Empire of Tomorrow: Seattle and the Making of Global Capitalism in the 1970s

Andrew Hedden

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Reading Committee:

Margaret O'Mara, Chair

Daniel Bessner

James Gregory

Moon-Ho Jung

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Andrew Hedden

University of Washington

Abstract

Empire of Tomorrow: Seattle and the Making of Global Capitalism in the 1970s

Andrew Hedden

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

Margaret O'Mara

Department of History

This dissertation recounts the history of Seattle as an imperial city, and in doing so chronicles a larger story about the fate of American global supremacy in the late twentieth century. Whereas the city began the 1970s in economic and political turmoil, it ended the decade as a paragon of new American urbanism, "the most livable city in the United States." And American power, once found strictly in manufacturing strength and military prowess, was being recomposed in new professional service sectors of trade, research, and technology – sectors that heavily favored Seattle. By examining how working people, community activists, unions, politicians, and business experienced these transformations, this dissertation argues that the fates of both the city of Seattle and American empire were deeply entwined. Faced with crisis, their renewed fortunes required new formations of class and race that would allow American elites to defeat the strength of organized labor and social movements while tapping into growing circuits of global capital.

To Mom and Dad,

and to Anna

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I first applied to graduate school in 2013. Ten years, two kids, and a global pandemic later, I am finally done. While the experience took an entire decade of my life (and probably took a few more years off my life on top of that), I would like to think it was not due to a lack of a goal or sense of purpose. I always knew that Seattle's history would be the subject of my research and eventual dissertation. I was born and raised in the city's suburbs, to parents whose families represent multiple generations in the Pacific Northwest. My life changed forever when the World Trade Organization, and the tens of thousands who opposed it, came to Seattle in 1999. I didn't attend the protests myself, but as a teenager I became swept up in the movements that followed in their wake. As the years passed, I never drifted far. I watched the city of Seattle change dramatically, as wealthy companies like Amazon exploded, the population boomed, and the cost-of-living skyrocketed. Whenever I turned to historical literature to try and make sense of the city, my experiences, and those of my family, I was always left with more questions than answers. I found many of the answers I sought through my work on this dissertation, but not all. A lot of work still remains. Someday I hope the research undertaken for this dissertation will provide the basis of a book, and when it does, that a larger audience will be able to read it, and not just the few people with the university resources to seek and access this history on a database.

Until then, I am grateful for all the help and support I have received in getting to this point. Given that I have taken so damn long to finish, it is difficult for me to resist the urge to thank each and every person I can remember who ever offered me an encouraging word or shared a thoughtful

conversation along the way. I am also afraid that I can't account for everyone. But I'll try. My debts stretch back to at least my time as an undergraduate at Fairhaven College in Bellingham, Washington, to some people that I have not spoken to in well over a decade. But I owe them all the same. Professor Dan First Scout Rowe urged me to attend graduate school long before I even knew what that was, while Chris Friday first introduced me to the field of academic history. Bill Lyne gave the best lectures, and Midori Takagi led the best seminars. Most of all, I thank the brilliant Teri McMurtry-Chubb, who showed me how the university could be a radical place for critical thinking and education, even amidst all the B.S. I will never forget how she assigned Marx's *Capital* in an undergraduate class on hip-hop, because, as Wu-Tang Clan argued, "Cash rules everything." Out of the classroom, fellow students and friends that I organized with helped me to work out how to put those ideas into action, especially Afrose Ahmed, David Cahn, Jennifer Fletcher, Ian Morgan, Lambert Rochfort, and Xavier Quinn. Our trips, discussion groups, rallies, protests, meetings, and parties will always be with me.

Maintaining friendships as an adult has, at times, been harder for me than completing a PhD. But somehow, I have managed to keep a few, and I treasure them all, even if I do an awful job of staying in touch. I have looked up to Jeremy Louzao ever since the day I met him over twenty years ago as a teenager attending my first protest. He never stops thinking, caring, or struggling for a better world, and his friendship and encouragement have meant the world to me. I met my friend Matt Hoffman under similar circumstances, and our trajectories have been eerily similar, if reversed. He did the PhD thing before he got into the labor movement, while I worked in labor before I went to graduate school. Though he lives thousands of miles away in Chicago, having him to share my frustrations with over text message through the years has been critical to my mental health. Love you, Matt.

Somebody else I've known since I was a teenager, Casey Moore, also gets a special mention. He found me the opportunity to write about Seattle history in an outlet I would have never thought possible, and his conviction that I had something worth sharing kept me going when I otherwise felt stuck. That more than makes up for that documentary about Seattle film history that we never completed (maybe we can try again after our kids are grown?). Michael Reagan was my fellow graduate student for a minute, but he gets a shout out here because he was always a comrade first. I will forever treasure the memory of sitting with him in the stands of a major league baseball game talking about stagflation and 1970s politics. Thanks also to Michael for nursing me back to health from food poisoning at the Urban History Association conference (note to the reader: Don't eat the Greek salad at The Standard bar in downtown Pittsburgh).

Before starting graduate school, I spent a couple years volunteering at Left Bank Books in Seattle's Pike Place Market. Fifty years old and going strong, Left Bank is quite possibly the best thing remaining about Seattle, and I enjoyed many conversations there that eventually became this dissertation. Thanks especially to collective members Bo, Chris, Jordan, and Lisa. I will forever be in awe of the fact that North America's oldest anarchist bookstore sits on what is most certainly some of the most valuable retail real estate in the city, if not the entire West Coast. With this dissertation, I have sought to preserve examples of radicalism that persist despite a hostile political economy. Left Bank Books is a living example of that sort of thing.

Since 2008, the University of Washington's Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies has been my community and my home base, a priceless space where workers and scholars are one and the same. Most of all, it is a place of inspiration, where I continually get to meet new students and activists who are constantly re-inventing social movements against the inertia of institutionalization. I thank especially my colleagues Sai Ahmed and Rachel Erstad, who bring

such care and intentionality to everything they do in their daily organizing and research. In this world, it is hard to build power that is centered in people and not institutions and egos, yet they manage to do so with grace. Getting to work with Sai and Rachel has gotten me through some of the hardest days of my professional life, and for that, I raise a fist in gratitude and solidarity. I also thank the many students at the Bridges Center that I have had the privilege to work with over the years, especially Riddhi Mehta-Neugebauer, Jiwoon Yu-Lee, Filiz Kahraman, Soohyung Hur, Shoaib Laghari, Quinn Rao, and Leo Baunach – comrades all, on campus and off.

The Harry Bridges Center itself is owed to the worker-centered vision of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, and this dissertation is, in some ways, my humble attempt at giving back. The dedication that ILWU members have shown to creating and sustaining the Bridges Center has driven me forward. I thank especially Ian Kennedy and his wife Michele Drayton, who both exemplify the commitment of ILWU pensioners to future generations of workers. I also thank Gene Vrana, the union's retired education director, whose straight-shooting, pragmatic criticism and organizing skill have taught me more than any graduate seminar ever did. Gene's successor at the ILWU, Robin Walker, gave me helpful advice about the union's archival records, even if COVID prevented my planned research trip to ILWU headquarters in San Francisco. Someday I hope to finally make it. Among active members, I thank Justin Hirsch, Zack Pattin, Alison Steichen, and Ali Vekich, who provided countless insights into the union's past and present. My earliest conversations about ILWU history were on the phone with the late Dr. Ron Magden, whose historical work and close relationship with Puget Sound dockworkers will never be surpassed. Anyone who knew Dr. Ron will understand what I mean when I write that I can still hear the joy in his voice over the receiver as he told me tales of Shaun Maloney (he started with Maloney's love life). Thanks Dr. Ron, we miss you.

Because of the pandemic, I did not talk to nearly as many union members, activists, and other historical actors that I hoped I would, but the few that I managed to speak with were thoughtful and generous with their time and memories. Mark McDermott shared stories of his earliest days in Seattle when he had organized with the Welfare Rights Organization. Tom Lux, a dedicated member of the Bridges Center's Visiting Committee and president of the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association, put me in touch with members of his union, the International Association of Machinists, District Lodge 751. Ron McGaha, longtime IAM 751 staffer and a labor history buff himself, also shared memories of his long career at Boeing and the union. Longtime Seattle rabble-rouser Bill Clifford reached out to me with an offer a historian couldn't refuse: he was cleaning out his house and had a complete set of the old New Lefty rag *Northwest Passage* on offer. Into my crawlspace went the box of yellowed newspapers, which is where I later found the best reporting on IAM 751's 1977 strike. Meanwhile, I found my best source on the government response to the Seattle unemployment crisis through a remarkable bit of happenstance. Laboring away in the Nixon Library, two weeks before the pandemic broke, I discovered a letter from an undergraduate student thanking Nixon aide John Ehrlichman for an interview for the student's thesis on Seattle's unemployment crisis. Through some quick internet sleuthing, I discovered the student had since become a Seattle lawyer and civic mover-and-shaker, Gerry Johnson. Responding to my unsolicited email, Gerry not only recovered his thesis from his attic, but he also had his staff scan me a copy of what I discovered to be the most comprehensive account of the Boeing bust that I had ever read. When pandemic restrictions lifted, Gerry then treated me to lunch at the historic, and strangely empty, Rainier Club.

My research would have been impossible without such generosity, personal and institutional. Former UW student Trevor Griffey is a Seattle expat who, through his work on the

Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project and his own PhD research on Black workers in the construction trades, deserves to be considered among the city's greatest historians. He is now living in Long Beach, California, where he and his partner Allison Perlman offered their home to me during my stay visiting the Richard Nixon Presidential Library in Yorba Linda, California. Besides accommodating hosts, they were indispensable guides to Southern California geography and traffic, and Trevor also shared his own experiences working in the Nixon papers.

That trip, and additional research and travel thereafter were made possible through funding from the UW Department of History, the UW Graduate School, the UW Graduate and Professional Student Senate, and the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies. At the Nixon Library, archivists Dorissa Martinez and Ryan Pettigrew helped me navigate the ins and outs of a such an immense collection. Closer to home, UW Labor Archivists Crystal Rodgers and Conor Casey assisted me in UW Special Collections. Jeanie Fisher helped me at the City of Seattle Municipal Archives, while archivist Midori Okazaki was my guide at the Washington State Puget Sound Regional Archives (according to Ron Magden, she also wrote the indispensable biographical note in UW Special Collections' Shaun Maloney collection).

In 2022, I had the good fortune of participating in the Global Urban History Project's Emerging Scholars program, which provided financial support and a forum to share my work with other scholars across the globe. I learned there is nothing like attending an online seminar at four in the morning with scholars on three separate continents in half a dozen time zones. Cyrus Schayegh, my GUHP mentor, gave my work a close reading and provided much needed encouragement. The GUHP also provided the opportunity to write up some of my research, in broad outline, for a special section of the Journal of Urban History. Editor Mariana Dantas's critical feedback gave me helpful lessons in framing an argument and writing within a limited

word count. Outside the GUHP, I also thank other scholars who took the time to share their research with me, including Peter Cole, Salem Elzway, Christopher Foss, David Helps, Polly Meyers, and Simon Toner.

Over my ten years in graduate school, I saw a lot of fellow students come and go. This included a pair, Steve Beda and Alex Morrow, who thoughtfully sought to stage an intervention when they heard I was applying for graduate school. In a premeditated surprise visit to my office, they insisted that keeping my staff job at the Bridges Center was better than going into the dire job market of academia. Fortunately, I was able to keep my Bridges Center job while going to school, giving me a graduate education without the professional anxiety that afflicts most graduate students. Against the odds, Steve is now a tenure-track professor at University of Oregon. Alex, who I knew less well, sadly passed away in 2022 from cancer. Both were dedicated members of UW's strong graduate student union, UAW 4121, an institutional embodiment of how deeply graduate students depend on one another to weather the compounding stresses of graduate life. I depended on quite a few fellow students to get through this, and so have lots to thank. Intellectual allies included "Captain Kurt" Ellison, Jey Saung, and JM Wong, and a pair of non-UW friends I met at conferences, Andrew Klein and Jonathan Ng. In UW History, I owe my sanity to Michael Reagan, Roneva Keel, Michael Aguirre, Josue Estrada, Frances O'Shaughnessy, Taylor Soja, and Brendan McElmeel, and my writing group pals, Anna Nguyen, Rachel Lanier Taylor, and Xiaoshun Zeng.

A host of UW faculty members helped me get to this point, even when it wasn't their job to do so. The late Charles Bergquist, a former Bridges Center director and UW History professor, was retired long before I first met him, but he never stopped acting like the stakes of labor history truly mattered. I get emotional whenever I think about all the time he made to talk with me, how

he and his partner Hwasook Nam hosted my family for a day at his apartment on Bainbridge Island, and about the fact he never got to read my work. He was as kind as he could be cantankerous, and I truly miss him. You went too soon, Chuck.

As my first boss at the Harry Bridges Center, James Gregory advised me not to go to graduate school out of concerns about the job market. But he was more than gracious enough to write me letters of recommendation, co-chair my Masters' Degree, supervise me twice as a Teaching Assistant, and serve on my PhD committee when I didn't follow his advice. I have since worked for four other faculty directors of the Bridge Center, each of whom supported my work in their own way. George Lovell always treated me like a peer, offering me endless encouragement and friendly conversation, even when he ascended to Dean status. Michael McCann is beloved among his graduate students, and beloved by me too. More than just a sympathetic ear, he was a tireless supporter for the Bridges Center staff, using his administrative acumen to fight for the funding that has grown the dynamic place it is today. Years before Kim England directed the Bridges Center, she would drop by my office simply to talk about my research in Seattle history. I will always appreciate her genuine interest in my work. Our current director, Moon-Ho Jung, may well possess the world's most well-honed academic bullshit detector. As my PhD committee member, he let me know how incomplete this project remains as a dissertation, but offered his full support for the project and mercifully swift approval so that I could get on with the work of redeveloping it for publication. I look forward to everything we have yet to accomplish together at the Bridges Center.

Outside of my direct supervisors, many faculty assisted this project through their seminars. Vicente Rafael assigned Paul Kramer's seminal essay "Power and Connection" in my first-ever graduate class, and in doing so broadened the whole trajectory of my research. As leader of my

first research seminar, John Findlay was both kind and critical, a rare and welcome combination. Susan Glenn, instructor of my second research seminar, gave my first chapter its title, "Food Stamp Capitol." In other classes, department colloquia, and personal correspondence, I also received insights and important feedback on my works-in-progress from Dan Berger, Daniel Bessner (also a PhD committee member), Purnima Dhavan, Mark Metzler, Megan Ming Francis, Stephanie Smallwood, Lynn Thomas, Joel Walker, Adam Warren, and Glennys Young.

More than any other faculty member, my Chair Margaret O'Mara made this dissertation possible. No shortage of graduate students can tell you how their advisors sowed doubts and did numbers on their mental health over the course of their PhDs. I am not one of those. Margaret did the exact opposite, giving me the warmth and encouragement that I needed to see this thing through to completion. She believed in my topic from day one, to the point that I always left a conversation with Margaret more committed to my project than when I went in. Well-versed in the latest scholarship, she was always suggesting new work for me to read, conferences to attend, and people to contact. She also made my goals feel achievable, even as the years stretched on, by endlessly accommodating my need to work at the Bridges Center while I pursued my doctorate. Recognizing that I was a part-time graduate student, Margaret always said this was effectively a "five-year dissertation," despite the ten years it actually took me to finish it. While I wish it *felt* like only five years, I also shudder to think how long it would have felt under any other advisor. Her turnaround times for providing feedback on drafts and letters of recommendation ought to be a thing of legend in the profession. She was everything you would want in an advisor, and for that I will forever be grateful.

Which brings me to family. If this thing took ten years, it was an eternity to them, especially in that final stretch when I said "almost finished" for months on end. Owing to the pandemic, much

of this dissertation got done at home. That, and working fulltime meant I had to squeeze in dissertation writing at some of the most inopportune moments, and I wrote more words in the middle of what were supposed to be family vacations than I care to admit. For impromptu childcare (lots of it), road trip car-driving, and generally not giving me a hard time for how often I was glued to a computer screen, I thank my sister Annette and her husband Jeff; my partner's family Dan, Salve, Kit and Corrie; and Emily, our best friend in Alaska. A special shoutout to our dear friend Carla, whose fierce political sensibilities informed the skill and expertise she brought to the job of caring for our kids.

My mom and dad, Marie and Dale, were there for me throughout this whole thing, offering words of support, things to eat, opening their home to me as my impromptu writing retreat, and a lot more. A nurse and a teacher, they taught me everything I know about the value of knowledge, education, compassion, and care. Above all, the hallmark of their parenting has always been trust. For over forty years, they have trusted me a lot, even when I maybe didn't deserve it. They always trusted that I would finish this dissertation, and I am relieved to be finally delivering on that promise. Thanks Mom and Dad, for your love, and for showing me what true care and compassion are. I dedicate this dissertation to you.

Everything my parents taught me about trust and care, I have tried to pass on to my own two kids, Felix and Socorro. Their love, joy and curiosity have sustained me through it all, especially during the grueling oppressive years of the pandemic when we were all locked inside together. This whole dissertation thing has seemed a bit of a mystery to them, but I hope that someday they will dig this out and give it a read, and then come to understand why I was always so crabby and unavailable through the first years of their lives. Or even better, they will compare this to the book that I wrote later and wonder how I could ever write something so brilliant and

insightful out of a dissertation that feels so incomplete and inchoate. Regardless of whether the book ever comes, I hope they can find some answers here to questions about their city and the world that they have inherited, and perhaps the hint of a path to a better world yet to come.

Finally, I also dedicate this dissertation to Anna. After writing 100,000 words about Seattle history, I could write 100,000 more about what she means to me. Eager to see me finish, she urged me to simply write, "Thnx." I will try and split the difference. For over twenty years, she has been my best friend and partner. She was there long before I first got into this, and she has been there for me every step of the way. She believed me when I said I could get this done while working full-time, and she supported my studies even when we decided to have two kids on top of it all. The life and family that we have made together will always be my proudest achievement, and as I write these final words, I am excited to know we will now have more time to spend with one another. Thank you, Anna. My love for you is truly beyond words.

EMPIRE OF TOMORROW: SEATTLE AND THE MAKING OF GLOBAL CAPITALISM IN THE 1970S

INTRODUCTION

> Now in Seattle that winter is here,
> He looks upon the world with detachment,
> Yet completely within. He reached solitude,
> The rise of completion, passing by way
> Of engulfing darkness, deep loneliness.
> Arriving at the intensity of knowing the truth,
> Of being desolate now. But to be desolate,
> Is to know the magnificence of lostness,
> Even too late, even at this heart of darkness.
>
> – Carlos Bulosan, "Landscape with a Bottle," excerpt, ca. early 1950s[1]

On September 11, 1956, Carlos Bulosan passed out in a Skid Road park in Seattle. His life in the continental United States had begun in that same city in 1930 when he had arrived on a boat from the American colony of the Philippines as a migrant laborer and an aspiring writer. His body since broken by alcoholism, malnutrition, and recurrent bouts of tuberculosis, his life would end in Seattle too, as he succumbed to pneumonia that evening. In those intervening twenty-six years, Bulosan had known poverty, struggle, success, repression, unemployment, and homelessness, in that order. His racialized status as a Filipino and a colonial subject of the United States conditioned

[1] Carlos Bulosan, "Landscape with a Bottle," Unpublished Poem, ca. Early 1950s, Accession No. 0581-012, Box 3, Folder 20, Carlos Bulosan papers, 1914-1976, University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, Seattle, WA.

everything he did and everywhere he went. Since the U.S. had taken over the Philippines from the Spanish empire in 1898, circuits of military operations and commercial trade had increasingly bound the Pacific port of Seattle to the colony, building the growing city's economy and making it a common point of entry for Filipino workers like Bulosan. But most, including Bulosan, did not stay in Seattle for long. Instead, subject to a capitalism built on racial order, they traveled up and down the West Coast seeking seasonal employment in farms and small towns, where they were exploited by white employers hungry for cheap labor and attacked by white workers who saw Filipinos as threats to their higher wage standards and patriarchal control over white women.[2]

In resisting that violence, Bulosan found something else in those years – love, comradeship, and purpose. He found them in the labor movement and radical left-wing politics, especially prominent on the West Coast and in places like Seattle, that gave him a new community and a new outlet for his passion for the written word. Beginning in the 1930s, the exclusionary white supremacist politics of American organized labor had been increasingly contested by the more expansive Congress of Industrial Organizations, and Bulosan put forth their cause in his poetry and essays. He eventually settled for years in Los Angeles where he spent long stretches convalescing in a sanitarium, and for a short time, found commercial success writing stories of his homeland for American audiences. That eventually led to the publication of *America is in the Heart* in 1946, a chronicle of Filipinos during the Great Depression and how their lives had been riven by racial discrimination and colonial dislocation.[3]

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[2] Rick Baldoz, *The Third Asiatic Invasion: Migration and Empire in Filipino America, 1898-1946* (New York University Press, 2011).

[3] Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London; New York: Verso, 1998); Augusto Fauni Espiritu, *Five Faces of Exile: The Nation and Filipino American Intellectuals* (Stanford University Press, 2005), 47-72.

As World War II receded, however, the weight of state repression fell upon Bulosan. Remaining a critic of capitalism and colonialism into the early Cold War, he began corresponding with communist guerillas in the Philippines fighting against the U.S.-backed regime there, drawing the ire of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Blacklisted in Los Angeles, he returned to Seattle around 1952, serving a short stint as the publicity director for the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU), Local 37, a left-led union of Filipino cannery workers that was itself fighting government attacks, including anti-communist deportation cases against its leadership. The pressure exacerbated internecine politics within the union, which ultimately forced Bulosan out.[4]

Afterwards, life grew harder for Bulosan, and his writing grew wistful and discouraged. Seattle, one of his unpublished poem's suggested, was just a "landscape with a bottle," and now the only heart that America was in was the one that novelist Joseph Conrad had called "the heart of darkness:" a forbidding place made possible by imperial power.[5] Jobless and tailed by the FBI, Bulosan spent his remaining years in and out of yet another sanatorium, sleeping on the couches of friends or in the union hall, and living day-to-day in the cheap hotels of Seattle's Skid Road.

But he still managed to write. At the time of his death, Bulosan had just completed a manuscript titled *The Hounds of Darkness*, which documented the daily lives of the men and women of the Skid Road community that he had come to call home. They were mostly people like Bulosan who had once worked the fields, the forests, or fisheries, but were too sick, too old, or too

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[4] Rick Baldoz, "'Comrade Carlos Bulosan': U.S. State Surveillance And the Cold War Suppression of Filipino Radicals," *The Asia-Pacific Journal*, Volume 11, Issue 33, Number 3; Moon-Ho Jung, *Menace to Empire: Anticolonial Solidarities and the Transpacific Origins of the US Security State* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2022); Michael McCann with George I. Lovell, *Union by Law: Filipino American Labor Activists, Rights Radicalism, and Racial Capitalism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

[5] Bulosan, "Landscape with a Bottle."

radical to work, who had become superfluous to an economy that had been profoundly changed by World War II. Since lost, Bulosan's manuscript was never published, and their stories went untold. His life's work unfinished, he died prematurely of diseases of poverty at the estimated age of 45.[6]

Bulosan's life, beginning and ending in Seattle, illustrated how the city's history was tied to that of empire. His later writings like "Landscape with a Bottle," mournful and pessimistic, articulated Bulosan's sense that the movements he was a part of were a thing of the past, while American empire continued apace. The Seattle he left behind certainly gave that impression. In 1962, two miles north of where Bulosan drew his last breath, the city became a monument to global capitalism under American auspices, host to the Century 21 World's Fair. World's Fairs had long served as festivals of empire, including Seattle's own 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, which had lionized the city's growing connections to trade in the Pacific and the American colonial project in the Philippines.[7] Century 21, as a celebration of America as a global imperial power, was no different. Funded primarily by the United States government, the six-month event glorified American advancements in technology and economic production and compelled the rest of the world to join along.

[6] Newspaper clipping, "New Awareness casts light on Bulosan," unknown publication, Jean Gundlach papers, 1921-1998, Accession No. 5207-002, University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections, Seattle, WA.; Harry C. Bauer, *Seasoned to Taste*, Wilson Library Bulletin, January 1957, University of Washington, Seattle, WA. Documentation is conflicting regarding Bulosan's year of birth. Baptismal records place his birthdate on November 2, 1911, but other sources place it later; see Cynthia Mejia-Giudici, "Bulosan, Carlos (1911?-1956)," *HistoryLink.Org*, February 14, 2003, https://www.historylink.org/File/5202, accessed November 26, 2023.

[7] Special Issue: Race and Empire at the Fair, *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 101, no. 3-4 (Summer/Fall 2010); Robert W. Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (University of Chicago Press, 2013).

But something *was* different in 1962 about American empire and about Seattle. In the wake of World War II, imperial rivals to the United States were few to none, depending on one's view of the Soviet Union, and the United States stood alone as the world's foremost industrial and military power. Seattle, for its part, was now benefiting from America's global imprint more than ever. Never before had the city, a remote backwater over one hundred and seventy-five miles from another major American population center, been considered anything more than a regional steppingstone to distant regional hinterlands like Alaska or the countries of the Pacific. Now, its global significance was more than a pretension, its growth was exponential, and Seattle itself was the destination, to the point that boosters could plausibly tout it as a "city of the future" without drawing a laugh.

A major part of the difference was the Boeing Company. First established in Seattle in 1916, the company had become a major industrial force making bombers for the United States in World War II. When its government contracts continued during the Korean War, the company then leveraged its profits and military models to become the world's most profitable commercial jet maker.[8] By 1950, the company's planes dominated the skies, enabling both U.S. military and commercial supremacy worldwide.[9]

Boeing's growth, meanwhile, had made Seattle into a modern metropolis. The draw of work in its factories increased the city's population by several orders of magnitude and pushed it into the surrounding suburbs. Drawing educated white males from outside the region to fill its

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[8] Eugene Rodgers, *Flying High: The Story of Boeing and the Rise of the Jetliner Industry* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1996).

[9] Jenifer Van Vleck, *Empire of the Air: Aviation and the American Ascendancy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), 244.

technical and managerial ranks, the company's labor recruitment practices homogenized the city's demographics and culture, making Seattle into one of the whitest major metropolitan areas in the United States.[10] Higher wages, a result of federal policies of military Keynesianism, the region's remote geography, and its high rates of unionization, cultivated a culture of affluence that allowed white workers to imagine themselves as self-made products of their own hard work, rather than the privileged beneficiaries of American global dominance.

As an ebullient 1965 profile in *LIFE* magazine put it, mid-century Seattle offered "the perfect middle-class vision – lots of ranch-style living, free repertory Shakespeare in the parks, op art in the department store windows, and the future is expected to bring only bright uncomplicated views of Mount Rainier." In contrast, the "bums cluster[ed] on the hard benches" of the city's Skid Road – the milieu of Carlos Bulosan – were significant strictly as emblems of a waning historical era. In this Seattle, *LIFE* declared, "No sad, old guys need apply."[11]

This was the world and social order that the World's Fair celebrated. Had Carlos Bulosan lived but six years more, he might have joined the ten million people who visited the event. Perhaps he would have perused exhibits like the World of Commerce and Industry, which paired the products of American private industry – Ford cars, forest products, Boeing airplanes – alongside the national specialties of American foreign policy allies like the rightwing governments of the Philippines, South Korea, or Taiwan (Bulosan would consider them client states). Or perhaps

[10] Ann R. Markusen et al., *The Rise of the Gunbelt: The Military Remapping of Industrial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 155.

[11] Conrad Knickerbocker, "No One's in Charge," *LIFE*, December 24, 1965.

Bulosan would have wandered through the World of Tomorrow, a multimedia presentation that envisioned Seattle and its suburbs as the model for cities of the future. And he could have viewed the city itself panoramically from the newly erected Space Needle, now the city's best-known landmark, seeing the highways and houses of sprawl stretching out in almost every direction, racially segregated and well out of his reach.[12]

Most likely, national security agents would have followed Bulosan here too, continuing to see him as a threat due to both his politics and his race. Baked into the enabling legislation for the World Fair's federal funding, for example, had been an explicit disinvitation to Asian nations that were resisting the tide of American-led capitalism. The bill had stated "no Communist de facto government holding any people of the Pacific Rim in subjugation" – meaning North Korea, North Vietnam, and the People's Republic of China – were allowed to attend.[13]

American organized labor, joining the World's Fair, struck the same note. The once-pathbreaking CIO, having merged with its conservative rival AFL to become the AFL-CIO in 1955, worked hard to expel radicals during the Cold War. In a Labor Day speech delivered at the Fair, George Meany, the federation's president, bashed the Soviet Union, contrasting the new Space Needle – "a towering monument to the aspirations of humanity for a better life" – with the depredations of the Berlin Wall. Behind the Fair's pretensions to international peace, a more

[12] Paula Becker and Alan J. Stein, *The Future Remembered: The 1962 Seattle World's Fair and Its Legacy* (Seattle, WA: Seattle Center Foundation, 2011).

[13] Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest, "Lesson Twenty-five: The Impact of the Cold War on Washington, The 1962 Seattle World's Fair," https://www.washington.edu/uwired/outreach/cspn/Website/Classroom%20Materials/Pacific%20Northwest%20History/Lessons/Lesson%2025/25.html .

violent world order stewed, and organized labor saw itself as America's domestic front line of defense.[14]

The World's Fair promised, and the AFL-CIO agreed, that poverty and want would not be vanquished by worker struggles, but overwhelmed by the ingenuity, generosity, and gallantry of American enterprise, imagining a world of consumers eager for American products and protection.[15] Not coincidentally, Elvis Presley's *It Happened at the World's Fair*, filmed at the exposition, featured the film and music star chaperoning an abandoned Chinese American girl around the fairgrounds, spoiling her with toys and treats before rescuing her from gun-toting, plane-flying international smugglers.[16] American empire, the film suggested, had a place for racialized others, so long as it was on the terms of white paternalism. Were he alive to see it, Bulosan would likely have been disgusted.

At the World's Fair of 1962, the spirit of Carlos Bulosan seemed defeated. American global capitalism, divided by race and backed by the violence of the state, was the order of the day, an order to which the labor movement had acceded. But had Bulosan lived to the end of the 1960s,

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[14] Ibid.

[15] As historian John Findlay writes, the World's Fair typified urban planning initiatives that "attempted to exclude diversity and misery from their idealized settings, substituting in their stead a world indexed to the middle-class standards of an affluent society;" John M. Findlay, *Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture after 1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 9. On the consumer politics of mid-century America, see Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Knopf, 2003). On the US national security state's global promotion of American culture, see Penny Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Harvard University Press, 2009).

[16] Norman Taurog, director, *It Happened at the World's Fair*, 1963. Perhaps not coincidentally, Taurog was a longtime director of U.S. propaganda. His work included one of the most infamous instances of American cinematic propaganda, *The Beginning or the End* (1947), which falsely recounted the development and deployment of the atomic bomb during World War II; see Greg Mitchell, *The Beginning or the End: How Hollywood—and America—Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (New York: The New Press, 2020).

he would have been heartened to see how radical ideas could persist and how American empire could still be challenged. By that time, American racism was under siege by a renewed Black Freedom Struggle, the country's military was facing defeat in Vietnam, and its economic dominance was coming unglued in the face of increasing competition from the very countries it had rebuilt under its aegis in Japan and Western Europe. Boeing, meanwhile, once Seattle's great benefactor, was on the brink of bankruptcy and threatening to take out the whole city with it, generating the worst unemployment crisis in an American city since the Great Depression. Everything seemed suddenly in disarray. The World of Tomorrow seemed like the empire of yesterday.

This is where *Empire of Tomorrow* begins. This dissertation recounts the history of Seattle in the turbulent 1970s and chronicles a larger story about the fate of American global supremacy in the late twentieth century. Whereas the city began the decade in turmoil, it ended it as a paragon of new American urbanism, "the most livable city in the United States." And American power, once found strictly in manufacturing strength, was being recomposed in new professional service sectors of trade, research, and technology – sectors that heavily favored Seattle. The fates of both the city and American empire, this dissertation argues, were deeply entwined. Faced with crisis, their renewed fortunes required new formations of class and race that would allow American elites to defeat the strength of organized labor and social movements while tapping into growing circuits of global capital.

In recounting this history, this dissertation contends that Seattle is best understood as an *imperial city*, an urban center pivotal to the project of empire. Empire, as Bulosan's life and the World's Fair illustrated, had many dimensions, but fundamentally it was defined by asymmetrical relations of power that extended far beyond the nominal boundaries of the city and the nation-

state, rendered through labor exploitation, uneven economic integration, and enabled and enforced by violence.[17] In this history, state institutions – from federal authorities on down to municipal governments – worked so closely with ostensibly private organizations, such as Boeing, shipping firms, and small business, that distinguishing them at times seems impossible. Whether through economic competition or military dominance, state and private actors both sought to exert power over peoples around the world to the benefit of elites in the United States. Regardless of the institutions involved, Seattle's relationship to empire led it to grow wealthy as a city, not through the genius or perseverance of its pioneering residents, but at the expense of workers within a larger field of global power divided by nation, class, race, and gender.

These relations were not foreordained and uncontested, however. In fact, the 1970s was a pivotal decade of class struggle in the United States, as the demands of organized labor and social movements escalated, and American capitalists grew increasingly disillusioned with the political compromises of Keynesian economic policy. People of color fought for community and workplace power, while workers of all kinds took a stand against growing trends of austerity, automation, inflation, and unemployment that severely undercut the value of their labor. Seattle's turmoil not only illustrated these conflicts, but showed how they were coterminous with America's imperial crisis more generally. The city's crisis spurred competing visions of its future economy from workers, business, and politicians that each advanced a corresponding conception of global connection and American power in the world. Each of these conceptions, moreover, contained distinct ideas about class and race which spoke to both the strength of social movements and the

[17] On the history and historiography of U.S. empire, see Jung, *Menace to Empire,* 9-14. For a larger overview of the literature on American empire, see Paul A. Kramer. "Power and Connection: Imperial Histories of the United States in the World," *American Historical Review* 116, no. 5 (2011). A more recent discussion of the state of the field is Kramer, "How Not to Write the History of U.S. Empire," *Diplomatic History* 42, no. 5 (November 1, 2018): 911–31.

changing power relations of global capitalism, from fights for affirmative action and welfare rights to the growing status of skilled professionals and the prominence of non-Western capital.

The title of *Empire of Tomorrow* thus operates in two senses: as a reference to how historical actors understood and envisioned the future of American power in the world, and as an account of the actual material transformation of that power across the decade of the 1970s with which they were grappling. Some consciously understood the United States as an empire, like Washington state Senator Henry Jackson, or U.S. President Richard Nixon, who both at different times likened America to European empires of the past; or the ILWU, which denounced the American empire for its ruinous wars overseas.[18] More often than not, however, the figures within *Empire of Tomorrow* did not put a name to their understandings of American power in the world, even as they sought to leverage that power to their benefit, or spoke out against its many hypocrisies.

Regardless of how it was understood, American empire was real and in the 1970s its material basis was changing. As Richard Nixon put it to his advisors on a Boeing-made plane flying over the Atlantic in November 1970, it seemed America had "only two more years as the number one power." Faced with the compounding challenges of the new decade, Nixon told them he thought that the United States had to either "make the best deals we can between now and 1975

[18] Nixon often spoke of American power in such world-historical terms; for examples of relevance to Seattle, see Chapter 2, "Empire in Need." In a 1980 symposium on U.S. trade with China at the University of Washington, Jackson compared the United States to the British Empire, arguing for the importance of foreign policy to domestic policy; see Christopher Foss, "Senator Henry 'Scoop' Jackson and the Intersection between Domestic Politics and Foreign Relations in the Postwar Era," in *The Cold War at Home and Abroad: Domestic Politics and US Foreign Policy since 1945* (University Press of Kentucky, 2018), 87. The ILWU referred frequently to the US as an imperial power and an empire in its publications. A specific example is "The Great American Trade Crisis," *The Dispatcher*, May 25, 1973. For further discussion, see Chapter 3, "A Strike Against Empire."

or increase our conventional strength."[19] Nothing about the 1970s, however, proved conventional. Indeed, its history is easily read as a series of crises. And for Seattle, the experience of crisis was threefold. First, at the decades' dawn, Boeing's struggles transformed Seattle into an exemplar of economic crisis – "Appalachia West," as some called it. The experience of unemployment and recession, waning in Seattle, then grew more generalized in the United States as the decade continued and inflation and economic stagnation – newly coined "stagflation" – increased. A second crisis emerged when global oil shocks, catalyzed by emboldened Third World governments, drove inflation sky-high, compounding the ignobility of Nixon's resignation and defeat in Vietnam. Finally, at the decade's close, a third crisis ensued, as the U.S. Federal Reserve, seeking to tame inflation once and for all, manufactured an economic downturn that sent unemployment soaring anew.[20]

Nixon's political career did not survive the seventies, but American supremacy ultimately did – as did Seattle's fortunes. While capitalists restructured American manufacturing dramatically, they succeeded at keeping the United States at the center of the global economy through a vast expansion of business and financial services, high technology, and the weakening of labor and social movements more generally. They only managed to do so, however, with the aid of the state.[21] As various factions put forth their agendas for Seattle's future, their fortunes fared according to these newly emerging terms of American power. Some, like local business boosters and the Boeing Company, found friends in the federal government, while others – like

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[19] Julian E. Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy: The Politics of National Security--from World War II to the War on Terrorism* (Basic Books, 2010), 238.

[20] On the many crises of the 1970s, see Niall Ferguson, Charles S. Maier, Erez Manela, and Daniel J. Sargent, editors, *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Harvard University Press, 2010).

[21] Sam Gindin and Leo Panitch, *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy Of American Empire* (Verso Books, 2012).

striking longshoremen – felt its full force set against them. Yet others, particularly those who unsettled the racial order of American capitalism, such as the city's welfare rights activists or later waves of Vietnamese refugees, were simply abandoned. What often made the difference, this dissertation shows, was how each sector advanced or opposed American empire.

By placing the local history of Seattle at the center of developments within global capitalism, *Empire of Tomorrow* challenges the way we think about the rise and fall of the American labor movement, the fall and rise of American cities, and the way we understand American power in the world. Seattle's early radical labor history is well told, especially its legendary General Strike of 1919, and Carlos Bulosan's *America is in the Heart* remains in print, having become a classic in Asian American literature and a best-seller for its present-day publisher. But the larger working world of Seattle, beyond midcentury, remains relatively unknown, like the lost manuscript of Bulosan's *Hounds of Darkness*. This is despite the fact that Washington state led the United States in union density at many times throughout the 1970s, a distinction it traded back and forth with Michigan, and it remains a top three union state to this day.[22] We know a lot about Detroit and the struggles of the United Auto Workers; we know very little about the labor movement in Seattle's home state beyond its early radical years, and why and how it persisted.

Similarly, we know a great deal about the decline of the manufacturing Rust Belt, or the federal government's abandonment of New York City during its 1975 fiscal crisis, fates that many feared would be Seattle's amid its own early 1970s crisis. While Richard Nixon's refusal of aid to

[22] Barry T. Hirsch, David A. Macpherson, and Wayne G. Vroman. "Estimates of Union Density by State." *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 2001.

Seattle in 1971 was similar in spirit to the later famous headline about New York City's fiscal crisis – "Ford to City: Drop Dead" – in Seattle's case, the headlines of partisan acrimony hid a more complicated political economy that is difficult to reconcile with the traditional account of urban abandonment. Even as Seattle experienced exceptional rates of unemployment, first in the early 1970s, and then again in the early 1980s, it also became a postindustrial poster child of the professional service economy, the type of place urbanists looked to when seeking new models of economic development.

How did Seattle experience both fates at once? It is not that the city succeeded where others failed. *Empire of Tomorrow* argues that there was no de-industrialization, or postindustrialism in the 1970s. Rather, what transpired was a more complex project of economic restructuring that preserved and transformed certain aspects of American manufacturing, at the expense of workers, while shoring up and extending the professional managerial functions of places like Seattle in the making of global capitalism. Rather than open space for global connection through abandonment, the federal government took actions for Seattle that bolstered those sectors of the city's regional economy that were seen as holding the most value to U.S. power in the world. Seattle's recovery was thus guaranteed a global character – and secured a critical place for the city in the empire of tomorrow.

Ultimately, *Empire of Tomorrow* brings Carlos Bulosan's world to the World's Fair, providing a history of Seattle as an imperial city that centers marginalized workers against government and business elites and their triumphalist narratives of affluence and abundance. In doing so, it reconciles a glaring contradiction in contemporary popular understanding of the city itself. Here, there are two Seattles: one is the Seattle of the worker, the protestor, the leftwing revolutionary, or more moderately, the Democratic liberal – a union town. Think the city's rowdy

protests in 1999 against the World Trade Organization, or the Trump administration's histrionic legal designation of the city as an "anarchist jurisdiction."[23] The other, the Seattle of the World's Fair, is Seattle as a node of the global capitalist order: Boeing, Microsoft and Amazon, and the countless smaller firms that service the finance and trade of the new service economy.

How did these two Seattles develop together? In the transitions undergone by American power in the world in the 1970s, *Empire of Tomorrow* finds an answer. As American empire went, so went Seattle. And to the extent that the power of working people represented a barrier to that empire, and not a productive asset, their well-being went with it. Communities of color in Seattle fought hard for power and saw Boeing's troubles as an opportunity to reorient the city's politics. Instead, they were rebuffed by exclusionary, nationalist white unions who saw themselves as the real standard-bearers of America's world-beating post-World War II productivity, and who thus sought a return to Boeing's federally funded glory days. Other politics were possible, as the anti-imperial ILWU would attest, but the reach of radicals was limited by their isolation within organized labor as well as the constant threat of action by the federal government. American business, meanwhile, unsettled by growing global competition in the 1970s, sought increased productivity not in alliance with organized labor, but through new forms of automation, hostile management practices, and economic restructuring that decreased worker power while increasing profits and maintaining the supremacy of the United States in the world economy. As a hub of the research, development, trade logistics, and other service functions that this global restructuring

[23] The best account of the WTO protests and the global movements they were a part of remains Eddie Yuen, Daniel Burton-Rose, and George N. Katsiaficas, eds., *Confronting Capitalism: Dispatches from a Global Movement* (Soft Skull Press, 2004). Trump's Department of Justice labeled Seattle an "anarchist jurisdiction" in the wake of Black Lives Matter protests in the city that occupied a city block for three weeks; see David Gutman, "Seattle is an 'anarchist' city, along with Portland and New York, Trump administration says," *Seattle Times*, September 21, 2020.

demanded, Seattle was at the center of this transformation. The city came to be dominated by a rising strata of educated professionals whose affluence was then upheld by business, politicians, and the press as the very cure for the dislocations these transformations were causing. Populations rendered surplus by capitalism, on the other hand, continued to be impugned as unproductive for their lack of contribution to the national economy, and by extension, American power in the world.

This dissertation follows a growing line of historians who have already identified the decade of the 1970s as a key moment in the political economy of both the United States and the world. Scholars have approached it through wide and varied lenses, via high politics, policy regimes, academic theory, home life, and more.[24] Chief among them have been labor historians who depict the decade as a time of contradiction, one of both rising labor militancy, particularly among workers of color, and the starting point for an on-going decline in the state of all American workers, represented in the fall of real wages, unionization rates, and the political clout of organized labor.[25] Some have blamed that decline on American statesmen, from Nixon to Carter, for prioritizing Cold War trade alliances that failed to protect American industry from financialization and globalized supply chains, or on American business, which mounted new

[24] On high politics, see Ferguson, et al., *The Shock of the Global: The 1970s in Perspective* (Harvard University Press, 2010); Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980* (Princeton University Press, 1989); Meg Jacobs, *Panic at the Pump: The Energy Crisis and the Transformation of American Politics in the 1970s* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016). On academic theory, see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990) and Daniel T. Rodgers, *Age of Fracture* (Harvard University Press, 2011). On home life, see Natasha Zaretsky, *No Direction Home: The American Family and the Fear of National Decline, 1968-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy since the 1960s* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012).

[25] Nancy MacLean, *Freedom Is Not Enough: The Opening of the American Workplace* (Harvard University Press, 2006); Aaron Brenner, Cal Winslow, and Robert Brenner. *Rebel Rank and File: Labor Militancy and Revolt from Below During the Long 1970s* (London and New York: Verso Books, 2020).

offensives against organizing workers.[26] Others have emphasized the failings of labor's statesmen, leaders of organized labor who stubbornly prioritized support for the war in Vietnam and the privileged egos of their white male memberships, such that American workers' class identity was based in race and gender exclusion and an easy target for new mobilizations of rightwing politics.[27]

Empire of Tomorrow shows that, in fact, all these things can be true at the same time. Seattle's history in the 1970s, full of sit-ins, strikes and newly mobilized workers, corroborates the decade as an era of labor unrest and, at least in hindsight, a moment of great possibility. But working-class activity, a structural feature of capitalism and its dependence on the wage relations of labor, is a constant in its history; the moving target for historians is working-class political mobilization, which translates that activity into effective structural change, and which has ebbed and flowed dramatically throughout American history.[28] And in that respect, the story of Seattle reveals more foreclosed possibilities than it does exciting new achievements. The ability of U.S. organized labor to translate unrest into change was severely limited by the anti-radical political compromises, nationalist prerogatives, and racial and gender exclusions that had compounded within it over decades, of the kind that left workers like Carlos Bulosan out in the cold at midcentury, and, as we shall see, ruled out common struggle with welfare activists, militant dockworkers, and impoverished refugees in the 1970s. The political clout of organized labor declined, not because of a lack of class consciousness, but because both its leaders' and members'

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[26] Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Lane Windham, *Knocking on Labor's Door: Union Organizing in the 1970s and the Roots of a New Economic Divide* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

[27] Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: New Press, 2010).

[28] On this process in the Rust Belt city of Pittsburgh, see Gabriel Winant, *The Next Shift: The Fall of Industry and the Rise of Health Care in Rust Belt America* (Harvard University Press, 2021).

expectations of how the world worked – and how U.S. power in the world operated – assumed a level of class compromise that was never a reality.[29]

If appraising the stakes of a changing American empire for working people represents the first main task of this dissertation, taking stock of how that globalizing economy was made in Seattle represents its second main objective. In a recently emerging field, the history of capitalism, scholars have turned the tools of social history towards previously siloed topics such as the inner workings of business, finance, and the daily life of elites. *Empire of Tomorrow* joins that work in excavating the political origins of capitalist development, demonstrating how phenomena of the economy such as private property, financial instruments, corporate fortunes, and individual wealth are the product of contested power relations, rather than the outcome of natural market forces, the forward march of technological progress, or the inspired minds of entrepreneurial genius. Engaging the history of elites, moreover, can address the simplifying tendency to see their actions in terms of conspiracy, illustrating instead how they wielded their institutional power within limits as individuals who only partially understood the worlds in which they acted.[30] At the same time, however, there remains a risk of overcorrecting the narrative to the point of absenting the power of working people and social movements that set the terms of elites' field of action – that is, the

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[29] On the question of class compromise in mid-century American history, see Nelson Lichtenstein, *State of the Union: A Century of American Labor* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002) and Mike Davis, *Prisoners of the American Dream: Politics and Economy in the History of the US Working Class* (London; New York: Verso, 1999 [1986]). On the correspondence between the expansion of workers' rights and mobilizations of empire and state violence, see Beverly J. Silver, *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization Since 1870* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 12.

[30] In particular, see N. D. B. Connolly, *A World More Concrete: Real Estate and the Remaking of Jim Crow South Florida* (University of Chicago Press, 2014); Kim Phillips-Fein, *What's Good for Business: Business and American Politics since World War II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Alex Sayf Cummings, *Brain Magnet: Research Triangle Park and the Idea of the Idea Economy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020); Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011) See also Andrew Hedden, "Creating Research Triangle Park– A Review of 'Brain Magnet.'" *The Metropole*, June 16, 2021, https://themetropole.blog/2021/06/16/creating-research-triangle-park-a-review-of-brain-magnet/ .

structural feature of class struggle within capitalism.[31] *Empire of Tomorrow* charts the activities of both Seattle's working class and its more powerful business and politicians to illustrate the co-constitutive nature of their histories.

