup> "Hosie Calls Meeting on Salmon Strike," *Seattle Times*, May 31, 1950, 8.

<sup>333</sup> *Reports from Labor*, May 11<sup>th</sup>, Jerry Tyler Papers, <[http://depts.washington.edu/dock/Mangaoang\\_Ernesto.shtml](http://depts.washington.edu/dock/Mangaoang_Ernesto.shtml)> "Picket ASI in Wash.," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, May 1950, 7; *Reports from Labor*, May 25, Jerry Tyler Papers.

<sup>334</sup> IFAWA Executive Board, May 25, 1950, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 13, page 4

<sup>335</sup> *Reports from Labor*, May 11<sup>th</sup>, Jerry Tyler Papers; "Labor Troubles Bring Eskimo to Seattle," *Seattle Times*, May 11, 1950, 14; "Union Demands Eskimo Leader Return North," *Seattle Times*, May 18, 1950, 57.

equipment from leaving Puget Sound.<sup>336</sup> Taft-Hartley severely limited secondary boycotts, in which a third-party to a labor dispute – shipping vessels in this case – is targeted in order to exert pressure on the employer.

The limits of Taft-Hartley and the intransigence of the Alaska Salmon Industry were overcome by a precisely coordinated show of solidarity. Around May 25<sup>th</sup>, Local 3 went on strike and voted 3-1 to not sign a contract with the ASI covering until the non-resident and resident cannery workers had settled.<sup>337</sup> On May 30<sup>th</sup>, joint conference of the three ILWU units – Local 3, Local 46 and Local 7-C – was held and Nashoalook was elected its chair and representative to the ASI.<sup>338</sup> Out of this committee came a militant united front of the three fishing industry units of the ILWU, and their demand for joint negotiations and settlement with the ASI for all gained the support of five additional unions that represented smaller groups workers.<sup>339</sup> An IFAWA statement declared that “the time has now come to re-establish on the West Coast the same powerful maritime unity which enabled fishermen, longshoremen, seamen and allied workers to mobilize their ranks in the 1930’s and wrest from the employers decent wages and conditions.”<sup>340</sup> Adding to the pressure, ILWU longshore members in Alaska pledged not to unload any cannery equipment until the strike was over.<sup>341</sup> Local 46 was prepared to send members to Puget Sound to picket if Local 7-C was prevented from doing so by an injunction. The ILWU also carried out solidarity and secondary actions by picketing canneries in

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<sup>336</sup> “ILWU Local Union 7C Places Pickets at Cannery Installations as NLRB Seeks Two Injunctions,” *Alaska Weekly*, May 29, 1950 page 1.

<sup>337</sup> *Reports From Labor*, May 25 & 30, 1950, Jerry Tyler Papers; “Alaska Salmon Seiners Win \$100 Gain Per Man,” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, June 1950, 20; “Salmon Picket Injunction Opens,” *Seattle Times*, May 27, 1950, 2; It is unclear what day ASI employees in Local 3 went on strike.

<sup>338</sup> *Reports from Labor* May 25, 1950, Jerry Tyler Papers.

<sup>339</sup> “Hosie Calls Meeting on Salmon Strike,” *Seattle Times*, May 31, 1950, 8.

<sup>340</sup> *Reports From Labor*, May 30, 1950, Jerry Tyler Papers.

<sup>341</sup> IFAWA Executive Board, May 25, 1950, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 13; *Reports from Labor*, June 6, 1950, Jerry Tyler Papers

Bellingham and the Columbia River that were owned by ASI companies.<sup>342</sup> Meanwhile, IFAWA held strong against a threat by the employers to fire the 160 members of Local 3 that worked for the ASI if a contract was not immediately signed.<sup>343</sup>