A substantial subset of the literature on capitalism has been concerned with explaining the rise of "neoliberalism:" a set of political ideas and practices, gaining prominence in the late 1970s, that sought the reduction of government in favor of the unleashing of unregulated free markets. The term "neoliberal" was initially useful as a quasi-epithet intended to name and grapple with the renewed political advancement of capital and the withering prospects of working class politics within multiple arenas, from the gentrifying efforts of local municipal government to the global "Washington Consensus" of institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization.[32] As scholars have poured over neoliberalism's origins, however, and broadened the term's application, they have sapped its explanatory power of much of the strength it once had. Historians have claimed to find its workings in nearly everything and everywhere: advanced by conservatives like U.S. President Ronald Reagan, but also his erstwhile enemies, the New Left radicals of the 1960s; as the defining ethos of the 1990s, but also a political project as far back as the 1920s; as a project of government contraction, but - in light of the explosion in mass incarceration - also a motor of tremendous state expansion.[33] Furthermore, as N.D.B. Connolly has argued, the act of juxtaposing a new "neoliberal" era against an earlier more progressive "New

[31] A noted tendency within the new history of capitalism, for example, has been the absorption of labor within a more nebulous narrative of "the people" versus "the interests;" see Jeffrey Sklansky, "Labor, Money, and the Financial Turn in the History of Capitalism." *Labor* (Durham, N.C.) 11, no. 1 (2014): 23–46.

[32] David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[33] Gary Gerstle, *The Rise and Fall of the Neoliberal Order: America and the World in the Free Market Era*, (Oxford University Press, 2022). On neoliberalism and the New Left, see Erik Baker, "New Left Review," *N+1*, March 8, 2022, https://www.nplusonemag.com/issue-42/reviews/new-left-review/. On the origins of neoliberalism in the 1920s, see Julia C. Ott, *When Wall Street Met Main Street* (Harvard University Press, 2011).

Deal Order" obfuscates how the supposedly novel oppressions of neoliberalism were in fact the daily reality for marginalized people throughout the twentieth century, and were even core features of the New Deal itself.[34] Readers of *Empire of Tomorrow* will see the workings of what has been called "neoliberalism" among its pages, particularly the use of public-private partnerships that privilege private capital. But this dissertation understands these moments as part of a continuity of class struggle within the history of American capitalism, rather than a radical break.[35]

A corollary to the concept of neoliberalism in past decades has been the equally indistinct idea of "globalization." As free market advocates sought to break down borders for unregulated trade, and communications and shipping technologies brought financial markets and supply chains more tightly together across long distances, the popular idea proliferated that states were losing their capacity to govern in the face of ascendent multinational corporations and new highly mobile global publics. Like neoliberalism, however, *Empire of Tomorrow* shows how this idea of globalization was ultimately an attempt to understand the latest developments in a longer history of global capitalism.[36] While the characteristics of so-called globalization – increased trade and advanced technology – became undeniable during the 1980s, *Empire of Tomorrow* shows how its infrastructure was built in Seattle a decade earlier, within an economy that was already quite global. Globalization, furthermore, was a misnomer to the extent that it conceived of states as

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[34] N.D.B. Connolly, "A White Story" *Dissent*, January 22, 2018, https://www.dissentmagazine.org/blog/neoliberalism-forum-ndb-connolly/ .

[35] For a recent account of twentieth-century American liberalism that challenges the novelty of neoliberalism, see Brent Cebul, *Illusions of Progress: Business, Poverty, and Liberalism in the American Century* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2023).

[36] Paul A. Kramer, "How Did the World Become Global?: Transnational History, Beyond Connection." *Reviews in American History* 49, no. 1 (2021): 119–41. On global connection as a framework for urban studies, see Saskia Sassen, *Global Networks, Linked Cities* (Psychology Press, 2002); A. K. Sandoval-Strausz and Nancy H. Kwak, eds. *Making Cities Global: The Transnational Turn in Urban History* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

withering institutions, when in fact states – and the American state especially – remained central to the global economy by funding business, controlling borders, repressing labor, regulating currency and finance, and otherwise superintending legal regimes of market relations.[37]

The long-standing historiographic portrayal of the 1970s as a decade of government contraction and industrial flight has masked the state's active role in building sites of concentrated wealth like Seattle.[38] For decades, the notion that the federal government had nothing to do with the city's economic recovery in the 1970s, advanced by both business boosters and chroniclers of Seattle's history, has been the received wisdom. *Empire of Tomorrow* sets the record straight, and in doing so, contributes to literature that expands on the previously underappreciated role that state development has played in American history.[39] Generations of academic scholars were confounded by the unique organization of the American national government, which had no analogue in the more centralized states of Europe. This led to regular appraisals of the American state as historically "weak," a conclusion that flew in the face of the size and scale of the twentieth century American military.[40] The reality, as historian Margaret O'Mara has aptly phrased it, is that

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[37] Gindin and Panitch, 1-2.

[38] A similar urban history that draws on broader economic contexts to dispute narratives of declension is Shaun S. Nichols, "Crisis Capital: Industrial Massachusetts and the Making of Global Capitalism, 1865–Present," *Enterprise & Society* 18, no. 4 (December 2017): 795–809.

[39] James T. Sparrow, William J. Novak, and Stephen W. Sawyer, *Boundaries of the State in US History* (University of Chicago Press, 2015); Brent Cebul, Lily Geismer, and Mason B. Williams, editors, *Shaped by the State: Toward a New Political History of the Twentieth Century* (University of Chicago Press, 2019).

[40] William J. Novak, "The Myth of the 'Weak' American State." *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 3 (2008): 752–772.

the United States boasts a "strong-state-as-weak-state:" immense state power distributed through a system of federalism that often masks the subsidies and wealth transfers it facilitates.[41]

In North America, state power in the twentieth century favored a very particular geography, one in which Seattle, home to Boeing and a regional hub of Pacific Northwest military installations, was a central node. Some have described this system in terms of a Military Industrial Complex, another quasi-epithet that has filtered in and out of academic literature. Originally defined as an elite-driven institution composed of the highest levels of government and corporate America, the term has since been diffused to describe an innumerable number of state/private sector relations.[42] The fact is that military and private sector interchanges have been a constant feature of American political economy in the twentieth century at multiple levels and scales, represented both in enduring local and regional political coalitions, and the developmental philosophy of military Keynesianism. Whatever they are called, in Seattle's history such interchanges were central, from the largesse of Boeing contracts to the shipping technology first employed by the U.S. military in Southeast Asia that enabled the port infrastructure of the city's growing business in international trade.

In this dissertation, commercial and military power are not pitted together, or dissolved into one, but considered as two overlapping modalities within the more expansive framing of

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[41] Margaret Pugh O'Mara, *Cities of Knowledge Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 11.

[42] On the Military Industrial Complex as elite-centered, see Seymour Melman, *Pentagon Capitalism: The Political Economy of War* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1970). On the "metropolitan-military complex," see Roger W. Lotchin, *Fortress California, 1910-1961: From Warfare to Welfare* (University of Illinois Press, 1992). On the "military-industrial-academic complex," see Stuart W. Leslie, *The Cold War and American Science: The Military-Industrial-Academic Complex at MIT and Stanford* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). More recent work on the military industrial complex includes Michael Brenes, *For Might and Right: Cold War Defense Spending and the Remaking of American Democracy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2020) and Tim Barker, "Cold War Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Military Spending, 1947-1990," PhD Diss., (Harvard University, 2022).

empire. In contrast, some histories of empire continue to advance a common but problematic account of American global power as an "informal empire," advanced through trade and commercial influence rather than the formal incorporation of territory or military force.[43] By focusing on only one mode of power, however, these accounts largely elide other central elements of American empire, particularly settler colonialism, race, and gender. Drawing on recent literature theorizing racial capitalism, *Empire of Tomorrow* pays close attention to how regimes of difference, both *de facto* and *de jure*, separated and divided populations in order to control and discipline them.[44] From Boeing's recruitment practices, to rhetoric around welfare and government relief during the company's early 1970s crisis; from the campaigns by the city's business and government to attract Japanese investment in the late 1970s, to the segregated service jobs that defined Vietnamese refugee resettlement efforts, racial differentiation was a complex and key feature of both Seattle's economic development and American empire.[45]

Making sense of Seattle as a site of empire also requires making sense of its standing as a city – that is, an *imperial city*. Present methods of understanding urban growth and global connection in the United States fail to fully grasp the relationship between cities and empire. Though an extensive literature exists connecting urban history and the colonial empires of Europe,

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[43] See Gindin and Panitch, 5-8. This approach was first developed by the so-called Wisconsin School of American Diplomatic History; see, for example, Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (Cornell University Press, 1963); William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2009 [1959]).

[44] Destin Jenkins and Justin Leroy, eds. *Histories of Racial Capitalism* (Columbia University Press, 2021); McCann, *Union by Law*. This literature is inspired by the work of Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (University of North Carolina Press, 2005 [1983]).

[45] For similar approaches to urban history, see Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008) and Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003).

comparable work on American cities has only been more recent.[46] Disregarding transnational connection, "urban imperialism" in U.S. urban historiography long denoted regional linkages between local city boosters and their siphoning of wealth from rural hinterlands, particularly in the nineteenth century American West.[47] Histories of American cities in the twentieth century, meanwhile, have connected urban growth to the federal state through the "Sunbelt," the sprawling metropolitan corridors of the American South and West created in large part by federal government investment and military spending especially from the New Deal onwards. Rather than lifting all economic tides, such developments splintered the region's economies between mostly white, suburban professional in-migrants and impoverished, inner city locals, a story that has echoes in *Empire of Tomorrow*.[48] In fact, early accounts of the Sunbelt, recognizing Seattle's shared origins in government spending as well as its accelerating trends of population and economic growth, sited the city squarely within that formation.[49] As the literature narrowed to focus on conservative political cultures that gave rise to the national Republican Party, Seattle's historically Democratic

[46] On imperial cities in Europe, see Felix Driver and David Gilbert, ed., *Imperial Cities: Landscape, Display and Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

[47] Gary Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: WW Norton & Co., 1991); Eugene P. Moehring, *Urbanism and Empire in the Far West, 1840-1890* (Reno and Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2004); Judd Kahn, *Imperial San Francisco: Politics and Planning in an American City, 1897-1906* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979); William G. Robbins, "Of Country and City: The Metropolis and Hinterland in the Modern West," in *Colony and Empire: The Capitalist Transformation of the American West* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1994). Much of this literature drew heavily upon the work of urban theorist Lewis Mumford; see Mumford, "The Imperial Façade," in *Sticks and Stones: A Study of American Architecture and Civilization* (New York: Dover, [1924] 1954).

[48] Bruce J. Schulman, *From Cotton Belt to Sunbelt: Federal Policy, Economic Development, and the Transformation of the South, 1938-1980* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Elizabeth Tandy Shermer, *Sunbelt Capitalism: Phoenix and the Transformation of American Politics* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013). For an earlier, but enduring account of the federal role in shaping U.S. urban political economy, see John H. Mollenkopf, *The Contested City* (Princeton University Press, 1983).

[49] Carl Abbott, *The New Urban America: Growth and Politics in Sunbelt Cities* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987); Markusen et al., *The Rise of the Gunbelt*.

politics and rainy Pacific Northwest climate rendered it an outlier.[50] But the focus on partisan divergences overshadowed shared economic development agendas, hostile to organized labor and redistributive politics more generally, that privileged emerging service economies and the professionals who managed them.[51] As this dissertation argues, that focus also masked a commitment to maintaining American power in the world that was shared by politicians regardless of party affinity.

Empire of Tomorrow, by contrast, advances a growing body of work that approaches American urban history through the lens of the imperial city.[52] Reframing urban history as imperial situates it within a global field of power that is often neglected by historians, showing how transnational relationships are constituted, and challenging historians to reconsider the "national" frame of analysis, too often taken for granted, as a form of power in its own right. In other words, framing cities as imperial not only expands the scale of analysis, but subjects the very notion of "scale" itself to scrutiny, to explain how categories like "global," "national" and "local" function

[50] Sean P. Cunningham, "Sunbelt Identities: The Pursuit of Place, Process, and Political Sensibilities." *Middle West Review 4*, no. 1 (2017): 63–70; Michelle M. Nickersonet et al. eds., *Sunbelt Rising: The Politics of Place, Space, and Region* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

[51] On the problems with partisan history, see Matthew D. Lassiter, "Political History beyond the Red-Blue Divide," *Journal of American History* 98, no. 3 (December 1, 2011): 760–64. On the politics of the professional service economy, see Lily Geismer, *Don't Blame Us: Suburban Liberals and the Transformation of the Democratic Party* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); Tracy Neumann, *Remaking the Rust Belt: The Postindustrial Transformation of North America* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Suleiman Osman, *The Invention of Brownstone Brooklyn: Gentrification and the Search for Authenticity in Postwar New York* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[52] Recent literature on imperial cities in the United States includes Kristin Hoganson, "Inposts of Empire," *Diplomatic History* 45, no. 1 (January 12, 2021): 1–22; Henry W. Berger, *St. Louis and Empire: 250 Years of Imperial Quest and Urban Crisis* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2015); Andrew Friedman, *Covert Capital: Landscapes of Denial and the Making of U.S. Empire in the Suburbs of Northern Virginia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013); Jessica M. Kim, *Imperial Metropolis: Los Angeles, Mexico, and the Borderlands of American Empire, 1865–1941* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2019); B. Alex Beasley, *Expert Capital: Houston and the Making of a Service Empire*, forthcoming.

across history.[53] The literature on imperial cities speaks to at least four elements of American cities that are particularly present in Seattle's history: extensive connections beyond the city's nominal borders; ongoing alliance between private commercial interests and the state that made such connections possible; a built environment of technological infrastructure made to serve that alliance; and labor forces, segmented by race, subject to the evolving needs of empire. To an extent, all American cities share this imperial history, both in their settler colonial origins and their subsequent economic developments within the global economy. If Seattle is unexceptional as an imperial city, it nonetheless exemplifies here-to-fore disregarded features of late twentieth century American urbanism, from the role of the federal government in selectively answering urban crisis, to the power relations that reconfigured global capitalism.

Last of all, *Empire of Tomorrow* addresses the marked absence of the city of Seattle itself from scholarly historical literature.[54] Again, it is a problem of two Seattles. On the one hand, the city boasts a robust body of work, comprised of both academic manuscripts and personal memoirs, that recover, preserve, and advance the stories of Seattle's workers and activists.[55] This growing

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[53] For a theoretical discussion of urban scale along similar lines, see Neil Brenner, *New Urban Spaces: Urban Theory and the Scale Question* (New York, NY, United States of America: Oxford University Press, 2019). An exemplary work that uses the imperial analytic to scrutinize the nation-state's definition of "interior" and "exterior" is Megan Black, *The Global Interior: Mineral Frontiers and American Power* (Harvard University Press, 2018).

[54] Important works that buck this trend, albeit on periods mostly prior to mid-century, include Megan Asaka, *Seattle from the Margins: Exclusion, Erasure, and the Making of a Pacific Coast City* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2022); Kornel S. Chang, *Pacific Connections the Making of the Western U.S.-Canadian Borderlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Matthew Klingle, *Emerald City: An Environmental History of Seattle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

[55] Historical scholarship includes Ligaya Domingo, "Building a Movement: Filipino American Union and Community Organizing in Seattle in the 1970s," PhD diss., (University of California, Berkeley, 2010); Trevor Griffey, "Black Power's Labor Politics: The United Construction Workers Association and Title VII Law in the 1970s," PhD diss., (University of Washington, 2011); Judson L. Jeffries, *On the Ground: The Black Panther Party in Communities across America* (University Press of Mississippi, 2010); Diana K. Johnson, *Seattle in Coalition: Multiracial Alliances, Labor Politics, and Transnational Activism in the Pacific Northwest, 1970–1999* (UNC Press Books, 2023); McCann, *Union by Law*; Jeffrey C. Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability: Inventing Ecotopia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010); Michael Schulze-Oechtering Castañeda, *No Separate Peace: Black and Filipinx Workers and the Labor of Solidarity in the Pacific Northwest*, forthcoming; Barbara Winslow, *Revolutionary Feminists: The Women's Liberation Movement in Seattle* (Durham, NC: Duke University

literature, much of it in the realm of public history, sometimes enables an alluring, if simple "Greatest Hits" of Seattle history: a transhistorical throughline from the Seattle General Strike of 1919 and "Soviet of Washington" of homegrown socialist parties to the Black Panthers, the WTO protests, and Occupy Seattle.[56]

But the larger story of the city's political economy from the 1970s onwards, the very setting and stage for activists' working lives, is no less than an historiographic black hole. In its place has been a celebratory literature that uncritically reads Seattle's contemporary position as a global hub of wealth and status back onto its past. Often written by locals consumed with an inferiority complex at the relative small size and stature of their city, these works are alternately boosterish and business-centric, filled with ahistorical one-hundred year accounts of Seattle's "pioneer spirit," often in an effort to identify the secret entrepreneurial sauce that made the city the wealthy home of giant multinationals.[57] Seattle, they insist, was an exceptional city, a model to follow. In fact, the city was subject to the same political and economic forces that any other American city was subject to. If nothing else, *Empire of Tomorrow* aims to put this triumphalist work in its place.

Press, 2023); Cal Winslow, *Radical Seattle: The General Strike of 1919* (Monthly Review Press, 2020). Memoirs and local histories include Ron Chew, *Remembering Silme Domingo and Gene Viernes: The Legacy of Filipino American Labor Activism* (Seattle: Alaskero Foundation and University of Washington Press, 2012); Aaron Floyd Dixon, *My People Are Rising: Memoir of a Black Panther Party Captain* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012); Bob Santos, *Hum Bows, Not Hot Dogs!: Memoirs of a Savvy Asian American Activist* (Seattle.: International Examiner Press, 2002) and Santos with Gary Iwamoto, *The Gang of Four: Four Leaders, Four Communities, One Friendship* (Seattle, WA: Chin Music Press, 2015). An exceptional public history resource is the Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, University of Washington, http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/index.htm, accessed August 5, 2023.

[56] "Soviet of Washington" was an off-hand quip made in 1936 by U.S. postmaster general David Farley regarding the leftwing orientation of the region's politics. It has since taken on a life of its own. See Cal Winslow, "Seattle, 'the Soviet of Washington,'" *Jacobin*, October 3, 2018, https://jacobin.com/2018/10/seattle-general-strike-iww-labor-revolution, accessed August 5, 2023.

[57] Variations on this theme include Roger Sale, *Seattle: Past to Present* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1976); Fred Moody, *Seattle and the Demons of Ambition: A Love Story* (St. Martin's Publishing Group, 2004); Michael Luis, *Century 21 City: Seattle's Fifty Year Journey from World's Fair to World Stage* (Fairweather Publishing, 2012); and Tom Alberg, *Flywheels: How Cities Are Creating Their Own Futures* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2021).

This dissertation proceeds over five chapters. Chapter one, "Food Stamp Capitol: The Politics of Work and Welfare in Seattle's Economic Crisis," tells the story of Seattle's early 1970s economic crisis from the grassroots. Between 1969 and 1971, the Boeing Company eliminated 60,000 jobs in the city, leading to the worst unemployment crisis in the United States. While the company's blue-collar workers and their union, the International Association of Machinists District Lodge 751, sought federal government assistance for Boeing, welfare rights activists inspired by the Black Freedom Struggle and the city's vibrant social movements fought to expand government relief for the unemployed and poor more broadly. Comparing the responses of these two disaffected groups, this chapter examines how divisions of race and gender in Seattle's economy forestalled solidarity at a critical moment of possibility for the labor movement, creating an opening for an advancing professional managerial stratum in local city politics.

Chapter two, "Empire in Need: Seattle and the U.S. Federal Government in the 1970s," examines how political elites overcame partisan divisions to enact broad and consequential support for the beleaguered Pacific Northwest economy from the national U.S. government. Despite a small but influential cohort of officials hailing from Seattle within the Nixon administration, the White House was extremely resistant to provide direct relief for the city, fearing it would merely benefit the state's Democratic politicians. Growing concerns over the diminishment of U.S. power in the world, however, ultimately brought the Nixon administration together with Washington state's powerful Democratic Senators Warren Magnuson and Henry Jackson to extend unprecedented federal funding and support to the region under the guise of support for the Boeing Company and continued U.S. global economic supremacy. Benefiting Seattle's emerging

economy of trade and services, the federal government's tacit bailout further enabled the city's growing profile within a restructuring global capitalism.

Elites were not the only historical actors with global visions of a new economy. Returning the focus to Seattle's workers, chapter three, "A Strike Against Empire: The Port of Seattle, the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union and the Politics of International Trade," recounts the generational 1971 strike of West Coast dockworkers through the perspective of their union's anti-imperial politics. While American capital sought increased world trade as a way to overcome the limits of their country's midcentury empire, the ILWU argued that increasing worker-to-worker diplomacy and the opening of relations with communist and socialist nations represented an alternative to the violent overextension of American military and economic power. Falling squarely within the city's unemployment crisis, the union's 1971 strike was interpreted as a threat to Seattle's new economic futures, inspiring calls for federal intervention from the region's politicians and employers. Ultimately, the Nixon administration, abetted by the U.S. Congress, would break the strike, illustrating how U.S. power in the world continued to shape American cities.

The undermining of worker power in pursuit of global restructuring was not always as dramatic or overt as a federal injunction. Chapter four, "'Seattle Means Business:' Race, Class, and Empire in the Postindustrial Pacific," follows the efforts of the local professional managerial stratum to build a post-Boeing economy through two new organizations, the Seattle-King County Economic Development Council, and the municipal Office of Economic Development. Faced with the geographic isolation of Seattle and the relative strength of the city's unions, business attempted to redefine Seattle as a new center of the global trade economy, home to an especially loyal and available workforce. Following from the premises of racial liberalism and postindustrialism, their

effort to build a professional service economy sought to leverage American global power to compel Japanese capital to invest in the city, while working to mitigate discrimination against foreign investors. At the same time, their pursuit of economic development through international investment leveraged race and class power at home by accommodating Japanese investors' professed aversions to Black workers and unions.

By the end of the 1970s, American empire would continue, but on new grounds. No longer the world's primary manufacturer, U.S. economic dominance came to rely instead on finance, technology, consumption, business services, and the political defeat of labor. A fifth and final chapter, "The Cost of Livability: Seattle and the New Political Economy of American Empire," shows how workers in Seattle confronted this new economy, which had transformed the once beleaguered city from the "Food Stamp Capitol" of the Boeing bust into the celebrated "most livable city in the United States." International Association of Machinists District Lodge 751, fed up with Boeing's use of layoffs to maintain its business, mounted the first successful strike in its forty-year history, but otherwise remained beholden to its privileged place in the national economy. Seattle's large, recently arrived community of Vietnamese refugees, on the other hand, fell victim to the continued emphasis on jobs over relief, which had doomed the welfare rights movement, and which had defined the principal response of Asian American activists to the Boeing bust. Ultimately, the experience of each group was determined by the outcomes of Seattle's early 1970s crisis and its status as an imperial city. Whether under the empire of yesterday, today, or tomorrow, economic worth in the United States was measured through material contribution to the maintenance of U.S. power in the world.

CHAPTER 1

FOOD STAMP CAPITOL

THE POLITICS OF WORK AND WELFARE IN SEATTLE'S ECONOMIC CRISIS

In the final days of 1970, Gyle and Jean Wyman sat in the living room of their suburban home in Bothell, Washington, 25 miles northeast of Seattle. Their television was playing, the volume muted. All year long it had brought Gyle and Jean national news about the war in Vietnam, about unrest on college campuses, about violence in the streets of America's cities. But now, circumstances brought the national news to them. Joining Gyle and Jean in their living room was a reporter from the weekly newspaper *National Observer*.

The Boeing Company, one of the largest aerospace companies in the world and the Seattle area's dominant employer, had cut 60,000 jobs since 1968, when its Seattle employees had peaked at 101,500. The cut had sparked an economic crisis sharper and more rapid than any seen in a metropolitan area in the United States since the days of the Great Depression. Over 10% of Seattle's workers were out of work, with more and more laid off each day, and Gyle was among them. By November 1971, that figure would hit nearly 17%. The sole wage-earner for Jean and their three children, Gyle was approaching his sixth month out of a job. No one had seen it coming, least of all the Wymans. "Until July," the reporter's article would explain, "Gyle was a member of the new middle-class who expected to earn about $18,000 this year." It was a pretty penny. Such an income in 2023 dollars would be over $135,000. "He lived in suburbia, owned a motorboat and the usual appliances – a color television set and automatic washer-dryer."

Wyman was also a union member of International Association of Machinists, District Lodge 751 (IAM 751, or the Aero Mechanics, for short), which represented production line workers at the Boeing Company, and until the layoffs, was one of the largest bargaining units in the United States. Gainfully employed and avid consumers, such workers were the bedrock of the country's Keynesian economic policies, which saw the creation of jobs through government spending in industries like aerospace as the means to a vibrant spending economy. But now those jobs were gone, and Wyman and his fellow workers were cast collectively as representatives of Seattle's economic crisis.

As Gyle described the shame and desperation he felt, his thoughts turned to poverty, race, and radical politics. He was, he told the reporter, an "average American." But the world he saw around him did not look to him like average America. Expecting they could make it on their own, the family had been reluctant to look to the government for help, waiting a full month after Gyle's lay-off before applying for food stamps. "Have you ever had to swallow your pride?" Gyle offered by way of explanation. He said he had looked for help, visiting the government's small business administration for a loan, but was denied assistance because he was white. "My only problem was the color of my skin. It wasn't black." The world he had known was unraveling and Gyle was exasperated. "The hippies, the drugs, the protests, I still don't understand what they're all about. I do know they are part of the reason that our aerospace industry is being wrecked. It's all linked together, the pressure on congress that has cost the aerospace industry billions. And the result can ruin an area like Seattle."[1]

[1] "The National Observer: The Unemployed: Gyle, a Highly Skilled Mechanic, May Have to Seek Work Abroad," *Aero Mechanic*, January 25, 1971, 3.

Not all of Seattle's applicants for government assistance were sitting at home feeling sorry for themselves. Two months before, in October 1970, a group led by Bernadine Garrett of the Washington State Welfare Rights Organization packed the Department of Public Assistance office in Seattle's Rainier Valley neighborhood. Without asking permission, the group placed a table in the lobby offering information about welfare recipients' rights, brought in two small libraries of reading material for waiting welfare recipients, commandeered an "Employees Only" area to serve coffee and cookies, and opened a makeshift nursery for waiting mothers to leave their children.[2] Owing to the Boeing crisis, the office was already a crowded place. Waiting rooms were packed as thousands of jobless workers applied for public assistance and food stamps, enrolling at such a rate that a congressional report called Seattle the "food stamp capitol" of the United States.[3] And they were not all, nor even principally, like Gyle Wyman. In Seattle's majority-Black Central District, for instance, unemployment approached 35 percent in 1971, over double that of the city's rate at large.[4]

A week previous, Bernadine Garrett had delivered a list of sixteen demands on behalf of the group to the welfare office administrator. In recognition of the city's economic crisis, the demands called for increased benefits for the unemployed and wider publicity for the food stamp program. Seeking to alleviate the dead time of waits that could average four to six hours, the group sought free coffee and milk in the welfare office waiting room, free daycare for waiting mothers, and staggered welfare worker breaks. They sought representation of recipients on welfare decision-

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[2] "Groups in Protest at Welfare Office," *Seattle Daily Times*, October 2, 1970; "Welfare Rights Militants Invade Public Aid Office," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, October 3, 1970; "Welfare Wrongs," *Sabot*, October 1, 1970.

[3] Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs, *Seattle: Unemployment, the New Poor, and Hunger, with Supplement.* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1971).

[4] Jon Stewart, "Seattle: The New Poor Face the New Depression," *Ramparts*, May 19, 1972, 50.

making bodies, the removal of intimidating security guards, and greater respect from receptionists, "such as a smile once in awhile." Above all, the demands insisted the welfare office "recognize welfare and food stamp recipients as dignified human beings worthy of respect." Now under siege by protesters, the administrator emerged from his office to argue defensively that his department just could not meet the group's demands. "They can be done," Garrett retorted. "We just did them."[5]

The aggrieved resignation of Gyle Wyman, the aerospace mechanic, and the resolute demands of Bernadine Garrett, the welfare rights organizer, represented two signal responses to Seattle's unemployment crisis of the early 1970s. Over decades of economic development, exclusionary terms of work and welfare had come to define Seattle's economy. At a time of general social movement unrest, the crisis gave new local strength to a welfare rights movement that was in decline nationally, and motivated organizer Bernadine Garrett to run for local political office, the first time a Black woman had ever done so in the city's history. Ultimately, however, the allegiance of the Aero Mechanics' union leadership and those of its members to a middle-class identity prevented the powerful grassroots challenge that welfare rights organizers posed to the existing political and economic order. The institutions of collective bargaining would provide real protections for members of the Aero Mechanics, and arguably even save Seattle's economy from grinding to a halt in the wake of Boeing's near implosion. But the failure of the union to ally with welfare rights organizers would set the terms of response to the on-going economic crises of the 1970s, increasing the racial divide in the city's economy, and widening the opening for a rising

[5] "16 Welfare Demands Made," *Seattle Daily Times*, September 21, 1970; "The States Report: Washington Meeting," *Welfare Fighter*, October 1970; "Groups in Protest at Welfare Office;" "Welfare Wrongs;" "Welfare Rights Militants Invade Public Aid Office."

strata of urban professionals in local politics who would advance an anti-worker agenda as the decade progressed.

SONIC BOOM: SEATTLE AND THE "FALLOUT" OF AFFLUENCE

In 1968, Seattle was Boeing's city. With a Seattle area workforce of 101,500 people, the company's profitability and growth practically enabled the metropolis, producing record amounts of building construction and an unemployment rate of only 3 percent.[6] Due in part to Seattle's substantial geographic distance from other major population centers in the United States, it had taken millions – if not billions – in federal government dollars and thousands of transplanted migrants over the course of three decades to reach that point. The primary beneficiary of the immense federal investment in airplane manufacturing in Washington state during World War II, Boeing's growth had been resurrected thereafter by the shifting of geopolitical military strategy towards airpower and ensuing Cold War arms contracts. Such contracts anchored the company's finances and allowed it to develop its commercial airplane business, with many of the company's early civilian aircraft merely modified versions of its military models.[7] The company's commercial operations accelerated in the 1960s, particularly between 1966 and 1968, when 50,000 new jobs emerged in the Seattle area aerospace industry as Boeing began production of its latest line of aircraft, the 747 "Jumbo Jet." Population growth followed suit, augmented by the Boeing

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[6] Washington Mutual Savings Back Advertisement, *Seattle Times*, January 3, 1968, 4; Herbert G. Lawson, "A Sonic Bust: In a Stunned Seattle, Only Radicals Rejoice at SST Loss," *Wall Street Journal* December 7, 1970.

[7] Ann R Markusen, Peter Hall, Scott Campbell and Sabina Deitrick, *The Rise of the Gunbelt: The Military Remapping of Industrial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 155.

Company's practice of recruiting new employees from outside the region. Over the course of the 1960s, the four counties encompassing the census-defined Seattle metropolitan area (King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap counties) gained 421,000 people, reaching a total of 1.9 million. Almost 60 percent of those newcomers, 259,000, came between 1965 and 1970.[8] When Boeing's Seattle area employment peaked in 1967 at 148,000, close to one in five workers in any sector of the metropolitan economy worked there, representing a whopping 61 percent of the area's manufacturing jobs.[9] By then, even the civic identity of the city seemed wedded to the company. That year, Seattle's new professional basketball team had been coined "The Super Sonics" following Boeing's receipt of a federal government contract to develop a Super Sonic Transport (SST) aircraft.[10]

Beyond pure numbers, the impacts of the company's development were extensive in the Seattle area. Stretching geographically beyond the city's formal limits into its suburbs, the company's influence deeply shaped the composition of the area's demographics and its familial arrangements. While Boeing's headquarters fell within Seattle's southern municipal limit, much of its "Seattle" production facilities in fact lay a stone's throw outside it, the jig-sawed city border artfully arranged for the company to avoid municipal taxes and assessments.[11] Other facilities in the area, meanwhile, lay further beyond. The company's oldest facility outside of Seattle lay to the southeast in Renton in King County, where Boeing had operated since World War II, and first

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[8] Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs, *Seattle: Unemployment, the New Poor, and Hunger, with Supplement.* (Washington: U.S. Govt. Print. Off., 1971), 5.

[9] Ann R Markusen, *The Rise of the Gunbelt: The Military Remapping of Industrial America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 155; Boyd Burchard, "Diversifying the Hard Way," *The Seattle Daily Times*, June 21, 1970, D10.

[10] Gil Lyons, "Supers Named Sonics," *Seattle Daily Times*, February 18, 1967.

[11] Nard Jones, *Seattle* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972), 335.

developed its commercial operations within a government-owned facility.[12] In 1967, out of room at its facilities in Seattle and Renton and unwilling to risk the cost of disrupting its workforce for a move out of state, Boeing had constructed its factory for the 747 aircraft in Everett, 25 miles to the north of Seattle in the county of Snohomish, where it quickly became that city's dominant employer. [13] Additional facilities were built during the 1960s in the small town of Auburn, located south of Seattle in the Green River Valley of King County, where such suburban industrial development contributed to a steep decline in farming.[14]

Not surprisingly, the residential patterns of Boeing employees followed this dispersed development, tending to cluster near the company's facilities. Prior to the construction of Boeing's Everett factory, over half of Boeing employees were already living outside Seattle city limits.[15] When employees signed on at Boeing, they were expected to be available to work at any one of the Boeing plants from Auburn to Everett, a span of 56 miles, and transfers between plants were not uncommon.[16] Thus, while people were moving to the Seattle area in large numbers over the course of the 1960s, the city proper saw a decline in its population as commuter communities grew, falling from 557,087 in 1960 to 530,881 ten years later – a dramatic decline considering the metropolitan area's overall net gain of 421,000 over the same period.[17] A capstone to this

[12] Markusen et al, 291, note 17.

[13] T. M. Sell, *Wings of Power: Boeing and the Politics of Growth in the Northwest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 87.

[14] Jeffrey C Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability: Inventing Ecotopia* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 29-30.

[15] Dick Moody, "Here Is Where Boeing Employes [sic] Live, Roughly," *Seattle Times*, August 21, 1966, 27.

[16] "Dial-A-Question," *Aero Mechanic*, March 31, 1969, 1.

[17] Seattle Office of Policy Planning, *Seattle Displacement Study* (Seattle, WA: City of Seattle, 1979), 11; Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs, 5.

development came in 1968 with the opening of the $90 million Southcenter Shopping Complex, one of the largest malls in the United States, in the south suburb of Tukwila, bordering both Seattle and Renton.[18]

Throughout the boom years, Boeing's dominance of Seattle was plain to see, leaving many businesses and financial institutions with local markets, like downtown merchants and banks, nervous about the area economy's lack of diversity.[19] A few other sectors gave them hope. Seattle's longstanding profile as a hub of the Pacific Northwest extractive hinterland economy remained, with lumber, agriculture (especially Eastern Washington fruit), and metals production (driven by the state's cheap hydroelectric power) continuing to represent key exports. Maritime and naval facilities had fallen way to the United States' imperial preference for air power, and American travelers' growing preference for airplanes. But Seattle's Puget Sound region was still home to a regional joint air force/army base and continued to serve as the main waterborne supply point for development of Alaska, where growth of the oil industry was highly anticipated. The city was also an increasing beneficiary of trade with the developing economies of the Pacific, such as Japan and Hong Kong, which accelerated in the late 1960s. The problem remained that all these export-dependent sectors were, like aerospace, highly reliant on demand and capital investment that originated from outside of the Pacific Northwest.[20] As long as that demand remained strong, and the United States economy kept growing, the need to develop economic diversity and local

[18] Washington Mutual Savings Bank, Advertisement, *Seattle Daily Times*, January 3, 1968, 4.

[19] Seattle's 1962 World's Fair had originally been an effort by the city's downtown businessowners to challenge suburbanization and the overwhelming profile of the Boeing economy. But after the federal government got involved, the Fair's focus turned to technology and aerospace; see John M. Findlay, *Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture after 1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

[20] Burchard, "Diversifying the Hard Way;" Gary Kamimura *Fifty-Year Perspective of Employment Trends in Washington State, 1947-1997* (Olympia, WA: Washington State Employment Security, Labor Market and Economic Analysis, 1998).

sustainability lacked a sense of urgency. The coming crisis, however, would challenge that complacency.

Seattle was growing larger. It was also a city divided. As Boeing and the aerospace industry transformed the city's economic landscape, they also segregated its racial geography. The longstanding pattern of the city's racial order had first been codified in the eighteenth century during the city's establishment as a settler colonial outpost of the expanding United States. That pattern was best illustrated by an 1865 city ordinance that had banned Native people within the city limits unless they worked for a white employer.[21] Later non-white communities were similarly excluded by law or discriminatory practices, except when the white-dominated economy demanded otherwise. The transformations of Seattle's economy during World War II and the Cold War, therefore, also transformed the city's mid-twentieth century racial composition. The area's non-Native, non-white communities, having survived decades of racial discrimination and state violence, predated those geopolitical conflicts. However, their size, demographics, and economic profiles were profoundly reshaped by U.S. state actions from the 1940s onwards.

Seattle's connections to the global economy of the Pacific had long drawn workers of Asian origin. Chinese migrants, for example, who had once worked as seasonal labor for the railroads, fish canneries, and farms of the city's hinterland, had been subject to white mob violence, expulsion, and legal exclusion for decades. During World War II, however, military alliance with the Chinese government and urging by Seattle's Chinese community moved Washington state

[21] Coll-Peter Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-over Place* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 54.

Senator Warren Magnuson to sponsor the successful repeal of the federal Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943. The reform led to a small but significant increase in the number of Chinese people in the city from 1,781 in 1940, to 4,176 in 1960.[22] Filipinos, who served as the same hinterland workforce following Chinese exclusion, came to the United States in large numbers in the early twentieth century when the Philippines was taken as a U.S. colony following the Spanish American War in 1898. Their numbers stagnated thereafter as the Philippines moved towards formal independence and new restrictions were implemented on migration in 1934.[23] Japanese residents, meanwhile, were subject to state violence during World War II, leading to a dramatic decrease in their numbers. Prior to the war, Japanese represented Seattle's largest non-white group, numbering nearly 7,000 people. Though subject to similar exclusionary anti-Asian laws and discriminatory violence as Chinese and Filipino migrants, different restrictions specific to Japanese immigration had allowed families to settle and grow in the United States. Following their incarceration in concentration camps by the U.S. government during the war, however, only 4,700 returned.[24]

As Seattle rapidly grew through the 1960s, the numbers of Asian residents in Seattle grew too, driven in part by federal immigration reform in 1965 that lifted national origin restrictions in favor of family members of legal residents, as well as skilled professionals. The reform was both a response to the growing influence of the Black Freedom Struggle, which had rendered the racist restrictions of national origin quotas increasingly untenable, and a geopolitical move to rehabilitate

[22] Doug Chin, *Seattle's International District: The Making of a Pan-Asian American Community* (Seattle, WA: International Examiner Press, 2001), 71.

[23] Dorothy Fujita-Rony, "History through a Postcolonial Lens: Reframing Philippine Seattle," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 102, no. 1 (Winter 2010/2011), 3–13.

[24] Chin, 74-75.

the reputation of the United States in the era of global decolonization. By 1970, the first year the federal census recorded information about Asian national backgrounds, Seattle's King County was home to 29,141 total Asian residents, the vast majority of whom lived within Seattle city limits. Filipino and Chinese communities totaled 7,117 and 7,303, respectively, while the Japanese community had recovered to 13,492. The percentage of the population that was Asian was small, only 2.5 percent of total county residents, but it was also much larger relative to the rest of the United States.[25]

Compared to the city's Asian communities, Seattle's Black community was more recent in origin. Taking the place of the Japanese as Seattle's largest non-white group during World War II, the number of African Americans expanded markedly during the city's dramatic wartime population and economic boom. While much smaller in number compared to similar migrations to other Western cities at the time, the influx nonetheless established Seattle's first large Black community. Drawn by wartime jobs, the new arrivals quickly found themselves sequestered into the city's un-skilled or semi-skilled professions due in large to the practices of Boeing and the largest union at the company, IAM 751. In 1941, the union was subject to a purge of its leftwing leadership, which had been dedicated to racial inclusion, by its conservative international union. This ensured a shared dedication to racial exclusion, often couched in the language of anti-communism, that the union shared with Boeing.[26] A Black worker at the company could not join the union until 1948, when the federal Taft-Hartley Act outlawed IAM 751's closed union shop.

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[25] "Mapping Race and Segregation in Seattle and King County 1940-2020," Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, accessed October 5, 2023, https://depts.washington.edu/labhist/maps-race-seattle.shtml. On the regional concentration of Asian communities in the Western United States, see Peter S. Xenos, Robert W. Gardner, Herbert R. Barringer, and Michael J. Levin, "Asian Americans: Growth and Change in the 1970s," in *Pacific Bridges: The New Immigration from Asia and the Pacific Islands* (Staten Island, NY: Center for Migration Studies, 1987), 258.

[26] Sarah Davenport, "Battle at Boeing: African Americans and the Campaign for Jobs, 1939-1942," *Seattle Civil Rights & Labor History Project*, accessed June 7, 2015, http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/boeing_battle.htm .

Until that point, Black employees had worked on a permit system, which excluded them from seniority rules and promotions even after union membership opened.[27]

Boeing's dramatic growth after World War II drove a large uptick in Black employment at the company, to the point that one in three Black workers in Seattle were employed in an aerospace-related industry in 1960. But owing to the on-going racist practices first established during the war, their employment in aerospace remained second-tier, a fact compounded by Boeing's reliance on recruitment of highly technical labor pools from outside of the isolated Seattle region, which followed the general defense industry preference of educated white men.[28]

While Seattle grew through midcentury, legacies of racist covenants and informal discrimination kept housing prospects for the city's non-white communities severely limited, with the 1970 census revealing the highest rates of racial segregation in the city's history. Black residents remained restricted to the increasingly congested Central Area neighborhood, though some had slowly begun movement into the city's southeastern Rainier Valley. Asian residents, meanwhile, began spreading out of the city's International District, especially to the nearby neighborhood of Beacon Hill.[29] Segregation increased the difficulty of finding and maintaining employment in the aerospace industry, which in the 1960s had expanded primarily within Seattle's

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[27] Trevor Griffey, "Black Power's Labor Politics: The United Construction Workers Association and Title VII Law in the 1970s" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2011), 37, 47.

[28] Even when the Boeing Company established a training program explicitly for "hardcore unemployed" black workers in the late 1960s, accusations spread that the company disproportionately scrutinized graduates of the program, routinely firing them after a short six-week trial period while claiming statistics showing more black employees than were actually kept on the job; "Boeing," *Helix*, April 23, 1970. On Boeing's recruitment practices, see Markusen et al, 7.

[29] Richard Morrill, "The Seattle Central District (Cd) Over Eighty Years," *Geographical Review* 103, no. 3 (2013): 315–335.

racially exclusive suburbs and small towns.[30] Seattle's Black and Asian residents were thus shut out of the city's general prosperity. In 1967, the jobless rate for Black workers was ten percent, three times higher than the city's overall jobless rate, even though 148,000 jobs had been added to Seattle's economy over the past year and a half.[31] Testimony from the area's Asian communities reported similar widespread employment discrimination, severely limiting the job prospects of Asian workers despite persistent "Model Minority" myths about their educational advancement and social mobility.[32]

In 1968, the benefits of Seattle's growth were distributed unevenly, but that did not bother the Aero Mechanics. As the union saw it, things were looking up. "Today, Aero Space, the industry as a whole is booming," Charles F. West, Vice President of District Lodge 751's parent union International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers, reported in March 1968 at the union's first bargaining conference of the year. "Stimulated by the war in Asia - and the development of the SST - demand has never been higher, profits have never been greater and prospects have never been brighter."[33] It was a high time for a union with a long history. Originally founded in the late 1880s by railroad machinists and engineers, the International Association of Machinists had grown enormously with the industrializing economy, becoming one of the largest

[30] Markusen, *The Rise of the Gunbelt,* 291, n 17; T. M Sell, *Wings of Power: Boeing and the Politics of Growth in the Northwest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 87; Jeffrey C Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability: Inventing Ecotopia* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 29-30.

[31] Quintard Taylor, "The Civil Rights Movement in the American West: Black Protest in Seattle, 1960-1970," *The Journal of Negro History* 80, no. 1 (1995), 13.

[32] Asian-American Advisory Council, *Report to the Governor on Discrimination against Asians*; *Public Hearing Conducted on March 3, 1973*, (Seattle, Washington, 1973).

[33] Charles F. West, "Keynoter Cites 1968 Opportunities, Problems," *Aero Mechanic*, March 11, 1968, 2.

unions in the United States. In 1935 the machinists had started to organize within the airline industry, in 1936 signing the industry's first labor agreement with the Boeing Company to form Seattle's IAM District Lodge 751. The move to sign with IAM, an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor, was a proactive attempt on the part of the company to head off a possible organizing drive by the more militant Congress of Industrial Organizations. In 1964, reflecting the Cold War increase in members from US space and defense programs, the IAM name was amended to become "International Association of Machinists & Aerospace Workers."[34]

While IAM District Lodge 751 represented most Seattle area workers at Boeing, they did not represent them all. Engineers had since 1948 bargained separately with the Seattle Professional Engineering Employees Association, which represented about 13,500 workers.[35] Moreover, since the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act of 1948, Boeing had not been a closed union shop, meaning any production line employee, despite working under the terms of employment established in IAM's negotiations, could decline to join the union and thus not contribute dues.[36] Nevertheless, over the course of Boeing's boom of the 1960s, with the national IAM&AW assisting Boeing in recruiting workers nationwide, IAM 751 grew dramatically.[37] Numbering 43,000 members in 1968, it was the largest union in Washington state and, the Aero Mechanics claimed, one of the largest bargaining units in the United States.[38]

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[34] Robert G Rodden, *The Fighting Machinists: A Century of Struggle* (Washington, D.C.: Kelly Press, 1984), 234; John McCann, *Blood in the Water: A History of District Lodge 751, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers* (Seattle, Wash.: District Lodge 751, IAM & AW, 1989), 22-24.

[35] "Boeing attempts to cushion impact of employee layoffs," *Seattle Times*, November 2, 1969, 28.

[36] IAM and Boeing did not negotiate a union shop until 1986; McCann, 234.

[37] "Higher Unemployment Benefits Backed By Labor," *Aero Mechanic,* March 3, 1969, 1.

[38] "Grand Lodge Auditor Evaluates 751's Office Procedure," *Aero Mechanic*, August 26, 1968; "Annual Financial Report to the Membership," *Aero Mechanic*, March 31, 1969, 5.

The size of IAM 751 translated into political power at the ballot box, with the union maintaining a close relationship with Washington state's congressional delegation. Representing the state in the U.S. Senate were Democrats Warren "Maggie" Magnuson and Henry "Scoop" Jackson, central figures in American liberalism throughout the Democratic Party's mid-century reign. Highly influential senior senators with decades of experience and critical committee seats, both were career politicians consistently re-elected, usually by sizeable margins, thanks in large part to the efforts of organized labor on their behalf. Magnuson had been a congressional representative from Washington since 1938, and a senator since 1944, and had played a key role in funneling federal defense contracts to the state – many times to the benefit of Boeing – both during and after World War II.[39] Jackson, for his part, had won election to the House in 1940 before proceeding to the Senate in 1952. His hawkish views on national security and defense spending had earned him the nickname of the "senator from Boeing."[40] The pair were regular features in Aero Mechanic publications, and by far the most powerful allies the union had.

The Aero Mechanics' alliance of organized labor and the Democratic Party had underwritten a blue-collar working-class liberalism that identified its fortunes with military Keynesianism: the provision of jobs to the economy through robust government spending in martial industries like aerospace.[41] The union prided itself on its productive contributions to the United States' economy, whose strength after World War II had allowed the United States to dominate globally, and which had afforded them the spoils of an affluent society. The union's

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[39] Shelby Scates, *Warren G. Magnuson and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997).

[40] Robert Gordon Kaufman, *Henry M. Jackson: A Life in Politics* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 145.

[41] Tim Barker, "Cold War Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Military Spending, 1947-1990," PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2022.

newspaper, *The Aero Mechanic*, regularly offered discounted vacations to destinations like Europe and Acapulco, and monthly advertised do-it-yourself construction kits for things like children's Christmas presents, home furnishings, workout equipment, ironing boards, sewing boxes, and so on.[42] More important, if less tangible, was the middle-class identity such trappings provided: a self-conception for its mostly male membership as productive and self-made.

Affluence may have defined Seattle for the Aero Mechanics in 1968, but it was hardly extended to all. Indeed, at the very peak of the boom, well before Boeing's fall, a crisis already stirred in Washington state's government relief offices due to the inequalities that the aerospace economy had wrought. Despite the widespread economic growth, the state was one of many across the United States in which demands on public assistance outmatched what state governments had allocated.[43] Sidney Smith, director of the Washington State Department of Public Assistance (DPA), and coincidentally, a former Boeing executive, noted several reasons for the problem. "A lot of smaller expenses and in some cases, federal policy can make a difference in the over-all costs of welfare," Smith explained to the press, identifying rising healthcare, administrative costs, and federal benefits standards. "But in the end it boils down to increasing caseload."[44] Each new DPA report through 1967 and 1968 brought news of record numbers of welfare enrollments, foremost within the Aid to Families with Dependent Children

[42] "How To Display Your Special Interests," *Aero Mechanic*, December 15, 1969, 2.

[43] Stanton Patty, "Vortex: Welfare Crisis Is 'Going to Get Worse,'" *Seattle Daily Times*, October 8, 1967.

[44] Bill Mertena, "State Faces Crisis in Welfare," *Seattle Daily Times*, October 4, 1967; Stanton Patty, "Vortex: Financing Not Only Crisis State Faces in Welfare," *Seattle Daily Times*, October 10, 1967.

(AFDC), which provided monthly assistance to single mothers.[45] While the state's increase matched almost exactly the overall growth in AFDC cases in the United States – 46.4 percent nationally, 46.3 percent in Washington, between 1963-1968 – it ranked eighth overall among states in additional cases.[46] In 1967, when the first unpredicted surge in public relief had occurred, $8 million dollars in emergency funds had to be found to cover the resulting budget shortfall. By 1969, as enrollments continued to rise and the earliest signs of Boeing's troubles began to emerge, sagging tax revenues forced DPA officials to order a sudden budget cut of $32 million, which they hoped would be remedied by an upcoming special session of the state legislature.[47]

The demands on public assistance reflected an economy that left Washington state's poor, especially mothers, with little recourse for survival. The structure of welfare in Seattle in the 1960s, and the United States in general, was a legacy of 1930s New Deal legislation that had established extensive government-based social protections for the first time in the country's history, but on a foundation of gender and racial inequity. The model of the nuclear family, led by a single male breadwinner earning a "family wage" large enough to support a wife and children, was never a reality for the majority of households in the United States, but it nevertheless underwrote all of the major U.S. social welfare programs in the early to mid-twentieth century.[48] As a consequence, the framework of government support inaugurated by the federal Social Security Act of 1935 was

[45] "Welfare Cases of Dependent Children High," *Seattle Daily Times*, July 4, 1968; "Aid to Dependent Children Has Rapid Increases on Rolls," *Seattle Daily Times*, December 8, 1968; Lyle Burt, "ADC Growth Is Startling," *Seattle Daily Times*, February 25, 1969.

[46] "Aid to Dependent Children Has Rapid Increases on Rolls."

[47] Marjorie Jones, "$32 Million: State Welfare Services Cut," *Seattle Daily Times*, November 20, 1969.

[48] Robert O. Self, *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy since the 1960s* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012), 9-10.

essentially divided in two. On one side, programs with robust federal backing like Unemployment Insurance and Old Age Insurance were funded by employee contributions and hence carried a sense of earned entitlement for recipients. White males held the most prevailing access to the job market, especially following World War II, and therefore benefited the most from these programs.[49]

In contrast, noncontributory public assistance programs like Aid to Dependent Children (ADC) –what was usually referred to by the term "welfare" – were unevenly backed by the federal government, relying on state governments to provide much of their funding, eligibility standards, and administration. ADC, for instance, which provided financial support for single mothers, was originally intended for widows on the assumption that mothers lived off the family wages of their husbands. By 1960, however, most ADC mothers were divorced, deserted, or never married, and Black families – who experienced higher rates of poverty, divorce, and unwed motherhood – constituted 40 percent of ADC cases countrywide.[50] Congressional amendments to the program increased the emphasis on male breadwinner families, and in 1961 ADC was renamed Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).[51]

While jobs were to be had in Washington state, they remained skilled positions primarily available to educated white males, many of whom were recruited from outside the state. As a December 1968 DPA report on the AFDC caseload increases found, "increasingly rigorous

[49] Marisa Chappell, *The War on Welfare: Family, Poverty, and Politics in Modern America* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 8-10.

[50] Ibid. See also Robert C. Lieberman, *Shifting the Color Line: Race and the American Welfare State* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998).

[51] Premilla Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors: The Welfare Rights Movement in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 12.

demands for skill and flexibility" in the workforce were "causing limited employment opportunities for the poorly educated and untrained."[52] The strain on Washington state's welfare system was thus compounded by what DPA Director Smith called the "fallout" of the state's economic growth: not all the people drawn to Washington state by the promise of jobs were considered qualified for them.[53] The *Seattle Times*, in a multipart report on the state's "welfare crisis," described the Seattle area "flooded with destitute newcomers, most of them unskilled, who pour in here on the basis of misleading reports about bright job prospects."[54]

Some Washington state politicians, particularly Republicans from the state's rural areas, took the opportunity to lambast Black welfare "chiselers," echoing a racist trope then being advanced by California Governor Ronald Reagan, whose speech at a 1967 Washington state G.O.P. fundraiser had attacked welfare recipients.[55] Washington state's "welfare crisis" was not only a racist fantasy spun to mobilize white resentment for partisan benefit, however, but reflected deeper institutional racism and gender divisions that were the product of Democrats and Republican policies alike. The lack of funding for public assistance, witnessed in Washington's state budget crisis, reflected the limits of the Keynesian state in face of the growing power of welfare recipients themselves. Among the reasons for surging enrollments, DPA Director Smith claimed, were "increasing organizations in big cities among welfare recipients," the newspaper reported, "especially mothers who, along with their children, receive aid to dependent-children

[52] "Aid to Dependent Children Has Rapid Increases on Rolls."

[53] "Rising Welfare Load Faces State," *Seattle Daily Times*, October 6, 1967.

[54] Patty, "Vortex: Welfare Crisis Is 'Going to Get Worse.'"

[55] Lyle Burt, "$100 Luncheon; Reagan Blasts Welfare Programs," *Seattle Daily Times*, November 11, 1967; Burt, "Snohomish County Republicans Split On Delegate Vote," *Seattle Daily Times*, April 21, 1968.

grants."[56] Programs associated with the federal War on Poverty, intended to stem the riots that raged in American inner cities throughout the 1960s, had begun educating potential welfare recipients in cities nationwide about the benefits available, organizing recipients to demand larger and more forms of assistance, and involving the poor in program decision-making.[57] The federal Legal Services program, for instance, worked with welfare recipients as plaintiffs to file lawsuits challenging stringent public assistance restrictions.[58] Very active in Seattle, the office sought individual cases with the potential to set larger legal precedents benefiting poor people.[59] Many cases asserted the right of AFDC recipients to fair hearings prior to the denial of benefits.[60] "Previously, lots of people stayed off ADC rolls," Smith explained. "Now they have organized mothers' clubs, out knocking on doors, telling others about the program and bringing them in."[61] Organizing to receive what they were entitled to by law, welfare rights organizers' encountered governments unprepared and politically unwilling to rectify the divisions wrought by American economic policy.

In Washington state, where the Black community was small, urban African Americans represented only a small portion of welfare recipients. Nine percent of people enrolled in AFDC in Washington State were Black, while the vast majority were white and rural, a reality contrary

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[56] "Rising Welfare Load Faces State."

[57] Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors*; Felicia Ann Kornbluh, *The Battle for Welfare Rights: Politics and Poverty in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

[58] Kornbluh, *The Battle for Welfare Rights,* 63-87.

[59] "Legal Services," *Helix*, August 1969.

[60] Andrea Gilbert, "Four Welfare Recipients Sue State Agency," *Seattle Daily Times*, March 16, 1969.

[61] Herb Robinson, "Child-Aid Problems Growing," *Seattle Daily Times*, January 1, 1968.

to racist rhetoric from Washington state's Republicans.[62] However, due to the recent influence and growing social movement strength of the Black Freedom Struggle, Black women represented the leadership of the new welfare rights movement. In Seattle, where 80 percent of federal anti-poverty initiatives in Washington state were concentrated, and the majority of the state's Black community lived, poor single mothers had begun building a sense of collective identity in programs mainly based in the Central Area.[63] The group ADC Motivated Mothers, for instance, worked under the auspices of the Central Area Motivation Project (CAMP), the neighborhood's main anti-poverty service organization.[64] Other projects, such as a mother-run day care program, were based in the city's housing projects like Holly Park.[65] Ultimately, these efforts, combined with the conditions of the Boeing crisis and the general atmosphere of social movement advancements, would grow the welfare rights movement into a potential political force in Seattle.

"A Real Social Revolution:" Communities of Color and the Fight for Power in Early 1970s Seattle

In the face of the growing welfare rights movement, Washington state's DPA Director Sidney Smith expressed exasperation. "We are in a real social revolution," he told the *Seattle*

[62] Walt Woodward, "Why the Growing Welfare Load?," *Seattle Daily Times*, January 26, 1970; Lyle Burt, "AFDC: State Headache," *Seattle Daily Times*, January 19, 1969; Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Civil Disorder, *Race and Violence in Washington State; Report of the Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Civil Disorder.* (Olympia: State of Washington, 1969), 4; Woodward, "Why the Growing Welfare Load?"

[63] "SKCEOB," *Helix*, Volume 9, Issue 2.

[64] Stephen Dunphy, "The Troubled Poverty War: Agency Heads Keep Up Hopes Despite Cutbacks," *Seattle Daily Times*, December 16, 1969.

[65] "Efforts Being Made to Keep Day-Care Centers Operating," *Seattle Daily Times*, December 2, 1969.

Times, "And I don't know the answers."[66] Smith was not alone in believing that a new day was dawning as the 1960s turned. Whether they feared or cheered the prospect, figures across the political spectrum in business, labor, and government expressed a common belief that the country's militant social movements threatened to upend the political system. Though relatively small (Seattle was the twenty-second largest city in the United States in 1970), Seattle was in many ways an epicenter of unrest, home to radical initiatives that frequently brought the attention of the federal government. From sit-ins and building takeovers, to direct action and land reclamation, movement was afoot, and new generations were employing new tactics and building new organizations to challenge the exclusions of the Keynesian economy. When Boeing's crisis appeared in 1970, local politicians and business would fret that it could lead to greater unrest. Organizers, by contrast, would see it as an opportunity.

National media and local politicians alike feared that Seattle's souring economy would lead to growing radicalization. The *Wall Street Journal* profiled local student radicals, who cheered Boeing's troubles, while Seattle Mayor Wes Uhlman testified to a 1970 Senate subcommittee on Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders that the city's economic crisis could lead to an increase in political violence. Indeed, by the measure of one study, Seattle was the country's "bomb capitol," home to the most politically motivated bombings per capita in the United States. [67] Fire bombings in the city's Central District, which targeted institutions with local reputations for racism, like real estate agencies, and antiwar actions, like a 1970 bombing of the University of Washington's

[66] Patty, "Vortex: Financing Not Only Crisis State Faces in Welfare."

[67] Herbert G. Law, "A Sonic Bust: In Stunned Seattle, Only Radicals See Good in Rejection of SST," U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Government Operations, and Committee on Government Operations, "Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders, Part 24."

Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) building, accounted for the high totals.[68] Senator Henry Jackson, fearing the bombings would impact the U.S. war in Vietnam, wrote to President Nixon to urge against shipping war materials through the Pacific Northwest. "We have persons here who would commit violence," Jackson warned.[69]

While violence drew the attention of the authorities, it ultimately represented only a small portion of the wider tide of social movement unrest reshaping Seattle in the early 1970s. That unrest had been a long time in coming. Communities of color in Seattle had built power over decades at the neighborhood level, allowing them to increasingly challenge institutions on broader scales. Across the 1960s, for instance, residents of Seattle's majority-Black Central Area had organized regular civil rights campaigns against housing and employment segregation, often through the local chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). After federal War on Poverty funds became available in 1964, grassroots organizing coalesced around CAMP, a community service organization which peaked at 300 employees in 1967. CAMP supported a wide range of initiatives, including tenants organizing, voter registration, jobs training, educational programming, family counseling, neighborhood clean-ups, and more.[70] In 1967, CAMP's services survived large cuts to federal funding thanks to Seattle's designation as a federal "Model City." One of the last War on Poverty programs, Model Cities incorporated the Central Area,

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[68] "Report From The Front," *Sabot*, September 11, 1970, Vol. 1 edition. Government provocateurs accounted for at least some of the violence. Larry Ward, a young unemployed man, was shot in the back and killed by Seattle police in May 1970 after an FBI informant paid him to place an explosive at a Central District real estate agency, where police officers were waiting. David Wilma, "Police shoot and kill Larry Eugene Ward while he sets a bomb in Seattle's Central Area on May 15, 1970," *Historylink.org*, https://www.historylink.org/File/2435, accessed October 13, 2023.

[69] David Wilma, "Bombings in Seattle move President Nixon to cancel nerve-gas shipments through Puget Sound on May 23, 1970," *Historylink.org*, https://www.historylink.org/File/2425, accessed October 13, 2023.

[70] Ivan King, *The Central Area Motivation Program: A Brief History of a Community in Action* (Seattle, WA: Central Area Motivation Project, 1990).

International District, and Skid Road neighborhoods into one "Model Neighborhood." The designation reflected the concentration of urban poverty within Seattle's majority non-white neighborhoods, as well as the fact that, in a city where the overall non-white population was small and the boundaries of neighborhoods overlapped, organizing was typically interracial across communities of color.[71]

The growth of Seattle's non-white communities, paired with the growing neighborhood infrastructure, led to the first entry of people of color into formal Seattle politics, with the city's first-ever Black elected official Sam Smith joining the city council in 1968, and the 1969 appointment of Liem Tuai, the city's second-ever Asian American councilmember.[72] The trend built upon Seattle's local history of racial liberalism, which replaced a politics of explicit racial exclusion and separation with a pluralist language of integration, equal opportunity, cultural diversity and cosmopolitanism.[73] Like the city's employment arrangements, this racial order often hinged on the prerogatives of the economy. Prior to World War II, for example, Seattle's Japanese community had been celebrated by boosters as an asset to the city's place in the Pacific trade economy, until the racist hysteria stoked by the U.S. war effort rendered them enemies *en masse*.[74]

But as a few people of color slowly became local establishment figures, racist segregation, discrimination, and police violence persisted, leading to growing radical demands from younger

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[71] Diana K. Johnson, *Seattle in Coalition: Multiracial Alliances, Labor Politics, and Transnational Activism in the Pacific Northwest, 1970–1999* (Durham, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2023).

[72] The city's first Chinese American council member, Wing Luke, had died in a place crash in 1965 after three years in office. David Takami, "Luke, Wing (1925-1965)," *HistoryLink.org*, January 1, 1999 https://www.historylink.org/file/2047, accessed October 20, 2023.

[73] Su-Shuan Chen, "In Pursuit of A Double-Edged Sword: The Politics of Racial Liberalism and Racial Triangulation in Seattle, 1940–1975" (PhD Dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 2017).

[74] Shelley Sang-Hee Lee. *Claiming the Oriental Gateway Prewar Seattle and Japanese America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).

activists. In April 1968, a group led by nineteen-year-old Aaron Dixon, the son of a Boeing draftsmen, founded the Seattle chapter of the Black Panther Party for Survival and Beyond, the first to be formed outside of California. The Party paired traditional emphases of neighborhood organizations on services with an unapologetic demand for Black power and community control, offering free children's breakfasts and medical services alongside education in political theory and arms training, and staging dramatic confrontations with politicians, teachers, business owners, police, and other authority figures. The Nixon administration took notice, planning a federal raid on the Seattle chapter's Central District headquarters in February 1970 that was quashed through the intervention of gun-shy Seattle Mayor Wes Uhlman, a liberal Democrat who feared the action would elicit more public sympathy for the Panthers. [75]

Confrontation defined Seattle's social movements of the period, witnessed in a long series of sit-ins, protests, and takeovers that escalated into the early 1970s. Seattle's CORE chapter had held many sit-ins in the city's past, and its Black high school students had made news for their stands against racist white teachers in the late 1960s. As the 1970s dawned, however, new initiatives inspired by the Black Freedom Struggle came from others besides Seattle's Black community, with ever bolder demands and more disruptive tactics. In February 1970, just as the Nixon administration was targeting the Panthers, United Indian People's Council (later United Indians of All Tribes), led by Colville Confederated Tribe member Bernie Whitebear, launched an occupation of Seattle's Fort Lawton, a former federal military base slated to become a city park.[76]

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[75] Aaron Floyd Dixon, *My People Are Rising: Memoir of a Black Panther Party Captain* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012); Judson L. Jeffries and Jeffrey Zane, "A Panther Sighting in the Pacific Northwest: The Seattle Chapter of the Black Panther Party," in *On the Ground: The Black Panther Party in Communities across America*, ed. Judson L. Jeffries (University Press of Mississippi, 2010).

[76] Sherry L. Smith, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2012).

The weeks-long action, taking inspiration from the 1969 Indian occupation of San Francisco's Alcatraz Island, was successful in reclaiming a portion of the land to establish a community center for urban Indians. Again, the White House was paying attention, and seriously entertained the idea of sending both President Richard Nixon and First Lady Pat Nixon to visit Fort Lawton. Plans were ended at the urging of Washington state Governor Daniel Evans, a Republican ally of the White House, and federal officials, who feared the Nixons' presence would draw disruptive protests and interfere with land transfer negotiations.[77]

With or without the Nixons, disruptive protests remained plentiful in Seattle thanks to a growing grassroots politics of alliance. Aiding the Fort Lawton effort and inspired by the action were community leaders like Black student organizer Larry Gossett, Filipino community organizer Bob Santos, and Chicano school teacher Roberto Maestas. The three, along with Whitebear, had become friends through their years of civil rights organizing in central and southeast Seattle across the 1960s, but it was the early 1970s that their efforts would take giant steps forward, leveraging movement momentum to establish new community institutions. Gossett, who had led sit-ins and protests in high school, organized similar actions at Seattle's University of Washington, leading to the establishment of the University's first programs for Black students.[78] Santos, who worked as a civil rights organizer for a local church, was involved in efforts to preserve the city's Chinatown/International District neighborhood from redevelopment. That effort also drew upon the growing strength of an Asian American youth movement that had staged campus protests for

[77] Dwight Chapin, Memorandum to H.R. Haldeman, "State of Washington," Memorandum, September 9, 1971, Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, Yorba Linda, California (hereafter cited as RNPLM); Buck Kelley, telephone message to Tod Hullin, "Rumored visit of Mrs. Nixon to the Pacific Northwest," August 16, 1971, RNPLM.

[78] Marc Arsell Robinson, *Washington State Rising: Black Power on Campus in the Pacific Northwest* (New York, NY: NYU Press, 2023).

ethnic studies at Seattle's Central College. And in 1972, following the example of the Fort Lawton action, Maestas would lead an occupation of a shuttered public school house in the city's Beacon Hill neighborhood to establish a Chicano cultural and service center, El Centro de la Raza.[79]

Organizers in Seattle's communities of color faced a metropolitan economy that had grown dramatically around them through the power and funding of the federal government, but from which they were excluded through institutional segregation and discrimination. Few understood these dynamics more keenly than Black labor organizer Tyree Scott. Seattle's 1960s population boom had driven a hot housing market that had fueled heaps of new construction across the metropolitan area, but longstanding practices of racial exclusion in the apprenticeship and hiring practices of the area's building trades unions kept the construction industry almost entirely white. Beginning in August of 1969, Scott's Central Contractors Association (CCA), an organization of Black construction workers first established through Seattle's Model Cities program, shut down every major federally funded construction project in the city. The CCA's direct actions, which included destroying equipment at a University of Washington building site and storming the tarmac of the city's expanding airport, demanded not only that Black workers be included in the construction workforce, but that the Black community have the power to determine how hiring took place.[80] Scott continued the struggle through the founding of the United Construction Workers Association (UCWA) in early 1970, which grew to play a leading in role in negotiating and enforcing federal affirmative action policies. These efforts once again led back to the White

[79] Johnson, *Seattle in Coalition*; Michael Schulze-Oechtering, "Blurring the Boundaries of Struggle: The United Construction Workers Association (UCWA) and Relational Resistance in Seattle's Third World Left," PhD diss., (University of California, Berkeley, 2016).

[80] Trevor Griffey, "From Jobs to Power: The United Construction Workers Association and Title VII Community Organizing in the 1970s," in *Black Power at Work: Community Control, Affirmative Action, and the Construction Industry* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010): 161-188.

House, where President Nixon plotted new overtures to the white leaders of recalcitrant building trades unions.[81]

Regular federal scrutiny signaled how high the stakes were in early 1970s Seattle. As Boeing fell apart, and social movement unrest mounted, the city's unemployment crisis was interpreted as a threat to the existing order of things. Whether this was an occasion to celebrate or a time to fear and denounce depended on one's position in the city economy, and in turn, one's relationship to the federal government. For IAM 751, who fell back on the collective bargaining protections and appeals to Democrats they had always used, this was a world to lose. For the welfare rights movement, it was a remarkable opportunity. In their opposing responses to the crisis, the two would inevitably clash over the politics of relief and welfare.

Sonic Bust: The Fall of the Aero Mechanics and the Rise of the Welfare Rights Movement

While layoffs had been a common feature of the aerospace industry in the decades after World War II, no one at IAM 751 foresaw anything on the scale of what was to come. Summarizing the union's plans for contract bargaining with Boeing in mid-1968, IAM 751 President Walt Berg noted: "Most economic experts don't foresee any substantial layoffs at Boeing in the near future, but we are building in some protections now. Employees will be protected in their labor grade and skill group to the last possible minute. If they should be laid off, they will have return rights before

[81] Griffey, "'The Blacks Should Not Be Administering the Philadelphia Plan:' Nixon, the Hard Hats, and 'Voluntary' Affirmative Action," in *Black Power at Work*: 134-160.

any new employees can be hired into their jobs."[82] The year 1969 would be different. As it turned out, most economic experts were wrong; substantial layoffs were in fact in the cards. Sales for the new 747, which had represented a massive investment for Boeing, were sagging. Meanwhile, government contracts, the traditional financial safety net for the company, were increasingly in short supply as opposition to the Vietnam War made military spending politically unpopular. Its troubles compounding, Boeing grew ever closer to bankruptcy.[83]

The first signs of trouble were tucked away on the back page of the very first issue of *The Aero Mechanic* newspaper of 1969: "Q. Please tell me why the Boeing Company is having such a large layoff at this time." Faced with the Boeing Company's tight-lipped monopoly on its business information, *The Aero Mechanic* could only venture a guess based on past experience. "Old timers say that the present situation is nothing new," the paper explained. "In the years past layoffs have always come at the end of the year – that's about the time they run out of budgeted funds in certain departments."[84] As the year progressed, layoffs at Boeing mounted, with 12,000 jobs cut by November and another several thousand expected by the end of the year.[85] Despite the trend, IAM 751 leadership under Walt Berg continued to stress that the situation was nothing new. "Throughout history every boom has been followed by a bust," the union newspaper read as late as November 1969. "There is no evidence that the laws of history have been repealed."[86]

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[82] Walt Berg, "Looking Ahead," *Aero Mechanic*, May 6, 1968, 2.

[83] Markusen et al, 156.

[84] "Dial-A-Question," *Aero Mechanic*, January 6, 1969, 8.

[85] "Boeing attempts to cushion impact of employee layoffs," *Seattle Times*, November 2, 1969, 28.

[86] "Plain Talk About IAM Strike Fund," *Aero Mechanic*, November 10, 1969, 2.

A few months later, Walt Berg found himself out of a job. His thirteen years in IAM District Lodge 751 leadership, first as secretary treasurer from 1956 to 1965, thereafter as president, had corresponded with the high times. Now, layoffs occasioned his ouster as the membership elected a new president beginning in 1970, Tom Edwards.[87] A change in leadership was only one of many developments spurred by the mounting layoffs. Boeing's economic crisis meant enormous difficulties for the union too, as production line jobs comprised the vast majority of cuts, and nearly every job cut from the production line at Boeing also meant the loss of a dues-paying member for IAM 751.[88] In addition, downgraded supervisors, hostile to the union, moved to the assembly line and declined to enlist as members.[89] Unemployed workers had the option of remaining union members at a reduced dues rate of 50 cents a month, but if the sharp decline in membership rates were any indication, few could be bothered to spare it.[90] From a peak of 43,000 in 1968, IAM 751 membership plummeted to just under 13,000 by 1971, a decline of 70 percent.[91]

Already facing the difficulty of servicing workers across a newly dispersed geographic area created by the 747 production facility, the union now faced enormous financial deficits – over $200,000 in the red in 1970 – and a membership reluctant to give any more of its precarious income in dues.[92] Several requests for dues increases were voted down by the membership in 1970 despite

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[87] McCann, 224-225; “”Tom Edwards, Bill English Begin Terms As District 751 Leaders After Election Win,” *Aero Mechanic*, February 2, 1970, 1.

[88] “Boeing Problems Detailed For U.S. Senate Hearing,” *Aero Mechanic*, May 10, 1971, 4.

[89] “Here's a Digest of Union Proposals to Boeing for a New 3 Year Contract,” *Aero Mechanic*, August 2, 1971, 4-5.

[90] “Avoid Trouble Keep Dues Up,” *Aero Mechanic*, August 11, 1969, 1.

[91] “District 751 Average Financial/Membership Comparisons 1968-1971,” *Aero Mechanic*, March 27, 1972. Note that the latter source cites an *average* 1968 membership of 38,506; the peak 1968 figure of 43,000 is given in “Grand Lodge Auditor Evaluates 751's Office Procedure,” *Aero Mechanic*, August 26, 1968, 2.

[92] “District 751 Average Financial/Membership Comparisons 1968-1971,” *Aero Mechanic*, March 27, 1972.

concerted appeals in *The Aero Mechanic*, and rumors flew over how the union spent the dues it already received.[93] "Have economies been made?" *The Aero Mechanic* newspaper asked defensively. "Yes. How have they been made?" From clerical staff to organizers to appointed union officials, personnel had been reduced, while participation in community organizations and activities was scaled back or ceased completely.[94] The publication of *The Aero Mechanic* itself dropped from twice a month to once a month, and in some months never appeared at all.

As the union contracted, its activities narrowed considerably to a limited focus on defense of the union's contract, state and federal lobbying, and electoral politics. First, IAM 751 concentrated on its responsibilities as an institution of collective bargaining. In the face of layoffs, IAM 751 counseled its members that their primary defense was the union contract. "If you are concerned that you might be laid off," *The Aero Mechanic* counseled at the first sign of trouble in January 1969, "be sure to read the contract and then check with your shop steward or business representative."[95] The following issue, under the blaring headline "WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE LAID OFF," summarized what protections a laid off worker had. The foremost protection was seniority; the longer a worker had been at Boeing, the less likely the worker could be subject to a layoff or a downgrade. Junior employees would have to go first. Moreover, any worker with earned seniority who was laid off could file for return rights in the event that Boeing started hiring again.[96]

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[93] "Changes in Dues Structure Asked to Keep Full Service," *Aero Mechanic*, March 2, 1970, 1; "Severe Service, Staff Cutback Faces Membership Unless New Dues Ok'd," *Aero Mechanic*, March 16, 1970, 1; "Big Test for Aero Mechanics," *Aero Mechanic*, March 30, 1970, 2; "Dues Increase Fails; Council Action Asked," *Aero Mechanic*, April 13, 1970, 3; "BR's Endorse Dues Raise," *Aero Mechanic*, June 1, 1970, 1; "The Most Important Story on This Page," *Aero Mechanic*, June 15, 1970, 1; "Vote on $2 Dues Raise; 1 Yes, 3 No," *Aero Mechanic*, June 29, 1970, 1.

[94] "Get The Facts / Stop Rumors! Know About Your Dues - $5.70," *Aero Mechanic*, July 27, 1970, 4.

[95] "Dial-A-Question," *Aero Mechanic*, January 6, 1969, 8.

[96] "WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE LAID OFF," *Aero Mechanic*, February 3, 1969, 1. Such return rights were not automatic, and had to be renewed every 90 days; over the course of the crisis, *Aero Mechanic* would publish constant

As layoffs changed how work was organized in Boeing factories, IAM 751's contract was also important on the shop floor. *The Aero Mechanic* regularly criticized Boeing for practices that resulted from a reduced workforce, such as lax shop-floor safety standards and mandatory overtime.[97]

Despite its diminished capacity, IAM 751 retained its activities in political lobbying, especially as the severity of Boeing's massive layoffs opened opportunities for policy reform. IAM 751 and the state labor federation, the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, had lobbied in the Washington state legislature extensively for years to increase state benefits to jobless workers, seeking a clause that would escalate benefits on the basis of the average weekly wage of all workers covered by the law.[98] When the magnitude of the Boeing crisis increased, legislators finally responded. In 1969, when it was still possible to write off Boeing's layoffs as a standard swing in the aerospace industry, the legislative session came and went without action on unemployment compensation, which *The Aero Mechanic* blamed on business interests and the machinations of House Republicans.[99] In February 1970, with Boeing still hemorrhaging thousands of jobs monthly, the escalation reform finally passed, immediately boosting the maximum weekly benefit, now tied to prevailing wages, from $42 to $70 or more.[100] A year later, organized labor was again successful in reforming the law, this time increasing the basis of benefits from one-third of the

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notices reminding unemployed members to do so. Additional paperwork had to be filed to protect one's retirement plan or maintain health insurance

[97] "Abuse of Overtime Short Changes Working People," *Aero Mechanic*, April 28, 1969, 1; Walt Berg, "Looking Ahead," *Aero Mechanic*, November 24, 1969, 1.

[98] "Jobless Pay Cut in October After 39 Weeks of Benefits," *Aero Mechanic*, September 20, 1971, 6.

[99] "House GOPs Renege: Put Squeeze on Jobless Pay Bill," *Aero Mechanic*, May 12, 1969, 3; "Labor Will Remember What The Legislature Failed to Do," *Aero Mechanic*, May 26, 1969, 2.

[100] "Jobless Pay Bill Passed in Olympia," *Aero Mechanic*, February 2, 1970, 1; "How It Works: Washington State's New Unemployment Compensation Law," *Aero Mechanic*, February 16, 1970.

average prevailing wage to one-half.[101] Moreover, since a worker's benefits only lasted for a set period, the union continued to pressure both federal and state governments to extend emergency funds, which they did multiple times over the course of the crisis.[102] "This past year has proven beyond doubt the value of the unemployment compensation program," observed Joe Davis, President of the Washington State Labor Council, in January 1971. "This program has been pumping money into the economy at the rate of $4,000,000 to $5,000,000 a week," he said. "That's the second largest dollar payroll in the state, and we wouldn't be surprised if it became the largest payroll in the state very soon."[103]

In addition to fighting for reforms to the state's system of unemployment compensation, IAM 751 fought for the right of its members to access such assistance. In August 1970, *The Aero Mechanic* profiled Bill and Lou Jonas, photographed in front of the Kirkland home they had recently lost to foreclosure. The parents of three children, both had worked at Boeing, Bill as a production line worker, Lou as keypunch operator. Having declined significant downgrades in their positions prior to their layoffs, the Jonases' claim to unemployment insurance was being disputed by Boeing, which prevented the couple from drawing assistance earlier than if they had been simply laid off. "The law says if you quit or are fired for cause, you must wait ten weeks in addition before you qualify for benefits. Meanwhile any savings accumulated are drained away and the family left to the indignity of welfare." IAM 751 had taken on the Jonases' case, filing an appeal against the Boeing Company's claims. [104]

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[101] "Jobless Benefits Rise to $75 Week," *Aero Mechanic*, June 28, 1971, 3.

[102] "Special Session to Extend Unemployment Requested," *Aero Mechanic*, July 3, 1972, 5.

[103] Joe Davis, "Davis Asks for End to Legislative Secrecy," *Aero Mechanic*, January 25, 1971, 6.

[104] "Boeing Fighting Laid Off Members Right to Get Unemployment Pay," *Aero Mechanic*, August 24, 1970, 1. The Jonases were not alone in losing their home to foreclosure during Seattle's economic crisis. Home foreclosures and

If IAM 751 was willing to criticize Boeing over shop floor practices and appeal its unemployment claims, the union remained remarkably reserved in its criticism of the company's layoffs, choosing instead to lobby the federal government on the company's behalf. In November 1970, when members of Seattle's New Left organized a small protest march on the Boeing Company, IAM 751 President Tom Edwards was quick to differentiate the union's approach. "While we are concerned with the layoffs and rising unemployment," Edwards explained in the union newspaper, "marching on the Boeing Company accomplishes nothing." He argued instead for IAM 751's traditional tactics. "We believe that telegrams to US Senators in support of the SST would be a much more effective way of getting more jobs." Edwards continued to defend the Boeing Company itself, criticizing the Nixon administration instead. "We have talked to Boeing about their future plans and are satisfied the Company is doing everything it can to get more business and more jobs and to diversify into other fields," he said. "The trouble is that we are suffering from the tight money, high interest policies of the present administration. Until these policies change, we probably won't see much improvement of economic conditions." [105]

Rather than holding the Boeing Company responsible, the union lobbied the federal government on behalf of the company, bemoaning the lack of government contracts and joining members of the Democratic Party in placing the aerospace industry's troubles at the feet of the Nixon administration, whose high interest rates and "tight money" policy, they claimed, were "choking" Boeing.[106] Augmenting a Boeing lobbying campaign run out of the offices of Senators

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deeds "in lieu" in Seattle skyrocketed from 240 in December 1968 to 4033 in December 1971, an increase of 1580 percent. Jon Stewart, "Seattle: The New Poor Face the New Depression," *Ramparts Magazine*, May 1972.

[105] "751 Wants No Credit For Boeing March Last Week," *Aero Mechanic*, November 9, 1970, 7.

[106] Brock Adams, "Adams Says Nixon Set Economics Gains Back to 50's," *Aero Mechanic*, March 2, 1970, 3; "Meeds Says Nixon Hurts Boeing," *Aero Mechanic*, October 26, 1970, 1; "Jackson Would 'Jolt' Economy Back On Track," *Aero Mechanic*, August 2, 1971, 5.

Magnuson and Jackson, IAM 751 put all the resources it could muster into persuading Congress to continue funding for Boeing's development of the Super Sonic Transport (SST) aircraft. [107] Following the initiative of the national IAM&AW, IAM 751's campaign for the SST began early in the crisis in 1969 under Walt Berg. Writing in *The Aero Mechanic*, Berg appealed specifically to the Seattle's areas new arrivals for help in reaching Congress. "What can a working person do to help? Plenty. Most of you come from other parts of the country. Many of you still have relatives in your former home areas. What we need is letters to Congress and the President from all across the country."[108]

Debates in Congress stretched on for another year into December 1970. By that time, lobbying for the SST had emerged as almost the exclusive focus of the new IAM District 751 leadership under President Edwards, who was pictured on the front page of that month's *Aero Mechanic* pointing to an optimistic marquee reading "Our Members Will Build America's First SST." Heavy coverage of the SST in *The Aero Mechanic* made it seem as if the entire aerospace industry hung in the balance. As a vote approached in December, a special SST phone hotline established by IAM 751 promised up-to-the-minute reports as lobbying efforts went down to the wire.[109] Organized into a committee called Industry and Labor for the SST, the plane's supporters made a particularly patriotic appeal, playing up the fact that European countries – the Soviet Union most importantly – were developing their own super sonic aircraft; as a bumper sticker distributed free in Seattle read, alongside a U.S. flag, "Let's Build An American SST". [110] Following a year

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[107] Kaufman, 145.

[108] Berg, "Looking Ahead," *Aero Mechanic*, October 27, 1969.

[109] "Hotline Has SST Details," *Aero Mechanic*, December 14, 1970, 1.

[110] "Tells The Story," *Aero Mechanic*, January 25, 1971, 1; CQ Almanac, "Congress Ends U.S. Funding of Supersonic Aircraft," accessed September 24, 2023, http://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/document.php?id=cqal71-1252799.

when IAM 751 had reduced its budget by $330,000, $10,000 was nonetheless found to help fund an advertisement pleading for support of the SST in the *New York Times*.[111]

Ultimately, the union's big investments did not pay off. As will be explored in more detail in Chapter Two, the SST became a target of environmental concerns on the part of emergent political blocs of white-collar professionals. Coming to a vote at a time when the unpopularity of the Vietnam War was reaching its peak, the plane also fell victim to general distrust of government projects associated with military contractors like Boeing. Extensive maneuvering by Magnuson and Jackson, plus strong support from the Nixon administration, kept the vote close and uncertain to the final roll call, but on December 3, 1970, federal funding for the project fell in the Senate, 41-52 against. Additional efforts to get the funding back into the 1971 Department of Transportation bill were filibustered by SST opponents in the Senate, led by Wisconsin senator William Proxmire. Some hope still lingered as a compromise to end the filibuster – again engineered by Magnuson and Jackson – allowed the project to continue through March 1971, giving the project additional time to prove itself to critics before a final vote was taken, but prospects were dim.[112] In the end, both chambers of Congress voted to end funding altogether, 215–204 on March 18 in the House, and 51-46 a week later in the Senate. By March 30, 1971, the SST was no longer, and thousands more Boeing employees were out of work.[113]

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[111] "Annual Audit Statement Released," *Aero Mechanic*, May 31, 1971, 1; "Anti-Technology 'Birds' Ready to Pick Bones of SST in Senate," *Aero Mechanic*, March 15, 1971, 1.

[112] Herbert G. Lawson, "A Sonic Bust: In a Stunned Seattle, Only Radicals Rejoice at SST Loss," *Wall Street Journal* December 7, 1970.

[113] "Anti-Technology 'Birds' Ready to Pick Bones of SST in Senate," *Aero Mechanic*, March 15, 1971, 1; CQ Almanac, "Congress Ends U.S. Funding of Supersonic Aircraft," accessed September 24, 2023, http://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/document.php?id=cqal71-1252799.

IAM 751's lobbying efforts illustrated how not all government assistance was equal in the eyes of the union. Some government programs were easier to reconcile with the IAM 751's assumptions about its membership as predominately white and middle-class. For example, writing in defense of the SST in his regular *Aero Mechanic* column, IAM 751 President Walt Berg took on SST critics who argued the program would drain money away from social spending. "No amount of welfare can give a person the self respect he or she gets from earning a fair way for a job well done," Berg argued. "[SST critics] say, 'take the money and give it to the cities and to the poor.' The money they are talking about would soon be gone and there would be cries for more."[114] Ironically, Berg's description of welfare easily doubled as a description of unemployment insurance: it inevitably ran out, and IAM 751 appealed for extensions of benefits. Unemployment insurance was more reconcilable with a middle-class identity, however, because of its source. Taxpayer-funded welfare programs, such as the federal government's Aid to Families with Dependent Children, smacked of unearned handouts to a union that thought of its membership as hardworking and self-made. Unemployment insurance, on the other hand, was paid for by contributions made into a dedicated fund by employers, a much easier pill to swallow. Sometimes, eligibility thresholds kept laid-off Boeing employees from accessing welfare programs, as their unwillingness or inability to forgo valuable assets – such as a house, a car, a boat – rendered them unable to qualify. Other times, however, these barriers were a matter of maintaining an identity as a self-made member of the middle-class. A 1973 survey of workers who had experienced unemployment during Seattle's crisis found that, instead of drawing on government assistance, a majority chose to depend on savings or cut back spending on material goods.[115]

[114] Berg, "Looking Ahead," *Aero Mechanic*, October 27, 1969, 2.

[115] Richard Benjamin Rainey, *Seattle's Adaptation to Recession* (Santa Monica, CA.: Rand, 1973), 29.

If IAM 751 and its members had been blindsided by the Boeing bust, others in Seattle's Black community saw it as an example of chickens coming home to roost. The *Afro-American Journal,* a Black Nationalist publication, proclaimed "White Seattle is Doomed," and noted the crisis made little difference for the city's Black residents given the preceding boom had been characterized by racist police violence and discrimination. An accompanying cartoon showed a boarded-up cave, awash in flames, with a nuclear family of pig-faced people, representing white Seattle, huddled in the corner, tears streaming down their faces.[116] While the *Afro-American Journal* may have cheered the bust, it nevertheless hit Seattle's Black community hardest. Generally the last hired and first fired, Black employees of the Boeing Company fell from a peak of 5,369 in 1967 (3.65 percent of the corporation's overall Seattle workforce) to 1,533 by 1970 (1.4 percent of the workforce), a drop of over 70 percent.[117] Meanwhile, laid off Boeing employees with "higher skills" scooped up entry-level jobs that unskilled Black workers depended upon for employment.[118] The result was an official Central Area unemployment rate of 28 percent, which unofficial community surveys placed as high as 50 percent. The ensuing demand on public assistance was equally dramatic. Within Seattle's Model Cities area, which included the Central Area, the number of welfare recipients ballooned by 250 percent within two years, with almost 20

[116] "Impending Doom," *The Afro-American Journal*, May 20, 1971.

[117] Quintard Taylor, *The Forging of a Black Community: Seattle's Central District, from 1870 through the Civil Rights Era* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), 194.

[118] Marjorie Jones, "King County: Welfare Applications Up 48%," *Seattle Daily Times*, October 5, 1969.

percent of its residents receiving some kind of assistance by 1971.[119] Seattle's DPA Central Office was forced to open a second waiting room as the large crowds ran up against fire codes.[120]

Though it was compounded in the Central Area, the crisis extended statewide. The rise in public assistance enrollment, going well beyond what budget forecasts had predicted, demanded that new resources be directed towards state welfare programs. But without a state income tax, legislators found it exceedingly difficult to find the funds necessary to do so. In 1967, when the first "welfare crisis" struck, $8 million dollars in emergency funds had to be found to cover the resulting budget shortfall.[121] By 1969, as enrollments continued to rise and layoffs at Boeing first began to appear, sagging tax revenues forced Department of Public Assistance officials to order a sudden budget cut of $32 million.[122] But as the resources dwindled, demand skyrocketed. In May 1971, the number of people on public assistance statewide totaled 234,105, a 45 percent increase over May of 1969. Over the same period, AFDC recipients grew from 77,959 to 145,051, an increase of 86 percent. Registration for food stamps, meanwhile skyrocketed from 93,035 people to 263,259, a 182 percent increase. [123]

If the unemployment crisis had sparked a narrowing of the Aero Mechanics' activities, it spurred new alliances and new leadership among welfare recipients. When the sudden cut of $32 million by DPA officials was implemented in late 1969, welfare recipients were quick to respond.

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[119] Jeffrey Gregory Zane, "America, Only Less so? Seattle's Central Area, 1968–1996" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 2001), 130; Office of the Secretary of State, *Hunger in Washington*, 2-3.

[120] "Welfare Stream Overflows," *Seattle Daily Times*, October 7, 1969.

[121] Lyle Burt, "Welfare Costs Rise - in Dollars, Politics," *Seattle Daily Times*, November 26, 1967.

[122] Marjorie Jones, "$32 Million: State Welfare Services Cut," *Seattle Daily Times*, November 20, 1969.

[123] Office of the Secretary of State, *Hunger in Washington* (Olympia: State of Washington, 1971), 3; Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs, *Seattle: Unemployment, the New Poor, and Hunger, with Supplement,* 6-8.

In Seattle, the first to publicly protest were the most immediately affected, “men 18 to 50 years old who are considered able-bodied” for whom all aid was eliminated.[124] Itinerant workers concentrated in the single-occupancy hotels of the city’s downtown Skid Road district, thrust onto the streets by the elimination of aid for shelter, quickly formed a First Avenue Street People's Committee and marched on the city’s government. In December 1969, the “Skidroaders” joined with the city’s ADC Motivated Mothers groups, the local Black Panther Party, and Native Americans activists to form the Committee for Human Survival, a self-described “interracial coalition of the poor and angry,” and marched on the state capitol of Olympia to demand the restoration of funding for welfare programs.[125] After taking over a hearing on welfare cuts, recipients – including many single mothers joined by their children – stormed the office of Governor Daniel Evans, who offered assurances that he cared, but made no concrete promises.[126]

In January 1970, the Committee for Human Survival returned to Olympia for another round of protests, this time with a new ally: the Welfare Rights Organization. Established in 1967 by Syracuse University chemistry professor and Congress of Racial Equality leader George Wiley, the National Welfare Rights Organization federated local welfare rights groups by sharing tactics and spreading news about welfare issues across the country. Headquartered in Washington, D.C., the group was a not inconsiderable federal lobbying force, enjoying meetings with top Nixon administration officials in the early 1970s. Even the organization’s staple policy effort – an annual guaranteed income for all households in the United States –was adopted in Nixon’s “Family

[124] “Skid Road Residents Plan To Take Crisis to Evans,” *Seattle Daily Times*, December 18, 1969.

[125] “Human-Survival Group Plans Welfare Protest,” *Seattle Daily Times*, December 25, 1969; “Caravans to Olympia: Welfare Cuts to Be Protested,” *Seattle Daily Times*, December 26, 1969.

[126] “Welfare Recipients March on Evans,” *Seattle Daily Times*, December 29, 1969; Marjorie Jones, “Evans Avoids Welfare Promises,” *Seattle Daily Times*, December 30, 1969.

Assistance Plan" welfare reform proposal, though in a greatly diminished, work-incentivized form that the NWRO opposed vehemently.[127] At its peak, the NWRO boasted a membership of 30,000, representing the largest organization of poor people in the history of the United States.[128] It was formally dedicated to organizing the poor across racial lines, and represented substantial numbers of Black, white, Indian and Latina women. The disproportionate share of Black mothers on AFDC, however, coupled with the rights consciousness cultivated by the Black Freedom Struggle of the 1960s, resulted in a grassroots leadership of mainly poor Black women, a leadership that often came into conflict with the organization's mostly white male professional national staff.[129]

Nationally, the early 1970s were a time of steep decline for the NWRO, which lost 10,0000 of its paid memberships between 1970 and 1971 as deep cuts to welfare programs across the country effectively eliminated the welfare recipients that composed the organization's constituency.[130] Despite similar cuts in Washington state, the activities of the Washington state WRO escalated quickly during the same time period owing to the growing unemployment crisis of the Seattle area. Until 1970, the NWRO, based primarily in the East and Midwest United States, had no presence in Washington state. That changed in early January 1970 when, at the invitation of ADC Motivated Mothers, NWRO chairperson Johnnie Tillman addressed a Poor Peoples Conference and spent several days in the Seattle area meeting with welfare rights groups in an effort to bring them all under the banner of a new WRO chapter.[131] "We feel we must present a

[127] Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors,* 157-192.

[128] Kornbluh, *The Battle for Welfare Rights*, 2.

[129] Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors*, 193-230.

[130] Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors*. 194.