The kind of action-oriented solidarity and cross-shop joint action has rarely been seen in the American labor movement. Faced with overwhelming unity and the paralysis of its operations, the Alaska Salmon Industry capitulated just days after the injunction against Local 7-C pickets. Cannery worker contracts were signed on the fifth of June and Local 3 fishermen ratified a contract three days later with a \$100 pay increase.<sup>344</sup> Jerry Tyler, labor activist and Seattle radio host concluded that “when the ILWU, with its record of fighting and winning for the people of Hawaii, who got the same kind of a going over from the Big Five in the Islands as Joe’s people got from the Alaska Salmon Industry,” entered the picture, workers flocked to it and won the strike.<sup>345</sup>

For Local 46, the gains were nothing short of incredible. At long last, they were given full pay equity with nonresident workers. They also gained the right to overtime pay, which had previously been denied because all hours worked were counted toward the fulfillment of the guaranteed seasonal income established in contracts, no matter how long the shift or the total hours worked in a week. In 1949, the ASI had hired resident workers for 15 minute shifts during pre-season, and then laid them off once the season began in favor of nonresident workers, leaving them with almost no pay. The new collective bargaining agreement gave a minimum of two hours worth of pay per shift and raised the guaranteed seasonal minimum by \$100-150,

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<sup>342</sup> “Two Unions Support ILWU in Fish Tieup,” *Seattle Times*, May 25, 1950, 8.

<sup>343</sup> Deposition of Robert Cummings, in *Pacific American Fisheries Inc vs. IFAWA, Local 3 Records*, box 14, folder 1; District Court US, Western Division of Washington, Northern Division, June 8, 1950, Local 3 Records, box 14, folder 1.

<sup>344</sup> “Victory Meeting,” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, July 1950, page 15; “Alaska Salmon Seiners Win \$100 Gain Per Man,” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, June 1950, 20.

<sup>345</sup> *Reports from Labor*, June 6, 1950, Jerry Tyler Papers

depending upon classification. It also ensured that resident workers got equal opportunity for work and promised 40 hours of pre-season work that would not count toward their seasonal guaranteed earnings.<sup>346</sup> The effectiveness of the united front in achieving these gains makes clear why Taft-Hartley criminalized secondary boycotts and other industrial actions that concretely express support for workers in another shop.

Once again, IFAWA was reaching the heights of its power and success just as the earth was eroding beneath its feet. In a crushing bit of irony, the extended time that Nashoalook had to spend negotiating in Seattle allowed the National CIO to set up a splinter ‘Industrial Union Local 46’. It was a hollow ploy that installed the owner of a store as the head of the new local, but nevertheless forced IFAWA to seek a court order halting negotiations between the National CIO’s Local 46 and the Alaska Salmon Industry.<sup>347</sup> Ultimately, the National CIO and IFAWA were fighting over a rank and file that lost interest.<sup>348</sup> The Bering Sea Fishermen’s Union (BSFU), a branch of the Alaska Fishermen’s Union made up of mostly Native residents, utilized the chaotic situation inside the AFU to leave it after years of strained relationships with non-resident fishermen.<sup>349</sup> The Bearing Sea Fishermen’s Union affiliated with the AFL and waged a vicious fight for recognition in 1951, striking the first part of the summer season. The resident cannery workers, who came from the same communities and families as the BSFU members, petitioned for AFL affiliation and joined the strike. It ended in early July with a 25 cent per hour

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<sup>346</sup> Ibid.; “Waterfront Solidarity Wins Smashing Gains For Alaska,” *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, June 1950, 3.

<sup>347</sup> “Union Charter May Rekindle Alaska Labor Troubles,” *Seattle Times*, June 7, 1950, 12; “Bristol Bay Union Dispute Goes to Court,” *Seattle Times*, July 14, 1950; “Bristol Bay Cannery Work Faces Delay,” *Alaska Weekly*, June 29, 1951, 1.

<sup>348</sup> “Long Salmon-Cannery Strike in Bristol Bay Area Settled,” *Alaska Weekly*, July 8, 1951, 1.

<sup>349</sup> Hébert, “Wild Dreams,” 202; “Bristol Bay Priest Predicts Defeat for ‘Reds’ In Area,” *Alaska Weekly*, May 23, 1952, 5; “Fish Packers File Charges Bristol Bay Charges,” *Alaska Weekly*, June 8, 1951, 1.

wage increase for resident cannery workers.<sup>350</sup> The same kind of solidarity that won the 1950 strike now undermined IFAWA's presence when fisherman-cannery worker solidarity meant leaving Local 46.<sup>351</sup>

IFAWA had the potential to replicate the kind of social, economic and political transformation initiated by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union in Hawaii, especially if it had been able to maintain control of the sometimes domineering non-resident leadership of the Alaska Fishermen's Union. Like the pre-statehood Hawaiian sugarcane and agricultural workers that organized under the banner of the ILWU, fishermen and cannery workers occupied a strategic position in the territorial economy. Alaska was dominated politically and economically by big business, particularly companies like those in the ASI that were based in Seattle and took advantage of the territorial status of Alaska to make easy profits.<sup>352</sup> In Hawaii, the ILWU's democratic, people of color led unionism unseated the domination of the island by a 'Big Five' group of corporations and their allies in the white Republican Party machine.<sup>353</sup> However, IFAWA always had to answer to the AFU, which comprised a third to a half of its membership, and was crippled by the withdrawal of a large section of the non-resident union following the ILWU merger.

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<sup>350</sup> "Long Salmon-Cannery Strike in Bristol Bay Area Settled," *Alaska Weekly*, July 8, 1951, 1; Showing successorship of BSFU-AFL to Local 46: "Trust Fund Goes to Work," *The Beacon of Dillingham*, January 29, 1952, 1.

<sup>351</sup> "Union Cauldron Comes to Boil," *The Beacon of Dillingham*, February 27, 1952, 2; For a first-hand but very factually flawed account, see: Jonathan Hughes, "The Great Strike at Nushagak Station, 1951: Institutional Gridlock," *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 42, No. 1 (1982); Hébert, "Wild Dreams," 203.

<sup>352</sup> Ivan Ascott, "The Alaska Statehood Act Does Not Guarantee Alaska Ninety Percent of the Revenue from Mineral Leases on Federal Lands in Alaska," *Seattle University Law Review* 27 (2004): 1008-1010.

<sup>353</sup> Alexander Morrow, "Hawaii," In *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-class History*, Eric Arnesen, Ed., 573-5; George Cooper and Gavan Daws, *Land and Power in Hawaii* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1990); Alaska is different from Hawaii in that Governor Gruening and non-voting US Congressional representative Dimond were liberal Democrats. However, their power was repeatedly sidelined by the ASI and other big economic interests, and federal officials. See, for e.g.: Ergenst Gruening, "Let Us Now End American Colonialism," <<http://www.alaska.edu/creatingalaska/-convention/speeches-to-the-conventio/opening-session-speeches/gruening/>>

The union was in peril and launched several last ditch efforts. The Supreme Court denied Local 36 a hearing, and the anti-trust attack expanded with a grand jury investigation of Local 33, the other main IFAWA unit in Southern California.<sup>354</sup> Local 33 gained some reprieve when its trial was delayed until June 1951, giving IFAWA time to integrate into the ILWU and, more importantly, make structural changes that would stave off further anti-trust suits.<sup>355</sup> A Fishermen and Allied Workers Division (FAWD) was set up in the ILWU to replace IFAWA, and an aggressive push was made to gain contract clauses that recognized fishermen as direct employees.<sup>356</sup> Additionally, the union filed a counter-suit alleging monopoly practices and price collusion by packers, and tried to use the consolidated structure of the Fishermen and Allied Workers Division to finally institute coastwise bargaining.<sup>357</sup> As occurred throughout the history of fishermen's union, this was preempted by more pressing concerns. Local 3 was in an intense battle with the National CIO over Washington State cannery workers, and Southern California was the target of renewed raiding by the AFL Seafarer's Union.<sup>358</sup> Jerry Tyler, the former Secretary of the Seattle Industrial Union Council, was hired to coordinate a campaign to win cannery worker representation elections from Blaine to the Columbia River. He was able to turn the tide in Bellingham and La Conner, where workers had initially opted for the National CIO, and won another election covering most canneries in Anacortes and Blain despite spending just \$3,000 in comparison the National CIO's \$12,000.<sup>359</sup> However, the ILWU fishermen lost an election to represent cannery workers at plants owned Pacific American Fisheries, one of the

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<sup>354</sup> "Anti-Trust Indictment In San Pedro Aids Canneries" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, July 1950, 3.