[131] "Poor People's Conference To Open Here," *Seattle Daily Times*, January 12, 1970.

united front of the poor so we can get some action on our demands to the DPA and to the legislators," explained Leola Woffort, a co-chair of ADC Motivated Mothers.[132]

Washington state WRO organizer Bernadine Garrett led the effort. Like many of Seattle's Black newcomers, Garrett had moved to Seattle after World War II, arriving in 1950 at the age of 16.[133] She had always known poverty, but credited her family for her ability to get by. "I've done a lot of things to survive in this cruel world - day work, cooking, both for families and catering," she told the *Seattle Times*. "If it hadn't been for my family's help I couldn't have made it."[134] Like her aunt Elizabeth Caldwell, also a leader in the Seattle WRO, Garrett participated extensively in community organizations in Seattle's Central Area, including the Council for the Advancement of Human Welfare, the Central Area Mothers for Peace and Improvement, and on several boards of the Seattle Model Cities program.[135] Married to a longshoreman during the 1960s, one of the few well-paying working-class occupations open to Black workers in Seattle at the time, Garrett had been living as a stay-at-home caregiver when she first became involved in the NWRO as a volunteer organizer. Following a divorce, Garrett was left to support her three children and a grandchild on AFDC before securing a temporary paid position as Assistant Director of the NWRO's National Self-Help Program. In fall 1971, Garrett joined the NWRO's National Executive Committee in the role of Sergeant-At-Arms.[136]

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[132] "Member of Rights Group To Address Welfare Rally," *Seattle Daily Times*, January 8, 1970.

[133] Bernadine Garrett, "CHECC Candidate Evaluation Questionnaire," Box 1, Folder 3, Choose an Effective City Council (CHECC) Records, 1967-1976, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

[134] Jones, "Welfare-Rights Leaders Press for 'Decent' Income."

[135] "Bernadine Garrett, "CHECC Candidate Evaluation Questionnaire;" "Caldwell Dies at 61," *Seattle Daily Times*, September 2, 1976.

[136] Beverley Dunn, "NWRO In the Political Arena," *The Welfare Fighter*, October 1971, Volume 2, Number 8; Alf Collins, "Welfare Women Tell It like It Is," *Seattle Daily Times*, December 6, 1977.

The WRO provided an outlet for Black women like Garrett to take a lead in political organizing at a time when radical movements in Seattle's Central Area were in ascendence. From the Black Panther Party to the UCWA, most of Seattle's Black Power organizations involved women, but rarely in a public leadership capacity. The UCWA's actions, for instance, were framed around the importance of employment to the maintenance of Black manhood.[137] Such an emphasis appears to have elided outward support for the organizing of single Black welfare mothers.[138] When a suburban church hosted a panel of activists to speak on Seattle's movement for Black liberation movement, it was not a coincidence that Bernadine Garrett was the lone woman represented among Black Panther Party leaders Aaron and Elmer Dixon, labor organizer Tyree Scott, and student leader Larry Gossett.[139]

The activities of the Washington State WRO followed a template laid down by the National WRO. The local chapter hosted educational events to inform welfare recipients of their rights to public assistance and of the need to pressure government officials for better treatment and greater benefits, such as a September 1971 "Survival Fair" held at the Central Area's Garfield Playfield.[140] Bernadine Garrett spent several days a week in Olympia tracking welfare policy discussions and

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[137] Griffey, "Black Power's Labor Politics."

[138] Coverage of welfare rights organizing was conspicuously lacking from the city's principal Black Power publication, the *Afro-American Journal*, which ran weekly from November 1967 to December 1972; see Doug Blair, "Black Power and Education in the *Afro American Journal*,1968-1969," Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, accessed June 9, 2017, http://depts.washington.edu/civilr/news_blair.htm .

[139] "Churchmen to Hear Views on Black Liberation," *Seattle Daily Times*, January 9, 1971. All these figures, save for Garrett, have since been the subject of books or dissertations. On Gossett, see Bob Santos, *The Gang of Four: Four Leaders, Four Communities, One Friendship* (Seattle, WA: Chin Music Press, 2015); on the Dixons, see Aaron Floyd Dixon, *My People Are Rising Memoir of a Black Panther Party Captain* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012); on Scott, see Trevor Griffey, "Black Power's Labor Politics."

[140] "'Survival Fair' - Welfare-Rights Director to Talk," *Seattle Daily Times*, September 16, 1971; "Nixon Assistance Plan Termed Worse than Present Plan," *Seattle Daily Times*, September 18, 1971.

lobbying state legislators.[141] As Garrett put it, "We know the ropes and can help a lot of people who don't." But the WRO needed to be assertive with that knowledge, she continued. "A lot of welfare people are too passive. They don't know their rights and won't fight for them even if they do."[142] The group therefore mobilized welfare recipients to testify in government hearings, picket, march, rally, and take direct actions like the October 1970 occupation of the DPA office.

Unlike the Aero Mechanics, Seattle's WRO embraced the support of the city's radical left, new and old. More conservative members of the Black community took exception to the chapter's association with members of the local Communist Party, for instance.[143] Garrett, meanwhile, was featured prominently in an interview with the national newspaper of the Black Panther Party.[144] Less a reflection of an ideological bent, these examples reflected the WRO's politics of alliance. Often the WRO served as the center of broader coalitions; 18 separate groups, for instance, formally endorsed its action at the DPA office.[145] Some of the groups the Washington State WRO worked with, including the Seattle Urban League and the Legal Services office, reflected longstanding alliances between welfare recipients and sympathetic professionals. Many of these professional associates, led by anti-poverty activist Kay Thode, would formalize their support by establishing a local chapter of the Friends of the WRO, an organization of non-welfare recipients

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[141] Stewart, "Seattle: The New Poor Face the New Depression," 56.

[142] Jones, "Welfare-Rights Leaders Press for 'Decent' Income."

[143] Quin'Nita F. Cobbins, "Black Emeralds: African American Women's Political Activism and Leadership in Seattle, 1941-2000" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 2018), 301.

[144] "Finally A Reason To Vote."

[145] The endorsing groups were the Washington Welfare Rights Organization, Seattle Liberation Front, Stone Way Welfare Rights Group, Central Area Mothers for Peace and Improvement, Georgetown Free Store, ADC Mothers Council, Seattle Union of the Unemployed, Model Cities Parent Program, Park Lake Parents Group, Georgetown Welfare Rights Group, Council for the Advancement of Human Welfare, Renton Union of the Unemployed, Yesler Terrace Welfare Rights Group, Washington State Welfare Youth Group, Central Area Motivation Program, and Legal Services. See "Welfare Wrongs."

that helped pay for the WRO's office rent and other expenses.[146] But the WRO also joined forces with new organizations formed in response to Seattle's economic crisis, including the New Left-led Union of the Unemployed - which had organized the protest against Boeing that had drawn the Aero Mechanic's ire - and the church-based Neighbors in Need food bank program.[147] Ultimately, the success of these coalitions would motivate Garrett and the Seattle WRO to take their program into the electoral arena.

"These Are Not Ordinary Times:" Bernadine Garrett's 1971 Campaign for Seattle City Council and "The New Poor"

In the summer of 1971, as Seattle's unemployment rate reached new heights, the growing support for poor peoples' organizing in the city convinced Bernadine Garrett that a new form of mobilization was possible. On July 14, Garrett declared her candidacy for Position 4 of the Seattle City Council. Like all Council races, the position was citywide, meaning Garrett would need to garner support far beyond the Central Area to succeed. Fully aware of the difficulties her campaign would face, conditions in the city and the United States nationwide nonetheless convinced Garrett her campaign had a chance. Over the course of the two months between her declaration and the September primary election, Garrett's campaign would demonstrate how the politics of the welfare rights movement could translate into a broader political program aimed at alleviating the hardships

[146] Kay Thode, Newsletters: Friends of Welfare Rights and other organizations, Box 4, Folder 13, Kay Thode Papers, 1962-2003, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

[147] Ruppert, "Welfare Recipient Attacks the 'System;'" Kay Thode, Newsletters: Friends of Welfare Rights and other organizations, Box 4, Folder 13, Kay Thode Papers, 1962-2003, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

of the city's economic crisis. The failure of her candidacy to gain traction would also reveal the stubborn commitment to the traditional terms of work and welfare of IAM 751 and others, as well as the rise of a new sector of professionals within city government.

Garrett's inspiration to run for political office was almost certainly influenced by the NWRO. The pages of the NWRO's newspaper *The Welfare Fighter* was full of profiles of welfare activists seeking political office.[148] They did so with the direct encouragement of the NWRO. Just two weeks after Garrett's candidacy declaration, for instance, the fifth annual national conference of the NWRO in Providence, Rhode Island featured a session on "Clients as political candidates" led by national officer Beulah Sanders. [149] Sanders herself had run for office in the New York State Senate on the ticket of the Freedom and Peace Party in 1968.[150]

Garrett's campaign leaflet stated bluntly and up front the odds she was facing: "How does a woman, who happens to be poor, happens to be black, and happens to be a welfare recipient besides, expect to be elected to public office?" The leaflet's answer was that Seattle's unemployment crisis had created a moment of exception. "In ordinary times she probably couldn't. But these are not ordinary times and Bernadine Garrett is not an ordinary woman."[151] Her candidacy was certainly unprecedented. The first Black woman to ever run for a position on the

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[148] Other examples of welfare rights candidates included Catherine Smith of Pasco, WA, see Dunn, "NWRO In the Political Arena;" Ethel M. Matthews of Atlanta, GA, see "WRO Mother is Running," *Welfare Fighter*, October 1969, 3; and Blondein Sims of Fort Wayne, Indiana, see "Political Candidate Raps on Welfare Rights," *Welfare Fighter*, March 1970, 8. NWRO's electoral campaigns have drawn little attention from the organization's historians, who instead emphasized the group's direct actions, law suits, and lobbying.

[149] National Welfare Rights Organization, "5th Annual Convention Schedule of Events," Box 4, Folder 14, Kay Thode Papers, 1962-2003, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

[150] Kornbluh, *The Battle for Welfare Rights*, 154.

[151] Garrett campaign leaflet, Box 4, Folder 28, Kay Thode Papers, 1962-2003, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

Seattle City Council, Garrett entered the race and Seattle city history as an outsider.[152] The city had only recently elected its first Black official, council member Sam Smith, in 1967. Only four of the fifty Seattle-area political candidates profiled by the Seattle Times in the 1971 primary races were people of color; three of these were in City Council races, and one was incumbent Sam Smith seeking his second term. As a woman, Garrett was also rare in the field; of the twenty-four people seeking City Council positions, only three were women. Of the fifty total people seeking a political position in any area contest, only four were women. In terms of education, Garrett was unique once again among the candidates for her lack of a college education, as seventeen of the twenty-one candidates profiled reported some form of college. Almost a third of the candidates reported graduate school experience. Lastly, in terms of occupation, Seattle City Council's non-incumbent candidates were primarily white-collar professionals (business owners, attorneys, planners, and consultants). Only a police officer, a retired construction worker, a TV serviceman, a former secretary, and a high school student joined Garrett among the ranks of non-professional candidates.[153]

Arguing that her own experience as a poor woman increased her credibility as a candidate, Garrett's campaign sought to leverage the city's ongoing unemployment crisis. "As a welfare recipient," read a volunteer pledge card for her campaign, "Bernadine Garrett understands the problem of Seattle's largest and fastest growing minority - the poor."[154] In 1971, as legions of former Boeing employees became eligible for public assistance, Garrett's campaign held out the

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[152] "Garrett, Bernadine," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* Index, Seattle Room, Central Library, Seattle Public Library.

[153] "24 Seek 5 Seattle Council Positions," *Seattle Daily Times*, September 19, 1971.

[154] Citizens for Garrett Pledge Card, Box 4, Folder 11, Kay Thode Papers, 1962-2003, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

hope that it could tap into a newly developed sympathy for the already poor on the part of the city's unemployed. Media accounts of the unemployment crisis at the time suggested the hope was not unfounded. Said one laid off Boeing employee, "I feel that I've come to understand a lot about poor people, and its something that I never thought about before… I used to think that welfare people were basically lazy. Now I know better. It's just not so."[155]

Indeed, Seattle's economic troubles had in a way transformed welfare into an animating issue within city politics. Garrett had chosen to run against City Council incumbent Ken Rogers, a former Boeing supervisor chosen to fill the vacated seat of Ted Best, a conservative who had resigned amidst corruption allegations. Rogers approved the description of his own politics by the Nixonite terms "conservative, hard-hat, silent-majority," and his approach to Seattle's economic crisis reflected it.[156] Claiming the city should "retrench like big business," Rogers suggested that services be cut to balance the city budget.[157] At the same time, he garnered endorsements from his former Teamsters local, which touted his "good record" as a "friend of labor," as well as the AFL-CIO's Committee on Political Education (COPE).[158] He had made headlines when, on his first day in office, he had balked at news that the federal Emergency Supplement Program, or ESP, would be providing Seattle workers thirteen-week jobs at $80 per week, tax free. "Hey, this is kind of like welfare," Rogers exclaimed. "If you keep giving people something for nothing they will continue to stand there with their hand out."[159]

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[155] Stewart, "Seattle: The New Poor Face the New Depression," 53.

[156] Richard W Larsen, "3-Way Race Shapes up for Council Position 4," *Seattle Daily Times*, September 12, 1971.

[157] "Rogers Appointment Irks Candidates," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, July 7, 1971.

[158] Larsen, "3-Way Race Shapes up for Council Position 4."

[159] Emmett Watson, "Making of a Councilman," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, July 14, 1971.

The sentiment drew immediate ire from the Seattle press and other Position 4 challengers who bemoaned Rogers' lack of sympathy for those out of work. In Garrett's candidacy announcement, she criticized Rogers for how he had "attacked the poor."[160] But in her view, the problem went beyond Rogers. Garrett argued that the Seattle City Council as a whole disregarded the needs of the poor. "I've spent many a day before the City Council and seen that they were turning a deaf ear to poor people. There wasn't anybody there listening."[161] When pressed on welfare issues, it was common for City Council officials to claim state and federal governments tied their hands. "It's easy to say that the City Council is to blame," argued councilperson Liem Tuai. "There's very little that the Council has to do with many of these things. We simply don't have the power."[162] Garrett was unconvinced. "A lot people with degrees a mile-long are sitting on the Council now, denying they have any responsibility for the welfare of the people of Seattle," she said. "I feel that responsibility and I want to do something about it."[163]

In addition to incumbent Rogers, Garrett's other main opponents in the race, Bruce Chapman and James Kimbrough, typified the educated sort she derided. Only thirty years old, Chapman was a Young Republican in the moderate mold of Washington state Governor Daniel Evans and New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller, having served as the student chairmen of the latter's 1960 presidential campaign. A graduate of Harvard University, Chapman described himself as a "writer and specialist in urban affairs" that was "trained in an unusual and new field

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[160] "Woman on Welfare to Run for Council," *Seattle Daily Times*, July 14, 1971.

[161] "Finally a Reason to Vote," *The Black Panther*, August 21, 1971, Vol. VI, No. 30.

[162] "Candidates' Reactions Vary on Holding Gambling Probe," *Seattle Daily Times*, October 22, 1969.

[163] "Bernadine Garrett, "CHECC Candidate Evaluation Questionnaire."

– public affairs consulting."[164] Over the course of the 1960s, in edited and co-written volumes like *Instead of Revolution* and *The Party That Lost Its Head*, Chapman had argued extensively against Richard Nixon's "silent majority" electoral strategies, advancing instead a Republican Party agenda targeting youth and urban demographics.[165] He also considered himself an expert on race relations, having in 1969 directed Washington state's Kramer Commission Report on Race and Violence in Washington state, the state's local answer to the federal 1968 Kerner Commission report on urban riots.[166]

James Kimbrough, as a longtime liberal Democrat, stood on the other side of the political aisle from Chapman, and his resume included service in anti-war and civil liberties organizations. Otherwise, the forty-year-old's profile was remarkably similar. The owner of a real-estate development firm specializing in the restoration of old buildings, Kimbrough gave his profession as "housing consultant," and touted his "strong educational and theoretical base for understanding urban problems," which included graduate study in sociology at the private Tufts University in Massachusetts.[167] Like Chapman, he presented himself as a white authority on racial issues, noting prominently his role as past president of the Seattle Urban League.[168]

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[164] Bruce Chapman for City Council, "Chapman: The Man With 'A Better Way'," Box 1, Folder 7, Choose an Effective City Council (CHECC) Records, 1967-1976, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

[165] Bruce Chapman, ed., *Instead of Revolution* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1971); Bruce Chapman and George F. Gilder, *The Party That Lost Its Head* (New York: Knopf, 1966).

[166] Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Civil Disorder, *Race and Violence in Washington State; Report of the Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Civil Disorder*; Bruce Chapman, "CHECC Candidate Evaluation Questionnaire," Box 2, Folder 11, Choose an Effective City Council (CHECC) Records, 1967-1976, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

[167] Larsen, "3-Way Race Shapes up for Council Position 4."

[168] James Kimbrough, "CHECC Candidate Evaluation Questionnaire," Box 2, Folder 11, Choose an Effective City Council (CHECC) Records, 1967-1976, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

The strong candidacies of professionals like Chapman and Kimbrough, at odds with the labor-backed conservatism of Rogers, were sterling examples of the rise of a new sector within Seattle politics represented by the bipartisan, good government group Choose an Effective City Council (CHECC).[169] In 1967, prior to the emergence of CHECC, six of the council's nine members had served for 12 or more years; of this six, two had served for 17 years and one for 37. According to journalist David Brewster, little happened in Seattle city politics during this period without the blessing and muscle of the Central Association, a group of primarily downtown property owners. [170] But CHECC's first slate of new city council people in 1967, followed by the mayorship of Wes Uhlman working with newly established budgetary authority, broke the hold of downtown business and conservatives like Rogers over city government. Chapman and Kimbrough encompassed CHECC's politics so fully that the organization struggled to choose one over the other, ultimately opting to make no endorsement in the Position 4 race.[171]

Chapman and Kimbrough both cited Seattle's economic problems as a key campaign issue, but neither spoke specifically of the unemployed or the poor.[172] Chapman, for instance, knocked Rogers' anti-welfare comments for their unawareness of "how vital federal help is to Seattle's economic recovery," yet then added that "tagging such aid as 'welfare' is not going to help Seattle."[173] Instead of welfare, Chapman and Kimbrough each touted his own advanced education

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[169] Peter LeSourd, "CHECC'S Emergence in 1967 as an Agent of Political Change in Seattle," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 100, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 107–19. Norbert MacDonald, *Distant Neighbors: A Comparative History of Seattle & Vancouver* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987).

[170] David Brewster, "The View from Downtown," *Seattle Magazine*, December 1970.

[171] Mike Conant, "City Hall: CHECC Ideals Meet Politics," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, July 18, 1971.

[172] Larsen, "3-Way Race Shapes up for Council Position 4."

[173] "Chapman Raps Ken Rogers," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, July 14, 1971.

and personal expertise in balancing plural interests in urban governance, argued for reform of city government and administration in the name of transparency and efficiency, and sought to remedy the city's economy through a select set of federal subsidies and local tax incentives to business.[174] Chapman in particular believed in rectifying the city unemployment rate with continued investment in Seattle's professional and service sectors. "High skill (capital intensive) industries such as research (e.g. Battelle), technical manufacturing, health sciences, import-export trade, corporate headquarters and urban tourism deserve encouragement and support from local government," Chapman argued, "and I believe creative leadership can find the funds that will enable us to launch a better program for attracting such industries. High skill industries must be the anchor for the City's tax base and social stability."[175]

In contrast, Garrett's proposed response to the unemployment crisis, based in the principles of the welfare rights movement, repudiated professional expertise, and stressed the salience of her own experience as a poor Black woman. "A lot of people say it's not a crisis," she explained, "I've lived through a lot of them but this is the worst crisis yet."[176] She criticized the current City Council's budget priorities, arguing her years of experience living on a welfare budget could be useful for economizing the city's budget. "When thousands of people are hungry you don't spend $10,000 on 5 police dogs," she said, referring to a recent Seattle Police Department purchase that had caused controversy in the Central Area. "Particularly when you can't even eat them."[177] Nevertheless, Garrett averred that all the budget talk was beside the point. "I'm not going to the

[174] Bruce Chapman, "CHECC Candidate Evaluation Questionnaire;" James Kimbrough, "CHECC Candidate Evaluation Questionnaire."

[175] Bruce Chapman, "CHECC Candidate Evaluation Questionnaire."

[176] "Finally A Reason To Vote."

[177] Dunn, "NWRO In the Political Arena."

City Council to save a budget for the city," she explained. "I'm going to try to save people's lives."[178] Employing the jobless, housing the homeless, and feeding the hungry were the primary themes of Garrett's campaign. Whereas other candidates, in a reflection of the worlds of finance and urban planning from which they came, addressed Seattle's economic crisis by prioritizing tax relief for business interests and homeowners, and demanding greater government efficiency, Garrett foregrounded material needs.[179] To reverse the city's unequal development and fund aid programs like free medical clinics and food banks, she proposed a tax on commuting suburbanites who worked but did not live in the city, and suggested a 20 percent reduction in city salaries over $15,000.[180]

In interviews, Garrett stressed the need for interracial unity among Seattle's poor. While her outlook reflected the origins of her platform within the welfare rights movement, it was also a political necessity for a campaign in the predominately white city of Seattle, whose electorate was most likely even whiter than its population figures after voting age was considered. Had Seattle's City Council been based in districts, assuming Garrett would have run to represent the Central Area, her chances would likely have increased exponentially. But all the Seattle City Council positions in 1971 were at-large, meaning expensive citywide campaigns – rather than block-to-block door-knocking – had an advantage.[181] Black council member Sam Smith was unpopular with some of Seattle's Black radicals for alliances he struck with the white political establishment, but

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[178] "Finally A Reason To Vote."

[179] "24 Seek 5 Seattle Council Positions."

[180] Bernadine Garrett, "CHECC Candidate Evaluation Questionnaire."

[181] On race and municipal politics in the twentieth-century United States, see Rufus P. Browning, Dale Rogers Marshall, and David H. Tabb, *Racial Politics in American Cities* (New York: Longman, 1997).

it was those alliances that gained him office.[182] Garrett struck no such alliances, but in doing so, she paid the consequences. A cold reception from the city's political elite, coupled with how the situation of Seattle's unemployed Boeing workers was represented and understood, ultimately demonstrated how structural barriers of class, race and gender could forestall change even under conditions of great unrest and uncertainty. While they were consequences Garrett had anticipated, they ultimately guaranteed that after two months, her campaign would end at the primary. [183]

The first barrier Garrett experienced came when she went to file her candidacy with the city. There she encountered the requirement that all candidates pay a filing fee of $201.70. As a welfare recipient supporting a family on $240 a month, the fee rendered politics an elusive luxury. "You have a constitutional right to run for city office," Garrett protested, "but it's a sin and unconstitutional when they put a stipulation upon it of a great filing fee that poor people cannot pay."[184] As had happened many times before over the course of the Seattle welfare rights movement, Garrett filed a lawsuit with the assistance of the Legal Services office seeking the fee waived on the grounds that it discriminated against low-income people. While she waited for the suit to wind its course through the courts, she borrowed the money from supporters and filed the fee.[185]

Garrett recognized that money would continue to be an issue. "One of the things we're trying to prove in this campaign is that money isn't everything," her candidate leaflet explained. "Other candidates will spend thousands of dollars for billboards, newspaper, radio, and television

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[182] For criticism of Smith, see "Editorial: The Red Summer!," *Afro-American Journal*, January 4, 1968, 2.

[183] "Primary Results," *Seattle Daily Times*, September 22, 1971, 1.

[184] "Finally A Reason To Vote."

[185] Neil Modie, "Candidate Claims Filing Fee Illegal," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, July 21, 1971.

advertising – something we just can't afford." Garrett trusted that the mobilization of volunteers and supporters, "people power," would be a sufficient substitute for campaign financing.[186] City filings show that ultimately Garrett's campaign would spend a total of less than $500 on advertising, printing, travel, and the rental of campaign headquarters.[187] In contrast, her two opponents that would advance to the general election, Bruce Chapman and James Kimbrough, respectively reported $14,536.37 and $16,597.13 in campaign costs for the primary alone.[188] In Chapman's case, media coverage of his candidacy dwelled on the well-heeled profile of his supporters at a cocktail party fundraiser. "It's a marvelous party," remarked a supporter. "Such a tony crowd."[189]

Without a wealthy campaign, Seattle's political establishment refused to take Garrett's candidacy seriously. The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, one of the city's two major daily newspapers, almost entirely ignored her campaign, even neglecting to send her a candidate questionnaire for its election issue. After Garrett contacted the paper herself, it finally printed her platform on the day of the primary – deep in the television section.[190] Similarly, Garrett charged CHECC with discrimination after the organization scheduled her to speak at the tail end of its candidate endorsements meeting. When Garrett's turn came to address the meeting, the time was past one in

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[186] Garrett campaign leaflet.

[187] Bernadine Garrett, "Affidavit of Primary Campaign Expenditures," Campaign Finance Reports, Office of the City Clerk 1907-1980, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[188] Bruce Chapman, "Campaign Finance Report," Box 1, Folder 20, Choose an Effective City Council (CHECC) Records, 1967-1976, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries; James Kimbrough, "Affidavit of Primary Campaign Expenditures," Box 1, Folder 25, Choose an Effective City Council (CHECC) Records, 1967-1976, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

[189] Shelby Scates, "Demos and GOP Mingle in Fund-Raising Affair," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, August 7, 1971.

[190] "Mrs. Garrett's Platform," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, September 21, 1971.

the morning and most of the group's members had left, eliminating a quorum.[191] After Garrett protested the meeting outcome and demanded a second endorsement meeting be scheduled, CHECC president John Hempelmann replied to say he regretted the meeting scheduling, blaming it on confusion with her campaign supporters, but added that the filing fee lawsuit she had filed "may preclude a serious primary election campaign."[192] CHECC's Endorsement Committee, for its part, though deeming Garrett "a serious candidate," thought her "long-range vision of Seattle's future was limited" and questioned her campaign experience. The Committee recommended against an endorsement.[193]

As money defined the council race, class and income inequality proved a hurdle for Garrett. Yet it had also been a class-based appeal – to "Seattle's largest and fastest growing minority - the poor"– upon which Garrett had staked her political chances. As it would turn out, decades worth of privileges enjoyed by white male breadwinner Boeing employees hung heavy on their class identities, even amidst a severe unemployment crisis, preventing them from seeing their common interests with welfare recipients like Bernadine Garrett. During the controversy over Rogers' comments about economic relief and welfare, newspaper columnist and Seattle mainstay Emmett Watson had related a story about a friend who, like Rogers, worked as a Boeing supervisor and believed deeply in free enterprise. When the company's layoffs were announced, he asked one of the effected workers what he planned to. "First I go to the unemployment office," the man replied.

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[191] "Candidate to Resign Model Cities Post," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, July 16, 1971; Bernadine Garrett to John Hempelmann, July 15, 1971, Box 1, Folder 7, Choose an Effective City Council (CHECC) Records, 1967-1976, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

[192] John Hempelmann to Bernadine Garrett, July 15, 1971, Box 1, Folder 7, Choose an Effective City Council (CHECC) Records, 1967-1976, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

[193] CHECC Candidate Evaluation Committee, "Summary Report: Bernadine Garrett," Box 3, Folder 25, Choose an Effective City Council (CHECC) Records, 1967-1976, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

“My and kids have got to eat.” Watson’s friend, surprised, answered with a Rogers-like quip. “Hey, that’s kind of like welfare. You going down there with your hand out?” According to Watson, the Boeing supervisor “came away with a bloody nose for that remark.”[194]

Watson’s anecdote underscored how Boeing workers could take welfare to be an insult to their status as breadwinners for their families. For laid-off Boeing employees, Seattle’s economic crisis doubled as an identity crisis. If they were middle-class – with a suburban home, cars and other fixed asserts, and certain expectations about income and quality of life – how could they then be poor? Garrett and other segments of Seattle’s left hoped Boeing workers would emerge from this crisis as allies of welfare recipients. National media coverage of Boeing’s unemployed, however, worked overtime to erase the traditional poor represented by Garrett, portraying Seattle’s unemployment crisis instead as a phenomenon they deemed “the New Poor.” These accounts, amplified in government reports, portrayed the middle-class experience as the very essence of Seattle’s crisis, the very thing that made it notable. A Senate Committee report on the Seattle crisis, citing an Associated Press series on the “New Poor,” stressed that “society is not prepared to think of a middle-class suburban home owner with two cars in his garage as being in need of outside help to put food on his table.”[195] But, at least by national media’s measure, the specter of a middle-class in need was the one thing about the crisis that society cared to hear about. In February 1972, for example, *LIFE* magazine ran an article typical of the coverage, centered on the experience of former Boeing engineer Stan Schuerman and his wife Mary. Recent transplants from the Midwest with two young children, the family had enjoyed “a $21,000 house in the suburbs, two cars,

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[194] Watson, “Making of a Councilman.”

[195] Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs, *Seattle: Unemployment, the New Poor, and Hunger, with Supplement.*

vacations, and a $15,000 salary." The story was also typical for *LIFE* in turning its attention to the qualities that made the Schuerman's representative of an idealized nuclear family of consumers. With subtitles like "Getting by on elk meat, ingenuity and little cash" and "Tough readjustments but no self-pity" the story foregrounded the Schuerman's self-sufficiency and familial strength through the hardships encountered by the loss of Stan's salary, the household's sole source of income. [196]

During her campaign, Garrett noted how the anxiety about middle-class identity during Seattle's economic crisis, shown by Boeing employees and the coverage of the "New Poor," translated into inequitable policy. Initiatives like the Emergency Supplement Program, rather than representing a form of welfare like Ken Rogers had supposed, in fact represented how policymakers could respond to the crisis without expanding direct public assistance. "Washington without the ESP Program would naturally have to put more people on welfare," she explained. "Now they could be welfare recipients as far as I'm concerned… but now as soon as the Boeing Engineers and some of the middle class suburbia get out a job, they come up with a thing called ESP. So if they get ESP they don't have to go on welfare rolls."[197] The result was that potential constituents were diverted away from the welfare rights movement, and by extension, Garrett's campaign.

Ultimately, while the extraordinary circumstances of Seattle's crisis had motivated Garrett's candidacy, they were not extraordinary enough to secure her victory. Early returns for

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[196] "The 'New Poor' Scramble to Survive in Seattle," *LIFE*, February 18, 1972. For more on politicized depictions of the family in *LIFE* magazine, see Natasha Zaretsky, *No Direction Home: The American Family and the Fear of National Decline, 1968-1980* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 5.

[197] "Finally a Reason to Vote."

Seattle's primary on September 21, 1971 showed Garrett's electoral support totaling only 4,218. The number would later creep up to around 6,000, but that would not reach even half of the votes cast for the primary's two victors, James Kimbrough and Bruce Chapman.[198] Part of the problem, perhaps, had been that the poor and unemployed characteristically did not vote, a fact seemingly admitted by Garrett's campaign slogan: "Finally a Reason to Vote." Prior to the primary, in a characteristic disregard of Garrett, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* politics reporter Mike Conant had expressed surprise that "Seattle's unemployment condition hasn't emerged as the strongest issue in the race." "If the pattern of history holds true," wrote Conant, "those who will be voting will be upper middle-class citizens who hold true to the moderate tenets of the Seattle Municipal League and who generally have more stable employment."[199] With low voter turnout characterizing the primary race, perhaps the pattern of history, despite Garrett's efforts, had held true.[200]

But the consequences of the welfare rights movement's failure to connect with the Aero Mechanics went far beyond the results of a single local election. These consequences were revealed in a 1973 study published by the RAND Corporation, in partnership with researchers at the University of Washington, which sought to answer why Seattle's unemployment crisis had not hit the city's economy harder than it did, with consumer spending remaining steady throughout the crisis. While the study never mentioned IAM 751, it nonetheless revealed how the strengths of organized labor had provided serious advantages to unemployed Boeing workers. For one, high incomes in the aerospace industry, in part a result of unionization, had contributed to savings that

[198] "Primary Results," *Seattle Daily Times*, September 22, 1971, 1. Garett's report back to the NWRO's Welfare Fighter newspaper nevertheless saw a silver lining: "People Power instead of money power; our votes cost us less than 16 cents each, while the average was 68 cents for the other candidates."

[199] Mike Conant, "Silent Rebuttal in the Primary? Change 'Disastrous' to Voter, Candidate," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, August 12, 1971.

[200] Shelby Scates, "Election Drew Only 21 Pct. of Voters," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer (WA)*, September 23, 1971.

allowed workers to get by over the course of their unemployment. The study also cited state and federal transfer payments, especially unemployment insurance – IAM 751's central lobbying victory during the crisis – as being key to workers' survival. Finally, the study noted how aerospace workers, despite being the first to be hit by the layoffs, ultimately fared much better than workers in other Seattle industries. Though it often meant a pay cut or demotion in status, aerospace workers generally experienced shorter periods between jobs, no doubt due in part to the seniority protections of IAM 751's contract.[201]

While these advantages made a real difference for aerospace workers, like the social security structure of the United States more broadly, employment was their basic condition. Not only did this leave enormous power within the hiring and firing hands of employers, but it abandoned populations kept out of the job market by racial and gender discrimination, childcare responsibilities, or both. Not surprisingly, then, among the RAND study's findings was that the Seattle unemployment crisis had been commonly mischaracterized as "a uniquely middle-class affair." The people hardest hit by the crisis were not, in fact, workers in the aerospace industry; the crisis had started there, "but, as always, it was the lower income and status groups who were hit the hardest," Seattle's Black community in particular.[202]

Garrett and the welfare rights movement had understood this reality, but their failure to gain wider political traction rendered them unable to change it. As the 1970s progressed, Washington state's assistance programs – no longer administered by the Department of Public Assistance, but the newly coined Department of Health and Social Services – lessened in value.

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[201] Rainey et al*, Seattle's Adaptation to Recession*, 29.

[202] Rainey et al*, Seattle's Adaptation to Recession*, 27.

Tracked by the Seattle Urban League's Kay Thode, the Consumer Price Index increased 94 percent between May 1967 and 1978, while the state's public assistance grants, grants for one person increased by only 34.6 percent, and four persons, 54.9 percent.[203] Meanwhile, administrative requirements grew more stringent as welfare investigations increased. [204] Rather than driving an expansion of the welfare state, as organizers had hoped, Seattle's crisis led to its gradual dissolution.

The decline in relief tracked with the national decline of the NWRO itself. Wracked by a growing anti-welfare political atmosphere and beset by internal divisions and financial debts, the national organization struggled to maintain its operations into 1973. That May, when the Washington state WRO met in Seattle for its annual conference, everything about the meeting had the air of an organization under siege. Extra security had been mustered by meeting organizers in fear of disruptions by the National Caucus of Labor Committees, an early venture of neo-fascist Lyndon LaRouche that had been attempting to overtake the WRO.[205] In the midst of her speech to the gathering, national organizer Beulah Sanders – now the president of the NWRO – collapsed from exhaustion. Organizers blamed the extended hours she had been expending to save the NWRO. State organizer Elaine McLean was left to finish Sanders's speech with criticism of "groups that had supported welfare rights in the past, but had eliminated them from their 'cause-of-the-month' list."[206] After two more difficult years, the NWRO folded for good in 1975.

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[203] Kay Thode, "Comparison of Changes in the Seattle-All Items Consumer Index and King County Public Assistance Grants 1967-1978," Box 1, Folder 16, Kay Thode Papers, 1962-2003, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

[204] "Welfare-Fraud Suspects Get Aid," *Seattle Daily Times*, July 28, 1972.

[205] On LaRouche, see Dennis King, *Lyndon LaRouche and the New American Fascism* (Doubleday, 1989).

[206] Mike Wyne, "Long, Hot Summer Hinted," *Seattle Daily Times*, May 24, 1973.

Welfare rights activists did not give up. Bernadine Garrett certainly did not. Like many others, Garrett continued the work she had begun in the WRO as the staffer of a social service agency. The turn to social services, much of it funded by private charity, reflected the diminished support for welfare on behalf of governments. To historian Premilla Nadasen, it also reflected the diminished outlook of the welfare rights movement itself: "Gone was the language of a right to a basic standard of living. Gone was the language of entitlement."[207] But for Garrett, at least, it was not gone. In 1986, she appeared in a *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* article about free back-to-school clothing provided by the Operational Emergency Center, a United Way program where she had worked since the mid-1970s.[208] Sixteen years after she had led a raucous occupation of the Department of Public Assistance Office and fifteen years after she had run for City Council on a platform of welfare rights, Garrett – now going by her maiden name of Saulsberry – had not forgotten her principles. "Just remember," she said, speaking to mothers picking out clothing at the Center. "It's not a privilege, it's a right. It's your right because you don't have clothing. I know, I've been on both sides."[209]

Not all of Seattle's insurgent social movements of the 1970s faced such a steep decline as the NWRO. While Garrett left public life, other figures like Larry Gossett, Bob Santos, Roberto Maestas and Bernie Whitebear only grew in prominence, entering political service like Gossett – a longtime King County councilmember – or leading their organizations into permanence, and even predominance, among Seattle service organizations. Today, Daybreak Star, the Indian center

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[207] Nadasen, *Welfare Warriors*, 227.

[208] "Government Inspected: The Unemployed Individual," KRAB Public Affairs Programs, September 10, 1975, accessed April 17, 2017, http://www.krabarchive.com/krab-programs-government-inspected.html .

[209] George Foster, "A Clothing Special: Poor Children Get Free Back-to-School Outfits," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, September 5, 1986.

founded by Whitebear, and. Maestas's El Centro De La Raza, are two of the city's largest cultural community centers. What did track with the decline of the NWRO, however, was the decreasing emphasis on confrontation, building power, and community control, and a growing devotion to service, of the sort that had predated the social movements of the 1970s. By the 1980s, despite social movement achievements, many organizations were still fighting for dwindling shares of resources, and Seattle's communities of color faced similar rates of segregation and poverty.

What led to that outcome? Why, a decade later, did organizers face the same problems they had fought so hard to overcome? One reason, this dissertation will argue, was that the terrain of global capitalism and American empire had shifted underneath their feet, fundamentally changing the city of Seattle that they had fought to claim as their own. Community power and a share of jobs meant less when neighborhoods were besieged on all sides by gentrification and development, and the city's growing service sectors devalued the very blue-collar workforce they had fought so hard to enter. Meanwhile, institutions that might ground a confrontation with global capitalism, like unions, were simply not up to the challenge due to political compromises, government repression, and a renewed business offensive.

In their response to the Boeing Bust, the Aero Mechanics were ultimately limited by compromise. As we shall see in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, the union had better days ahead of it. But their role in responding to Seattle's unemployment crisis, particularly the protections of collective bargaining, went entirely unheralded, to the detriment of organized labor's political influence in the city. Ironically, despite representing the primary workforce at the epicenter of the layoffs, and despite its outsized role in sustaining the city's economy, organized labor and IAM 751 were left out of the RAND study and every subsequent account of the Boeing crisis

altogether.[210] In identifying so closely with the establishment, blending in as it were, it is worth wondering if the union did not erase itself. In turning a cold shoulder to Bernadine Garrett and the welfare rights movement, the union passed on an opportunity to expand working class power in the city for the sake of their members' own sense of privilege. In their place within Seattle's political economy would rise professionals like the council candidates Bruce Chapman and James Kimbrough, who, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, advanced agendas that would increasingly sideline workers in pursuit of a professional service economy. But that would not be before the U.S. federal government, fretting about what Seattle's troubles meant for American power in the world, came to the rescue of the city and the Boeing Company.

[210] The most commonly cited work dealing with the Boeing Bust in the context of broader Seattle history, Roger Sale's *Seattle: Past to Present*, never once mentions IAM 751. See Roger Sale, *Seattle, Past to Present* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), 232-238. Other works focusing directly on Boeing, rather than the city, also discuss the crisis without reference to IAM 751. See for instance Ann Markusen, *Rise of the Gunbelt* and T. M. Sell, *Wings of Power: Boeing and the Politics of Growth in the Northwest*.

CHAPTER 2

EMPIRE IN NEED

SEATTLE AND THE U.S. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN THE 1970S

To hear him tell it, Warren Magnuson had never known shame like he did on December 10, 1971. "I have served in the Senate for over 25 years and in all of that time I have never felt disgraced by my Government," the senior congressman declared to his colleagues in the United States Senate. "But today I stand here on the floor of the greatest deliberative body in the world in total humiliation."[1] Back in Magnuson's home state of Washington, the city of Seattle was deep in economic crisis, experiencing the worst unemployment in an American urban area since the Great Depression. For over a year, the Washington state congressional delegation, led by Magnuson and his fellow Democratic senator Henry Jackson, had been working to direct federal funding and relief to their home districts against an apathetic, if not hostile, Nixon administration. In particular, Magnuson and Jackson had tried without success to compel the Department of Agriculture to release surplus food commodities to supplement Seattle's inadequate food stamp programs against what the administration claimed was a prohibition against dual relief plans. As government at all levels proved itself unable or unwilling to provide relief, Seattle residents had organized to address a growing hunger crisis, establishing a

[1] "Hunger in Seattle," *TIME Magazine* 99, no. 4 (January 24, 1972): 25.

volunteer-run free food program, Neighbors in Need, that was feeding thousands of families a week.[2]

Magnuson's humiliation, however, was not due to the hunger crisis alone. His was an embarrassment of international proportions. Less than two weeks before, in a show of solidarity, residents of Seattle's sister city of Kobe, Japan had sent stores of food to Neighbors in Need. "Mr. President," Magnuson challenged, "Why must citizens of the richest Nation in the world have their survival dependent upon mercy shipments of rice and canned goods from another nation across the Pacific?" Since World War II, the United States had emerged as the most powerful country in the world – the greatest and the richest, in Magnuson's words – and to him, the mere thought of another nation lending support impugned his country's reputation as a benevolent hegemon. "I served in the Pacific during the war, and I am surprised about how we are reversing foreign relations."[3] Magnuson insisted it was humiliating for himself and the United States, and it was apparently humiliating for the Nixon administration as well. Magnuson's rhetorical gambit worked where months of petitioning, legal wrangling and bureaucratic arm-twisting had not, and with national headlines telegraphing his speech of shame, the Department of Agriculture finally approved the release of surplus commodities to Seattle the very same day.[4]

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[2] United States et al., *Seattle: Unemployment, the New Poor, and Hunger, with Supplement.* (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971).

[3] Senator Warren Magnuson, speaking on "Senate Resolution 212-Submission of a Resolution Relating to the Feeding of Hungry People in Seattle and Other Areas of Economic Disaster," on December 10, 1971, Congressional Record 117, 46061-46069.

[4] "U.S. Reverses Stand On Seattle Food Aid After Senate Attack," *New York Times*, 1971; "U.S. Orders Food Sent to Hungry in Seattle: Supplements Stamp Program After Japan Delivers Gifts of Rice and Canned Goods," *Los Angeles Times (1923-1995)*, December 11, 1971, sec. PART ONE.

The response of the U.S. federal government to Seattle's unemployment crisis in the early 1970s represented a paradox. As the struggle over food relief reflected, the administration of Richard Nixon stood intransigent against any form of direct relief or bailout for the city, ignoring or deflecting appeals for support for over two long years, even as existing relief and welfare programs proved woefully inadequate for the legions of Seattle's unemployed. And yet by the time Washington state politicians began heralding the end of the recession in 1972, actions taken by the Nixon administration, Congress, and the federal bureaucracy had funneled over one and a half billion federal dollars into the state, a *de facto* bailout occurring mainly outside the big headlines that had occasioned the controversy over Japanese food aid. The reason, this chapter argues, was that partisan politics and Republican party ideology, which animated the Nixon administration's ostensible stance on Seattle, were immaterial to the deep structural significance that Washington state held for U.S. economic and military strength. The release of surplus commodities following Japan's mercy shipments was one example among many illustrating how growing concern over the diminishment of American power in the world motivated the federal government to intervene in Seattle, not for the sake of any of those suffering in the city, but for the sake of the global standing of the U.S.-based industries at the center of the city's economy. Such actions revealed that federal government aid, not unlike domestic welfare policy, was often means-tested by an imperial measure: the likelihood that funding would benefit U.S. global power.

At a time when American power was newly embattled, both militarily in the war in Vietnam, and economically from growing competition from countries like Japan, federal intervention was not straight-forward, nor was it always successful. It was nonetheless highly consequential for Seattle and its place within global capitalism. Born of Cold War defense build-

up, the imperial dimensions of Seattle's political economy provided the city's partisans the necessary leverage to obtain federal aid that would give Seattle an early advantage as America's central role in the global economy was reconfigured, transforming the metropolitan area in the 1970s into a critical site of a renewed U.S. empire in the late 20th century. Boeing remained key, but its place in the city's economy was joined by other high technology firms and business services that kept profits and productivity high even while well-paying jobs diminished. When the recession had finally run its course in 1972, aerospace's share of the area economy had been cut by more than half over 1968, while the total represented by all professional sectors – government, education, finance, insurance, real estate and services – had grown by over 20 percent. The total share of Seattle's workforce funded directly or indirectly the government, meanwhile, grew to 35 percent. [5]

As urban restructuring reshaped American cities through the 1970s, and American empire regained its footing on new grounds, continuing federal support would expand Seattle's business service economy, abetting the city's reorientation around trade and white-collar professions, and boosting the metropolis increasingly higher in a global hierarchy of cities as the twentieth century continued. A shared effort by Republicans and Democrats alike, the federal actions taken on behalf of Seattle from 1969 to 1972 revealed American empire as a bipartisan project with significant implications for urban development in the late 20th century United States.

[5] Berkley Gerald Johnson, "Seattle: The Lean Years" (AB Thesis, Dartmouth College, 1973), 32, 45.

"A Very Tender Political Climate:" Seattle and the Partisan Politics of Unemployment

Entering the 1970s, Seattle's relationships to the U.S. federal government, the national economy, and the world were deep and multidimensional, knotted tightly with the fortunes of empire. The centrality of the city's aerospace company Boeing to the international economy and its strategic position on the Pacific Ocean lent the city an outsized importance belied by its modest population of 500,000 and geographic remove of nearly 800 miles from any similarly sized U.S. city outside of Portland, Oregon. Despite being well over 2,000 miles from the U.S. capital of Washington, D.C., national institutions were nonetheless central players in the drama of the city's unemployment crisis from beginning to end, from the White House to Congress to the federal bureaucracy.

In the White House sat President Richard Nixon, whose relationship to Seattle over time was defined by the two overriding motivations of his political career: maintaining his own political power and the power of the United States in the world.[6] His rare visits to the city provide cases in point: the only time he was not campaigning, like a brief stop for President Dwight Eisenhower in 1958, another for his own candidacy in 1960, and one more in 1968 during his second presidential race, Nixon was in Seattle to celebrate U.S. prominence on the world stage, bringing his family along to the city's World's Fair in August 1962.[7] Then, though still in campaign mode amidst his race for the governorship of California, he perused the Fair's

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[6] Maier, *Among Empires*, 236; Allen J. Matusow, *Nixon's Economy: Booms, Busts, Dollars, and Votes* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 84.

[7] "Richard M. Nixon and His Family Visit the Seattle World," *HistoryLink.Org*, accessed January 7, 2020, https://www.historylink.org/File/10137; "Richard M. Nixon Campaigns for the Presidency in Seattle on September 24, 1968," *HistoryLink.Org*, accessed May 23, 2021, https://historylink.org/File/3666;

many booths representing the nations of the world, commenting on the various countries he had visited. He did not know it then, but Nixon's political career was approaching its nadir: barely two months later he would lose the governor race bitterly to Democrat Pat Brown, all but announcing his retirement from politics in a spectacularly embarrassing press conference that would go down in infamy in U.S. political history ("You don't have Nixon to kick around anymore," he proclaimed, "because, gentlemen, this is my last press conference.").[8] On the other hand, as the World's Fair served to illustrate, American empire was at full strength, coasting on the economic and military supremacy the country had established after World War II that filled the world's markets with U.S.-made goods, blotted its regional theaters with swaths of U.S. military installations, and blanketed the world's skies with Boeing's Seattle-made airplanes.[9]

In 1970, when Seattle's economic crisis began in earnest, the tables had dramatically turned. Following the remarkable political comeback of his 1968 presidential victory, Nixon was now the most powerful man in the United States, if not the world. But for the first time in the postwar era, the preeminent power of the United States in the world was in question, and the terms of the Cold War were straining. Western Europe and Japan's dramatic postwar recoveries, engineered under the auspices of U.S. supremacy, were now generating new international pressures through economic competition, and for the first time since 1893, the United States was approaching a trade deficit.[10] Meanwhile, the growing unpopularity of the war in Vietnam was setting novel limits on overt U.S. military action and putting a dent in support for defense

[8] Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: The Rise of a President and the Fracturing of America* (Simon and Schuster, 2010), 61.