<sup>355</sup> "Anti-Trust Trial Set," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, October 1950, page 7.

<sup>356</sup> "'New Deal' Offers Benefits To Small Boat Fishermen," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, September 1950, 19.

<sup>357</sup> "Union Exposes Real Price-Fixers in Fish Industry," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, November 1950, 1; "Caucus to Mobilize ILWU Strength in Fishing Industry," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, December 1950, 1.

<sup>358</sup> Local 3-3 Conference, January 3-4, 1951, box 13, folder 31.

<sup>359</sup> Local 3 Executive Board, September 15, 1951, Local 3 Records, box 13, folder 31.

largest packers on the Sound.<sup>360</sup> In February 1951, the fishermen's union was routed 789-291 in an election to represent Columbia River cannery workers.<sup>361</sup> The Fishermen and Allied Workers Division (FAWD) continued to fight for control of the Alaska Fishermen's Union and convened a meeting of 300 Seattle members voted in October 1950 to join the ILWU. A smaller number of AFU members in San Francisco supported the ILWU but there was no support among the membership in Bellingham, the headquarters of the Alaska Fishermen.<sup>362</sup>

Meanwhile, Local 3 developed another creative job action when negotiations stalled, reversing preparations of gear and removing painstakingly loaded nets from boats.<sup>363</sup> Isolated success was made on toward contractually enshrining an employer-employee relationship by drag boat fishermen in San Francisco, who went on strike in February 1951 demanding classification as piece-rate workers.<sup>364</sup> The packers reversed an initial promise to jointly ask for a favorable legal opinion on the new contract, and instead asked a US Federal Court to bar any such language.<sup>365</sup> The setbacks were mounting for the ex-International Fishermen and Allied Workers. Publication of the *Fishermen and Allied Worker* ceased in March 1951, and as membership shrank the decision was made to gradually eliminate the Fishermen and Allied Workers Division and replace it with a caucus.<sup>366</sup> The initial plan to shift staffing of the Division to Jeff Kibre in San Francisco, with Jurich staying on in a reduced role as Chairman, was scrapped and Kibre became the ILWU representative in Washington, D.C. He held position until

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<sup>360</sup> Fishermen and Allied Workers Division Executive Board, August 11, 1951, Local 3 Records, box 13, folder 31.

<sup>361</sup> "Company Unionism Wins in Columbia River Poll." *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, February 1951.

<sup>362</sup> "Alaska Fishermen's Union Receives ILWU Charter," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, October 1950, 9.

<sup>363</sup> Local 3 Executive Board, December 1, 1951, Local 3 Records, box 13, folder 31, page 3

<sup>364</sup> "San Francisco Dragboat Men Winning Fight For 'New Deal,'" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, January 1951, 5; "Militant Dragboat Men Win Strike in San Francisco," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, February 1951, pages 1 & 12.

<sup>365</sup> "SF Dragboat Men Fight Determined Campaign to Consolidate Victory," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, March 1951, 9.

<sup>366</sup> Local 3, April 14, 1951, Local 3 Records, box 13, folder 31, pages 5-6.

his death in 1967.<sup>367</sup> Membership in the Fishermen and Allied Workers Division remained at 16,000, but heavy losses among the ex-IFAWA were masked by the absorption of FTA fish cannery locals.<sup>368</sup> A pitched internal battle took place within the Columbia River Fishermen's Protective Union in 1950, as union leadership decided to join the ILWU despite a majority 'no' vote in an internal referendum. Both the Columbia River Packers Association and the National CIO filed injunctions to force a representation election, which the CRFPU refused to do until its executive board was threatened with criminal proceedings.<sup>369</sup> It held the mandated election, but never revealed the results and burned the ballots before holding another union-administered election in July.<sup>370</sup> A positive result temporarily kept it in the ILWU, but in 1951 the CRFPU decided to go independent.<sup>371</sup>

The remnants of IFAWA in the ILWU experienced a slow decline after the losses of 1951 removed its ability to convert a coastwise critical mass of workers into power at the bargaining table and on the picket line. On the Puget Sound, Local 3 attempted to obtain direct employment clauses in their 1952 negotiations with the Puget Sound packers and the Alaska Salmon Industry. Both refused but continued to negotiate price agreements with the union.<sup>372</sup> In the place of a division, all ILWU fishermen became part of a coastwise Local 3, and Puget Sound became Local 3-3. The area was the strongest part of the new mega-local but was still forced to accept major concession in 1953 negotiations.<sup>373</sup> In 1954, the Federal Trade Commission issued an order blocking Local 3-3 from negotiating price agreements, though the

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<sup>367</sup> Jeff Kibre to Norman Leonard, George Anderson and Jurich, June 25, 1965, Local 3 Records, box 13, folder 19. Francis Gannon, *Biographical Dictionary of the Left Vol 3* (Boston: Western Islands, 1969), 60.

<sup>368</sup> ILWU Executive Board October 10-11, 1950. Seattle, Local 3 Records, box 12, folder 13

<sup>369</sup> "CRFPU Fights to Save Union From Cannery's Disruption," *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, July 1950, 10.

<sup>370</sup> "CRFPU Votes 3-1 For ILWU" *International Fishermen and Allied Worker*, August 1950, 9.

<sup>371</sup> "CRPU Goes Independent" *Clatskanie Chief*, January 11, 1952.

<sup>372</sup> Puget Sound Contract Committee and Executive Board, April 8, 1952, Local 3 Records, box 13, folder 41; J. Steele Culberston, ASI, to Local 3-3, May 28, 1952, Local 3 Records, box 14, folder 1.

<sup>373</sup> Puget Sound Negotiating Committee for Fall Season 1953, Local 3 Records, box 15, folder 48.

union was able to evade compliance for at least a year.<sup>374</sup> A strong cadre of leadership forged in the 1949 strike remained in place, and Jurich returned as Secretary-Treasurer in 1955 after a few years in a reduced role.<sup>375</sup> Although Local 3-3 could no longer negotiate over prices, it continued to negotiate with vessel owners over working conditions. The Local also continued to represent tendermen and cannery workers.<sup>376</sup> Meanwhile, fishermen were beginning to be squeezed from both ends by legal and environmental factors. In 1957, Puget Sound salmon fishing was restricted to three days a week, and the next year the number of boats fishing salmon declined from 39 to 15.<sup>377</sup> Members were now updated by a one-page, double sided monthly mimeographed newsletter, a far cry from the old union paper. In 1958, Puget Sound purse seiners launched a brief strike. It failed to rekindle fishery worker unionism on the Sound.<sup>378</sup> A few years later, the Boldt decision handed half of the Puget Sound catch back to Indian peoples.

While British Columbia had taken longer to consolidate into an industrial union, the Canadian United Fishermen and Allied Workers Union (UFAWU) was able to outlive its American counterpart. They too struggled with red baiting and anti-trust laws, and spent two decades outside the main federation of Canadian unions. However, UFAWU stayed united and grew from 4,000 to 7,000 members during the 1950s. When the packers refused to negotiate in 1959, UFAWU launched a twelve day general strike of all fishing and cannery members. The pressure exerted during the general strike and the several years of industrial conflict that led up to it – twenty-five strikes occurred between 1945 and 1963 – forced the government to write laws which protected the collective bargaining right of fishermen, albeit weakly as ‘dependent’

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<sup>374</sup> Robert W. Graham, Bogle Bogle & Gates, to NEFCO, March 26, 1954, Local 3 Records, box 14, folder 24.