[9] On Boeing and American empire at mid-century, see Jenifer Van Vleck, *Empire of the Air: Aviation and the American Ascendancy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013).

[10] Matusow, 117. For an overview of the literature on this conjuncture, see Daniel Sargent, "The Cold War and the international political economy in the 1970s," *Cold War History*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2013), 393-425.

spending.[11] Owing to these trends, Nixon was convinced he had taken the reins of the presidency at a precipitous moment in the history of the United States as a world-historical force, and true to his twin motivations, he saw himself, armed with the necessary political power, as the only man up to the task of saving the country from decline.[12] Of particular consequence for Seattle, this meant an economic agenda that sought to maintain American supremacy in key sectors, advance an aggressive stance in international trade, and mitigate declining domestic support for military spending.

As intertwined as U.S. empire was with Seattle, the city itself was of little interest to Nixon, a reflection of both the region's Democratic political profile and Nixon's notorious aversion to domestic policy in favor of foreign policy and imperial grand strategy. As it happened, however, some of the most important administration staffers that Nixon entrusted with domestic policy hailed from the city. Leading this so-called "Seattle mafia" was Nixon's assistant for domestic affairs John Ehrlichman, a former Seattle land use attorney, born and raised in the area, who had grown close to Nixon through his work as a veteran West Coast Republican Party operative.[13] Working under Ehrlichman were administrative assistants Tod Hullin, a former University of Washington football player, and Egil "Bud" Krogh, another UW alumnus and a former employee of Ehrlichman's Seattle law firm.[14] With Nixon's attention primarily on world affairs, Ehrlichman and his team were perhaps the most powerful force in the

[11] Mattias Fibiger, "The Nixon Doctrine and the Making of Authoritarianism in Island Southeast Asia," Diplomatic History 45, no. 5 (2021): 954–82, https://doi.org/10.1093/dh/dhab065.

[12] Julian E. Zelizer, *Arsenal of Democracy: The Politics of National Security--from World War II to the War on Terrorism* (Basic Books, 2010), 238.

[13] John Ehrlichman, *Witness to Power: The Nixon Years* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982).

[14] Dick Dykeman, "Ehrlichman and Krogh -- Modest Members of the 'Seattle Mafia,'" *Seattle Daily Times*, October 6, 1970.

administration's day-to-day domestic policy decision-making, and they imbued that practice with a concern for partisan politics that bespoke both Ehrlichman's origins in campaigning and Nixon's overriding preoccupation with his own power.

Seattle's representation in the White House was new and novel, a bit of a happenstance of politics. In contrast, the city's clout in Congress was outsized and longstanding, and represented some of the chief engineers of U.S. empire in the postwar era. More than any other single persons, Seattle's structural significance to U.S. empire owed to the careers of Democratic Senator Warren Magnuson and his longtime colleague Henry "Scoop" Jackson, whose decades in Congress and influential committee positions (Magnuson in commerce, Jackson in foreign policy and energy) had long funneled funds to the state through federal facilities and contracts.[15] As the affair over food relief illustrated, Magnuson was a staunch critic of the Nixon administration during Seattle's crisis, though he and the administration would grow closer over their shared commitment to U.S. empire as the crisis continued. Jackson, on the other hand, was widely regarded as Nixon's favorite Democratic Senator, a status owed to his hawkish foreign policy and support for the President on Vietnam; indeed, 93 percent of Jackson's congressional votes on foreign policy in 1969 and 1970 had aligned with Nixon. In 1968, Nixon had even asked Jackson to join his cabinet, offering a choice between Secretary of Defense or State, but Jackson declined over concerns about the impacts his appointment would have on the partisan political balance of Washington state and the U.S. Senate, as well as his own plans to ultimately run for president.[16] As Jackson began planning his run for the Democratic presidential

[15] Christopher P. Foss, *Facing the World: Defense Spending and International Trade in the Pacific Northwest Since World War II* (Oregon State University Press, 2020).

[16] Foss, "Senator Henry 'Scoop' Jackson and the Intersection between Domestic Politics and Foreign Relations in the Postwar Era," in *The Cold War at Home and Abroad: Domestic Politics and US Foreign Policy since 1945* (University Press of Kentucky, 2018), 64–65; Robert Gordon Kaufman, *Henry M. Jackson: A Life in Politics* (Seattle: University

nomination in earnest in summer 1971, he had much less time than Magnuson to lead the charge for federal relief for Seattle. Nixon's camp still paid him close attention, however, wary of his appeal to the voters central to their own "New Majority" electoral strategy, namely organized labor.[17]

Democrats' domination of Washington state would complicate the Nixon's administration's nominal response to Seattle's unemployment crisis. Among the state's nine congressional representatives, only elderly Thomas Pelly, a long-time North Seattle incumbent on the cusp of retirement, belonged to the Republican Party. Even so, Republicans boasted some important positions in Washington state as well. State Governor Daniel Evans was a high-profile Republican that Nixon had considered for his 1968 campaign ticket. Popular with voters, Evans was serving his third consecutive term, a record for the office.[18] Republican John Spellman, meanwhile, served as the Executive of Seattle's King County, and Spellman was friendly with John Ehrlichman dating back to his Seattle days.[19] As Seattle's crisis deepened, both Evans and Spellman visited Washington D.C. regularly, attempting to work their partisan relationships with the Nixon administration to engineer relief for the region. As the White House stood firm against direct relief, however, Evans and Spellman would mute their criticisms out of the same partisan allegiance.

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of Washington Press, 2000), 197-198, 215; Peter J. Ognibene, *Scoop: The Life and Politics of Henry M. Jackson* (New York: Stein and Day, 1975), 230.

[17] "Washington Political Brief for Richard Nixon, for September 26, 1971 Trip to Walla Walla, WA," September 26, 1971, RNPLM.

[18] "Governor Dan Evans Delivers the Keynote Address at the Republican National Convention on August 5, 1968," *HistoryLink.Org*, accessed May 23, 2021, https://www.historylink.org/file/20876.

[19] John Charles Hughes, *John Spellman: Politics Never Broke His Heart* (Washington State Heritage Center, Legacy Project, 2013).

Holding no such allegiance was Seattle's young mayor, Wes Uhlman, who came from a dovish wing of the Democratic Party. Uhlman had his own, far less-friendly history with Ehrlichman and the White House. In January 1970, Nixon had backed armed raids of the Black Panther Party nationwide by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, & Firearms. When federal agents approached Uhlman for assistance in Seattle, he not only nixed the raid but revealed their plans to the national press, which the administration then denied. Hardly a partisan of the Panthers, Uhlman was worried that potential violence would stoke public sympathy for the group. No matter, when Uhlman later visited the White House lobbying for federal funds for his police department, he was confronted by an irate Ehrlichman, who accused the mayor of embarrassing the President over the Panthers. "We won't forget this," Ehrlichman chastised. "We won't forget this!" After the confrontation was leaked to the press, Uhlman reaffirmed his opposition to the raid, but insisted he wanted to smooth things over. "We want to get along," Uhlman pleaded to the *Seattle Times*. "We want to make love, not war, with Mr. Ehrlichman."[20] Despite the fight, Uhlman was also in Washington D.C. on a regular basis pleading for federal support. He would eventually find the love he sought, not so much with the White House, but with the federal bureaucracies that would come to Seattle's rescue.

From the outset of Boeing layoffs in late 1969, Washington state politicians turned to the federal government for relief. While the state's Democrats eagerly framed their appeals as critiques of the Republican Nixon administration, the state's Republicans shared the impulse that Seattle's crisis was primarily a federal issue: federal dollars had created the city's economy, after all, so federal dollars should save it. The Nixon administration, on the other hand, despite a

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[20] Bob Young, "Wes Uhlman: A Politician of His Times" (Legacy Washington; Office of the Secretary of State, Washington State); William E. Prochnau, "Panther Remark Gets Uhlman White House Flak," *The Seattle Times*, March 12, 1970.

renewed campaign seeking national full employment, greeted the Seattle crisis as an opportunity to punish Democrats and purge Washington state's reliance on federal government support. Seen as a matter of rescue versus abandonment, through the first eighteen months of the unemployment crisis, abandonment seemed to be most in the cards for Seattle.

Few were eager to blame Boeing, the city's primary rainmaker, for Seattle's crisis. For Washington state's Democrats and their core constituencies such as aerospace workers, Nixon's inflation policies, not the Company's financial decisions or its profit-motive, were the true genesis of the state's unemployment crisis.[21] Speaking at the state's Labor Council Convention in 1969 as aerospace layoffs were only just beginning, Senator Henry Jackson explained how the impacts of tight money were especially compounded in credit-dependent industries like those that dominated Washington state. "In major industries like commercial aircraft, where big sales depend on the buyer's ability to finance the purchase, the impact can be swift and serious. Every contract to buy planes lets the buyer off the hook if he can't get financing. In recent weeks contracts aggregating over 100 millions of dollars have been cancelled for this reason, and contract cancellations mean regional unemployment."[22] Boeing needed buyers for its airplanes and buyers needed financing. Similarly, the forest products sector, the state's number two industry and a historic backstop to the boom and bust of aerospace, depended on moderate interest rates to stimulate housing starts.[23]

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[21] For more on Washington State politicians and aerospace workers hesitancy to blame Boeing, see Chapter 2, "Food Stamp Capital."

[22] "Jackson Hits Nixon Tight Money Policy," *Aero-Mechanic*, August 25, 1969, Seattle, WA. Washington congressman Lloyd Meeds also argued that Nixon's high interest rates and "tight money" policy were "choking" Boeing; "Meeds Says Nixon Hurts Boeing," *Aero-Mechanic*, October 26, 1970.

[23] Johnson, "Seattle: The Lean Years," 13-17.

Ironically, it was a critique that Nixon privately agreed with. In addition to growing international competition, the first years of Nixon's administration had been beset by inflation. Due to strong union contracts, dramatic wage increases occurred for U.S. workers in 1969, and combined with high levels of federal spending for the war in Vietnam, the national economy had approached full employment. Squeezed for profits by the resultant high costs of labor, businesses raised prices precipitously, causing severe inflation. Administration officials sought to temper employment and bring down the inflation rate, but despite the traditional Republican antipathy towards organized labor, owing to Nixon's desire to woo workers into his New Majority, he was reluctant to attack labor directly.[24] Instead, his administration leaned on "tight money" policies, such as raising interest rates, which under Nixon began to reach historic highs, and cutting back defense spending. The result, as intended, was increased unemployment. Much to Nixon's chagrin, however it also provided a readymade campaign issue for the Democratic Party in the 1970 Congressional elections, which blamed Nixon for growing unemployment and claimed that the Republican Party's business-friendly ideology prevented the necessary interventions, like wage and price controls, that would best fight inflation. Sensing defeat, Nixon made a last-minute attempt to pivot his administration's attention away from fighting inflation to fixing unemployment, but it was too late, and the GOP lost several important congressional seats. Nixon, seething, insisted that 1972 would be different, and instructed his advisors to pursue full

[24] On Nixon's relationship with organized labor, see Jefferson Cowie, "Nixon's Class Struggle: Romancing the New Right Worker, 1969-1973," *Labor History* 43, no. 3 (2002): 257–83, https://doi.org/10.1080/0023656022000001779.

employment again, inflation be damned.[25] "The economy *must* boom beginning July 1972," he concluded.[26]

The state's Republicans were more diplomatic in their appeals to the White House. Almost immediately upon Boeing's announcement of major layoffs, King County Executive John Spellman traveled to the national capitol to personally lobby for economic development funds, and in June 1970, Governor Daniel Evans made his first petition directly to the President. "The State of Washington has fully supported your programs to bring the inflationary spiral under control," Evans wrote, an exaggeration, given state Democrats' on-going willingness to hammer Nixon on the economy. "Curtailed spending has, of course, resulted in an increased unemployment level across the country, but the impact on Washington State is so far greater than on the rest of the nation that I am compelled to ask for your assistance." Noting that the state's unemployment rate had been the worst in the country for three months straight, and was only growing worse, Evans asked for expedited federal construction projects and the delay or cancellation of planned cuts to military and nuclear installations.[27] In a letter sent to Ehrlichman the day before Evans' appeal, Spellman elaborated further. Due to Seattle's singular reliance on the aerospace industry, Spellman explained, no short-term local solutions were at hand: there were no other industries that laid-off aerospace workers could transfer their specialized skills to, and as "people who abhor public assistance," the state's welfare infrastructure was ill-equipped to aid them. Spellman called for an extension of unemployment benefits "paid for by the Federal

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[25] Matusow, 63; Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2010), 28.

[26] Matusow, 84.

[27] Michael Parks, "Boeing Cutback: Spellman Will Seek Financial Aid," *Seattle Daily Times*, January 14, 1970; Daniel Evans, "Daniel Evans to Richard Nixon," July 23, 1970, RNPLM.

government in recognition of its role in the cause of the local problem," and asked that President Nixon convene a "top level Federal interdepartmental task force to be relocated to Seattle with instructions from the President to cut through red tape to provide as much Federal Funding, at maximum matching, as is possible to all public works-type projects as can properly be qualified," including "WPA-style" projects to hire the unemployed to maintain local parks.[28]

Ideas for how the federal government might help were not in short supply. That fall, Spellman and Evans worked with the Seattle Federal Regional Office to compile a wide-ranging list of sixty-six possible federal actions to help Washington state titled "A Healthy Economic Life for Puget Sound" (HELPS), containing everything from new multimillion dollar aerospace contracts to small-time Model Cities urban rodent control programs, which they submitted to Nixon's Office of Budget and Management.[29] Subsequently, in November a working group of federal agency representatives met with a bevy of local political elites – Evans, Spellman, Uhlman, and Magnuson – and the Seattle Chamber of Commerce, promising to consider expedited actions in their departments. When a reporter asked Governor Evans if the meeting indicated the federal government was finally getting the message that Washington state needed help, Evans wasn't sure. "I really don't know just how significant the task force was that came out here," he answered. "I think it is significant that they sent a fairly high-level task force here to listen to what was being said -- to talk with us on the ground. However, we have had the opportunity in the last couple months to send pretty high-powered teams from the State of

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[28] Spellman, "John Spellman to John Ehrlichman, 'Public Assistance in King County: A Proposal for Solution,'" June 22, 1970.

[29] Peter Braestrup, "Seattle's 11% Jobless Get Little Federal Help," *Washington Post*, January 11, 1971.

Washington with state and local representation back to Washington D.C. We've told them many times what our problems are, so I just don't know."[30]

Unfortunately, for Evans, Spellman, and the unemployed of Washington state, the bonds of Republican partisanship and Nixon's new desire for full employment were not enough to overcome the administration's disinclination to federal relief, some of it ideological, most of it political. Ideologically, whatever past role the federal government had played in building the state's economy, and whatever current role it played in its present crisis, Nixon staffers initially saw no federal responsibility for rescuing it. If anything, they saw themselves as saving Seattle's economy by bleeding it of government support. One of the earliest federal assessments of the city's unemployment crisis, an October 1970 memo prepared by Office of Budget Management Associate Director Arnold Weber for John Ehrlichman, delivered a harsh evaluation of the HELPS memo for not squaring with the Republican economic agenda. "This undifferentiated catalog of suggested Federal activities and projects," Weber wrote, "includes urging the enactment of pending Administration-sponsored legislation such as the SST [Super Sonic Transport], recommendations for substantial long-term public works projects, and pleading for tiny, socially satisfying, but economically unimportant neighborhood projects. In short, it does not attempt to match solutions to the problem."[31] The problem, as Weber and others in the administration saw it, was an overdeveloped reliance on the federal government that only private sector diversification of Seattle's economy could remedy. "Clearly," Weber concluded in a follow-up memo to Ehrlichman a month later, "the jobs which will help pull Seattle out of the

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[30] "Transcript of Press Conference Comments by Dan Evans, November 1970," November 12, 1970, RNPLM.

[31] Arnold Weber, "Arnold Weber, Associate Director of OMB, to John Ehrlichman, 'Regional Council Recommendations to Improve Economic Conditions in the Puget Sound Area,'" October 21, 1970, RNPLM.

doldrums in the longer range are going to have to come from private investment, not Federal programs."[32]

To the extent that the administration and Nixon acknowledged federal responsibility, it was to cast the crisis as a consequence of the painful but necessary actions they had taken to correct against the previous errors of the Lyndon B. Johnson administration, namely rampant inflation and the war in Vietnam. As Ehrlichman put it in a reply letter to a group of concerned University of Washington economics professors, ghost-written by White House economic advisor Paul McCracken, due to "changes in national priorities and withdrawal of forces from Vietnam," it was necessary "for the economy to undergo two transitions simultaneously: a transition from wartime to a peacetime economy, and transition from a higher to a lower rate of inflation."[33] Compared to matters of this scale, Washington state's regional economy was considered extraneous; most adjustments of federal policy, the administration privately wagered, were "changes of national scope, with implications and costs far beyond the dimensions of Washington's problems. In short, the issues are of such breadth that Washington's plight can scarcely be the rationale for decision-making."[34] According to Nixon special assistant Jonathan Rose, interviewed in 1972 for a student's thesis on the government's response to Seattle's crisis, the administration did not consider the city's population of unemployed large enough to be a

[32] Weber, "Memorandum to John Ehrlichman Re: Background on Seattle Economic Problems," November 1970, RNPLM.

[33] John Ehrlichman, "John Ehrlichman to Philip J. Bourque, Re: Causes of Seattle Unemployment Crisis," May 18, 1971, Folder GEN ST 47 Washington; Box 18; White House Central Files, RNPLM.

[34] John Wells, "John Wells to Jonathan Rose, Federal Programs for Seattle and State of Washington," Memorandum, October 11, 1971, Folder EX ST 47 Washington; Box 17; White House Central Files, RNPLM.

federal problem; it was too geographically local, and besides, the people could just move away. “The government shouldn’t subsidize nonproductive stability,” Rose maintained.[35]

Nevertheless, ideology was not consequential for the Nixon administration. If Nixon’s staff had their ideological predilections for the private sector, Nixon himself was ideologically flexible. More often than not, Republican principles took a back seat to the President’s penchant for real politicking, with Nixon working the levers of the federal bureaucracy to the benefit of his own political power. Here too, Seattle was out of luck. Washington state had no figure like Strom Thurmond, the South Carolina Senator to whom Nixon had made big policy promises on the international textile trade in return for Thurmond’s support in the 1968 presidential election.[36] Indeed, no one had delivered Washington state to Nixon; it had gone for Democrat Herbert Humphrey in that election, the only state west of the Mississippi to do so, and even Republican Governor Evans had supported Nixon opponent Nelson Rockefeller in the 1968 primary.[37]

As a result, the administration considered any obligations to Washington lawmakers to be of little priority, and whatever drips they released from the federal tap came with a political quid pro quo. The approach was illustrated in a July 1970 memo to John Ehrlichman, in which assistant Tod Hullin provided a point-by-point evaluation of the “sex appeal” of Evans and Spellman’s requests to the President. “I think we can get some action on one or more of the above items,” Hullin conjectured. “The question is, ‘What are the best ways to release them?’” Implying that who would get credit was more important than getting something done, Hullin

[35] Johnson, “Seattle: The Lean Years,” 169.

[36] Matusow, 120-122.

[37] Johnson, “Seattle: The Lean Years,” 149.

drew up a scoresheet. Senator Henry Jackson and Representative Thomas Pelly, he recognized, both needed accomplishments to tout in upcoming elections. Alluding to Nixon and Jackson's concurrence on foreign policy, Hullin noted the Senator was "needed on the ABM" (Anti-Ballistic Missiles), Nixon's on-going arms negotiation with the Soviet Union. As for Pelly, "I'm not sure what we owe Pelly." Governor Evans? "Of course, Governor Evans wants some of the action, but he was given the AWACS thunder" (a recent small Boeing military contract). And true to Ehrlichman's angry word, they had not forgotten the testy January tête-à-tête with Wes Uhlman at the White House. "Regardless of how we approach the release," Hullin wrote, "I think we should strive to completely eliminate Mayor Uhlman."[38]

The same day as the Hullin memo, seeking to make hay, Ehrlichman fired off requests to federal department heads for information on extant plans for the Seattle area that predated the unemployment crisis. "We could gain a great deal of political mileage if, indeed, these funds are forthcoming," he explained.[39] As such every federal dollar to the state needed a friendly name attached. Concerned over the "political judgement" shown in releasing grant funding information to Seattle politicians, Ehrlichman reminded Secretary of Commerce Maurice Stans of the dearth of the area's Republicans and the need to shut out congressional Democrats.[40] And Ehrlichman raged when news of Department of Labor unemployment compensation funding was obtained and announced first by Mayor Uhlman, demanding and receiving a full investigation of the

[38] Tod R. Hullin, "Tod R. Hullin to John Ehrlichman, Evaluating Daniel Evans' Requests for Federal Action," Memorandum, July 22, 1970, Folder EX BE 5-5 Recessions - Depressions; Box 66; White House Central Files: Subject Files, RNPLM.

[39] Ehrlichman, "John Ehrlichman to Cap Weinberger, Re: 'Federal Construction Funds for Seattle Area.'" John Ehrlichman, "John Ehrlichman to Cap Weinberger, Re: 'Urban Renewal Funds-Pike Plaza Urban Renewal Project - Seattle, Washington,'" July 22, 1970. John Ehrlichman, "John Ehrlichman to Ed Harper, Re: "EDA Grants for Seattle Projects," July 22, 1970. John Ehrlichman, "John Ehrlichman to John Price, Re: 'Model Cities Projects Within State of Washington,'" July 22, 1970, RNPLM.

[40] John Ehrlichman, "John Ehrlichman to Maurice Stans," December 18, 1970, RNPLM.

"leak." "As you know, the area is not only plagued by poor economic conditions, but it is also subject to a very tender political climate," Ehrlichman scolded. "It's a little disturbing that a Democratic Mayor gets all the credit for this extension while the Republican Governor, Congressman and County Executive were all caught flat-footed."[41]

The Nixon administration's politicization of unemployment found perhaps its greatest expression in the secretive Key States Unemployment Project (KSUP). Undertaken at the direct order of Nixon following the defeats of the 1970 congressional elections, the KSUP was, in the words of Jonathan Rose, "an effort to determine whether anything effective can be done to channel federal expenditures in such a way as to reduce unemployment rates in key states prior to the Fall of 1972," when the next presidential election would be held.[42] In April 1971, the project identified eleven swing states, producing a list of states' unemployment rates alongside their corresponding electoral college votes. Though falling outside of the eleven project targets, Washington state's unemployment rate was too high not to merit an honorary mention on the list. At 11.8 percent, its rate stood over 3.5 percent higher than that of the second highest state, but with only nine votes, Washington state also featured the lowest electoral college value.[43] When the state's unemployment reached 15 percent three months later, Rose reiterated the state's exclusion in another KSUP memo to project lead Peter Flanigan. "In passing," Rose wrote, "I should note that while John Ehrlichman's home state of Washington is perhaps not considered a key political state for us, its problems are the most acute now and will remain so for the

[41] James Hodgson, "James Hodgson, Secretary of Labor, to John Ehrlichman, Re: Extension of Washington Employment Supplement Program and Leaked Information," Memorandum, May 26, 1971, Folder EX LA 2 4/8/71-5/31/71; Box 5; White House Central Files: Subject Files, RNPLM.

[42] Jon Rose, "Talking Points, From Jon Rose to Peter Flanigan," Memorandum, July 1, 1971, RNPLM.

[43] Peter Flanigan, "Key State Unemployment Project, Peter Flanigan to Jon Rose," April 15, 1971, RNPLM.

foreseeable future." As if to erase any doubt about Washington state's importance, Rose boldly struck the word "perhaps" from his memo before sending it.[44]

As KSUP's efforts ramped up over summer 1971, the project narrowed to California and its hefty forty-five electoral college votes, "the keystone of our so-called sunbelt strategy," Flanigan noted, in reference to Nixon's quest for a New Majority.[45] Enlisting consultants, including University of California, Los Angeles economists, and quietly canvassing federal agencies for potential job-creating programs to expand and expedite, the project took actions for California that Washington state's politicians had been demanding for their own much larger and still rapidly growing unemployment crisis. Writing to Nixon that August, Flanigan and Rose reported that the Department of Defense had been ordered to create 35,000 direct jobs in California within a year through a host of measures, including cutback exemptions, increases in federal installation and maintenance spending, a speed-up in weapons procurement, and "allocation of as much discretionary defense research and development money as possible."[46] To aid in their efforts, the White House hired Pittsburgh business man Fred Foy, "a strong RN [Richard Nixon] supporter with early background and extensive business acquaintances in California," who worked on a daily basis with Jon Rose and Peter Flanigan "as an 'Ambassador' to the West Coast on behalf of the Administration to deal with the serious unemployment problem, particularly in the aerospace industry."[47] Despite his aerospace emphasis and nominally

[44] Rose, "Talking Points, From Jon Rose to Peter Flanigan."

[45] Flanigan, "Key State Unemployment Project, Peter Flanigan to Jon Rose."

[46] Peter Flanigan and Jonathan Rose, "Peter Flanigan and Jonathan Rose to Richard Nixon," Memorandum, August 28, 1971, RNPLM.

[47] John Ehrlichman, "John Ehrlichman to Richard Nixon, 'Meeting with Fred Foy,'" January 7, 1972, RNPLM.

coastwide charge, the *Seattle Times* reported the "elusive" Foy "remained almost a shadow in Washington."[48]

Later, in an extensive internal evaluation of potential federal actions to help Washington state prepared by Office of Management and Budget (OMB) bureaucrat John Wells, the administration spelled out its motives behind the state's omission from the KSUP. "Because Washington is viewed as a lost cause as to its own electoral college votes in 1972," Wells noted, "there was little emphasis on short-term jobs for jobs' sake." Appearances – and politics – were everything: "The primary short-term solutions reflected more the relative opportunities for publicity impact -- deemed desirable to let citizens of Washington, as well as other states (who may identify with or sympathize with the plight of Washington), know that the Federal government (specifically the President) cares about the problems, feels some sense of Federal responsibility for their causes, and is acting to implement solutions."[49] In other words, the state's economic depression was handled as a public relations crisis. The state had appealed for assistance and, in return, received damage control.

Despite nine months of meetings and the comprehensive HELPS proposal, by January of 1971 the Nixon White House had yet to take significant action for Washington state. Not shy about challenging Nixon, Seattle Mayor Uhlman took his case national to the *Washington Post*, which reported on the lack of response to HELPS and the political divisions that complicated the matter. "Just to convey the right atmosphere, we wanted to hold one meeting with [OMB Deputy] Kugel in the biggest (empty) hangar we could find at Boeing," an anonymous city official groused. "But the governor vetoed the idea." While the confidential KSUP project ran

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[48] Dan Coughlin, "How to Collect from Uncle," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, December 1, 1971.

[49] John Wells, "John Wells to Jonathan Rose, Federal Programs for Seattle and State of Washington," Memorandum, October 11, 1971, Folder EX ST 47 Washington; Box 17; White House Central Files, RNPLM.

full steam for California, a disingenuous OMB threw up its hands to the *Post*. "There is a very limited number of things that the federal government can do," an official claimed.[50]

Governor Evans found himself increasingly pinched between the need to remain allegiant to the Republican administration and the executive branch's continuing inaction. Unable or unwilling to blame either the Boeing Company or the Nixon administration for Seattle's predicament, Evans landed on an idea that exonerated them both. In testimony to Congress in May 1971, Evans floated legislation that would equate regional economic depressions with a natural disaster such as a hurricane or earthquake, essentially an act of God for which no person was responsible, and trigger special federal assistance in the event of crises like Seattle's. Henry Jackson picked up on the idea, drafting and introducing the Economic Disaster Relief Act of 1971, which then passed the Senate. It failed to reach the floor of the House, however, and the White House signaled opposition and a sure veto if it passed, arguing that it replicated already existing relief programs.[51] After months of more meetings and federal foot-dragging, Evans was then forced to counter a news report in July 1971 that he had ordered state agency heads to compile a "dossier of Nixon rebuffs" of Washington state requests. His nervous staff sent Evans' statement disavowing the report to Ehrlichman, "to be sure that you saw his response because he was pretty unhappy with the original story."[52] To ensure that Evans stayed on message with the

[50] Peter Braestrup, "Seattle's 11% Jobless Get Little Federal Help," *Washington Post*, January 11, 1971.

[51] Johnson, "Seattle: The Lean Years," 164; Howard Baker, Jr., "Howard Baker, Jr. to John Ehrlichman, Economic Disaster Relief Act of 1971," July 31, 1971, Folder EX BE 5-5 Recessions - Depressions; Box 65; White House Central Files: Subject Files, RNPLM; John Ehrlichman, "John Ehrlichman to Senator Howard H. Baker, Jr.," August 4, 1971, RNPLM.

[52] By March 1971, Evans and Spellman were concerned enough about federal inaction to fire off another round of personal appeals to Ehrlichman and Nixon; see John Spellman to John Ehrlichman, March 16, 1971, and Daniel Evans to Richard Nixon, March 29, 1971, RNPLM.

administration, Ehrlichman's office monitored the transcripts of the Governor's press conferences off and on for over a year.

LEVERAGING EMPIRE: SEATTLE, THE SUPERSONIC TRANSPORT, AND FEDERAL FOOD RELIEF

The Nixon administration punished Seattle over partisan politics, standing pat as thousands suffered and stepping in the way of direct relief unless it held some political purchase for the Republican Party. Through its relationship to American empire, however, Seattle also occupied an ulterior and ultimately more consequential register, one that loudly resonated with Nixon's imperial designs amidst what he viewed as a precipitous moment for U.S. power in the world. Therefore, Seattle's unemployment crisis became a major talking point for one of his imperial passion projects, federal funding for an American Super Sonic Transport (SST). Panic over global American power and prestige, meanwhile, became a pivotal point of leverage for Seattle in the battle for federal food relief. Coming at a moment when the movement against the Vietnam war was more powerful than ever, and an environmental movement was first emerging, the SST's association with big federal spending and a military contractor like Boeing would ultimately prove the project's undoing. Efforts at securing federal food relief, meanwhile, in raising alarm over America's dwindling global stature, would succeed where the SST failed. Despite their divergent outcomes, both struggles would illustrate how support for American empire could move the federal government to aid Seattle.

If aviation had enabled America's midcentury power projection across the world, the SST promised to push that project into hyperdrive. It would be the speediest commercial aircraft ever

constructed, flying faster than the world turns at 1,800 miles per hour and reaching anywhere on the globe in twelve hours or less. The federal government had been sponsoring development of an American SST since the Kennedy administration. Locked in an international technological race against the British/French supersonic Concorde and the Soviet TU-144, Kennedy wanted an American version in the air by the end of the 1960s.[53] As such, the SST was a product of the same teleological impulse as the space race, or Boeing's gargantuan 747: the mid-century American belief that everything was bound to get bigger and better, or in this case, faster. *Nation's Business*, the official organ of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, told the centuries-long history of transportation technology this way: horses, railroads and steamships, automobiles, airplanes – and now the SST (and, someday, a hypersonic transport and sub-orbital craft beyond that).[54] More than promotional bluster, this conception of history's arc informed both the federal government's sponsorship of the project, and production decisions at the highest levels. Indeed, Boeing President William Allen and Pan Am maven Juan Trippe's mad dash to build the 747, in large part responsible for Seattle's mess, was motivated by the belief that the SST would quickly render their big plane obsolete. Fortunately for the company, Boeing was out in front on the SST too, securing a federal contract to develop the plane in 1966. [55]

The SST was also a symbol of Seattle's civic faith in its bright Jet Age future. Boeing was barely a year removed from winning the bidding for a federal contract to develop the airplane when, in 1967, the plane was chosen as the moniker of the city's new National Basketball Association franchise. The plane was yet to be built, but that didn't bother the

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[53] Mary E. Ames, *Outcome Uncertain: Science and the Political Process* (Washington: Communications Press, 1978).

[54] "Coming: The 12-Hour World," *Nation's Business*, August 1969.

[55] Eugene Rodgers, *Flying High: The Story of Boeing and the Rise of the Jetliner Industry* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1996), 241.

basketball team: the novelty was the point. “We think the name best expresses Seattle’s people, and its present and future,” said Don Richman, the team’s general manager, who helped to choose the name from among 5,000 contest entries.[56] Conspicuously omitted among the criteria cited by Richman was the city’s past and its other traditional regional identifiers. Rejected runners-up included the Potlatchers, Drizzlers, Raindrops, Rhododendrons, and various species of salmon. Seattle’s American Western aura, it seemed, including its settler colonial origins, were no longer the city’s signal attributes.[57] “We couldn’t really think of anything else,” explained the contest winner, high school teacher Howard Schmidt, who had brainstormed it with his son. “Oh, I suppose you could always go back to Indians and such, but Seattle’s fame is in its airplanes and space work.”[58]

The SST itself was imagined as fast, but its development was painfully halting and slow. Boeing had been chosen by the Federal Aviation Administration to develop the plane in 1966, mainly on the grounds of its commercial track record. In its rush to compete with the Concord, the FAA had overlooked a host of shaky features of Boeing’s proposal, including safety, engine noise, and reliability. As a result, by 1970 the American SST had not gotten very far. Due to constant design problems, not even a prototype had been built, and the project depended on the constant renewal of federal appropriations by Congress. By 1971 almost a billion dollars had gone into the plane’s development with little to show for it, more than 80 percent of that from the U.S. government. Through most of the 1960s, the program could depend on a solid coalition of congressional Democrats, led by Henry Jackson and Warren Magnuson, who believed that

[56] Gil Lyons, “Supers Named Sonics,” *Seattle Daily Times*, February 18, 1967.

[57] Georg Meyers, “The Sporting Things: SuperSonics Will Do,” *Seattle Daily Times*, February 22, 1967.

[58] Dwight Chapin, “It’s the Seattle Sonics,” *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, February 18, 1967.

federal provision for the SST was instrumental to maintaining American supremacy in commercial aviation and a military edge over the Soviet Union – while also, not incidentally, building the economies of their home state.[59]

Another round of SST funding renewal was needed in 1970 but owing to new political forces unleashed by antiwar and environmental movements, its approval was no longer a foregone conclusion. In particular, growing concerns about the plane's potential impact as a pollutant had sparked the protest of a new grassroots movement of environmentalists.[60] First, it was impossible to ignore the noise pollution: the sonic booms caused by the its engines, discharged in semi-clandestine tests over populated areas by the U.S. military throughout the 1960s, had left broken windows and 5,000 estimated damage claims in their wake, leading Harvard professors led by physicist William Shurcliff to found a "Citizens League Against the Sonic Boom" in 1967. The movement against the boom then emboldened environmentalists who had previously stayed out of the fight in allegiance to their Congressional ally Henry Jackson, such as Friends of the Earth (a Sierra Club offshoot), to finally break against the SST due to its potential to saturate the upper atmosphere with carcinogens and deplete the ozone.[61] A formidable lobbying effort thus emerged from organizations like the Coalition Against the SST, which represented thirty national, state and local civic groups, including both environmentalists and more conservative taxpayer organizations.[62] Seattle's New Left newspaper *Sabot* articulated these concerns with a modest proposal for a new SST model that met "all the criteria our present

[59] Ames, 61-67.

[60] Mel Horwitch, *Clipped Wings: The American SST Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1982).

[61] Joshua Rosenbloom, "The Politics of the American SST Programme: Origin, Opposition and Termination," *Social Studies of Science* 11, no. 4 (1981): 403–23.

[62] Ames, 74.

economic specifications demand," including "no exhaust emissive pollutant," "silent operation," and "safety." The proposal was for a paper airplane, complete with folding instructions.[63]

Combined with Boeing's troubles and the sorry state of Seattle's economy, as well as the growing opposition to the war in Vietnam, the stakes for Magnuson and Jackson were now higher than ever. What had seemed such a technological and economic certainty only four years before now became a pitched battle in Congress. In May 1970, only weeks removed from the National Guard and police shootings at antiwar protests at Kent State and Jackson State, appropriations for the SST survived a House vote, but by the narrowest margin in its history. Doing little to dissuade his long standing reputation as the "Senator from Boeing," Jackson gave over his office to John Salter – his childhood friend, lifelong political confidant, and former staffer turned Boeing lobbyist – as headquarters for the Company's SST campaign in D.C.[64] Jackson and Magnuson then put their decades worth of experience in parliamentary maneuver into high gear, managing to delay the SST vote until after the November general election in hopes of reducing pressure from environmental groups.[65] The months in the interval witnessed Magnuson wager Model Cities appropriations, muddle mandatory busing in the South to gain the support of a Mississippi Senator, and threaten funds for a Portland airport to encourage Oregon's anti-SST Senator to miss a key vote.[66] A December showdown, bringing victory in the House but a filibuster by SST opponents and defeat in the Senate, ended with an early new year compromise between the House and Senate allowing SST funding to continue through March

[63] "No Boom – Super Sonic Trash," *Sabot*, October 9, 1970, 8.

[64] Kaufman, 207.

[65] "SST Wins 'Breather," *Aero-Mechanic*, October 12, 1971, 1.

[66] Ames, 79; Shelby Scates, *Warren G. Magnuson and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 278-279.

1971, buying another few precious months for SST supporters to move the needle on more permanent funding.[67]

In their efforts, Jackson and Magnuson had a friend in Richard Nixon. Whereas Nixon had little love for Seattle, he had an endless supply of enthusiasm for the SST. Shortly upon taking office in 1969, Nixon commissioned several reports on the potential of the program. When they proved pessimistic about the chances of the SST to fly safely, cleanly or profitably, he kept them confidential and publicly announced his support for continued appropriations anyways.[68] As with everything Nixon did, there was a political dimension to his support. The SST was a dividing issue between Democratic Party presidential frontrunners like Edmund Muskie, who opposed it, and Henry Jackson, the plane's chief proponent, and the Nixon administration thought it might also help divide organized labor and the Democrats.[69] For instance, the administration noted that AFL-CIO leader George Meany, who Nixon had long sought to woo over their shared support for U.S. foreign policy, had made a big issue of the SST with Democrats. [70]

Though politics played its role, it was not the reigning motivation for Nixon on the SST. Rather, Nixon staunchly believed the SST was an asset to the power of American empire.

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[67] CQ Almanac, "Congress Ends U.S. Funding of Supersonic Aircraft," accessed January 24, 2020, http://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/document.php?id=cqal71-1252799.

[68] Ames, 68.

[69] Victor Riesel, "Muskie in Trouble with Labor Over SST opposition," *Aero-Mechanic*, March 1, 1971, 1.

[70] Chuck Colson, "Recommended Phone Call to George Meany," May 12, 1971, RNPLM. While the SST informed classic Nixonian divide-and-conquer strategy, it was also a motivator for notorious Nixonian tactics. The White House, for instance, allegedly kept count of how many times the SST was derided on The Dick Cavett Show, a late-night talk show, and called the producer to demand the show book the administration's pro-SST spokesman, William Magruder. When host Cavett dared to needle the strait-laced Magruder on air by noting to the audience that Magruder had been booked by "Nixon's Talent Agency," the show's cast and crew found themselves hostilely audited afterward by the IRS. See Dick Cavett, "A. Godfrey: A Man for a Long, Long Season," *New York Times Blogs,* June 25, 2010. Retrieved May 9, 2013.

Influenced by trade warriors like Secretary of the Treasury John Connally and international economics advisor Peter Peterson, who counseled that continued American supremacy – and with it, American jobs – would come from a newly aggressive global trade posture, Nixon was convinced that the plane was critical to the country's fortunes.[71] Privately, he mused that America's world historical status as a successor of empires past, following the Spanish and the British, depended on "the will to compete, to explore," represented by the SST.[72] In a meeting with Congressional leadership on the eve of the March 1971 Senate vote, Nixon acknowledged the polls were against the SST. "But we have a greater responsibility," he implored. "We are the Number One country in the world in transport; and I don't want to lose that lead the way we lost the lead in electronics to Japan."[73] As he would explain several months later to a meeting of the National Commission on Productivity, in five to ten years, "75% of our foreign policy would be economics. We either have to come to the mark, or we will be #2 economically. If that should happen, something will go out of the American spirit. That's why I don't like to give up on the SST, and that's why we are ending the war the way we are…. It's terribly important we be #1 economically because otherwise we can't be #1 diplomatically or militarily."[74]

Echoing Nixon, from the Boeing shop floor to the floors of Congress the campaign to save the SST centered on the theme of maintaining American power in the face of growing international threats. "The Russians are coming! The Russians are coming!" shouted a headline in the newspaper of the machinists' union IAM District Lodge 751, referring to the Soviet

[71] Matusow, 117.

[72] "Conversation 471-004 | Richard Nixon Museum and Library," accessed May 23, 2021, https://www.nixonlibrary.gov/white-house-tapes/471/conversation-471-004.

[73] Patrick Buchanan, "Notes from Congressional Leadership Meeting, March 23, 1971," March 23, 1971, RNPLM.

[74] William Safire, "Remarks of the President at Productivity Commission Meeting," June 29, 1971, RNPLM.

Union's own supersonic TU-144.[75] Bumper stickers offered by the Seattle-based Committee for an American SST read "Let's Build an American SST," complete with American flag insignia, while a Boeing promotional film was titled flatly, "Keep America First in the Air." Other promotional material, including a booklet titled "Development of a National Asset - The American SST," outlined what keeping American first meant in practice: that the SST would help correct America's unfavorable balance of trade by as much as $22 billion, improve the international monetary position of the American dollar, and augment the country's military capabilities against the Soviet Union.[76] "America cannot be the most advanced nation in the world," Ohio Republican Clarence Brown argued in the House, "without the economic strength which comes from our capacity to do things better, quicker and cheaper." Over in the Senate, speaking to the opposition, Warren Magnuson struck the same note. "You are letting American air superiority go down the drain," he warned, "and a few years from now we will be a third-rate power in world aviation."[77]

In the atmosphere of the growing anti-war movement, however, blanket appeals to U.S. global power no longer carried the political purchase they once had. Leading the fight against the SST was Senator William Proxmire of Wisconsin, an influential and staunch critic of wasteful defense spending who was frequently at odds with Jackson and Magnuson. He had first formally opposed the project in 1966, when he had proposed an amendment to cut the SST's appropriation by over 70 percent, noting the plane stood only to benefit a very wealthy "jet set."[78] Indeed, it

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[75] "The Russians are coming! The Russians are coming!" *Aero-Mechanic*, March 3, 1971, 1.

[76] "Development of a National Asset - The American SST," Boeing Company, Undated. Seattle Municipal Archives, VF-0000 2/742 1970-1970 The American Supersonic Transport (Boeing Company).

[77] CQ Almanac, "Congress Ends U.S. Funding of Supersonic Aircraft."

[78] Ames, 65.

was true that those who stood to benefit most from scouring the globe in supersonic fashion were primarily agents of empire and people of privilege. "The early SST's may even be all first class," admitted *Nation's Business*. "Most passengers on early SST flights will be businessmen who must cover great distances in a hurry. Wealthy tourists also will be aboard, and there will be occasional doctors rushing to save patients' lives, high-ranking military men, and diplomats on missions that depend on timing."[79] While Proxmire's amendment was defeated, anti-SST forces grew considerably in the years after, joining the Senator in the belief that the beneficiaries of the SST would be narrow and limited.

Amidst a rush of lobbying from industry, labor, and environmentalists, Congress convened in March 1971 to reconsider appropriations. The atmosphere was uncertain, with Representative Teno Roncalio going as far as to suggest that revolution and violence were nigh if the program continued. "There can be little hope for the peaceful, reasonable and orderly re-altering of national priorities," the Wyoming Democrat intoned, "if the House today bows down to the demand for funding the SST."[80] The final results came down to the wire. Days before the vote, House Minority Leader Gerald Ford insisted to Nixon he had it sewn up for the SST.

But Ford's calculations were wrong, and in the end, and on March 18, 1971, the House declined to renew funding for the Super Sonic Transport by a close vote of 215-204. The week following, on March 24, the Senate followed suit, another close vote of 51-46 against the SST, ensuring that federal funding would run out by the end of the month. The next day, to console its sullen, soon-to-be-laid-off workers – approximately 7,000 in the Seattle area – Boeing had

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[79] "Coming: A 12-Hour World," *Nation's Business*.

[80] CQ Almanac, "Congress Ends U.S. Funding of Supersonic Aircraft," accessed January 24, 2020, http://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/document.php?id=cqal71-1252799.

Nixon's voice piped into its factories.[81] "The reason I fought so hard to keep the SST project alive was that I believe deeply that America must remain the vanguard of scientific and technological progress -- the kind of progress your team represents, and to which you have been dedicated. Congress' action on the SST has come as a severe blow to us all."[82] Boeing started packing up its SST operation shortly thereafter, leaving the plane to sit, *LIFE* magazine said, "like a rich kid's abandoned toy, once very expensive and very exotic, now consigned to the corner of the garage."[83]

Contemporary post-mortems for the plane blamed politics. With Nixon's popularity plummeting and antiwar sentiment peaking following news of his invasion of Cambodia, and with SST's close ties to the embattled military industrial complex, the argument for American greatness failed to sell Congress on the project. Top Democrats like Edmund Muskie and Hubert Humphrey had opposed it because of Nixon's support, while Nixon's overall unpopularity had members of his own party looking for politically safe areas of disagreement. "With the President dropping in the polls and the folk back home talking about him as a loser in 1972, Republican congressmen wanted to embellish their records with some anti-Nixon votes," explained political observers Rowland Evans and Robert Novak. "What better issue than the SST, for which grass-roots supporters are hard to find?"[84] National columnist John Chamberlain, meanwhile, argued that antiwar sentiment had Nixon playing with one arm behind its back. "The Nixon administration had the much sounder argument of military necessity for developing the plane,

[81] *Aero-Mechanic*, May 10, 1971.

[82] Richard Nixon, "Remarks of the President in a Telephone Call to Employees of the Boeing Aircraft Company in Seattle and Wichita," March 25, 1971.

[83] "Packing Up the SST," *LIFE*, May 28, 1971, 85.

[84] Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Political significance of SST defeat," *Seattle Times*, March 26, 1971.

but it never quite dared to use it for the simple reason that the feeling against maintaining a strong America has reached an all-time high."[85]

The plane was nearly resurrected two months later, when, in yet another legislative maneuver on the part of Magnuson and Jackson, the House voted 201-195 to turn the federal appropriation to end the program, $97.3 million, into funds for its continuance. But Boeing Chairman William Allen, who happened to be in Washington, D.C. for another purpose at the time of the vote, made a public relations gaffe with a reporter, putting the price of rebooting the program at nearly one billion dollars, an enormous figure the Senate balked at. Some later speculated that Allen simply wanted to end the venture. The SST was potentially a bad business investment, as the poor performance of the Anglo-French Concorde would later prove, and Allen's remark may have reflected Boeing's broader misgivings about the project.[86] Regardless, an irate John Ehrlichman chewed out a sheepish Allen over the phone afterwards, and Nixon, enthusiastic for the SST until the end, shot off a memo suggesting "on a very confidential basis" that they "forget the whole Boeing enterprise and start fresh on a new canvas and see what we can come up with."[87] To shame representatives and senators for their failure, Nixon later had promotional brochures for the Soviet's super sonic jet surreptitiously distributed to congressional offices. The whole affair, he lamented to his staff, was "the number one Technological Tragedy

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[85] John Chamberlain, "SST Case Mishandled," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer,* April 1, 1971.