<sup>375</sup> Local 3 Executive Board, October 1, 1955, Local 3 Records, box 17, folder 15.

<sup>376</sup> JD Cooper, Alaska Packers Association, to Jurich, July 19, 1957, Local 3 Records, box 14, folder 2; SG Tarrant, Pac Am Fisheries, to Jurich July 26, 1957, Local 3 Records, box 14, folder 2; Tendermen’s Agreement, June 20, 1957, Local 3 Records, box 14, folder 3

<sup>377</sup> *Purse Line*, August 1957, Local 3 Records, box 16, folder 25; *Purse Line* June 1958.

<sup>378</sup> *Purse Line* September 1958; *Purse Line* May 1959.

contractors.<sup>379</sup> UFAWU's strategy of high stakes escalation did not end there. The most dramatic episode came in 1967, when the union refused to comply with an injunction ordering shoreworkers back to work. UFAWU's Secretary, longtime Communist Party activist and fisherman Homer Stevens, and the union's President spent a year in jail and UFAWU paid \$25,000 in fines. The membership overwhelmingly reelected its officers while they were still incarcerated.<sup>380</sup> Today, UFAWU is part of the militant Canadian Autoworkers in a division that unites it with fishermen on country's East Coast.<sup>381</sup>

Across the border, Local 3-3 was a servicing local with no organizing capacity.<sup>382</sup> It was administered existing agreements but was incapable of contract campaigns to mobilize the membership during bargaining. A broad membership continued, including salmon seine and herring fishermen in Puget Sound and Alaska, tendermen in Puget Sound, and crab fishermen and some processing boat workers in Alaska. Jurich was a competent and committed staffer, but the movement atmosphere of the 1930s and 1940s had disappeared. Over time, the constitution of the union was altered to decrease the frequency of meetings and elections.<sup>383</sup> The economic decline of the West Coast commercial fishing and canning industry, and the Puget Sound industry in particular, began in earnest with the 1966 dissolution of Pacific American Fisheries.<sup>384</sup> Raids by the Alaska Fishermen's Union and the Seafarer's Union became ever more

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<sup>379</sup> "Organization of Divided Fishers," in *Uncommon Property* Marchak, Guppy McMullan. Eds., 230-1; 27; North and Griffin, *A Ripple, A Wave*, 36-40; Benjamin Isitt, *Militant Minority: British Columbia Workers and the Rise of a New Left, 1948-1972* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 150

<sup>380</sup> Isitt, *Militant Minority*, 160-1; Charles Menzies, "Us and Them: The Prince Rupert Fishermen's Co-op and Organized Labour, 1931-1989," *Labour* 48 (2001); Stephen Hume, "He was the Best of Who We Are': Tribute to Gritty Labour Leader Homer Stevens," *Vancouver Sun*, October 19, 2002.

<sup>381</sup> CAW-TCA, "Fisheries," <<http://www.caw.ca/en/sectors-fisheries.htm>>; Ibid., "A Profile of the Membership," <[http://www.caw.ca/assets/pdf/08-Chapter\\_3.pdf](http://www.caw.ca/assets/pdf/08-Chapter_3.pdf)>

<sup>382</sup> Local 3 Executive Board, September 30, 1961, Local 3 Records, box 13, folder 3.

<sup>383</sup> NLRB Form 1080, Certificate of Union Officers, Local 3 Records, box 13, folder 11.

<sup>384</sup> Radke, *Pacific American Fisheries*, 168-70.

costly as the workforce shrunk in size.<sup>385</sup> By this time, there is no evidence of ILWU fishing units outside of Puget Sound, and Local 3-3 reverted back to being called Local 3. Jurich stayed on at the Local until retiring in 1978 or 1979. In 1984, he passed away at 83.<sup>386</sup> The union effectively died with him. A new Secretary-Treasurer took his place, but shuttered the Local office in Seattle in favor of a PO Box.<sup>387</sup> Local 3 became barely functional and failed to follow through on its end of a joint organizing project with ILWU Local 37, the former ILWU 7-C, which was undergoing a period of reform and renewal. No cannery workers were left on Puget Sound, and one of the final contracts signed by Local 3 covered a handful of caretakers and security guards at a Blaine cannery for 1980-1982.<sup>388</sup> The Local soon fell into arrears on its per capita payments to the International. In January 1982, Local 3 was unceremoniously declared defunct by ILWU Executive Board and quietly ceased to exist.<sup>389</sup> Many organizations of fishermen exist today, usually marketing associations. The Columbia River Fishermen's Protective Union, the first fishing union on the West Coast, continues to operate without a collective bargaining role but gillnetting on the River may soon be banned. A few crab fishermen in California have kept the strike alive, but they are the exception in an industry that has dramatically changed since the 1950s with ecological decline and regulatory change.<sup>390</sup>

## Conclusion

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<sup>385</sup> NLRB, Representation Election at Fishermen's Packing Corp, July 1, 1976, Local 3 Records, box 13, folder 13.

<sup>386</sup> "Joseph F. Jurich, First President of Fishermen's Union, Dies at 83," *Seattle Times*, September 29, 1984, D20.

<sup>387</sup> Ken Lane, To Whom It May Concern, September 18, 1980, Local 3 Records, box 13, folder 19.

<sup>388</sup> Puget Sound Fish Cannery Workers Agreement, January 1, 1980, Local 3 Records, box 15, folder 6.

<sup>389</sup> ILWU Executive Board January 22, 1982, Local 3 Records, box 13, folder 20

<sup>390</sup> Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen's Associations, [www.pcffa.org/](http://www.pcffa.org/); "Dungeness Crab Season Starts After Fishermen sStrike \$2.25-A-Pound Deal," *LA Times*, November 29, 2011, <[http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/money\\_co/2011/11/dungeness-crab-season-starts-after-fishermen-strike-225-a-pound-deal.html](http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/money_co/2011/11/dungeness-crab-season-starts-after-fishermen-strike-225-a-pound-deal.html)>; Corey Pein, "Fisherman's Wrath: A Campaign Targeting Gillnetters Takes Class War to the Columbia River," *Willamette Week*, June 13, 2012. <[http://www.wweek.com/portland/article-19314-fisherman%E2%80%99s\\_wrath.html](http://www.wweek.com/portland/article-19314-fisherman%E2%80%99s_wrath.html)>

Among the eleven unions expelled from the CIO, only the ILWU and the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE) survive. Bitter factionalism, union-busting, red-baiting and raids destroyed the other unions. On top of these problems, the International Fishermen and Allied Workers faced a systematic effort by the state to dismantle their union. From the very beginning of its existence, anti-trust cases attacked the associational rights of fishermen. In the post-war period the state upped the ante and criminalized union participation. The dismemberment of IFAWA was a direct outgrowth of this unrelenting utilization of the legal system to prosecute and bankrupt affiliates of the union. This was carried out in concert with the packers, and at its height the anti-trust push allowed companies to defy a union with whom they had bargained for over a decade. IFAWA did not back down and won key victories in 1949 and 1950, but the costs of the anti-trust cases and expulsion from the CIO proved too costly for the morale and finances of the union. In its short existence, IFAWA transformed the industry and made significant progress in rectifying the precarious nature of work in fishing and processing. In 1950, fishermen and shoreworkers had guarantees about their seasonal income, work and safety rules and a myriad of other contract gains. It was a far cry from the price chaos and instability of the early 1930s.