[86] Scates, *Warren G. Magnuson and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century America*, 280.

[87] John Ehrlichman, "Transcript of Phone Call between John Ehrlichman and William Allen, Boeing," May 14, 1971, RNPLM; Richard Nixon, "Richard Nixon to John Ehrlichman, Re: Continuing SST and Forgetting Boeing," June 1, 1971, RNPLM.

of our time."[88] As always for Nixon, relief for Seattle was just an afterthought, and all the city had to remember the SST by was a basketball team.

In December 1971, when Warren Magnuson delivered his speech on the floor of the Senate declaring his shame at the Nixon administration's refusal to release federal food relief, the matter had been a year in the making. As Seattle's unemployment crisis deepened, the inadequacy of existing government relief programs for the city's unemployed and poor had grown painfully clear, signified most dramatically in the rapid growth of Neighbors in Need (NIN), a free food distribution network founded by the Church Council of Greater Seattle in the fall of 1970. In both philosophy and practice, NIN was a challenge to the means-testing and bureaucracy of U.S. welfare programs. Requiring no paperwork or income attestations, the organization simply issued food to whoever came to collect it. The program was originally intended as a stop-gap operation in anticipation of governmental relief, but after several months, it was clear no relief was forthcoming. In fact, government action was making matters worse, as stringent new welfare standards established by the state of Washington swelled the demand for NIN's services. NIN closely tracked its clientele as a measure of Seattle's crisis, and the numbers were staggering. It served 3,000 hungry people its first month, 30,000 in two months, 170,000 after six months, and 375,000 for the year, the last number representing over 20 percent of the Seattle metropolitan area's population.[89]

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[88] Richard Nixon, "Handwritten Comment about SST," May 28, 1971 and John Ehrlichman to Richard Nixon, June 27, 1972, RNPLM.

[89] "Seattle Plan, Hearst Model, Feeds Many," *The New York Times*, February 21, 1974.

Growing wary of serving as a band-aid for the failures of the public welfare system, NIN turned to political action, joining in coalition with welfare rights activists to lobby state and federal government for the expansion of relief programs.[90] An early target of their efforts became the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) surplus commodities program, which purchased and stockpiled generic food products from American farmers like corn grits, cornmeal, flour, canned meat, dry milk, peanut butter, instant mashed potatoes, lard, oats, and so on. Intended mainly as an economic support for American agriculture, it had a secondary purpose as a food relief program, but federal regulations prevented states from offering surplus commodities and food stamps concurrently except in the event of a natural disaster.[91] While Washington was a food stamp state, the inadequacy of that program in addressing Seattle's hunger crisis was glaring, evidenced in the growing demand for NIN's services and frequent food shortages at its distribution centers. Compounding grievances was the fact that surplus food sat in storage, unused, at a government facility at Seattle's Sand Point neighborhood, a short distance from NIN headquarters in the city's Capitol Hill neighborhood. NIN and others thus undertook a concerted campaign demanding that the federal government release surplus commodities to Seattle's hungry.

Gaining powerful political allies, the campaign grew increasingly difficult for the White House to ignore. Following Warren Magnuson, all high-level Washington state politicians, including Republicans Thomas Pelly and Daniel Evans, petitioned the USDA to approve dual relief programs, sending letters and hosting hearings with USDA officials, including a visit to

[90] Ray Ruppert, "Neighbors in Need Program Moves into Political Action," *Seattle Daily Times*, March 21, 1971.

[91] Ray Ruppert, "Surplus food: Whom and how it would help," *Seattle Daily Times*, July 15, 1971.

Seattle by the USDA Assistant Secretary Richard Lyng.[92] Preparing for a July 1971 meeting with Evans, White House staffer Tod Hullin related Ehrlichman's growing alarm about surplus commodities to another staffer, noting "John's feeling is that we're taking a political beating in the Northwest on this issue and we should try to do something." John Wells at the OMB, in his comprehensive take on Seattle's crisis in October 1971, concurred while warning against supporting economic nonproductivity. "This category presents the most telling political dilemma -- such actions would probably be the most favorable in terms of publicity, yet they have a serious common flaw: the final effect is to further immobilize the labor force in an area with questionable capacity for economic recovery."[93]

Given these misgivings, despite ongoing pressure the USDA and the Nixon administration still did nothing. Both insisted that the law prevented families from receiving both food stamps and commodities, and that even if they could allow families to choose one or the other, the administration of commodity distribution was cost-prohibitive. Though NIN had offered to coordinate administration of surplus foods, its lack of means-testing was a non-starter. "There is no legal authority to permit the distribution of food without tight controls on eligibility," Nixon Special Assistant Richard Cook insisted to Representative Pelly.[94] Learning of a September 1971 trip by Nixon to Eastern Washington's city of Walla Walla, and desperate to speak to the President about Seattle's dire straits, NIN organizers arranged an emergency trip, but failed to see Nixon, whose time there was instead spent touring the Hanford nuclear facility

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[92] Ronald W. Perry, *Social Movements and the Local Community* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1976), 21.

[93] John Wells to Jonathan Rose, Federal Programs for Seattle and State of Washington, Memorandum, October 11, 1971, Folder EX ST 47 Washington; Box 17; White House Central Files, RNPLM.

[94] Richard Cook to Thomas Pelly, August 21, 1971, RNPLM.

with Governor Evans and meeting with major Republican donors (all "industrialists and businessmen" and generous donors to Senator Henry Jackson, Nixon's political brief noted).[95]

Looking to the federal government, advocates for relief interpreted their case through an international lens, measuring Nixon's inaction for Seattle against his many actions in foreign policy and concluding that America's special status among the world's nations was being violated. They noted that foreign states received aid from the United States when it helped American global power, but hungry people within the country's borders did not, so long as it did not also threaten that power. "An affluent country like America, with all the wealth we're supposed to have - supporting all these foreign countries and fighting wars," reflected one laid off Boeing worker to *Ramparts* magazine, "surely we should be able to help our own people to the extent that they don't have to find themselves in such desperate circumstances as not having enough food to eat."[96] Throughout the months-long campaign for surplus commodities, advocates for relief waged such American exceptionalism to dramatic effect, appealing to the nation's global status as grounds for action and questioning policies that seemingly prioritized other nations over Seattle residents. "No successes in foreign policy can erase the shame of hunger in America," concluded one appeal to Nixon.[97] Another letter asked pointedly, "Have you, sir, ever seen a child sitting on a curb, ripping open a can of tuna fish with his bare hands because he is too hungry to go home and open the can properly? This is happening here; not in Asia; not in Africa; but here, in Seattle, USA -- land of plenty."[98]

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[95] "Washington Political Brief for Richard Nixon, for September 26, 1971 Trip to Walla Walla, WA," September 26, 1971, RNPLM.

[96] Jon Stewart, "Seattle: The New Poor Face the New Depression," *Ramparts*, May 19, 1972.

[97] Victor Lygdman to Richard Nixon, July 30, 1971, RNPLM.

[98] Lillian Ashworth to Richard Nixon, July 15, 1971, RNPLM.

The rhetoric intensified with the arrival of Japanese food aid in summer 1971. Like NIN, the act was coordinated through the churches. Reverend Sadao Ozawa, a minister from Seattle's sister city of Kobe, Japan, had toured the program while visiting Seattle, and suggested his city could make a food donation. The idea was originally floated in jest, but as federal inaction grew increasingly egregious, Ozawa took the further step of raising funds to purchase a single symbolic sack of rice to be flown from Japan, supplemented with additional rice from a Japanese American grower in California. Later food donations from Japan were held up by U.S. customs officials but released following the intervention of Senator Magnuson, who then made the affair the centerpiece of his speech to the Senate. [99]

The very same day as Magnuson's speech, itself nearly a year to the day the senator and others had first written to the USDA requesting expanded food programs, the Nixon administration finally relented, and surplus commodities were distributed in Seattle on December 23, 1971. Afterwards, the Japanese ambassador to the United States inquired of the Nixon administration whether any other American cities needed aid. Domestic policy now indistinguishable from foreign policy, Ehrlichman referred the matter to White House National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger.[100] Ehrlichman's assistant Tod Hullin, meanwhile, merely lamented the political outcome and looked ahead to 1972. "Now that concurrent programs have been instituted in Seattle, other areas will ask for similar treatment," Hullin wrote to the OMB.

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[99] "Plight of Seattle's hungry described to federal officials," *Seattle Daily Times*, June 18, 1971; Johnson, "Seattle: The Lean Years," 190-191.

[100] John Ehrlichman, "John Ehrlichman to Henry Kissinger, 'Food Packages,'" January 21, 1972, Folder EX LG/Seattle [2 of 2] 1972-1974; Box 23; White House Central Files, RNPLM.

"Now that we are coming into an election year it is extremely important that we prevent issues like this from being blown out of proportion by our opponents."[101]

CONSENSUS HISTORY: THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S BAILOUT OF SEATTLE IN THE EARLY 1970S

The SST's defeat and inaction on relief gave the impression that the federal government was failing Seattle. Yet by the time the dust settled, and the city's recession was declared over, $1.5 billion dollars in new funding had been directed towards Washington state thanks to federal efforts. While reflecting similar concerns as the alliance for the SST, particularly in their focus on the Boeing Company, these actions were decentralized enough to avoid the politics that had doomed the SST in Congress. Spread across multiple areas, from unemployment compensation to economic development, international trade to military spending, they were most significant as whole, particularly in how they tended to privilege professional sectors that increased the international economic profile of the Pacific Northwest. The steep divisions of partisan politics, revealed in Nixon's machinations over unemployment and the drag down battle over food relief, compounded the suffering of thousands in the Seattle area. But then, such suffering – "socially satisfying, but economically unimportant" in the administration's estimation – mattered little compared to the Seattle area's overall structural importance to U.S. imperial strategy, as the ultimate resolution of the recession in 1972 would show. A belief in maintaining U.S. hegemony, coupled with the need to newly rejuvenate the country's place in the global economy, created pivotal points of convergence between the Nixon administration and Washington Democrats like

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[101] Tod Hullin to Paul O'Neill, Re: "The Problem of the 'New Poor,'" January 6, 1972, RNPLM.

Jackson and Magnuson, and even a Nixon *bête noire* like Seattle Mayor Wes Uhlman, that resulted in a record sum of federal funding for the Seattle area. Unlike food relief or the SST, these actions were policy areas of consensus, places where Democrats and Republicans, in the words of Uhlman's plea to John Ehrlichman, made "love not war."

Anathema to Republican ideology and the foil for organized labor and Democrats' arguments for jobs, welfare and special relief ran afoul of the productivist ethos of American empire, which measured a person's value by their worth to the national economy and their ability to work a waged job. Unemployment compensation, on the other hand, funded through employer contributions and intended to carry workers from one job to another, was an ideologically palatable conveyor belt of relief for Washington's workers, passing through Congress without the dramatic struggle that had occasioned food relief. Warren Magnuson was a firm believer in unemployment going back decades, having been responsible for the country's very first state-level unemployment compensation measure as a Washington state legislator in 1932. Working his clout in Congress across the years of the Seattle crisis, the Senator was primarily responsible for multiple federal renewals of unemployment benefits, such that they garnered the moniker of the "Magnuson extensions." Altogether, through multiple legislative amendments and coordination with Washington state's unemployment system, the Senator managed to extend unemployment benefits three different times, producing sixty-five consecutive weeks of benefits for Washington workers and pouring $69 million in federal dollars into the state during the recession. Against White House objections, Magnuson also made multiple attempts to run public employment bills through Congress, including an Emergency Employment Act that finally passed without veto in summer of 1971, which temporarily added over 6,500 people to government payrolls in Washington state. He also petitioned for the extension of a 1970

Department of Labor initiative that funded jobs in civil service and non-profit agencies, the Employment Supplement Program, which had caused a minor stir over the politics of welfare in Seattle's city council race. [102]

Similar to their preference of unemployment over relief and welfare, Washington State politicians steered money away from federal programs that had originally been intended for Seattle's most destitute residents. Model Cities, one of the last War on Poverty initiatives of the Lyndon Johnson administration, had been funding projects in Seattle's predominately Black and Asian neighborhoods, the Central Area and the International District, for years when, in 1970, the Nixon administration proposed "planned variation," an experimental program revision that would expand funding, increase city control and lessen federal oversight, and broaden the program's traditional neighborhood boundaries.[103] Ehrlichman initially balked at the idea of including Seattle, but Washington's congressional delegation successfully petitioned the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development to include it among the limited number of cities provided with planned variation funding.[104] The city then received $5.2 million for the expanded Model Cities area, which was redirected towards predominately white and middle-class neighborhoods in Seattle's north end, as well as city-wide projects that benefited professional sectors of the economy in the name of "diversifying the Seattle economy."[105] These included Wes Uhlman's new Office of Economic Development, which was devoted to stimulating the

[102] Johnson, "Seattle: The Lean Years," 158-160.

[103] Jeffrey C. Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability: Inventing Ecotopia* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 97-98.

[104] Robert A. Podesta to John Ehrlichman, 'Suggestions for Seattle,'" December 21, 1970, Folder EX LG/Seattle [1 of 2] 1969-1971, Box 2, White House Central Files, RNPLM; Henry Jackson and Warren Magnuson to George W. Romney, December 30, 1970, RNPLM; Brock Adams, Henry Jackson, Warren Magnuson and Thomas Pelly to John Ehrlichman, June 30, 1971, Folder EX LG/Seattle [1 of 2] 1969-1971, Box 2, White House Central Files, RNPLM.

[105] Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability*, 97.

private sector of the city at large through efforts like liaison work with business, motion picture recruitment, world marketing of Seattle, and tourist redevelopment of the city's Pioneer Square neighborhood. All were a far cry from Model Cities' initial goal of organizing residents within specific poor communities.[106]

The Nixon administration and local Washington politicians converged especially in the belief that action on behalf of business was the most potent cure for Seattle's ailments. Seeing the need to lift the inordinate influence of Boeing off of the city's economy, both shared the assessment proffered by the OMB's John Wells that "the focus should be on long-term economic development/diversification that will fill the fundamental gaps and prevent a recurrence of the problem in such extreme proportions" ("subject also to the pertinent political issues," Wells added in parentheses).[107] While John Ehrlichman's Seattle heritage seemed to beg for personal intervention in the area's crisis, the only such action he took was to expedite a grant from the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) for the Seattle King County Economic Development Council, an industrial recruitment and area marketing effort undertaken at the prompting of Seattle Mayor Wes Uhlman and King County Executive John Spellman. When the money became hung up at the EDA, Seattle Chamber of Commerce President James Douglas traveled to Washington, D.C to meet with Ehrlichman, a longtime friend, who then promptly called the agency to say that Douglas was enroute in a White House limousine to collect the funds. More EDA money was forthcoming to Seattle over the course of its economic crisis to the tune of over $20 million, including redevelopment of tourist facilities at the site of Seattle's 1962

[106] Seattle Model City Program Project Summary: Economic Development Project, 5/1/72, Seattle Municipal Archives, Office of Economic Development, 1612-01, 1/24 1972-1976, OED Economic Development History.

[107] John Wells, "John Wells to Jonathan Rose, Federal Programs for Seattle and State of Washington," Memorandum, October 11, 1971, Folder EX ST 47 Washington; Box 17; White House Central Files, RNPLM.

World's Fair, a study of the industrial potential of the city's Duwamish Valley, and construction of infrastructure for the Port of Seattle.[108] The EDA's actions moved Mayor Uhlman to finally speak approvingly of the federal role in the city's recovery, a compliment that did not escape the notice of the White House's Jonathan Rose, who reported it to Ehrlichman.[109] And whereas Uhlman had once declared federal funding would not be the savior of Seattle's economy, by 1972 he "practically lived" in Washington D.C., working out of Warren Magnuson's office to seek and acquire federal grants.[110]

Through a growing focus on international trade and research and development, economic development for Seattle was squared with the changing focus of United States' global economic policy. As its advocacy for the SST showed, the Nixon administration understood trade and technological development as the cutting edge of American imperial strategy. Accordingly, among the catalog of economic development ideas put forward in the HELPS proposal drawn up by Washington state politicians, the administration only thought two had any real merit: development of the Port of Seattle and the acceleration of aircraft exports. Actions against striking dockworkers (the subject of Chapter 3) and EDA grants saw to the former, while international actions taken for the Boeing Company saw to the latter. Inquiries made for John Wells' report on Seattle led to "startling" statistical revelations forecasting a coming decline in U.S. export aircraft sales. This prompted a renewed aircraft export marketing campaign by the Export-Import Bank, a New Deal-era lending institution whose sole purpose was the provision of loans to foreign countries to purchase U.S. products on better terms than private lending

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[108] Johnson, "Seattle: The Lean Years," 163, 170.

[109] Jonathan Rose, "Jonathan Rose to John Ehrlichman, Re: Seattle Efforts," March 20, 1972, RNPLM.

[110] Bob Young, "Wes Uhlman: A Politician of His Times," 19.

institutions could afford.[111] The administration also rescinded long-standing Cold War restrictions on commercial jet sales to China, first by approving Pakistan's sale of second-hand Boeing planes to the Communist country in 1970 after Pakistan promised to use the funds to buy new Boeing planes, then by allowing Boeing to directly sell ten 707 jets to China in 1972.[112] Some new federal contracts kept the cash coming in, but increased foreign jet sales proved the key factor in Boeing's eventual recovery, and later landed the Company in hot water with Congress and federal regulators when a scandal revealed over $70 million in improper payoffs to foreign agents by Boeing between 1970 and 1976. A total of $5.5 billion in foreign sales, crucial to the Boeing Company's survival, made the impropriety worth it, both for the corporation and evidently the national security state, with some speculating that the C.I.A. had a role in the scheme.[113]

As Boeing brought Jackson and Magnuson closer to Nixon in foreign policy, it also brought them closer together in domestic politics. Magnuson and Jackson shared Nixon's vision of an American supremacy reinvigorated by international trade, with both Senators playing key roles in the growth of Pacific Rim trade in the 1970s, particularly with Japan and China, and all parties viewing Nixon's opening of diplomatic relations with China as a bellwether for monumental new markets for American products.[114] As the 1972 presidential election

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[111] John Wells to Jonathan Rose, Federal Programs for Seattle and State of Washington, Memorandum, October 11, 1971, Folder EX ST 47 Washington; Box 17; White House Central Files, RNPLM.

[112] Jeffrey A. Engel, *Cold War at 30,000 Feet: The Anglo-American Fight for Aviation Supremacy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007), 291-295.

[113] Rodgers, *Flying High*, 359-362; Roger E Bilstein, *The American Aerospace Industry: From Workshop to Global Enterprise* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1996), 160; William Jeske, *Seattle Daily Times*, January 21, 1973, D1.

[114] Christopher P. Foss, *Facing the World: Defense Spending and International Trade in the Pacific Northwest Since World War II* (Oregon State University Press, 2020); Foss, "Senator Henry 'Scoop' Jackson and the Intersection between Domestic Politics and Foreign Relations in the Postwar Era," 71; Warren Magnuson, "International Trade and Its Relation to Economic Development," Speech to the Seattle King County Economic Development Council, Kiana Lodge Meeting, August 28, 1973.

approached, furthermore, the Nixon administration leveraged its close relationship with the Boeing Company to move Magnuson and Jackson against Democratic Party nominee George McGovern. Owing in part to reforms within the Democratic Party that had favored its younger antiwar constituencies, McGovern had won the presidential nomination over Henry Jackson despite organized labor's dead set opposition. During his campaign, McGovern gave Seattle the attention Nixon had failed to, visiting the city and touring the Neighbors in Need program.[115] Nevertheless, he had opposed the SST, and thus would not deliver where it mattered most to Jackson and Magnuson, namely a commitment to Boeing and military spending.

In July 1972, Richard Nixon wrote to Treasury Secretary John Connally, who was nominally a Democrat, about bringing Magnuson into the fold of Connally's Democrats for Nixon organization. "Magnuson recognizes that not only in the field of foreign policy, but also with regard to Washington's enormous interest in Boeing, they will be a lot better off with Nixon than with McGovern," Nixon wrote. "The SST, National Defense, etc. stands of McGovern would be highly detrimental to Boeing, whereas mine are very helpful to Boeing."[116] Meanwhile, John Ehrlichman worked on Henry Jackson behind the scenes, asking Boeing executive T.A. Wilson to apply personal pressure, and offering to help Jackson manufacture an excuse to be out of Washington state during McGovern's visit.[117] In the presidential election a month later, the Nixon administration won Washington state, and all but Massachusetts, in one of the largest landslide victories in U.S. history. While it may have seemed like a lot of effort for Washington state's measly nine electoral votes, the overtures did double-duty: more than electoral support,

[115] Johnson, "Seattle: The Lean Years," 184.

[116] Richard Nixon to John Connally, July 7, 1972, RNPLM.

[117] John Ehrlichman and TA Wilson, Phone Call Recording Transcript, July 22, 1972, RNPLM; Tod R. Hullin to Bill Timmons, "Senator McGovern's Trip to the State of Washington," October 17, 1972, RNPLM.

Nixon needed Jackson and Magnuson for his international agenda, given their ability to influence defense and trade legislation.[118]

Whatever impressions were left by the inaction of the Nixon administration, the failure of the SST, and the dearth of direct relief for those most suffering in Seattle, the federal government ultimately played the central role in rescuing Seattle and Washington state from economic collapse. The bailout never came in one lump sum, however. Spread over many different areas, and rendered in actions well beyond mere cash infusions, federal action was difficult, maybe even impossible, to tally in specificity, though that did not stop some Washington state politicians from trying. When the Boeing Company slowly began hiring again in 1972, local officials were eager to declare the recession was over and to claim responsibility for the federal action that enabled the recovery. In June, the office of Governor Evans issued an ebullient proclamation that everything was "up:" "Business and Personal Income - Up;" "Average Weekly Earnings - Up;" "Employment - Up." Playing the longstanding game of taking credit for federal cash, the Governor's Office attributed the state's economic upturn to "$600 million of federal economic assistance received in response to his requests" over the previous year, including $187 million to support the private sector, $128 million for unemployment programs, and $252 million in public works. [119]

The numbers were, in some ways, fast and loose. For instance, Nixon's intervention in a dockworkers' strike (the subject of Chapter Three), was somehow quantified by Evans' office as a $90 million contribution to the state's economy. But the overall point was correct: the federal

[118] Ognibene, *Scoop: The Life and Politics of Henry M. Jackson*, 103.

[119] Washington State Office of the Governor, "Press Release from Daniel Evans Office: 'Evans Says State's Economic Upturn Sooner, Stronger Than Anticipated,'" June 20, 1972 (Office of the Governor, Washington State, June 20, 1972).

government had been Washington state's friend indeed. From 1970 to 1972, federal outlays to Washington state ballooned from $3.4 billion to over $5 billion, with the state's share of federal spending per capita over forty percent above the national average.[120] Washington state's rank among all states in Defense Department spending improved from 18 to 12, NASA spending from 26 to 19, and the Interior Department from 6 to 2.[121] Reported the *Oregonian,* "It was one of the biggest federal feedouts in history to one area."[122]

Diversification away from aerospace had not been achieved for Seattle, but there was another economic consequence of such immense federal action. Seattle's economic crisis had the effect of lurching the regional economy towards expanded professional services, particularly by increasing the imprint of government employment and international trade, the very sectors that would matter most to Seattle's growing place in the global economy. The region had been leaning in that direction prior to the crisis, a fact reflected in the two-faced nature of the recession. While hundreds of thousands of workers were unemployed, and specific communities, like Seattle's predominately Black Central Area, experienced jobless rates of 30 percent or more, professional sectors of the city's economy remained strong, buoying record rates of office building construction in Seattle's downtown.[123] But federal action accelerated this transformation significantly, as Seattle's exceptional unemployment provided a ready rationale for directing government dollars towards the city's profitable professional sectors in the name of "diversifying the economy."

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[120] Ognibene, *Scoop: The Life and Politics of Henry M. Jackson*, 102; Johnson, "Seattle: The Lean Years," 147.

[121] Foss, "Senator Henry 'Scoop' Jackson and the Intersection between Domestic Politics and Foreign Relations in the Postwar Era," 70.

[122] Stan Federman, "Seattle Looks with Cautious Optimism for End of 'Disaster Years," *Oregonian*, December 17, 1972.

[123] Johnson, "Seattle: The Lean Years," 25.

Before the decade was through, Seattle would be firmly ensconced as a beneficiary of a new U.S. empire: an American empire based in consumption, international trade and finance, emergent out of but firmly distinguishable from the production machine that had driven U.S. power in the two decades following World War II.[124] Far from foreordained, it was a transformation that required the sorts of federal action that saved Seattle in the early 1970s. Enabling Seattle's continued profile as an urban area of affluence in the 1970s and beyond, it was a transition owed in large part to the bipartisan commitments of those federal figures whose power was most consequential for Seattle during the years of the Boeing crisis: Richard Nixon, Henry Jackson, and Warren Magnuson. In the end, Washington state's Republicans mattered little. In fact, the irony of Daniel Evans was that having a Republican Governor might have been worse for Washington: faced with a President uninterested in assisting the state, partisanship prevented Evans from protesting too much. Magnuson and Jackson had no such hang ups about criticizing the President; they were also more critical to Nixon through their clout in Congress.

Given his administration's partisan agenda on direct relief and unemployment, Nixon's contribution was not immediately obvious at the time. But in hindsight, when Seattle's crisis intersected with Nixon's foreign policy, only then did the city matter to the executive. This was the case with the SST, it was the turning point in the battle over surplus commodities, and it was the hallmark of Nixon's partnership with Magnuson and Jackson against Democratic Party nominee George McGovern. Lastly, concern over U.S. empire heralded his administration's international actions on behalf of Boeing, including the epochal shift in aviation diplomacy

[124] Sam Gindin and Leo Panitch *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy Of American Empire* London and New York: Verso Books, 2012); Charles S. Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors* (Harvard University Press, 2009), 237-240.

signaled by the direct sale of Boeing jets to China in 1972. If Seattle had neighbors in need in 1971, the United States had an empire in need, and it was this imperial imperative that would prove most operative. It would be a lesson that the city's dockworkers, going on out on strike amidst Seattle's unemployment crisis, would learn firsthand.

Chapter 3

A Strike Against Empire

The Port of Seattle, the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, and the Politics of International Trade

As Boeing's unemployment crisis befell Seattle, international trade emerged as a potential savior of the city's economic future. To all appearances, the fortunes of Seattle's aerospace and maritime economies had flipped by the dawn of the 1970s. In the 1950s, Seattle's waterfront seemed on the decline, and the city's economic future was in the skies. But by 1970, while Boeing's massive investments in the 747 jumbo jet had been a bust, a decade of improvements at the Port were paying hearty dividends. In the 1960s, upon the recommendation of two damning reports by consultants that described a decade of mismanagement and dysfunction, the Port of Seattle had internally reorganized and embarked on a sustained building campaign the likes of which it had never seen. Over the decade, the Port poured over $100 million, raised by voter-approved bond issues and revenue, into new terminal facilities and equipment, modernizing piers that had not been updated since World War II.[1] The Port would also come into its own as a major land developer, creating a real estate department and buying up shuttered shipyards and former Army piers. In 1970, with Boeing eager to unload anything for a buck, the Port of Seattle bought

[1] Marc Levinson, *The Box: How the Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016), 192; Padraic Burke, *A History of the Port of Seattle* (Seattle, WA.: Port of Seattle, 1976), 116.

the site of the Company's original Plant One factory on Seattle's Duwamish River.[2] Many saw it as a sign that the basis of the city's economy was irrevocably shifting.

Whether it was a sign of things to come or a temporary state of affairs, the rise of international trade shared a central continuity with Seattle's Boeing-led economy: the longstanding pattern of economic development driven by war. Since its founding as a public entity in 1911, the Port had seen spikes in activity during World War I and World War II. But it was U.S. military operations in Southeast Asia that had incubated the new trade infrastructure based in the shipping technology of containerization, saving the Port from the nadir of the 1950s. Lucrative Pentagon contracts with containerization's main purveyor, the Sea-Land Corporation, allowed the shipping company to develop its private sector trade routes with Asian nations across the Pacific at the same time that it served the logistical needs of the U.S. military in Vietnam. As the North Pacific Headquarters of Sea-Land, and one of two military container ports on the West Coast (the other was Oakland), the Port of Seattle's foreign trade exploded, rising by over 4 million tons between 1960 and 1974. [3]

If Boeing and the Port owed similar debts to the American warfare state, however, they differed markedly in the politics and militancy of the unions that represented workers in their industries. Boeing had the International Association of Machinists District Lodge 751, whose members had rushed to lobby for the company even as it laid them off in droves, and which staunchly supported the war in Vietnam. The Port of Seattle did not have it so easy. As a landlord to shipping companies, and not a shipper itself, the Port was not a direct employer of dockworkers,

[2] Burke, 116.

[3] A. T. Kearney, *Economic Action and Seattle-King County Economic Development Council: A Plan for Economic Recovery* (Seattle: The Firm, 1971), 17.

but it still had to contend with the strong-willed militancy and politics of their union, the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU).[4] Not only did the union's membership bristle against the automation of containerization, which it saw as killing jobs, the union was avowedly anti-imperial, having opposed American involvement in Vietnam since 1956. And in 1971, just as the Boeing crisis was peaking and elites pinned their hopes for Seattle's recovery on the Port, the ILWU went on strike.

That is why, to columnist Don Page, who covered the city's maritime industry for a local daily newspaper, just about every worker in Seattle in July 1971 was either on strike or unemployed. "Between strikes, vacations and the general economic dumps, too many of our readers have time on their hands and less cash in their jeans than they'd like," he observed. While layoffs at Boeing were ongoing, thousands of area workers elsewhere were on strike, part of a larger wave of labor unrest that witnessed job actions and union drives across the country in the early 1970s. The tumult included the Port of Seattle, where five hundred members of the ILWU were in the midst of their third week out on strike. Confronted by new technologies like containers and cranes that eliminated jobs in the once labor-intensive shipping industry, the ILWU was fighting for workers' share of industry profits while holding the line for union members' job security and jobsite jurisdiction.

With so many people out-of-work with time on their hands, Page wagered, "a good, free show may be the best thing to write about in today's waterfront column." To his readers, Page

[4] In 1997, at the initiative of rank-and-file women members, the ILWU voted to officially change its name to the gender-neutral International Longshore and Warehouse Union. This chapter follows the name used contemporaneously by the ILWU in the 1970s; "What's in a Name?" *The Dispatcher*, April 1997, C8.

gave a plug to "Gateway to the Orient, Past and Present," a new exhibit at the Seattle's Museum of History and Industry. "With ship models, pictures, Oriental dolls, lanterns, sextants, knotwork and assorted eyefuls," the exhibit chronicled the port city's century of foreign trade with Asian Pacific nations.[5] In suggesting international trade could assuage Seattle's economic woes, Page was in strong company. With Boeing going bust, city boosters at large were pinning their hopes for recovery on the Port, where booming Pacific trade traffic was setting new records with each passing year. To many, this process of globalization was simply a natural development. As the museum exhibit illustrated, Seattle had long been heralded as a "Gateway to the Orient" owing to its geographic proximity to the Pacific Rim, with the curvature of the Earth making Seattle the shortest shipping route between the continental United States and East Asia. The exhibit also suggested, with its industrial relics and Asian artifacts, that trade was a straightforward matter of technology and cultural exchange. A decade of investments in new technology that replaced schooners with freighters and break-bulk cargo with metal boxes had allowed the Port to tap the strength of growing postwar Pacific economies like Japan, transforming Seattle into one of the leading container port cities in the world by the time Boeing began flirting with bankruptcy in the early 1970s.

To the ILWU, on strike down on the docks, international trade had never been a simple forward progression of geography and technology. Trade was about power. The leftwing union had been born during the Great Depression, survived the most repressive years of the Cold War, and was now fighting against containerization. New technologies, when introduced into the workplace by employers, were never neutral. As the union saw it, containerization was acting as a

[5] Don Page, "A Fine Ship Show, Broke or Not," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, July 24, 1971.

wedge to break worker control over the jobsite and decrease union strength by shrinking the workforce. Furthermore, for a union that had long opposed the American involvement in Vietnam, global connection in a world dominated by the United States was not merely a value-neutral exchange between cultures. Relationships across borders were just as often forged through violence. A more historically accurate exhibit on American trade, for instance, would account for the role of the U.S. military in Pacific relations, featuring artillery shells and napalm as much as dolls and knotwork. In its publications and editorials, the union gave this world of profit and war a name: empire. In opposing war and empire, the ILWU advocated an alternative anti-imperial foreign policy, worker diplomacy, that firmly opposed military action while foregrounding trade's benefits for connecting working people – not capital – across borders.

The 1971 strike of the ILWU, this chapter argues, was a struggle over empire. In line with a long history in which trade and war were closely intertwined, Seattle boosters' efforts at advancing international trade were not simply an attempt to take advantage of the city's geographic place in the world. They were an effort to leverage the geopolitical power of the United States. To advance their agenda, however, business needed to overcome the ILWU and to secure labor's acquiescence to the new global economy more broadly. Doing so would not be easy. The longshore union not only maintained a sophisticated critique of American empire, but it also held significant power on the docks at a critical choke point in the global economy. As the 1971 strike would illustrate, it was a power the union was not afraid to use. The longest waterfront strike in U.S. history, the action shut down ports up and down the West Coast and was seen by American business and government as a threat to the country's increasingly precarious position in global trade. Ultimately, it would draw the full force of the federal government. As the ILWU's 15,000 members "hit the bricks" in 1971, then, much more was on the line than the well-being of a small

group of West Coast longshoremen. At stake was the very future of the global economy, and the question of who that economy would benefit.

Empire and Revolution on the Seattle Waterfront

Born as a settler port city of the nineteenth century United States, Seattle was from its very beginnings a site of imperial connection where American commercial and state power developed in tandem through circuits of global shipping. The Port of Seattle, as a public institution devoted to private commerce, long exemplified this relationship, facilitating both overseas trade and American military operations abroad, at least until a shift in American power projection after World War II, from the sea to the air, seemingly put that relationship in jeopardy. Meanwhile, as a crossroads of international circuits, Seattle also served as a home to maritime workers who, in traveling the globe, had been exposed to revolutionary ideas and movements the world over. These workers would subsequently transform the Seattle waterfront into a site of leftwing radicalism, profoundly influencing the politics and practices of the ILWU. By midcentury, as state repression otherwise crushed the American left during the Cold War, the ILWU would persist as an institutional shelter for unrepentant radicals.

"Climax of a World Quest:" American Empire and the Port of Seattle

Waterborne travel and trade made possible in part by military power shaped Seattle's development from its very beginnings. The settlement of Seattle on the deep-water harbor of Elliot

Bay, first erected by white colonists in 1851 on the lands of the Duwamish people, owed in part to the military protection of the U.S. Navy, which engaged violently with American Indians over land rights as part of the protracted Puget Sound War of 1855-1856.[6] The Spanish American War and subsequent U.S. occupation of the Philippines beginning in 1898, staffed by many military personnel who had taken part in earlier Indian Wars, provided a boost to Seattle shipping when the city's Fort Lawton was chosen as a point of disembarkation for U.S. troops, making Seattle a major source of military supply thereafter.[7] Even the Port of Seattle itself was a byproduct of gunboat diplomacy. Its establishment by city voters in 1911 was part of a larger race by West Coast cities to take advantage of the trade anticipated from the opening of the Panama Canal, a passion project of U.S. imperial champion Teddy Roosevelt, whose deployment of warships had secured control of the area from Colombia in 1903.[8]

While early trade returns from the Panama Canal's opening in 1911 would disappoint, multiple wars would provide an economic infusion to the Port of Seattle time and again over the ensuing decades. The Port's new wharves, terminals, and warehouses were just what Seattle needed to meet the shipping demands of World War I, catapulting it ahead of all other West Coast ports. By 1918 the Port boasted the second biggest annual value in cargo in the United States behind only New York City. Under the leadership of Commissioner Colonel George Lamping, a former military officer in the U.S. occupation of the Philippines, the Port weathered the peacetime of the 1920s by leveraging the city's geographic proximity to China and Japan. By mid-decade,

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[6] Coll Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017).

[7] Rich Berner, *Seattle in the 20th Century, Volume 1: 1900-1920* (Seattle: Charles Press, 1991), 22.

[8] Padraic Burke, *A History of the Port of Seattle* (Seattle, WA.: Port of Seattle, 1976), 32. On the Panama canal, see Julie Greene, *The Canal Builders: Making America's Empire at the Panama Canal* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009).

70 percent of U.S. trade with the two countries was handled by Washington state. Then, following a lull in foreign trade during the Great Depression, the Port came roaring back in World War II. Military takeovers of Port property were more than offset by the massive influx of billions of federal dollars occasioned by the war, which saw Seattle rank third among all cities in war contracts per capita. While wartime migrant workers churned out airplanes and ships in factories and yards along the harbor and a short way inland along the city's Duwamish River, thousands of troops trained at Seattle's Fort Lawton and nearby Fort Lewis, to be shipped out through Puget Sound to the Pacific theater and the northern garrisons of Alaska.[9]

The war was a bonanza for maritime industries, so much so that peacetime was an absolute bust by comparison. To the surprise of many, U.S. triumph in the war did not translate to a triumph in West Coast commercial shipping afterwards. Railroads and trucking had taken over domestic coastwise commerce, except where geography still made it impossible, like Seattle's Alaska run, and the rise of affordable flying made possible by Boeing's 707 spelled the death of waterborne commuter traffic.[10] Absent a Marshall Plan-like arrangement for the decimated economies of the Pacific Rim, and with potential trade partners like Korea, China, or Indochina blocked by war or anti-communist embargos, U.S. international trade with Europe predominated, favoring the East Coast. In 1955, in fact, only eleven percent of foreign trade traveled through Pacific ports.[11]

The situation was felt keenly in Seattle. The Navy continued to operate out of Elliot Bay, and Cold War projects like the U.S. Air Force Distant Early Warning System helped the Port post

[9] Burke, 54-56, 67-72, 95-99.

[10] Marc Hershman, *Urban Ports and Harbor Management: Responding to Change along U.S. Waterfronts* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1988), 287.

[11] Marc Levinson, *The Box: How the Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016), 191-192.

meager profits in the early 1950s, but were not enough to stem the larger trend of decline.[12] Senator Warren Magnuson, who had been one of the voices forecasting growth at the war's end, instead declared maritime "the sickest segment" of Washington state's economy, while a local television documentary, "Lost Cargo," stirred the public against the Port with charges of missed opportunities. Despite Magnuson's efforts, the Army closed its Port of Embarkation in Seattle in 1955, further spelling doom for Seattle's shipping industry.[13] At midcentury, as Boeing's success turned peoples' heads to the sky, Seattle's struggling maritime economy seemed increasingly a thing of the past.

Radical Seattle: ILWU Local 19

Longshore unionism had existed in Seattle almost as long as global trade had. The first documented organization of dockworkers dated back to 1884, and its earliest days were peppered with bloody strikes and worker radicalism. For the first fifty years of that history, however, employers had held the upper hand, keeping dockworkers divided and casualized, subject to poorly paid, temporary, corrupt, and precarious employment arrangements.[14] All that changed in 1934 when, galvanized by the dynamic organizing of Australian expatriate Harry Bridges, headquartered in San Francisco, port cities up and down the West Coast of the United States were engulfed in a spectacular coastwide strike. As an unapologetic leftist, Bridges' efforts included a pathbreaking commitment to racially integrated unionism, which overcame the company

[12] Burke, 110.

[13] Burke, 101, 106, 110.

[14] Ronald E. Magden, *A History of Seattle Waterfront Workers, 1884-1934* (Seattle, WA: International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, Local 19).

recruitment of Black strikebreakers that had doomed many longshore strikes before it.[15] After 83 dramatic days that witnessed nine deaths and over a thousand injuries in clashes between workers, scabs, and police, including the murder of longshoreman Shelvy Daffron in Seattle by a company guard, Franklin D. Roosevelt's government stepped in to settle the strike, granting the Bridges-led union unprecedented control over a waterfront hiring hall.[16]

Splitting from the East Coast-based International Longshore Association (ILA) in 1937, the newly independent ILWU consolidated its gains over the ensuing decades. They fended off employer attempts to break the hiring hall with another large strike in 1948, and waged regular work slowdowns to resolve local job conflicts, which shipping interests blamed for the sorry state of international trade traffic after World War II.[17] The union's radicalism persisted despite frequent attacks from the federal government, which continually sought to deport Bridges throughout the Cold War over his alleged communist sympathies. That effort was generalized to the entire waterfront workforce by Warren Magnuson's Port Security Act, passed in 1950, which subjected dock workers to political screening in the name of national security.[18] The union also faced challenges from the increasingly conservative American labor movement. The powerful Teamsters, under the professed business unionism of Seattle leader Dave Beck, long sparred with the union over jurisdictional issues, and the ILWU's refusal to expel communist members led to

[15] Peter Cole, *Dockworker Power: Race and Activism in Durban and the San Francisco Bay Area* (University of Illinois Press, 2018), 70-71.

[16] Magden, 221.

[17] Burke, 101.

[18] Elizabeth Poole, "Pushed Ashore: Coast Guard Screening on the Seattle Waterfront," ResearchWorks Archive, University of Washington, https://digital.lib.washington.edu/researchworks/handle/1773/16593.

its own expulsion from the nationwide labor federation, the Congress of Industrial Organizations, in 1950.

The ILWU weathered these hardships through a fierce commitment to militant job action, leveraging their workforce's pivotal position in the U.S. economy to maintain control over the organization of work on the docks. While other leftwing unions were broken by government hostility, the ILWU thus became a safe haven for otherwise besieged American radicals. [19] Seattle's ILWU Local 19 was an exemplary case in point. Over the decades, the local had become a magnet for worldly working-class activists, well-traveled veterans of the labor struggles of the 1930s and 1940s. Though the majority no longer belonged to formal left organizations like the Communist Party or Socialist Party, they had not abandoned their hostility to capitalism nor their faith that the workers of the world would unite.

None were more militant than Local 19 President Shaun Maloney. Raised by an Irish nationalist mother and a Wobbly stepfather in Minneapolis, Maloney had entered the workforce after the eighth grade. There he received a crash course in the labor movement, first joining the Industrial Workers of the World in North Dakota as a 17-year-old farm worker. He then organized truckers for the Teamsters, eventually taking part in the bloody Teamsters-led Minneapolis general strike of 1934 as a picket captain and negotiating committee member. Steeped in working-class radicalism, Maloney continued to organize truckers thereafter, and served two years in federal prison for destroying a scab delivery truck in Iowa. He spent the war years in the merchant marine, including a months-long layover stranded in the Soviet Union, before finding his way to Seattle working on the Alaska run. In Seattle, Maloney was an active member of the Sailors Union of the

[19] Howard Kimeldorf, *Reds or Rackets?: The Making of Radical and Conservative Unions on the Waterfront*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

Pacific until his support for expelled fellow radical John Mahoney led to Maloney's own expulsion in 1950.[20]

From there, Maloney followed Mahoney and other "Mahoney Gang" militants Lee Anderson and Dick Moork into the ranks of ILWU Local 19, where radical resumes were common. Holding various elected union positions throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Maloney's support among union members grew until 1971 when he was elected to Local 19's highest office. It was the first of what would be Maloney's five consecutive terms as President, a record that would stand for decades afterwards.[21] While his tenure in elected office was exceptional for a union in which democratic scrutiny by the membership meant frequent turnover, Maloney's politics were not. Vice President Art Mink, for example, had spent over a decade as organizer for the Communist Party and was a founding member of the Freedom Socialist Party.[22] The unofficial voice of the local, Jerry Tyler, a former pulp fiction writer and radio producer turned Local 19 publicity committee chair, had developed his worldview as a revolutionary sailor in the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union.[23] Combined with Maloney's crew, these men and countless others in the rank and file formed a significant bloc of Local 19 members with storied leftwing pasts, representing a whole generation whose politics centered on their identity as members of the international working class.

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[20] Biographical Note, Archives West: Shaun Maloney Papers, 1930-2000, accessed December 19, 2019, http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv03772/op=fstyle.aspx?t=k&q=Maloney#;

[21] Ronald E. Magden, "The Militants," unpublished manuscript, copy in possession of the author.

[22] Interview with Art Mink, Communism in Washington State Project, University of Washington, https://depts.washington.edu/labhist/cpproject/mink_interview2.shtml

[23] Leo Baunach, "Jerry Tyler and Labor Radio: An Activist Life," Waterfront Workers History Project, University of Washington, https://depts.washington.edu/dock/tyler_jerry.shtml .

Leftwing politics also informed Local 19's demographics, though to a limited extent that reflected the larger failings of American organized labor. Like the ILWU more broadly, Local 19 was racially integrated from its very beginnings, owing both to the union's political orientation and the efforts of leaders like Frank Jenkins, Jr., a founding member who came from a mixed Black and Filipino family. Some ILWU locals, like those in Portland, Oregon and San Pedro, California, were known for racism and exclusive white membership. Others had significant members of color, like Harry Bridges' home Local 10 in San Francisco, which grew to be majority Black, and the large Asian and Pacific Islander membership of the union's Hawaii division.[24] The Seattle local's Black membership was very small in number, but it was also disproportionately large relative to the general whiteness of Washington state. About 3.8 percent of ILWU members in the region were Black, compared to 1 percent of the general population.[25] On the other hand, the union's civil rights stances did not extend to gender politics. The longshore membership was exclusively male to the extent that so much as the sight of a woman in the union's member-only parking lot could draw complaints in Local 19's newsletter.[26] Though its gender politics were constrained by breadwinner domesticity, the union did boast a very active and very leftwing Ladies Auxiliary, which raised funds and staged letter-writing campaigns for causes that echoed the larger union's politics on peace and civil rights.[27]

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[24] Cole, *Dockworker Power.*

[25] ILWU Research Department, "ILWU Membership Attitude Survey," April 3, 1967, copy in possession of the author.

[26] Jerry Tyler, *The Hook*, August 1969, Box 2, Jerry Tyler papers, 1948-1973, Accession No. 5553-001, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

[27] White House files on the ILWU are full of concerned letters from ILWU Local 19 Ladies Auxiliary members; see RNPLM.

To the ILWU, global solidarity was simple common sense. The union's founding principles, first drafted in 1937, stated it bluntly: "The basic aspirations and desires of the workers throughout the world are the same. Workers are workers the world over. International solidarity, particularly to maritime workers, is essential to their protection and a guarantee of reserve economic power in times of strife."[28] Jerry Tyler illustrated this tendency with a story in Local 19's *The Hook*, the monthly newsletter that he produced to share official union announcements and colorful anecdotes alike. Working the docks, ILWU members spotted a young Black man locked up aboard one of the international vessels that called at port every day in Seattle. Chatting up the detainee, they learned he was a stowaway from Ethiopia, held captive and prevented from leaving. Quickly, they organized a collection of cigarettes, money, cakes, and candy for the man, which they passed to the ship's captain. "This is fantastic," Tyler reported the captain as saying. "You mean you longshoremen care enough about a total stranger to do this?" With pride, Tyler quoted the captain's remarks like a banner statement: "If the diplomacy of the world was handled by working people like you, our troubles would disappear."[29]

CONTAINERIZATION AND THE IMPERIAL POLITICS OF TRADE

As the Northern Pacific headquarters of the Sea-Land Corporation, the world's foremost purveyor of the shipping container, Seattle emerged as a key site of the resurgent global trade

[28] John S. Ahlquist, Amanda B. Clayton, and Margaret Levi, "Provoking Preferences: Unionization, Trade Policy, and the ILWU Puzzle," *International Organization* 68, no. 1, January 2014, 44.