‘Precarious employment’ connotes two circumstances. The first is an employment relationship that is unstable and exploitative – seasonal, misclassified, (permanently) temporary, informal, subject to arbitrary dismissal – and the second is the precariousness of everyday existence in jobs where safety standards are nonexistent and a social safety net is nowhere to be seen. Fishermen and shoreworkers in the 1930s embodied both meanings, and IFAWA confronted these conditions head-on by through collective bargaining and political action that demanded inclusion in social programs. In partnership with community networks that stretched

from San Diego to Bristol Bay, perceptive organizing methods fitted to the idiosyncrasies of the industry united workers who had been divided by geography, ethnicity, craft and disparate employment relationships. They did so in the CIO era, which is remembered and misremembered as a pre-neoliberal heyday of regular employment and the welfare state. This essay complicates this narrative and highlights the long arc of precarious work, which has always been a reality for women, immigrant and other hyper-exploited sectors of the working class.<sup>391</sup>

By drawing on unused and rare records, I hope to give a forgotten union a place in the history of the CIO and the West Coast waterfront. Much of the attention has rightfully been on the ILWU. However, a complete portrayal of the radical and militant West Coast ports of the CIO era includes smaller but no less important groups like the National Union of Marine Cooks and Stewards and the Fishermen and Allied Workers. These overlapping communities built off each other's power, as shown by the intertwining of strikes in Southern California by an IFAWA forerunner with the 1934 longshore strike. The trajectory of the Fishermen and Allied Workers between the mid 1930s and 1951 is emblematic of the overall history of CIO, showcasing how industrial unionism reached new sectors of workers, the sacrifice by labor to win the war, and the damage done by the internal political fights of the late 1940s.

This essay also seeks to make several contributions to broader themes in labor history during the CIO era. The anti-trust cases provide an important angle on the relationship between labor and the state, especially the contrast between the cases of the late 1930s brought by the packers and the increased role take by the government beginning in 1947. The unique multiethnic and gender dynamics draw attention to the role of civil rights and gender in the vibrant labor movement of the 1940s. This essay identifies two groups who are rarely studied in

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<sup>391</sup> Dorothy Sue Cobble and Leah Vosko, "Historical Perspectives On Representing Non-Standard Workers," in: *Nonstandard Work: The Nature and Challenges of Changing Employment Arrangements*, ed. Carre, Feber, Golden and Herzenberg (Champaign, IL: Industrial Relations Research Association, 2000).

relation to class and labor, Yugoslavian immigrants and Alaska Natives, as the bedrock of IFAWA. The involvement of Alaska Natives led the union to fight for pay equity as a civil right, in spite of the recurring limits imposed by the mostly non-resident Alaska Fishermen's Union. It is interesting to note that the only evidence I can find of IFAWA ending pay inequality for women was also in Bristol Bay. The alliance of resident Alaska Native and non-resident Asian-American cannery workers merits attention as an example of multiracial unionism with anti-colonial implications. IFAWA also provides another look at the Communist Party's complex role in labor organizing. Party organizers introduced industrial unionism and transformed halting collective action along craft into a sustainable coastwise organization. This essay demonstrates how leftist leadership remained connected with the rank and file through a common interest in transnational solidarity and close to the intersection of material and ideological concerns. Finally, the experiences of IFAWA and its forerunners challenge notions of fishermen as individualistic pioneers or businessmen separate from the working class.

Research for this piece began shortly after misclassified port truckers in Seattle led a groundbreaking two week wildcat strike supported by the Teamsters and the Change to Win federation, and concluded shortly before "independent" port truckers in LA/Long Beach signed a landmark contract with Toll Group. Despite these important campaigns, misclassified workers remain outside of the labor movement and are rarely on the agenda of organized labor. Meanwhile, unions are struggling to find the tools to organize the unorganized in an era in which precarious work impacts all sectors of the working class. The experience of the International Fishermen and Allied Workers is a neglected historical example that offers important lessons and warnings for this effort. The group's analysis was simple and actionable: fishermen and

shoreworkers, regardless of their official employment status, produced profit for the packers and only a union that included workers at all stages of production could reclaim their rightful share.

I would like to briefly thank Professor James Gregory for being my advisor on this project, and the Labor Archives at the University of Washington for making the source material available.

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