[29] Tyler, *The Hook*, March 1970, Box 2, Jerry Tyler papers, 1948-1973, Accession No. 5553-001, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries, Seattle, Washington.

economy. The terms of that economy, however, would increasingly conflict with the worker-centered politics of the ILWU. The union not only interpreted containerization as a weapon against its fiercely held control of work arrangements on the docks, it viewed the economic crises of the 1970s as the steep cost of American military build-up overseas. That cost, the ILWU argued, was being balanced on the backs of workers. In contrast, the union sought an economy that centered the needs of working people through a reinvigorated welfare state at home and the proliferation of labor standards and worker-to-worker solidarity abroad.

The Vietnam War and the Rise of Containerization

The Port of Seattle's huge investments in container infrastructure were part of a larger building frenzy among West Coast Ports in the 1960s, or at least those like Oakland, Los Angeles, and Long Beach that were fortunate enough to be sited on harbors with the size and capacity to accommodate the giant new cranes and ships that the new technologies demanded.[30] Centuries of shipping had been break-bulk cargo, stored in a ship's hold and organized in individual units by the skilled labor of longshoremen. The system of containerization, on the other hand, stowed cargo in big metal boxes of fixed size and shape and replaced the collective work of the longshore gang with the singular operation of the crane. The enormous costs of containers played to the strengths of Ports as public institutions, whose financial advantages, such as tax exemptions and lower

[30] Levinson, 197.

borrowing rates, could service capital debts for development and long-range planning that private shipping interests could or would not bear.[31]

Seattle had been the site of early experiments in containers, which had been introduced on military cargo barges for the Alaska run in the late 1940s. The technology really took off, however, at the hand of the Sea-Land Corporation, a U.S. shipping firm that saw the industry's future in the container system's new labor-eliminating efficiencies, which had chosen Seattle as its North Pacific Headquarters. The Corporation first began operations out of Seattle in 1964 running service to Alaska. [32] But like so many times before in the city's history, it would be the state violence of war, and not private investment alone, that fostered the fortunes of shipping, cementing containerization as the bedrock of global trade, and catapulting Seattle to the forefront of the world's container ports. As U.S. military deployments to Southeast Asia ramped up in the mid-1960s, Sea-Land's enterprising executive Malcolm MacLean had pushed hard for Pentagon business. The lack of modern port facilities in South Vietnam, ill-equipped to accommodate the outsized waves of military equipment and supplies pouring into the country, was becoming an escalating scandal for the U.S. war effort, producing wasteful logjams and exposing war shipments to pilferage and corruption.[33] Promising to revitalize the military supply chain, Sea-Land scored its first U.S. government contracts in 1967, establishing shipping lines to U.S. bases in the Philippines, followed by direct service to South Vietnam. There, Sea-Land stationed hundreds of

[31] Marc Hershman, *Urban Ports and Harbor Management: Responding to Change along U.S. Waterfronts* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1988), 130-132; 224.

[32] Brian Cudahy, *Box Boats How Container Ships Changed the World* (Bronx: Fordham University Press, 2006), 28, 84.

[33] Levinson, 172.

personnel, where they quickly constructed a modern container port in Cam Rhan Bay with the help of welders recruited from South Korea.[34]

The new efficiencies of containerization proved a revelation for U.S. military planners. In just a year's time, forty percent of all non-petrol U.S. military cargo to Vietnam would travel in one of seven Sea-Land container ships. Most significantly for Seattle, the war was also an enormous windfall for Sea-Land, both in making the U.S. military into containerization's foremost champion, and in pure profit. The contracts themselves were lucrative: by 1971, Vietnam-related business would represent 30 percent of Sea-Land's annual sales, while their overall Department of Defense contracts would total $450 million between 1967 and 1973. But more important was how the arrangement enabled Sea-Land to grow. The Pentagon footed the full bill for the westbound haul of military cargo from the West Coast of the United States to Vietnam. Once emptied, the ships were free to stock up on commercial cargo throughout Southeast Asia for export back to North America. The arrangement allowed Sea-Land to proselytize containerization to growing economies around the Pacific, such as Japan and Hong Kong, thus establishing regular routes of cargo shipment that entwined military and private enterprise into one single global supply chain.[35]

The profits also came back to Seattle. Beginning in December 1968, the Port of Seattle became the terminus of Sea-Land's first ever West Coast-Cam Ranh Bay-Yokohama-West Coast circuit.[36] With Sea-Land as its central container tenant, combined with new grain terminals and exclusive contracts with Japanese shipping lines, the Port's foreign trade increased over 4 million

[34] Cudahy, 108; Levinson, 180. On the recruitment and circulation of Korean workers during the Vietnam War, see *Simeon Man, Soldiering Through Empire: Race and the Making of the Decolonizing Pacific* (Univ of California Press, 2018).

[35] Cudahy, 108; Levinson, 182-186.

[36] Cudahy, 109.

tons between 1960 and 1974. The Port captured such a large share of West Coast trade traffic, in fact, that it was subject to Federal Maritime Commission investigations at the behest of other West Coast ports, who charged that the Port was unfairly underpricing its container services to undercut the competition. Business interests in Seattle, on the other hand, saw the Port's aggressive pursuit of growth as a core strategy for resuscitating the city's economy, with international trade and distribution identified as a key alternative to the floundering aerospace sector.[37] While Boeing hemorrhaged jobs, international trade continued a steady forward march, with trade-related employment capturing a record 10 percent of Washington state's total state workforce by 1972, representing a payroll of $2.25 billion dollars, an increase of over two billion dollars since 1960.[38] As Chapter Four will discuss, seeking to fight Seattle's bad reputation as a city of despair, the city's businesses and politicians mounted a multi-million dollar advertising promotional campaign and a slew of regular trade junkets that feted the Port, touting the growing connections to Japan and the spigot of shipping profits anticipated by Alaskan oil development.

Reckoning with the Costs of Empire: The ILWU and Economic Crisis in the 1970s

Whereas Seattle boosters sought to leverage the new infrastructure of international trade that had been incubated by the war in Vietnam, the ILWU remained a steadfast opponent of both war and initiatives by capital, like containerization, which it saw as advancing imperial connection at the expensive of workers the world over. This perspective could be plainly seen in the union's

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[37] A. T. Kearney, *Economic Action and Seattle-King County Economic Development Council: A Plan for Economic Recovery* (Seattle: The Firm, 1971), 17.

[38] Burke, 117.

interpretation of the economic crises of the early 1970s, the backdrop to Seattle's economic struggles, which were advanced in its newspaper *The Dispatcher*. In stark contrast to Democrats who were quick to lay the woes of the economy and Boeing in particular at the feet of Nixon's anti-inflationary "tight money" policies, the ILWU extended its critique to the federal government's full agenda on matters both monetary *and* military, implicating Nixon and Democrats alike. From war and inflation to unemployment and welfare, the ILWU interpreted each issue of Seattle's crisis on an international scale, refusing to separate foreign and domestic policy. Instead, the union consistently connected the condition of the U.S. economy and Seattle with it to the behavior of the United States in the world, asking who would pay the consequences of American empire.

At the dawn of the 1970s, members of the ILWU were keenly aware that international trade was accelerating, and that containerization threatened to render moot any benefits that growing international trade might have for them. It was a trend that they had been working to mitigate for over a decade. First in 1960 and again in 1966, at the urging of Harry Bridges, the union membership had approved two Mechanization and Modernization agreements with the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA), which negotiated the introduction of new work arrangements and technologies in exchange for greater wages and benefits. While the agreements made the ILWU the first union in the world to confront containerization, putting them ahead of major changes in the industry that would be imposed more disruptively elsewhere, they were not without controversy within the union itself. Local 19's Shaun Maloney, for example, was a staunch opponent of the agreements, which he believed would undermine the union's hard-fought control

of the job site.[39] The second agreement featured a particularly hated rule, Clause 9.43, that allowed employers to bypass the union hall to hire regular crane operators, so-called "steady men."[40] Initially, the impacts of containerization on the longshore workforce in Seattle were hidden by the late 1960s surge in shipments for the war build-up in Vietnam. But as the July 1, 1971 expiration date of the ILWU's contract approached, Nixon's ground war drawdown was well into its second year, revealing the reality of containerization. Even as international trade surged, ILWU work hours were plummeting.[41] Trade-based jobs may have been growing state-wide, but they were shrinking for longshoremen.

While containerization was the animating jobsite issue for the union in the early 1970s, the ILWU understood that issue within the broader global political economy of war and capital that had incubated the technology across the Pacific. First priority in the ILWU's "program for an economically healthy America," adopted at the ILWU's 1970 International Convention, was "a prompt withdrawal from Vietnam," reiterating a stance the union had held on the conflict since its first resolution on the matter in 1956.[42] The ILWU's *Dispatcher* was filled with news on the conflict, the many efforts to end it, and the connections between military spending and the economy at large. The ILWU's Research Department, for example, elaborated on the connection between military spending and inflation. An American worker making a bomb, they argued, put nothing back in the economy in the form of consumer goods. In turn, manufacturers seized the "golden opportunity to raise their prices, because the supply of consumer goods is deliberately

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[39] Dallas DeLay, "Shaun Maloney 1911-1999," Unofficial ILWU Local 19 History and Education, https://www.ilwu19.com/history/loss.htm.

[40] Cole, 150.

[41] Tyler, *The Hook*, January 1971.

[42] *The Dispatcher*, January 26, 1973, 2.

limited."[43] Though articulated most clearly in the *Dispatcher,* this radical perspective was not a top-down peculiarity of the international office. While any democratic union of 15,000 workers was bound to contain a diversity of viewpoints, the ILWU's global outlook was suffused throughout its locals. A comprehensive 1967 survey of union membership found more than 80 percent favored the union's efforts "working for peace." The percentage was nearly identical among Washington state members, where over half of members surveyed thought the union should be doing more to end the war in Vietnam.[44]

Throughout the early 1970s, the ILWU argued that there was a direct connection between U.S. military operations and the economic turbulence of the early 1970s within a broader American empire. The union held that a decade of American expansionism overseas in the 1960s, in the forms of wars, foreign aid, and general military expenditures, had led to the accumulation of vast amounts of US dollars by foreign banks and speculators, devaluing the dollar and throwing U.S. global finance askew. "By encouraging higher prices," argued an analysis in the *Dispatcher*, "devaluation effectively helps to transfer the cost of paying for the US military presence overseas more directly onto the shoulders of working people. In the past, when we had more money coming in than going out because of our favorable trade position, the US could pay the costs of maintaining its empire off that surplus." [45] But rising international competition was making it impossible for U.S. policymakers to continue to hide the costs of military action behind its trade supremacy. "Whether we're talking about the balance of payments problem, high taxes or inflation," the union

[43] ILWU Research Department, "Nixonomics: Workers Pick Up Tab," *The Dispatcher*, December 18, 1970.

[44] ILWU Research Department, "ILWU Membership Attitude Survey," April 3, 1967, in possession of author.

[45] "The Great American Trade Crisis," *The Dispatcher*, May 25, 1973.

declared in another *Dispatcher* editorial, "it's clear that the role of imperial policeman is ruinously expensive – to say nothing of its inhumanity."[46]

At the same time, the ILWU understood that large government investments in military spending, however wasteful, provided the present livelihoods for millions of American workers, and saw it as the union's duty to fight for those workers too. Alluding to Seattle's crisis in his regular "On the Beam" column, President Harry Bridges noted, "We even witness high-priced, well-educated skilled men who are often on welfare today who'd give their right arm to work on the waterfront if they could."[47] The union was careful not to cast white-collar workers as exceptional, however, stressing that they were simply workers subject to the same pressures that others had long suffered under. Rather than representing a "New Poor," like U.S. media had claimed, *The Dispatcher* described the experience of Seattle's white-collar unemployed as "nothing new" compared to the longstanding high unemployment rates of the city's Black community.[48]

To challenge American empire, the union recognized that a new economy would have to take its place. For the ILWU's Washington, D.C. office, the primary takeaway from the defeat of the Super Sonic Transport in Congress was the need for "converting defense and aerospace industries to peacetime, useful industry."[49] In another stark contrast to Boeing's machinists and the AFL-CIO more generally, who sought the simple reinstatement of Cold War spending and turned a cold shoulder to welfare rights activists, the ILWU extended support to the Welfare Rights

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[46] *The Dispatcher*, August 18, 1972.

[47] Harry Bridges, "On the Beam," *The Dispatcher*, February 5, 1971.

[48] "Staggering Job Loss in Washington," *The Dispatcher,* February 5, 1971.

[49] "How Do You Convert the US Economy from War to Peace?" *The Dispatcher,* April 16, 1971.

Organization and proposed a reinvigorated welfare state that included increased domestic spending and more jobs "for those able to work," but also a guaranteed income for those who could not. "We believe the way we make a living determines the kind of life we live," the Officers' report to the 1971 convention proclaimed. "We'd rather build homes than build war machines; we'd rather build hospitals and health facilities than to keep reading about body counts in Vietnam; we'd rather see a war on poverty than a war on the poor."[50]

The ILWU recognized that international trade in-and-of-itself was not always beneficial to workers, and that multinational corporations, often with the aid of the U.S. federal government, were sending factories and jobs overseas. Rather than limiting trade as others in organized labor advocated, the ILWU advocated for international fair labor standards, which it sought to build through a concerted global campaign of worker-to-worker diplomacy. In 1959, Harry Bridges had made high profile tour of the world ports, visiting with unions and workers in ten different countries, and the union regularly participated in international forums and conferences, but travel was not merely a privilege of union leadership.[51] In 1973 alone, the union sent rank-and-file delegations to a dozen different countries across five continents, reporting back in *The Dispatcher* about the advances made by workers in pre-coup socialist Chile, for example, or the depressing conditions in the colonial outpost of Guam, where Filipino and Korean laborers on tenuous visas made possible U.S. economic expansion into the Pacific.[52]

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[50] "The 'Welfare Cadillac' – Reality or Fantasy?" *The Dispatcher*, April 16, 1971; "Officers Report to Convention – Perspectives," *The Dispatcher,* May 7, 1971; "Seattle Pensioners Call For Labor, Peace Coalition," *The Dispatcher*, November 5, 1971.

[51] Robert W. Cherny, *Harry Bridges: Labor Radical, Labor Legend* (University of Illinois Press, 2023), 336.

[52] "The Revolution in Chile," *The Dispatcher*, January 12, 1973; "Guam," *The Dispatcher,* February 23, 1973.

The trips were a marked contrast to the Cold War-driven foreign affairs of other U.S. trade unions. When Sea-Land executives first toured military installations in Saigon in 1966 seeking the Pentagon's war business, for example, they had crossed paths with Thomas Gleason, President of the East Coast ILA, who was leading a team of union officials advising South Vietnamese dockers to aid the war effort.[53] ILWU delegations were also very different from the boosterish trade missions typical of the Port of Seattle, business and government, as Ed Anderson of Seattle's Local 19 discovered after returning from an employer-organized wheat trade mission to Southeast Asia in November 1971. Meeting in executive council as Local 19's representative on the contract negotiating committee, Anderson faced the wrath of an angry, disapproving Harry Bridges, who reproached the trip as "not good unionism."[54]

The union's positions were not without their contradictions. Throughout the Cold War, the union consistently opposed trade barriers with socialist and communist nations, particularly the Soviet Union and China, arguing for the full normalization of economic and political relationships with the United States. This advocacy, while based in the union's vision of worker diplomacy, increasingly aligned the ILWU with the Port of Seattle and Washington state business, who similarly sought to expand connections with Asian Pacific markets, China in particular. It also saw the union frequently at odds with the protectionist tendencies of the AFL-CIO and others in organized labor, who sought to insulate U.S. industries by limiting trade through tariffs and import

[53] "I.L.A. Helps Saigon Dockmen Ease Port Snarl: Gleason Says 'They've Been Operating It Lazy,' but Are Learning New Methods," *New York Times*, January 6, 1966; Levinson, 178.

[54] "ILWU Executive Board Minutes," November 22, 1971, Shaun Maloney Papers, Box 19, Folder 40., University of Washington, Special Collections. Bridges had reason to be wary of the trip; in a plea to President Richard Nixon seeking federal intervention in the 1971 strike, a Portland official admitted the trade mission was in part an attempt to sway ILWU officials against strike action by impressing on them the importance of Asian wheat markets; Letter to Richard Nixon, November 24, 1971, White House Central Files, Subject Files, GEN LA 6-37, 10/1/71—[2 of 2], RNPLM.

quotas.[55] From the late 1960s onwards, for example, the ILWU in the Pacific Northwest fought regularly against efforts to limit log exports by the region's lumber and sawmill unions, whose industry was disappearing as wood processing was increasingly shifted overseas, particularly to Japan.[56] Quite ironically, the ILWU also represented one of the primary private sector domestic workforces enabling the U.S. war in Vietnam, as its members loaded military cargo at army ports in Oakland and Seattle. While individual members may have surreptitiously taken isolated jobsite actions of sabotage against the war, the union was officially committed to working military cargo, understanding that any refusal to do so could quickly bring down the repressive force of the U.S. federal government.[57]

"THREATS TO THE NATION:" THE 1971 STRIKE OF THE ILWU AND THE U.S. FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

As the ILWU's contract with the dock employers, represented by the PMA, expired in 1971, the militant labor politics of the union would face off with the imperial politics of business, the federal government, and other more dominant factions of organized labor in a dramatic 138-day strike. Falling amid Seattle's unemployment crisis and a perceived national crisis in foreign trade imbalances, the strike would lead local and national figures to argue that the union's action

[55] "How to Start a Trade War," *The Dispatcher*, December 4, 1970.

[56] Ron Magden, *Seattle's Working Waterfront, 1884-Present* (Seattle, WA: Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies, 2022).

[57] Cole, *Dockworker Power*; Lincoln Fairley, *Facing Mechanization: The West Coast Longshore Plan* (Los Angeles, CA: Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California, 1979), 328.

imperiled both Seattle's economy and American power in the world.[58] As it progressed, the strike revealed divisions within the ILWU between its locals and the international leadership over the efficacy of job action and the political power of the union, as well as divisions between the Nixon administration and business over the inclusion of organized labor within a coalition premised on shared foreign policy. While the union's rank and file members would hold tight, and the Nixon administration would drag its feet, the ILWU's political isolation would ultimately facilitate federal action to break the strike.

"Just who is *the United States?" The 1971 Strike and the Politics of National Peril*

As the ILWU's negotiations got underway with the PMA in early 1971 ahead of their contract's expiration in July 1971, they were shaped by contentious negotiations within the ILWU itself. As he had for the union's last agreements, international president Harry Bridges urged a contract settlement without a strike. Peace had held in ILWU/PMA relations since 1948, when the union had firmly won the right to control the hiring hall, and in stark contrast to his radical early years as a labor leader, Bridges was now convinced that job action was costly and unnecessary to achieve the best contract possible. ILWU membership, on the other hand, more in line with the wave of worker unrest that was sweeping the United States at the time, was itching for a fight.[59] Overruling Bridges' more limited contract demands, the union's local leadership sought an end to

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[58] For the longer history of arguments framed around national peril, see David C. Hendrickson, *Republic in Peril: American Empire and the Liberal Tradition* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[59] On the wave of worker mobilization in the early 1970s, see Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: New Press, 2010); Cal Winslow and Robert Brenner. *Rebel Rank and File: Labor Militancy and Revolt from Below During the Long 1970s* (London and New York: Verso Books, 2020); Lane Windham, *Knocking on Labor's Door: Union Organizing in the 1970s and the Roots of a New Economic Divide* (University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

the steady man clause, greater jurisdiction over containers, a work opportunity guarantee, no layoffs, wage increases, elimination of extended shifts, an improved pension, expanded medical and dental coverage, and ten days paid vacation.[60] Reflecting in *The Hook* on the state of the economy for workers, Jerry Tyler noted that longshore wages and hours were not keeping pace with the general rise of inflation and concluded that the path forward was clear. "We have no choice," Tyler declared. "We either get a slice of this modernized industry pie, or we go down the tube talking to ourselves. Joining the unemployed Boeing engineers. And other cast offs. We've got to win."[61]

Rejecting the PMA's final contract offer in June 1971 against Bridges' wishes, 96 percent of the coastwide membership, representing some 15,000 workers, voted in favor of walking out. On July 1st, for the first time in a quarter century, West Coast longshoremen hit the bricks – and stayed there, as the international office, still opposed to the action, refused to coordinate.[62] Without Bridges' backing, the ILWU's local unions immediately were forced to take up leadership of the strike, mainly San Francisco's Local 10, but also Seattle's Local 19. For the first three weeks, the international office did not even issue a public statement on the strike, leaving it to grind on with no immediate resolution in sight.[63]

Meanwhile, pressure for federal intervention in the longshore strike came from business and politicians whose interests depended on an unimpeded supply chain, quickly transforming the

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[60] "Set Contract Demands," *The Dispatcher*, November 6, 1970.

[61] Tyler, *The Hook*, June 1971, Tyler papers.

[62] Paul W. Staples, "Longshore strike ties up port," *Seattle Daily Times*, July 1, 1971, A1; "Dockers Vote 96% For Strike," *The Dispatcher*, July 2, 1971.

[63] Cole, 158.

conflict from a localized jobsite struggle into a battle with international stakes. Washington state Governor Daniel Evans, among others, called for the strongest measure available to the federal government: a Taft-Hartley Act injunction. That would force striking workers back to work for an eighty-day "cooling off" period if President Nixon determined that the work stoppage was endangering the "health or safety" of the nation.[64] Throughout the strike, the ILWU had purposely continued to load and unload military cargo in an effort to avoid government action on just such grounds, receiving commendations from military officials in Oakland and Seattle for their special accommodations. Nevertheless, American trade and shipping interests, large and small, framed their appeals for federal intervention in the language of imperiled national power within the global arena. "At a time when an expanded export market is directly needed to overcome the US trade deficit and at a time when world competition for new markets is stronger than ever before," read a typical statement from Kansan Congressman William Roy, a Democrat, "we cannot afford to lose face with our trading partners."[65] Japan, Korea, the Philippines and others were stalwart buyers of American grain, the argument went, but only so long as supply continued. If it was interrupted, sellers such as Australia could swoop in, leaving U.S. agriculture without the world markets it depended upon. The PMA amplified the argument in its own public relations campaign against the ILWU, running a full-page ad in newspaper dailies nationwide that warned of "irreparable damage" to America's world trade markets that made "thousands of farm families" into "innocent victims" of the work stoppage.[66]

[64] "Evans Asks U.S. to End Dock Strike," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, September 1, 1971.

[65] William Roy to Richard Nixon, August 10, 1971, RNPLM.

[66] Pacific Maritime Association advertisement, "Anchored," August 11, 1971, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

In the papers and among politicians, the ILWU was isolated. The union had no budget for full-page ads, no large publications ran editorials in its favor, and no constituents wrote to Nixon demanding he pressure the PMA to meet the union's demands. Assessing the public discourse, Local 19 publicity committee chair Jerry Tyler sensed a double standard at work. Writing in the local's strike bulletin, he compared the arguments against the strike to the ongoing debacle at the Boeing Company. When "the out-go begins to exceed the in-come," Tyler noted, "Boeing does what any good businessman must do. They cut back." Hardships ensued: "Innocent people are going to suffer. Welfare rolls swell. Affiliated businesses go belly up. The economy of the State takes a helluva thumping. But that is all part of the game, you see? Really. You can't blame Boeing. No way. Because, dammit, business is business." Not so for labor and the ILWU. "You let us or any other group of working stiffs follow the same business principles followed by Boeing and any other big industrial business and what happens? All hell busts loose." Economic hardship was never the fault of the company. When times were tough, labor shouldered the blame and the burden. "Makes a man kind of wonder, doesn't it?" Tyler concluded.[67]

How disruptive to the national economy were longshore strikes? As it happened, the federal government had an answer at hand in the form of a recent January 1970 study prepared by the U.S. Department of Labor. The report considered three major strikes by the ILA, the union representing east coast and gulf coast longshore workers, between 1962 and 1969. Each strike had drawn a Taft Hartley injunction, and the report sought to determine whether the work stoppages had influenced U.S. foreign trade patterns over the same period. "Measuring the deviations from 'normal'" of economic indicators during the strikes, the study's findings were unequivocal: "The strikes had no

[67] Tyler, Strike Bulletin #10, August 23, 1971, Tyler papers. The remarks were reprinted in "Notes from the Picket Lines: 'The Beat Goes On,'" *The Dispatcher*, September 10, 1971.

visible impact on the economy as a whole – industrial production, retail sales, national income, or total employment." Whatever disruptions the strikes caused to commerce were made up by accelerated shipping in anticipation of work stoppages and the rush to catch up after contracts had been settled. The net losses to the U.S. trade balance due to the strike, which the study estimated ranged somewhere between $1 and $1.15 billion, were a drop in the bucket compared to the hundreds of billions of dollars in total U.S. foreign trade over the same period. Furthermore, there was "no evidence of a permanent loss of export markets because of a strike." The majority of U.S. exports remained finished manufacturing goods whose delivery schedules could be interrupted with little impact on their eventual likelihood of being sold. Perishable agricultural products were an exception, but even then, there was no indication that markets had disappeared. Could strikes adversely impact localities? Certainly. Even so, the report concluded, "the serious and permanent damage to individuals, firms, and even neighborhoods or communities is not great enough, even in the aggregate, to affect national totals."[68]

The debate between the ILWU and the rest was not whether strikes were disruptive or not, but rather whether longshore strikes were objectively more disruptive than your basic swings of the business cycle to merit federal intervention. The Department of Labor's study concluded that they were not, but that did not stop shipping interests from claiming the mantle of national interest all the same. The actual truth was that "national" was a malleable category, one that could do tremendous work if it was defined against labor. Jerry Tyler had illustrated the point two years before in Local 19's newsletter. In his "Dear Steve Adoree" advice column, a concerned letter-writer (likely Tyler in full satirical form) reported a newspaper headline claiming Peru had

[68] United State Department of Labor, "Impact of Longshore Strikes on the National Economy," Paper Prepared for the U.S. Secretary of Labor, January 1970, 1, 5, 24.

appropriated “United States” land. Fearing a Peruvian invasion and ready to grab a gun to defend his homeland, the letter-writer read further only to learn the claimed land was *in* the Latin American country, owned by American investors. “Now I want to know just who *is* the United States,” the reader asked, “all of us or just the investors of us?”[69] In Tyler’s estimation, national identity obscured the class interests of American imperialism, identifying capital – not labor – with country.

“A natural enemy”?: Richard Nixon and the 1971 Strike

If Tyler was right, and American nationalism hid an anti-labor agenda, then history suggested a near automatic opposition between Richard Nixon and the ILWU. The Republican had made his political career decades prior as an anti-communist crusader, and the leftwing ILWU itself never pulled any punches against Nixon and his policies in union publications and statements. Harry Bridges, a prominent antiwar voice once dogged by allegations of Communist Party membership, seemed the perfect Nixon *bête noir* – “a natural enemy” in the words of advisor Chuck Colson, who pressed hard for Nixon to inveigh publicly against the ILWU President.[70] Bridges was certainly a known quantity to Nixon. He had made Bridges a target of his anti-communist crusades in the 1950s, and they had met personally several times over the years, including a secret arranged private rendezvous behind a Honolulu bandstand during Nixon’s 1960

[69] Tyler, *The Hook*, July 1969, Tyler papers.

[70] Charles Colson, Schedule Proposal, “Dock Strike Legislation,” January 19, 1972, White House Central Files, Subject Files, GEN LA 6-37, 10/1/71—[2 of 2], RNPLM.

presidential run.[71] In 1971 as in 1950, attacking Bridges would provide opportunity for Nixon to shine his anti-communist bona fides and appease his pro-business Republican base.

Nixon, however, held off on the attack. As it happened, the ILWU's strike fell almost simultaneous with Nixon's decision to adopt an electoral strategy to expand his political coalition with the ranks of blue-collar workers along the same lines of national interest that shippers sought to claim. At a July 21 meeting with high-level staffers held three weeks after West Coast longshoremen first hit the bricks, Nixon explained his belief that elite softness and decadence were weakening American resolve, that working men and women were "the real strength of the country," and explicitly banned anti-union rhetoric by his administration. Foremost among the reasons for Nixon's conviction that a new working-class coalition was possible was the stalwart support of organized labor for his foreign policy. In private conversations, Nixon frequently invoked the patriotic politics of the AFL-CIO's George Meany, Teamsters, and building trades unions, the latter of whom had impressed the administration with its violent prowar "hard hat" demonstrations in New York City a year before. [72]

Despite the ILWU's leftwing orientation, Nixon's ban on attacking organized labor extended to the union and Harry Bridges. Retired U.S. Air Force General Emmett O'Donnell, Jr., a personal acquaintance known to Nixon as "Rosie," authored a virulent anti-union letter to the President calling for a legal assault on Bridges. Staffers chose to leave it unanswered owing to the

[71] "May 5, 1950: The Rhundred Hustlers' and a Visit from a Senate Candidate," *Redlands Daily Facts* (blog), April 15, 2007, https://www.redlandsdailyfacts.com/general-news/20070415/may-5-1950-the-rhundred-hustlers-and-a-visit-from-a-senate-candidate; John Ehrlichman, *Witness to Power: The Nixon Years* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 23-24. Bridges was fond of telling stories, typically humorous and possibly apocryphal, about his assorted run-ins with Nixon; see Cherney, 259-260.

[72] Cowie, 147-148.

administration's efforts "trying to win labor's support" for their policies.[73] Instead, while keeping backdoor communication open with the PMA, the Nixon administration consistently expressed public optimism that the strike could be settled through negotiations, not intervention.[74] When the stoppage stretched into September, Nixon dispatched a federal mediator to San Francisco. When that failed, he called a surprise meeting with Bridges himself and PMA chief Ed Flynn, who met with Nixon for twenty-minutes during his brief September 1971 stopover in Portland, Oregon. Peppered with questions about his stance on the strike, Nixon remained non-committal. "If the strike goes on to a period that I will determine," he said vaguely, "then we have to step in and use Taft-Hartley." In the meantime, Nixon assured the media that his meeting with Bridges and Flynn had left the two men with "a new sense of urgency."[75]

Absent a strong public outlet for its position, all the ILWU had was labor power, and perhaps, given Nixon's initial hesitation to attack the union, the political strength represented by organized labor more broadly. Bridges, harangued by local union leaders for his unwillingness to push the envelope in negotiations with the PMA, seemed to think that the union's labor power was not enough. Throughout the strike, he sought to forge a merger with the ILWU's jurisdictional rival on containers, the Teamsters, as well as the East Coast ILA, both central targets of Nixon's

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[73] Roland L. Elliott to Dave Gergen, "Disposition of Emmett O'Donnell, Jr.'s Letter," White House Memorandum, September 13, 1971, White House Central Files, Subject Files, EX LA Labor-Management Relations 1/1/71-, RNPLM.

[74] White House internal correspondence described a conversation with William Horton of Olympic Steamship Company of San Francisco, who hoped a few more days would be given before Taft-Hartley invocation. "He felt that the presence of [Federal Mediator] Counts was most helpful and that Counts was beginning to fully understand the 'Bridges problem.'" What was meant by the "Bridges problem" – either Bridges' own intransigence in negotiations, or Bridges' inability to convince ILWU members to settle, for example – is not clear; Tod R. Hullin to George Shultz, September 21, 1971, White House Central Files, Subject Files, GEN LA 6-37, 9/21/71-10/15/71, RNPLM.

[75] Blaine Schulz, "Dock Strike May Spur Nixon Action," *Oregonian*, September 26, 1971.

blue-collar appeals. Bridges' merger strategy, however, struck most observers as strange given the wide divisions between the leftwing internationalism of the ILWU and the America-first Cold Warrior leadership of both the Teamsters and ILA. Local 19 members, at least, felt the same. An informal survey for the strike bulletin found "the bulk were flat out against any merger with anyone, but were in favor of a good strong working relationship with the ILA longshoremen."[76] Fiercely dedicated to action on the job, and firm in their belief that labor power was enough to pull it off, the membership was committed to sticking it out alone.

By late September, as the strike approached its fourth month and business pressure mounted, Nixon's halt on anti-union action finally ran out of leash. A month before, his efforts to woo the leaders of organized labor on the terms of nationalism had run aground upon the economic imperative to fight inflation. Believing that strong labor contracts were driving up prices, Nixon announced unprecedented wage-price freezes that enraged the AFL-CIO.[77] Then, one of the administration's remaining public justifications for avoiding Taft-Hartley – that the ILWU stoppage was a regional, not national, affair – evaporated when the East Coast ILA announced their own strike beginning September 30. Without Nixon's action, both coasts would be shut down in labor disputes for the first time in U.S. history. On October 4, 1971, Nixon finally invoked Taft-Hartley, affirming shippers' arguments that the strike imperiled "national health and safety."[78]

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[76] Tyler, Strike Bulletin #10.

[77] Cowie, 151.

[78] Nixon's injunction came with a catch: at the urging of East Coast shipping companies, the injunction would not include the ILA's strike. The discrepancy owed to the ILA's annual wage guarantee, which required shippers to pay longshoremen independent of the amount of dock traffic. Shippers reported to the administration that they expected traffic in the near future to be slow and begged for exclusion from the injunction; administration insiders agreed. "From the standpoint of our overall trade picture," White House economist Peter G. Peterson argued, making a case for the ILA exception, "it is my view that we will require a shipping industry in as sound a financial condition as possible, and that anything which damages that position will be harmful to our longer-range goals." Ironically, East Coast shippers stood to take advantage from a strike in their industry; thus, the administration wagered it was better

Angered at the hypocrisy of the injunction, a dozen of the first Local 19 gangs forced back to work at the Port of Seattle were fired over slowdowns. The actions of Local 19 members added to the ongoing tension between the recalcitrant rank and file and Bridges, who spoke out against the slowdowns in a visit to Seattle shortly after. When other locals opted not to follow Local 19's lead, work more or less returned to normal on the West Coast for the duration of the injunction.[79] Denying that there were any organized job actions, meanwhile, Local 19 President Shaun Maloney put the blame on a pro-business Nixon. "Employers feel they have a winner in the White House," he told the press, "and are going to play it for all it's worth."[80]

As the eighty days of the "cooling-off" period counted down, Nixon's relationship with organized labor only soured further, culminating in an orchestrated embarrassment of the President by George Meany during Nixon's visit to the AFL-CIO's Florida convention in November.[81] With nothing about the blue-collar strategy bearing fruit, and the ILWU threatening to walk again at the expiration of the injunction in mid-January 1972, the administration turned to what it knew best: partisan politics. Finally going full-bore against the ILWU, the White House sought to leverage the dock strike as a cudgel against Democrats. "Clearly," Nixon's regular private media brief would report, "this is an issue where the loyalties of the Democrats are divided between the farmers and suffering folks on the coast on the one hand, and their union benefactors on the other – and

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to only have West Coast workers back on the job. Peter G. Peterson to George P. Shultz, "Port Strike," White House Memorandum, October 1, 1971, White House Central Files, Subject Files, GEN LA 6-37, 9/21/71-10/15/71, RNPLM.

[79] "Bridges Here, Calls for Labor Power," October 19, 1971, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

[80] "Employers complain of dock slowdown," October 12, 1971, *Seattle Daily Times*.

[81] Cowie, 153.

the loud silence of the Democrats on the issues testifies to their dilemma."[82] Taking the gloves off on labor, the administration accelerated accusations that unions imperiled the nation, and its actions now became calculated towards holding their political adversaries "feet to the fire by pointing out their foot-dragging" on federal intervention.[83]

When the ILWU strike resumed on January 17, 1972, the administration was quickly on the union's back. Claiming the options of the executive branch were exhausted after the Taft-Hartley decision, Nixon punted action to the Democrat-controlled Congress, demanding special legislation to force the ILWU and PMA into arbitration, and quickly adopting all of the previous arguments of business that laid the waning of the nation's global economic power at the feet of organized labor. In his 1972 State of the Union speech, ironically framed as a plea for non-partisanship, Nixon singled out the ILWU strike as "an irresponsible labor tie-up" of the sort "this Nation cannot and will not tolerate."[84] He elaborated in a written statement to Congress issued the following day, essentially a catalog of business arguments against the ILWU, what Nixon called "the dimensions of destruction which this strike is wreaking upon its victims:" a "harvest of despair" among farmers, trade losses in world markets, and layoffs in West Coast states.[85] Preparing statements to Congressional hearings on the legislation, administration officials planned to escalate the allegations further, citing East and Gulf Coast labor strikes in the late 1960s as a

[82] Weekend News Review prepared for Richard Nixon by White House Staff, January 24, 1972, WHSF: SMOF: President's Office Files, Annotated News Summaries [Jan 19-24, 1972] [2 of 2], RNPLM.

[83] Colson, "Memorandum for Richard Nixon Re: Meeting with Reagan, Evans to Discuss Dock Strike," Memorandum, February 1, 1972, RNPLM.

[84] Richard Nixon, Address on the State of the Union Delivered Before a Joint Session of the Congress, January 20, 1972.

[85] Richard Nixon, "Special Message to the Congress Transmitting Proposed Legislation to Arbitrate the West Coast Dock Strike and Urging Passage of the Crippling Strikes Prevention Act - January 21, 1972," Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States 1972 (1972): 75–77.

direct cause of the United States' new trade deficit, and placing federal action against organized labor alongside international monetary policy, corporate tax incentives, export promotion, and subsidies as necessary to the reinvigoration of the country's standing in world trade.[86]

While the White House sought legislation, other federal officials got creative in their attempts to break the strike, seeking to leverage the outsized influence of the American military on the West Coast docks. Less than a week after the strike renewed, Federal Maritime Commission Chair Helen Bentley – whom Nixon himself later honored as a "an effective advocate for our position on the dock strike" – got administration assistant Tod Hullin on the phone.[87] Bentley noted that the ILWU's work exceptions for working military cargo, still strong despite drawdowns of the ground war in Vietnam, represented an essential financial lifeline for striking longshoremen. Asking for Department of Defense assistance, Bentley beseeched the administration to re-route military cargo away from West Coast ports to increase pressure on the ILWU to settle.[88] Bentley's call was clearly part of a coordinated effort with the employers, as the same day she spoke with Hullin, the PMA took the initiative itself and announced an embargo on military shipping. The DOD declined to help, however, expressing public concern that such a stoppage would essentially strangle the war supply chain, given nearly 100 percent of military cargo was traveling on leased space in commercial vessels. Within twenty-four hours, the PMA withdrew its ban.[89]

[86] Maurice Stans, "Proposed Statement of Commerce Secretary Maurice Stans to Subcommittee on Labor, Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee, on Emergency Dispute Legislation for the Longshore Industry, by Edgar Turpin (Department of Commerce?) To Ralph Malvik (OMB)," January 28, 1972, RNPLM.

[87] Richard Nixon to Helen Bentley, personal note, March 1, 1972, White House Central Files: Subject Categories, EX FG 126/Federal Maritime Commission, 1/1/71- [71-72], RNPLM.

[88] Tod R. Hullin, "West Coast Longshoremen's Strike Telephone from Helen Bentley, Tod Hullin to George Shultz," Memorandum, January 21, 1971, RNPLM.

[89] "Bridges Here for talks," January 20, 1972, *Seattle Daily Times*.

While Nixon had originally demanded congressional action within a week, his legislation was held up several weeks more by Democratic resistance and congressional maneuvers. Special Subcommittee hearings on the emergency legislation in the House, held the first week of February, further revealed the conflict as a political battle over the elastic definition of "national interest," producing plenty of acrimonious rhetoric but little in the way of hard evidence that the U.S. economy was in fact imperiled. In testimony, cabinet members and staff from across the Nixon Administration lined up to spin a coordinated narrative of a nation held hostage by a small union of selfish dissidents. Pointing to the newly emerged U.S. trade deficit, they played on fear of the future and the threat of national decline, warning without any recent historical precedent that world markets might never return. Eschewing reasoned studies, the administration's representatives instead shared heart-tugging constituent letters bemoaning layoffs, lost profits, and bankruptcies – mostly from businesses, but one from a ten-year old daughter of an unemployed worker claiming the dock strike had canceled her family's Christmas.[90]

Tellingly, the administration ultimately omitted its prepared claim that earlier East and Gulf Coast strikes had driven the trade deficit, perhaps realizing it contradicted the federal government's own 1970 report on longshore strikes, which House representative James O'Hara, a strong supporter of organized labor from Michigan, had submitted to the congressional record during the hearings. As administration representatives were questioned, the facts of the matter became clearer. Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz was forced to admit that, despite the strike, agricultural exports from the Pacific Coast had set a record in 1971, totaling $7.7 billion in sales, not the sort of figure produced by a floundering industry reaping what Nixon had called a "harvest

[90] Emergency Legislation to Settle the West Coast Dock Dispute, Hearings, Ninety-Second Congress, Second Session, on H.J. Res. 1025, January 31, February 1 and 4, 1972 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1972), 7.

of despair."[91] A *Los Angeles Times* article submitted to the hearing, furthermore, reported that statistics widely cited by California Governor Ronald Reagan and other union opponents about the economic losses incurred from the strike were wildly exaggerated. And some congressional representatives, not privy to Nixon's year of attempted politicking with organized labor, wondered why, if the national interest was so dearly threatened, the administration had taken 100 days to invoke Taft-Hartley to begin with.[92]

Summoned to Washington, D.C. on February 4, 1972 amidst marathon late night bargaining sessions, both Harry Bridges and PMA head Ed Flynn were called to testify. If there was any remaining doubt, their words clarified who government action would most benefit. Flynn began by proclaiming the PMA's desire for emergency legislation but spent the remainder of the hearing walking back his statement under questioning by pro-labor congress people, who were concerned that Flynn's comment meant the PMA was no longer bargaining in good faith to end the dispute on its own.[93] Bridges, meanwhile, came across in his testimony as something of both the irascible radical of old, and a besieged admiral caught between a mutinying rank and file and a hard place. Asked to explain why the union was striking for the first time in a quarter century, breaking the peace that had defined Pacific Coast labor relations for nearly a generation, Bridges called out his own union's dissidents. "They say, 'We have gone too long without a strike.' Well, they are wrong." While he said he didn't agree with them, Bridges attempted to explain what his members thought: that between two Mechanization and Modernization agreements, "the union spent too much time, effort, and their money solving employer problems when we are supposed to

[91] Emergency Legislation to Settle the West Coast Dock Dispute, 76.

[92] Harry Bernstein, "Dock Strike Costly But Seen As Less Than Anticipated," *Los Angeles Times*, January 30, 1972.

[93] Emergency Legislation to Settle the West Coast Dock Dispute, 108.

be working for the workers."[94] Reservations about the strike aside, Bridges argued forcefully against government intervention. Forever the internationalist, Bridges made headlines by testifying that a worldwide work stoppage awaited American trade if Congress moved forward, comments that Nixon's press secretary labeled "veiled threats to the nation."[95]

At that moment, Nixon was practicing a different kind of internationalism – the internationalism of great power politics. Heading off in late February for his famous visit to China, the President packed the special legislation with him, promising to sign at a moment's notice. He did so on February 21, 1972, after Congress approved the measure overwhelmingly in the Senate, 79–3, but by a close final vote in the House, 203–170. As it happened, however, Nixon's signature was legally inconsequential. A day before, with federal action looming over its head, the ILWU had already announced a tentative agreement with the PMA, which an exhausted membership approved by a vote of 6,803 to 2,761. The agreement rendered the federal legislation unnecessary, making Nixon's approval a "largely symbolic act," in the words of Secretary of Labor James Hodgson.[96] But as the invocations to "national interest" by business and its political allies illustrated, even the symbolic carried weight.

The simultaneity of Nixon's China trip and his threatened actions against the longshore strike may have been happenstance, but they were not strictly coincidental. Both were part of a coordinated effort on the part of the President to reposition U.S. power in the world, an effort that required labor's acquiescence to a globalizing economy to effectuate. Whether enlisted within a

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[94] Emergency Legislation to Settle the West Coast Dock Dispute, 125.

[95] "Bridges' Talk 'Threat' to U.S.," February 6, 1972, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

[96] "134 day strike end; Longshoremen reopen ports," *Oregonian*, February 22, 1972, page 1.

willing coalition dedicated to national greatness, as in Nixon's failed overtures to organized labor, or broken in the effort to fight inflation and resuscitate the trade deficit, federal action recognized that labor power was pivotal to the maintenance of American empire in the early 1970s.

"Cut to ribbons:" The Aftermath of the ILWU Strike in Seattle

As they had been throughout the city's economic crisis, the actions of the federal government were consequential for Seattle as well. The strike was officially over, but in an embattled city where the stakes of global trade were magnified and the militant-minded Local 19 still plied the docks, the conflict continued locally in new guises. To begin with, the final contract had not been overwhelmingly popular with Seattle longshoremen. When put to the membership, the contract was favored by Local 19 rank and file by a vote of 476-294, but only after four hours of debate, and with Shaun Maloney representing a strong voice among the sizable minority who opposed it.[97] The new deal contained enough financial gains for Harry Bridges to plausibly tout the agreement as a union victory, including a $1.12 an hour wage increase, a weekly wage guarantee of the sort enjoyed by East Coast longshoremen, and $1 a ton "tax" on containerized cargo handled by non-ILWU workers.[98] But the contract did not stall the forward march of the containers or halt the erosion of worker control represented by the 9.43 steady man clause, nor did it fully resolve the complicated jurisdictional issues over cargo handling with the Teamsters. The agreement could also not escape further federal intervention in the form of Nixon's Pay Board,

[97] Don Page, "Docks Future Still Glimmering," February 18, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*; "Snag Stalls Dock Strike Settlement," February 20, 1972, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*; "STRIKE IS OVER," *The Dispatcher*, February 24, 1972.

[98] "Summary of Longshore Pact," *The Dispatcher,* February 24, 1972.

which slashed the contract's first-year wage increases by 40 percent and lowered the PMA's wage guarantee in the name of fighting inflation.[99]

With so many issues unresolved, conflicts continued at the Port of Seattle throughout 1972. Local business raised the alarm that union actions threatened the recovery of Seattle's economy, echoing the panic over national decline that businesses had staged during the coastwise strike. Tensions mounted when the Port joined an antitrust lawsuit against the ILWU and the PMA challenging the new contract's rules around containerized cargo, which the Port argued would force it to join the PMA.[100] A Local 19 dispute in the spring with the Teamsters over unloading automobiles, meanwhile, led to special meetings of Seattle Mayor Wes Uhlman's Maritime Advisory Committee (Maloney, ostensibly a member, sat out).[101]

But the real six-alarm fire, in the eyes of politicians and business, arrived on the docks that summer in a conflict between Local 19 and the Port's largest tenant and resident war profiteer, the Sea-Land Corporation. In July, seeking to leverage the new contract's failure to resolve the steady man issue, the shipper invoked the 9.43 clause, attempting to bypass the hiring hall and directly hire four crane operators. Angered at the threat to the union's control over hiring, Local 19 members' work on Sea-Land ships slowed to a crawl. In response, the company temporarily diverted ships to the nearby Port of Tacoma, where the lack of container facilities did little to expedite unloading, then escalated the stakes further by threatening to leave the Port of Seattle

[99] Fed up with the attacks on labor, the Board's AFL-CIO quit in protest over the decision, an example of the broad labor action Harry Bridges had been seeking all along with his merger talk; "Pay Board Robs ILWU," *The Dispatcher*, March 10, 1972; "ILWU Takes Pay Board To Court," *The Dispatcher*, April 14, 1971. Bridges' previous promise to take the union out on strike in the event of a Pay Board cut did not materialize, however, and its decisions stood.

[100] "Port Sues ILWU and PMA," *The Dispatcher*, April 14, 1972.

[101] "New Longshore, Teamster Row Looms," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, April 14, 1972.

permanently. Once again, Mayor Wes Uhlman's Maritime Advisory Committee convened to discuss a solution. And once again, Local 19 sat out, both from Committee meetings and the public relations battle in the press. "I don't know anything about any slowdown," Shaun Maloney commented. "We don't negotiate in the newspapers." Other local labor leaders, including the Teamsters, felt differently, ripping Local 19 in the press. Port officials had no such qualms either, equating Sea-Land's interests with Seattle, raising the specter of yet another unemployment crisis, and feeding a constant line of economic figures to the papers. "This will whack us like Boeing and worse," Merle Adlum, Chair of the Port Commission, insisted. Port estimates of Sea-Land's contributions to the local economy were wildly wide-ranging and ballooned over the course of the slowdown, from an initial claim of $15 million a year to a much larger $77 million a few weeks later.[102]

Regardless of the exact figure, the Port's stake in retaining Sea-Land was substantial. The *Seattle Times* reported that the tax-funded institution had spent upwards of $12 million over less than a decade to accommodate the container company with new cranes, staging areas, warehouses, offices, and "acres and acres of blacktop."[103] Complicating matters further, Sea-Land's new crane operators were all African American, leading to accusations that Local 19 member's actions against the steady men were simply racial discrimination.[104] Just as likely, it was an attempt by Sea-Land to exploit racial tension among workers. San Francisco's ILWU Local 10, which boasted

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[102] "Sea-Land Slowdown on Docks Continues," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, August 1, 1972; "Arbitration decision due on longshore dispute," *Seattle Daily Times*, August 18, 1972.

[103] "Too much muscle?" *Seattle Daily Times*, August 2, 1972.

[104] "Sea-Land Ship Unloads Here," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, September 6, 1972.

the largest African American membership and leadership on the coast, had long been engaged in a running battle against the 9.43 clause.[105]

As the conflict stretched on through the summer, the affair ultimately found resolution in the courts. Longshore workers found themselves subject again to the same governmental pressures that had scuttled the strike, this time legal rather than legislative. Initially, a regional arbitrator found no evidence of an illegal union-organized slowdown, but the PMA appealed the decision to the coastwide arbitrator, who found in favor of Sea-Land. When Sea-Land ships returned to Seattle in September, the company claimed that slowdowns continued, leading to a lawsuit by the PMA and a U.S. District Court-issued restraining order against the union. A final judge ruling in December absolved union leadership of responsibility for any slowdowns, dismissing contempt actions against the officers, but nonetheless fined the union $50,000 for the actions of its members.[106] With the existence of the slowdown at last an established fact according to the law, ILWU lawyer Robert Duggan was finally at liberty to discuss the rank and files' motivations in the press. After 134 days on strike, a contract that had been signed under federal pressure, and a wage increase shredded by the same federal government, worker anger had boiled over in frustration over the steady-man clause, which threatened to bypass the hiring hall for the first since 1934. "There was a growing resentment on the part of the worker. Everything they had struck for," Duggan explained, "had been cut to ribbons."[107]

[105] Cole, *Dockworker Power*.

[106] "Longshoremen Fined $50,000 in Slowdown," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, December, 21, 1972.

[107] "Seattle dockers fined $50,000," *Seattle Daily* Times, December 21, 1972.

Hemmed in by borders, courts, the President and Congress, and a conservative labor movement, ILWU members had focused their actions on the jobsite, the one place they held unequivocal power, fighting over jurisdiction and the terms of a hard-fought contract. In Seattle, public relations favored the Port and the shippers, who put their interests at the center of the city's economic crisis by touting their continuing economic success as everything else seemingly crumbled. Local 19 and Shaun Maloney, on the other hand, struggled to advance their message that the union's actions benefited all working people. While Maloney enjoyed support within his local, he was known better outside of the union for his unpopularity. Glen Carter, a local maritime columnist for a local daily, included the following in his waterfront predictions for the coming year of 1973: "A Miss Maritime will be elected. So will a Miss Seafair. Shaun Maloney, president of Local 19, Longshoremen's Union, will not be elected Maritime Man of the Year."[108] Labor didn't necessarily need a popular leader to be powerful. The career of Harry Bridges, who *Time* magazine had once called the "most hated man in California," was a testimony to that.[109] But solidarity was nevertheless a key variable, and in Seattle in the early 1970s, the ILWU had very little to call on.

Despite all the concern raised over the impact of work stoppages on the city's economic future, global trade in Seattle was hardly worse for the wear. The one-hundred-day shutdown barely made a dent in the accelerating traffic at the Port of Seattle, with 1971 emerging as the second largest year for foreign trade tonnage in the institution's history. Right in line with the findings of the federal government's report on East Coast longshore strikes, whatever impacts the union's actions had on trade were made up for by the shipping rush that occurred before and after

[108] Glen Carter, "Looking into the crystal ball for 1973 on the waterfront," *Seattle Daily Times*, January 5, 1973.

[109] "U.S. At War: Blow to the War Effort," *Time,* June 8, 1942.

the shutdowns. Indeed, during December 1971, in the waning days of the Taft-Hartley injunction, 179,746 tons had moved through the Port of Seattle, more than during any single month in its history. The rates in Seattle were part of a larger record-setting surge in foreign trade across Washington state, which saw a nearly 30 percent increase between 1970 and 1971. Coupled with new automated labor-saving efficiencies in production, like containerization, the surge in trade drove a marked shift from blue-collar to white-collar industries in Washington state. These changes did less to benefit direct employment in the state industries producing traded products, such as agriculture, wood products, and airplanes, and more to expand professional business services. By 1972, nearly half of all jobs generated by trade since 1960 had been in "secondary" service sectors, producing 65,000 new jobs compared to 55,000 in agriculture and manufacturing.[110]

Rather than an illustration of the strike's limited impacts, labor's opponents leveraged the trade numbers as a measure of the worth of federal intervention. In a summer 1972 press release proclaiming the beginning of the end of Seattle's recession, the office of Republican Governor Daniel Evans claimed federal intervention in the strike as a $90 million infusion into the state economy, listing it alongside a laundry list of public works projects, unemployment assistance, and other federal programs with actual fixed price tags. Boasting "$600 million of federal economic assistance received in response to" the Governor's requests, the statement was tailored to ingratiate state voters with the Republican presidential administration, which had long been

[110] Washington State Department of Commerce and Economic Development, Economic and Planning Analysis Division, "International Trade and the Washington State Economy, 1960-1972" (Olympia, WA: The Division, 1973), 24-28.

blamed for inaction on the region's recession. It also quietly admitted that defeating the power of labor was central to the resolution that business sought for the economic recessions of the 1970s.

Regardless of its veracity, the claim that breaking the strike contributed $90 million to the state economy mattered politically. It cast the actions of the ILWU as individualistic and selfish, rather than as a measure of working people's power and well-being more broadly. And it shielded the decisions of shipping employers from scrutiny, measuring employers' worth through the economic value of their firms' operations overall in the Seattle economy, rather than how that wealth was distributed within the community. In this account, foreign trade was not a force splitting the state's economy into haves and have-nots, it was economic salvation for the whole state of Washington – a force, the Governor's Office claimed, "equivalent to all the estimated foreign trade of the People's Republic of China in 1970."[111]

Measured by the many ways that the U.S. federal government has conditioned global trade throughout history, the 1971 strike of the ILWU speaks volumes about the role that American empire played in the economic development of Seattle before and after its economic crisis. From the Panama Canal to containerization, the city's trade economy was shaped, first and foremost, by the actions of Americans in the world: commercially and militarily. As one of two sites for military containers on the West Coast, Seattle shipping benefited from the war in Vietnam more than most, a fact that at first hid the impacts of containerization on the longshore workforce, and then proved

[111] Washington State Office of the Governor, "Press Release from Daniel Evans Office: 'Evans Says State's Economic Upturn Sooner, Stronger Than Anticipated'" (Office of the Governor, Washington State, June 20, 1972).

a major flash point of the strike, when the PMA sought to squelch military cargo to pressure the ILWU.

State power was strong and ever-present, but it was also subject to politics. Containerization, no matter how subsidized by the federal government, was impossible without the public investments of the Ports, a tax-funded entity with elected leadership, and labor law ultimately reflected what was legislated and enforced, all matters subject to political contestation. Harry Bridges may have had a sense of this in his hurry to hitch the ILWU's fortunes to the ILA and the Teamsters, both big unions with the ear of President Nixon. His failures were his inability to harness the fighting spirit of his rank-and-file membership, which was diffused by Bridges' father-knows-best penchant for bickering with local leadership, and his lack of appreciation for the tall task of wedding an anti-imperial union with two of America's staunchest defenders among organized labor. The ILWU in the 1960s and 1970s was an exceptional union in both senses of the word: outstanding and out front against the war in Vietnam and its willingness to imagine and seek out international solidarity; and atypical amongst an American labor movement whose imagined boundaries were too limited, too synonymous with those of the country's borders. As fractious as Richard Nixon's effort to enlist the support of the AFL-CIO proved, the fact he felt such a fraternity could be forged through their shared foreign policies despite the anti-labor platform of his own party suggests the strong role that American empire played in mid-20th century labor politics.

Politically isolated, ILWU members still had the power of their labor, a power that had to be broken if the federal government and American capital was to pursue internationalism on their terms. It was a war on organized labor by business and government that would intensify as the 1970s continued. Mechanization represented one effort on the part of the employers to recapture profits, raising productivity while siphoning labor costs; new investments in breaking labor unions

and a new willingness to flout labor law were another.[112] Beyond its 1971 strike, the ILWU continued to understand these developments from an international perspective. In a 1973 editorial, the union reflected on the changes of the past few years, the pivoting US international position, and the deteriorating economy. "The war in Indochina may be over, the Cold War may be ending – but it's clear that someone has to pay the bills for more than a quarter century of US expansionism," they argued. "We believe that the slow build-up of an anti-labor strategy by this administration can be understood in this context. American workers are being told that *they* must pay the freight for overseas expansionism, that *they* are responsible for inflation, and that *they* must solve the crises of American domination abroad by tightening their belts, speeding up production, and accepting lower wage increases."[113]

The ILWU argued that the country's prosperity had been built on a precarious base, one that required U.S. control over the world that was now unraveling. It was a canny evaluation of the crisis that had engulfed Boeing and Seattle's economy and that had led to renewed attacks on organized labor. It was not an argument that would stick with American workers. The real tragedy of the period, which would witness the slow dissolution of organized labor as a real force in American politics, was that large sectors of the American working-class were conscious, angry, and ready to move, yet simultaneously invested in a national project that easily cast their anger as selfish and destructive when it hurt the general prerogatives of American business. The union's strike of 1971 revealed that the power of workers – organized, militant, and fiercely committed to job action – was heavy, even world-moving; but in that moment, the power of empire proved heavier. The continuation of American supremacy in the world economy demanded the reordering

[112] Sam Gindin and Leo Panitch, *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy Of American Empire* (Verso Books, 2012); Windham, *Knockin' On Labor's Door*.

[113] "Perspectives for the ILWU," *The Dispatcher*, May 11, 1973, 2.

of global trade. As the 1970s continued and Seattle business sought to tap into that changing world economy, the city's workers would increasingly pay the price.

Chapter 4

"Seattle Means Business"

Race, Class, and Empire in the Postindustrial Pacific

The most famous sign in Seattle history was a joke that failed to land. For fifteen days in 1971, Bob McDonald and Jim Youngren, two real estate developers, erected a billboard reading, "Will the last person leaving Seattle - Turn out the lights." Their sign was a commentary on the Pacific Northwest city's economy and its ongoing unemployment crisis.

Despite all the joblessness, however, McDonald and Youngren could not see what all the fuss was about. In Seattle, their business was booming. Downtown construction was proceeding at an historic clip and consumer activity was as strong as ever. Intending to mock the discrepancy between the narrative of depression and their own growing business in real estate, McDonald and Youngren purchased the billboard near SeaTac airport, just outside the city limits. Out of town investors, their thinking went, would see the depressing message on the way into Seattle from the airport, only to be impressed by the bustle of construction and shopping to be found there. Sure, Boeing was on the ropes, but to a politically ascendant sector of young businessmen like McDonald and Youngren, Seattle was on the rise. The only thing the city really needed to leave behind was its government-dependent aerospace industry.[1]

The joke was lost on nearly everyone. Instead of sending up Seattle's shabby reputation, the billboard became a veritable emblem of the era. Broadcast around the world by international

[1] Eric Lacitis, "'Turn out the Lights': Message from 1971 Seattle Billboard Echoed in Head-Tax Debate," *Seattle Times*, May 21, 2018.

media, the billboard's message was used not only to illustrate Seattle's status as a "City of Despair," as London's *Economist* put it, but also the city's standing as a specter of national decline. Beset by military defeats in Vietnam and quickly losing economic ground to emerging international competitors like Japan and West Germany, there was a growing sense among the country's elite that the nation's place as the preeminent global power was in danger. Seattle's dramatic predicament provided the media with an easy shorthand for all the economic and political crises embattling the United States in the early 1970s. In this context, the city was not just a company town on the skids according to the *Economist*, but "the worst example of economic decline in any sector of America since the great depression 40 years ago."[2] To the *Wall Street Journal*, meanwhile, the beleaguered city represented a "breeding ground" for leftwing militants and violent movements, home to the country's worst rate of politically motivated bombings per capita.[3] Even pop culture figures joined in. Country star Waylon Jennings transformed the billboard's phrasing into a cautionary lament concerning the corruptions of urban life in the song "The Last One to Leave Seattle."[4]

Embroiled by economic and political turmoil, Seattle exemplified how America's dominant postwar global position, an empire built upon economic strength in manufacturing and far-reaching military presence, was on rocky footing amidst the global turbulence of the 1970s. But the city was not merely a *symbol* of imperial power. Seattle, in fact, was a site of its construction. Lost along with the intended humor of Youngren and McDonald's sign was the

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[2] "City of Despair," *Economist*, May 22, 1971.

[3] Herbert G. Lawson, "A Sonic Bust: In a Stunned Seattle, Only Radicals See Good In Rejection of SST," *Wall Street Journal*, December 7, 1970.

[4] Waylon Jennings and Steve Norman, "The Last One To Leave Seattle," n.d., track 12 on *Lonesome, On'ry and Mean*, 2003 (originally released 1973), RCA Victor, compact disc.

deeper material basis for their punch line: Seattle was not simply a city caught in a global crisis in 1971, it was a city divided by one.

If aerospace manufacturing was on the ropes, another global economy was growing in the shell of the old: a postindustrial future premised on service, retail, and international trade. Where it failed as a joke, the billboard otherwise succeeded as a prophecy. The message presaged the efforts of Seattle business over the ensuing decade to direct the outside world's attention away from the suffering of city residents, and towards opportunities for capital investment. Don't take unemployment seriously, their efforts implied; instead, focus on the new wealth being generated.

For a rising generation of Seattle businessmen and local politicians who were disenchanted with their city's dependence on the military-spending driven economy of Boeing, the key to this new wealth was in the intended audience of McDonald and Youngren's billboard: the outside investor. The city's unemployment crisis thus gave birth to a new phase of Seattle boosterism, touted by supporters as the city's first-ever foray into "economic development." Bringing together prominent figures in the public and private sectors, these efforts sought to both sell business on Seattle as a lucrative site for investment, and simultaneously sell the people of Seattle on the importance of public support for business to the city's economic recovery. Inspired by Seattle's growing traffic in foreign trade, this campaign increasingly prioritized the recruitment of international capital, especially from Japan.

The following chapter examines how Seattle business leaders sought to leverage the economic power of the United States in the Pacific to the city's advantage, contributing to the making of global capitalism on an urban scale. The extension of global capitalism in the 1970s is often presented as an inevitable process driven by the forward march of markets and technology. In actuality, this chapter argues, international connection was a *political* project for

Seattle elites. This project advanced specific ideologies of race and class, such as racial liberalism and postindustrialism, that prioritized particular populations over others in seeking to advance the power of business. While privileging professional and white-collar sectors, this project worked to undermine the city's blue-collar workers and their unions. Furthermore, Japanese investors became targets of opportunity for Seattle boosters due to both its imperial relationship with the United States, as well as federal trade maneuvers that sought to put Japan at a disadvantage. In the process, boosters sacrificed the well-being of the city's Black workers by quietly accommodating Japanese businessmen who feared militant affirmative action would disrupt their workforces. Ultimately, the campaign for economic development would feature as many dead ends as it did successes, and overall unemployment in the region would not diminish much outside of the improved aerospace industry. Nevertheless, as the nature of U.S. global economic dominance shifted from a basis in manufacturing to one in trade and service, Seattle business stood ready to benefit.

Racial Liberalism and Pacific Postindustrialism: Seattle's New Politics

When Boeing's unemployment crisis first struck in late 1969, Seattle's municipal politics were in transition. Power was transferring from an entrenched clique of *petit bourgeois* business owners to a new generation of professional-managerial technocrats: attorneys, architects, academics, urban planners and consultants, a university-educated vanguard who valorized policy expertise over political patronage. More worldly in orientation, these new strata would challenge the parochial sensibilities of Seattle business and politics by advancing racial liberalism to

answer the city's militant Black social movements and a platform of postindustrialism to eliminate Seattle's dependence on the Boeing Company and the federal government.

Entering the late 1960s, the city's existing political elite was old and incumbent. In 1967, the average city council member was around 67 years old, and a supermajority had served for a dozen years or more.[5] Most were downtown businessmen and property owners, whose interests were represented by the Central Association of Seattle, which played a critical role both in elections and in making possible city projects.[6] By the end of 1971, however, the City Council's membership had completely turned over. The sea change was shepherded by a new political group, "Choose an Effective City Council" (CHECC), that had assembled from members of the Young Republicans, the Metropolitan Democratic Club, and the Junior Chamber of Commerce.[7]

Like the political establishment it challenged, the group was almost exclusively white and male, but it was younger by half. Most members were under 30, and nearly all were college-educated, filling the ranks of Seattle's growing professional sectors. For example, the two candidates who defeated welfare rights activist Bernadine Garrett in the city council primary election in 1971, Bruce Chapman and James Kimbrough, both white professionals, were urban affairs consultants touting advanced graduate degrees from prestigious universities. Chapman, who ultimately won that election, saw the professional economy as the answer to Seattle's economic troubles, and would play an important role in the city's economic development efforts as the decade continued.[8] Mayor Wes Uhlman was similarly emblematic of the new Seattle

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[5] Peter LeSourd, "CHECC's Emergence in 1967 as an Agent of Political Change in Seattle: A Memoir," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 100, no. 3 (2009).

[6] David Brewster, "The View from Downtown," *Seattle Magazine*, December 1970.

[7] LeSourd, "CHECC's Emergence in 1967."

[8] Bruce Chapman, interview by Gary Greaves, 1990, Gary Greaves Collection, Accession No. 5815-001, Special Collections, University of Washington, Seattle, Washington.

politics. A former real estate attorney and Democratic state legislator, the 34-year-old Uhlman had been elected the city's youngest ever mayor in 1968, defeating a downtown business-backed candidate with a landslide 64 percent share of the vote. Uhlman's election was heralded broadly as a rebuke to the city's political establishment, made possible through a coalition of younger voters and neighborhood groups, as well as organized labor, who liked Uhlman's track record in the state legislature.[9]

Circumstances made Uhlman's tenure, and the larger political shift it was a part of, seem like more of a sea change than it really was. His role as mayor was enhanced thanks to new government reforms of the type that CHECC supported, namely a measure passed by the state legislature in 1969 that granted stronger budgetary authority to the city's executive office at the expense of the city council, which was intended to undo political deadlocks and make municipal government more active. The seemingly disruptive nature of Uhlman's administration was also amplified by his tendency to tick people off. To his detractors, the Mayor was not a consensus builder, and had a reputation for talking a big game publicly and taking credit without doing the backroom work to move initiatives forward.[10] Whether he did the actual work, however, he was a reliable mouthpiece for the shift in the city's political economy. Later described by a former colleague as an "unapologetic capitalist," Uhlman was firmly committed to strengthening the private sector with public action, and one of his administration's primary focuses would be shepherding the power of business through the period's multitude of political and economic

[9] "Mayor Stuns Establishment," *Oregonian*, November 9, 1969.

[10] Berkley Gerald Johnson, "Seattle: The Lean Years," AB Thesis, Dartmouth College, 1973, 94.

crises.[11] In this way, his administration ultimately represented less a revolution and more a changing of the guard, reconfiguring rather than challenging the city's relationship to business.

The new wave of politically active professionals epitomized Seattle's local brand of racial liberalism. Replacing explicit racial exclusion and separation with a pluralist language of integration, equal opportunity, cultural diversity and cosmopolitanism, racial liberalism tempered the most inflammatory dimensions of white privilege while preserving existing economic and political structures, thus defusing more radical calls for change.[12] Few to none of the city's new wave of professional-managerial pols were social movement activists, but they were nonetheless compelled to answer civil rights and environmental demands. On issues ranging from minority hiring to urban renewal, they shared a commitment to managing social issues in order to minimize disruption, imagining a more "sophisticated" Seattle in the process. Racialized law and order rhetoric, for example, while rampant in the late 1960s, had notably not been by employed by either Uhlman or his opponent in the 1968 mayoral election.[13] Furthermore, Chapman and Kimbrough, in their campaigns for city council, had both touted their civil rights experience in nonprofits and on government commissions, in stark contrast to the lived experience of welfare rights activist Garrett.[14]

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[11] Bob Young, "Wes Uhlman: A Politician of His Times" (Legacy Washington; Office of the Secretary of State, Washington State).

[12] Su-Shuan Chen, "In Pursuit of A Double-Edged Sword: The Politics of Racial Liberalism and Racial Triangulation in Seattle, 1940–1975," PhD Diss., (University of California, San Diego, 2017).

[13] Daryl Lembke, "Two Liberals Vie for Seattle Mayor's Job: Little Except Generation Gap Separates Candidates in Campaign With Few Issues." *Los Angeles Times*, November 2, 1969.

[14] Chapman, interview with Greaves; Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Civil Disorder, *Race and Violence in Washington State*; Bruce Chapman, "CHECC Candidate Evaluation Questionnaire," Box 2, Folder 11, Choose an Effective City Council (CHECC) Records, 1967-1976, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries; James Kimbrough, "CHECC Candidate Evaluation Questionnaire," Box 2, Folder 11, Choose an Effective City Council (CHECC) Records, 1967-1976, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

At the same time, Seattle's new politics was forced to contend with rising militancy and unrest among Black youth and workers, a reality that Mayor Uhlman literally could not escape when, enroute to Hawaii for his honeymoon in the days before taking office, his flight was delayed by a protest of Black construction workers at the city's SeaTac airport. While affirmative action fights were disrupting the city's construction sites, youth were burning down racist institutions in the segregated Central District, such that Seattle ranked first in the United States for politically-motivated bombings per capita.[15] Uhlman's tenure is thus often remembered for his tussles with the Nixon administration over a federally-directed police raid of the local Black Panthers, which Ulman nixed out of fear it would embolden the Black radicals, and his fights with municipal unions over affirmative action hiring, which drew an unsuccessful recall vote against Uhlman in 1975.[16]

Seattle's racial liberalism had an international dimension that reflected both the multiethnic demographics of the city as well as the imperial priorities of the United States: people of the world, like people of color in Seattle, were included insofar as they were willing partners in capitalism. Peter LeSourd, a CHECC founder, attributed his group's racial liberalism to its members' exposure to campus social movements, as well as their common experiences traveling overseas as students or in military service, which convinced them that racial inclusivity would make Seattle "a more exciting place to live."[17] Unconsidered by LeSourd and CHECC, however, were the less than equal terms under which such inclusivity was written. While

[15] U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Government Operations, and Committee on Government Operations, "Riots, Civil and Criminal Disorders," 90th Congress, Volume 74, Part 24 (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970); Lawson, "A Sonic Bust: In a Stunned Seattle, Only Radicals See Good In Rejection of SST."

[16] Young, "Wes Uhlman: A Politician of His Times;" Judson L. Jeffries and Jeffrey Zane, "A Panther Sighting in the Pacific Northwest: The Seattle Chapter of the Black Panther Party," in *On the Ground: The Black Panther Party in Communities across America*, ed. Judson L. Jeffries (University Press of Mississippi, 2010).

[17] LeSourd, "CHECC'S Emergence in 1967," 110.

LeSourd and his colleagues traveled the world, immigration restrictions kept most of the world's people of color out of the United States, at least until Cold War geopolitical concerns drove Congress to adopt the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. The Asian communities that existed in Seattle were numerically small but well-established, their formation predating such restrictions. City boosters had long sought to marshal them for the sake of Pacific trade, from enlisting Japanese residents to market Seattle as a "gateway to the orient" prior to World War II, to conscripting Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino Americans as hosts and liaisons for international exhibits during the Seattle World's Fair of 1962. Such inclusion accorded Asian communities a measure of status but had provided little protection to Japanese residents from concentration camps during World War II, and few material rewards from World's Fair participation compared with the jobs secured at that event by the fair employment protests of Seattle's Black community.[18]

While Uhlman and others were pressed to respond to persistent, Black-led social movements, their politics also reflected growing disillusionment with the U.S. war in Vietnam, which influenced their responses to Seattle's unemployment crisis. When the Nixon administration initially failed to answer Seattle's crisis, the mayor had not only needled the administration in the press, he had also criticized military spending, such as federal government support for the floundering Lockheed and the war in Vietnam.[19] In his first State of the City address, for example, Uhlman declared, "It appears that our cities must first become either military bastions or areas of outer space exploration in order to receive adequate federal aid," a

[18] Chen, "In Pursuit of A Double-Edged Sword;" Shelley Sang-Hee Lee, *Claiming the Oriental Gateway Prewar Seattle and Japanese America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011).

[19] Peter Braestrup, "Seattle's 11% Jobless Get Little Federal Help," *Washington Post*, January 11, 1971.

lament he echoed in both the press and in private correspondence.[20] He made exceptions for Boeing, of course, claiming the company had no cost overruns like other military contractors (an artful dodge of the company's mishandling of its commercial 747, the primary reason for its major layoffs), and underscoring that the Super Sonic Transport was not a defense project.[21] To say otherwise would have meant political suicide in hard hit Seattle. But on the whole, Uhlman was consistent in his opposition to government support for war, a position he shared with a growing sector of influential Democrats in the Pacific Northwest.[22]

In place of bombs, Uhlman sought business. As the Nixon's administration's foot-dragging continued into 1971 amidst Seattle's climbing double-digit unemployment, the Mayor decided he was done waiting. "No magician from Washington, D.C. will appear to solve our problems," he declared in a January speech to the Seattle Area Industrial Council (SAIC), a small organization of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce that had provided economics research to companies and government agencies since 1963. Instead, Uhlman insisted that Seattle's crisis could only be solved through an alliance of local government and the private sector around a concerted program of economic development, one that envisioned "a new stable economic base to replace the cornucopia of aerospace manufacturing." To get there, Uhlman proposed two new institutions: a Seattle-King County Development Commission, a public-private partnership managed by a representative cross section of the city's business and political elite; and a municipal Office of Economic Development, which he had recently proposed to the city council.

[20] Wes Uhlman to University of Washington Daily, June 1971, Subject Files Record Series 5287-02, Box 45, Folder 10, Economic Development (Sept.-Dec.), Seattle Municipal Archives, Seattle, WA.; Uhlman to Harry Beyma, August 23, 1971, Subject Files Record Series 5287-02, Box 46, Folder 6, Economy, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[21] "Jobs: 'It's Up to U.S.' - Uhlman," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, June 14, 1971.

[22] Brian Casserly, "Securing the Sound: The Evolution of Civilian-Military Relations in the Puget Sound Area, 1891–1984," PhD Diss., (University of Washington, 2007).

The government's role had been and always would be "minor," Uhlman assured the SAIC, "because you and I wish to preserve a free, private enterprise economy."[23] But if the government had a role to play, this was it: not big indiscriminate contracts for industrial giants, but targeted and measured application of professional expertise coordinated with local business coalitions.

Uhlman's economic development proposal was received as a slight on the downtown business community by the Seattle Chamber of Commerce, still stinging from the loss of their preferred candidate to Uhlman in the recent mayoral election. Nevertheless, political division was ultimately overcome by economic necessity. Uhlman's speech claimed his economic development proposals would be a first for any West Coast city in the United States, functioning as "a prototype," but the claim was a bit of typical Uhlman boasting: the SAIC itself had been using research to promote Seattle as a place of business for nearly a decade, albeit with little to show for it.[24] Taking offense at Uhlman's disregard for their efforts, the Seattle Chamber was nonplussed with Uhlman's proposal for a new commission. In fact, the Seattle Chamber had convened its own Economic Task Force in fall 1970 to chart the course of business out of the city's severe recession, commissioning a study by the international business consulting firm A.T. Kearney and Company. The Kearney report, released in May 1971, landed on an idea remarkably similar to Uhlman's. A future independent of aerospace manufacturing would have to be forged through a local coalition of elites organized through a partnership "representing the highest levels of public and private leadership," that was sufficiently neutral to coordinate

[23] Transcript of Speech by Wes Uhlman at Seattle Area Industrial Council Forecast Luncheon, "Seattle's Opportunity," January 8, 1971, Subject Files Record Series 5287-02, Box 45, Folder 8, Economic Development (Jan.-Apr.), Seattle Municipal Archives, Seattle, WA.

[24] Mike Conant, "Uhlman's Aim: City Development With Eye to Human Needs," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. April 22, 1971.

between otherwise conflicting sectors – "business, government, labor and minorities" – to "present a united front to the Federal Government."[25]

New to Seattle or not, the idea of economic development had over a decade of history elsewhere in urban America. As historian Tracy Neumann traces, when manufacturing fled American city centers of the North Atlantic in the 1950s and 1960s, local growth coalitions sought to redevelop and diversify their urban economies around professional service and financial sectors. In doing so, they fashioned what Neumann calls a distinct "utopian planning model" of postindustrialism, "a pervasive ideology that privileged white-collar jobs and middle-class residents, as well as a set of pragmatic tactics designed to remake urban space, including financial incentives, branding campaigns, and physical redevelopment, typically carried out by public-private partnerships."[26] Uhlman and the Chamber's proposals were drawn from the same postindustrial playbook, as the report commissioned by the Seattle Chamber of Commerce illustrated. The report analyzed the demographics of the city's unemployed, evaluated the region's economic sectors, and outlined an economic development agenda. Its findings showed that, numerically, Boeing's crisis was impacting non-professional and non-managerial workers the most, particularly in manufacturing, clerical, and general labor positions. Nevertheless, true to the postindustrial credo – and the "New Poor" coverage of Seattle's crisis in general – the study emphasized the high rate of unemployment *within* professional and technical categories and made much of the overall growth in the city's professional service sectors, education and

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[25] A. T. Kearney, Inc., *Economic Action and Seattle-King County Economic Development Council: A Plan for Economic Recovery* (Seattle: The Firm, 1971), 1, 7, 8.

[26] Tracy Neumann, *Remaking the Rust Belt: The Postindustrial Transformation of North America* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), 2-6.

trade in particular, citing the booming office building construction that resembled other growing cities of the Sunbelt like Birmingham, Dallas, and Atlanta.[27]

While postindustrialism had its origins on the Eastern seaboard, its Seattle partisans gave it a specifically Pacific recasting. Mayor Uhlman argued in his speech to the SAIC that Boeing's woes were an opportunity to build a new Seattle of international commerce, a city that that supplied "Alaska's great development future" and that was "the kingpin for a new era of trade and tourism with Japan and the Orient – even Red China."[28] Both aims described long standing, even foundational, features of Seattle's economy dating back a century, but Pacific postindustrialism imagined them on an unprecedented scale, recalibrated for a new era of global capitalism. The Kearny report, for example, foregrounded the aggressive expansion of the Port of Seattle, where massive investments in container infrastructure in the 1960s had enabled growing trade numbers that remained unaffected by the city's unemployment crisis.[29] As early as 1966, well before Boeing's bust pressed the issue, Seattle's Port planners had anticipated postindustrialism by imagining an economic future predicated on the movement of goods, rather than their production. The idea seemed especially suited to a city like Seattle hundreds of miles removed from the major urban markets of the U.S. economy, but close in proximity in terms of seaborn commercial traffic to the growing economies of the Pacific world.[30] The trade sector also produced the professional managerial jobs that were so prized by postindustrial

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[27] A.T. Kearney, Inc., 10.

[28] Wes Uhlman "Seattle's Opportunity."

[29] A.T. Kearny, Inc., 12.

[30] Marc Levinson, *The Box: How the Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2016), 196.

development. In the early 1970s, nearly half of all Washington state's foreign trade-related jobs were in "secondary" service sectors: banking, logistics management, real estate, and so forth.[31]

If professionals were needed to realize the postindustrial dream, other workers needed to go. The study's survey of over one-hundred business owners provided little insight into why firms located in Seattle. Most said it was because that was simply where their founders' families were. But it did reveal a lack of sympathy for the city's unemployed, with business owners insisting the jobless simply move away to find work. The report also expressed alarm over the strength of the region's unions, a longstanding concern of city elites since even before the days of Seattle's famous 1919 general strike. Claiming organized labor was "highly organized and very aggressive in its pursuit of improvement for union members," the report noted that Washington state carried the second highest union density rate in the country, second only to Michigan, which was "a major concern in a site-location analysis" for business firms.[32] Defeating the power of organized labor would become thus a central concern for Seattle's economic development boosters as they put their plans into action.

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[31] Washington State Department of Commerce and Economic Development, Economic and Planning Analysis Division, "International Trade and the Washington State Economy, 1960-1972" (Olympia, WA: The Division, 1973), 24-28.

[32] A. T. Kearney, Inc., 15.

"MERCHANDISING A BUSINESS FRONTIER:" THE SEATTLE-KING COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL AND THE OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Clearly, Seattle's economic development advocates had their work cut out for them. Implementing their postindustrial vision would require the concerted political mobilization of both business and government and would need to overcome the hurdle of organized labor. Contrary to calls to free the region from federal support, the work of economic development itself would depend on federal government funding. Rather than contracts for an industrial giant like Boeing, however, this funding supported campaigns aimed at growing the city's professional sectors. While pitching the city's unemployment crisis as a lucrative business opportunity for Eastern capital, these campaigns also sought to convince Seattleites that political support for business was the only possible road to recovery. Selling Seattle to business, in other words, also required selling business to Seattle.

To fulfill the city's postindustrial promise, the Kearney report proposed the Seattle-King County Economic Development Council (EDC), an organization essentially analogous to the stillborn commission advanced by Uhlman. The report provided the EDC with an eleven-point program that converged around professional sectors. Four points outlined further studies of the regional economy, paired with promotional marketing "to attract white collar employment." Even if aid or defense dollars were unlikely, furthermore, state and federal government still had a role to play. Another four points proposed public works and alterations to existing federal programs, including the redirection of War on Poverty dollars intended for minority communities

to the unemployed more broadly, and expanding the definition of "economically disadvantaged" to include the well-educated.[33]

King County Executive John Spellman laid the groundwork for the EDC in the Seattle area, and in late April, Uhlman joined with Spellman and Seattle Chamber of Commerce President Norman Clapp to formally announce the organization's creation.[34] True to the consultant's proposal, the new Council's officers and board were a cross-section of the area's elite. Its initial composition, however, illustrated how dependent Seattle's economy was on outside sectors, and how economic development centered mainly on local business interests that relied on those sectors. Only two board members were employers of any real consequence. The founding EDC President was Clapp, who, in addition to heading the Chamber, was also the President of timber giant Weyerhaeuser. Also on the board sat William Allen, chairman of Boeing. Both Clapp and Allen represented the region's longtime industrial titans whose fortunes shaped the conditions of the regional economy more generally, but they played little to no role in actual EDC affairs. Another two members, Seattle Port Commission President Merle Adlum and Edward Carlson of United Air Lines, represented the city's presumptive future in trade and travel. But a supermajority of the board, nine of thirteen, came from firms that depended on, rather than constituted, the strength of the regional economy: local banks, telephone and utility companies, real estate, and retail and advertising. An outlier was Luther Carr of the Seattle Urban League, both the token Black man on the board and the only member from a community organization. The public sector, meanwhile, was accounted for by Uhlman and Spellman, acting

[33] A. T. Kearney, Inc., 1.

[34] Economic Development Council of Seattle and King County. "Press Release: Economic Development Council Formed to Coordinate Job Producing Efforts," April 23, 1971. On Spellman's role, see Johnson, "Seattle: The Lean Years," 120.

as the EDC's Vice Presidents, and the Port's Adlum, who was an elected official. Notably absent on the initial roster was anyone representing the ranks of the unemployed themselves, or anyone from organized labor, though state labor leaders would be added to the EDC's board later.[35]

Municipal government became a particular engine for economic development politics. While Mayor Uhlman's ideas had initially been met with hostility from the Seattle business community, the city council was more convinced, passing Uhlman's proposal for a City Office of Economic Development (OED) by a unanimous vote (though the Chamber of Commerce opposed that measure too, arguing it would duplicate the functions of their own Seattle Area Industrial Council).[36] From the beginning, the OED and EDC were imagined together as two sides of the same economic development coin. According to Uhlman's proposal to the council, in addition to serving as the Mayor's chief economic advisor and his "personal executive agency for contracts with prospective investors," the OED would function as the public unit of the public-private partnership of the proposed EDC, acting as an intermediary and expeditor between EDC staff and City agencies, and supporting the EDC "in efforts to change legislation."[37] The city agency would employ tools of economic analysis – "extensive research on employment, tax laws, market characteristics, land use, industries" – which, if applied "actively and aggressively," would "serve as catalysts in bringing potential investors together with the resources they need to locate and operate successfully in the city."[38] Operating under the premise that "the only way to

[35] A. T. Kearney, Inc., 8-9.

[36] Mike Conant, "City Creates Office to Help Attract Industry," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, March 16, 1971.

[37] Wes Uhlman to City Council, Proposing OED and Seattle King County Development Commission," January 13, 1971, Subject Files Record Series 5287-01, Box 53, Folder 7, Executive – Economic Development Task Force, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[38] Uhlman, "An Economic Development Position for Seattle," 1971, Subject Files Record Series 5287-01, Box 53, Folder 7, Executive – Economic Development Task Force, Seattle Municipal Archives.

really cure our unemployment problems is for private industry to expand," as an early organizational document explained, the OED acted as an advocate for business in its relations with city government, providing legal advice, economic research data, and other investment information.[39] Where possible, the OED would also take action for business as a "red-tape cutter," offering investors an expedited express all-expenses-paid tour through the city's bureaucracy, a function that the local press assured readers was not illegal – "nobody is advocating breaking any laws" – but simply a navigation of the gray areas of city policy. "If we've done but one thing," OED coordinator Gary Bloomquist said proudly, "we've at last established a place for businessmen to bring their problems."[40]

Ironically, given Uhlman's proclamation about no magicians from D.C., both the EDC and the OED relied on the federal government to launch their operations. The City of Seattle expanded its new OED with an appropriation of $415,000 from the federal government's Model Cities program. As discussed in Chapters One and Two, the program had funded efforts in the city's predominately Black Central Area, the pan-Asian International District, and the derelict Pioneer Square, also known as Skid Road, since 1968. Through an effort called "Planned Variations," however, the Nixon administration had recently loosened restrictions on the program funds, allowing Seattle to move the money to support economic development more generally.[41] The EDC's first act, meanwhile, was to submit a grant application to the Economic Development Administration (EDA) for $150,000 in seed money to fund the organization's first

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[39] Office of Economic Development, "Examples of Contacts and Work," undated, Subject Files Record Series 1612-01, Box 1, Folder 25, Inventories of Accomplishments (OED Policy), Seattle Municipal Archives.

[40] Dan Coughlin, "No Jobs So Far," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, September 9, 1971.

[41] Jeffrey C. Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability: Inventing Ecotopia* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 97.

nine months.[42] When months passed without an answer on the EDC's federal grant application, leaving the organization without a director or a full budget, the city's economic development staff began to feel left on the altar, urging the Mayor to pressure the EDC to get its act together.[43] The money finally came through a personal intervention by then Seattle Chamber of Commerce President James Douglas, a friend of Nixon aide (and later convicted Watergate conspirator) John Ehrlichman dating from the latter's days as a Seattle land use attorney. After flying to Washington, D.C for a face-to-face meeting, Douglas persuaded Ehrlichman to expedite the EDA's money with a phone call to the Department of Commerce. Ehrlichman then sent Douglas to collect the check in a White House limousine. The limousine ride would be the only real direct action the White House took on Seattle's behalf.[44]

Federal seed money secured, by 1972 the EDC was finally up and running. Ultimately fetching a total of $600,000 from local and federal government sources and $1.4 million in contributions – mainly membership subscriptions – from business, it was enough to bankroll a two-year program boasting a staff of 30 and a swank downtown office.[45] Now the challenge became to convince investors that the city was not a disaster area at all, but rather a land of opportunity. Washington state Governor Daniel Evans and King County Executive John Spellman kicked off the organization's inaugural year by hosting the EDC's January Board Meeting, dedicated to a discussion of how to counter the state's reputation in the press, which

[42] Speech to Council on Urban Economic Development, September 4, 1974, Box 5, Speeches, 1972-1980, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington.

[43] Peter Shepherd to Wes Uhlman, Memorandum, "Economic Development Council," July 7, 1971, Subject Files Record Series 5287-02, Box 45, Folder 9, Economic Development (May-Aug.), Seattle Municipal Archives.

[44] Johnson, 170.

[45] Speech to Council on Urban Economic Development; Johnson, 176-177.

had "unquestionably" impacted financial investment in the region.[46] Collaborating closely with Evans, Spellman, and Uhlman, the EDC rolled out "Phase I" of its economic development agenda, a promotional marketing campaign that featured glossy literature, coordinated junkets to New York City and Washington, D.C., and advertisements in the national press. The campaign also extended internationally to Japan, with Uhlman making three separate trips across the Pacific during the recession, and EDC making many more, speaking at trades fairs and talking up potential Japanese investors.[47] An EDC brochure made the point with a snappy slogan, "Seattle Means Business," suggesting that the city was both serious about economic development and a haven for private sector investment too.[48]

The campaign recalled a debate that had been ongoing since the recession's earliest days over whether Seattle unemployment truly constituted a "crisis." Organized labor, for example, had declared Washington state's growing unemployment a "disaster" in 1970, and often thereafter. [49] For the staunchly pro-business *Seattle Times* Editorial Board, on the other hand, there was no disaster or crisis, but a "two-faced" economy. Though double-digit unemployment plagued manufacturing sectors like aerospace and wood products and redounded to secondary sectors populated by unskilled workers, white-collar professional sectors were humming right along, with the growth of finance and services continuing unabated, and some Washington state

[46] Daniel J. Evans and John Spellman to Wes Uhlman, December 29, 1971, Subject Files Record Series 5287-02, Box 45, Folder 10, Economic Development (Sept-Dec.), Seattle Municipal Archives.

[47] Johnson, 107.

[48] Seattle-King County Economic Development Council, "Seattle Means Business," 1973, Box 13, Reports K-T, 1971-1982, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington.

[49] Kirk Smith, "Davis, Evans Disagree On Washington Economy," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, October 16, 1970; Editorial, *Seattle Daily Times*, September 30, 1971.

residents registering their highest incomes ever.[50] In other words, whether it was a crisis or not was a matter of perspective, mainly who was considered most valuable to the area economy and its future. The pair of real estate investors who had mounted Seattle's infamous "Lights Out" billboard, after all, had thought the whole idea of a crisis to be a joke because their business was booming. In this view, to call Seattle's predicament a crisis was at best farcical and at worst a threat to the city's service economy future. James Ellis, a Yale-educated lawyer and Seattle civic leader, feared calling it "disaster" threatened the bond investments necessary for his "Forward Thrust" infrastructure initiatives. "We are torn between the need for quick and substantial federal relief on the one hand," Ellis explained, "and the need for strong long-term private commitments, reasonable borrowing conditions and increased tourist and convention business on the other hand."[51]

EDC's promotional efforts tackled the issue head on, calling it "Seattle's Economic Paradox." A full-page advertisement, running in big Eastern newspapers like the *Wall Street Journal*, featured a smiling Governor Evans looking upon Mount Rainier from an airplane, with a headline asking, "How can things be good when things are bad?" Sure, unemployment rates were high in Seattle, the campaign acknowledged, but it was exactly the type of available workforce that investors were looking for. To make the case, the EDC literally redefined the city through its class composition. Their pitch, delivered to the banking and press scions of the Eastern power centers, asked plainly, "What's a Seattle?" The answer, EDC Executive Director Bill Ostenson explained, was a "business product" particularly suited for the postindustrial

[50] "Economic Profile of the State of Washington" (Olympia, WA: Washington State Department of Commerce and Economic Development, Economic Analysis Division, 1974), 14.

[51] James Ellis, "Calling City an 'Economic Disaster' Area Harmful," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, August 1, 1971.

economy: a labor force that was "young, well educated, productive and wedded to the concept of staying where they are."[52]

Defining the city in this way erased most of its residents, especially those for whom unemployment was the worst, namely blue-collar workers, the unskilled, or African Americans. But emphasizing Seattle's growing professional and technical sectors allowed the EDC to take advantage of the persistent media narrative that the city's unemployment crisis was exceptionally middle-class. [53] It also allowed the EDC to sidestep the concern that the region's workforce was highly unionized. Those workers, like Boeing's machinists and the Teamsters, were predominantly blue collar. Indeed, in the EDC's view, Seattle's unemployed were not industrial leftovers, but the vanguard of a new economy. "In such categories as health technology, ocean sciences, forest products, foreign trade, supply and logistics for Alaska's north slope oil movement, manufacture of nuclear power plant components, Seattle is on the hunt for new business that doesn't involve the move or relocation of a plant or other facility," went the pitch. "It involves merchandising a business frontier." Seattle's unemployment, rather than a liability, would be leveraged into a "potent and positive weapon in the grand design for economic development."[54]

In reimagining Seattle's unemployed as a reserve army of professional-managerial labor, the EDC spun negative statistics into selling points for the city. One of the most prominent and successful examples was the idea that the region's stubbornly persistent unemployment rates,

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[52] Transcript of speech by Bill Ostenson, n.d., Box 5, Speeches, 1972, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington.

[53] Richard Benjamin Rainey, *Seattle's Adaptation to Recession* (Santa Monica, CA.: Rand, 1973).

[54] Seattle King-County Economic Development Council, "Basic Speech - New York City - Washington. DC, June 6-8," Box 7, N.Y., 1972, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-001, Special Collections, University of Washington.

rather than an endemic sign of a sluggish economy, owed to the fact that the unemployed refused to move because Seattle living was so good and the environment so beautiful. The notion that Seattle residents were "wedded to the concept of staying where they are," like the middle-class profile of the city more generally, had some roots in the postwar boom – "If you're a real he-man, you'll never leave Seattle," a Boeing engineer had crowed to *LIFE* magazine in a breathless profile of the city in 1965.[55] But the idea of a workforce beholden to Seattle's beauty, a "technical labor pool preferring unemployment to relocation," as one management consulting firm put, became especially ubiquitous to Seattle boosterism during and after the Boeing bust as a critical talking point for business recruitment.[56]

The truth, however, was more complicated, and the hard numbers behind the contention always remained hazy and inexact. City economic development staff privately noted that Seattle proper was bleeding residents throughout its unemployment crisis, even as its suburbs continued to grow; and the EDC's own data, including the original Kearney report, attributed slight declines in unemployment to out-migration.[57] Indeed, the period marked the only time after World War II that Washington state recorded a net loss in population, with 28,000 outmigrants compared to 24,000 incoming residents.[58] The notion that Seattle's unemployed stuck around likely came from a Boeing study that showed 85 percent of its laid off workers had not moved

[55] Conrad Knickerbocker, "No One's in Charge," *LIFE*, December 24, 1965.

[56] W.M. Cushman, Jr. Case and Company to Wes Uhlman, June 6, 1972, Subject Files Record Series 5287-01, Wesley C. Uhlman Departmental Correspondence, Box 30, Folder 6, Office of Economic Development, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[57] Peter Shepard to Wes Uhlman, November 1, 1971, Subject Files Record Series 5287-02, Box 45, Folder 10, Economic Development (Sept-Dec.), Seattle Municipal Archives; Zane Barnes, "Suggested Remarks, EDC Press Conference," February 22, 1972, Box 5, Speeches, 1972-1980, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington.; A. T. Kearney, Inc., 15.

[58] Gary Kamimura, *Fifty-Year Perspective of Employment Trends in Washington State, 1947-1997* (Olympia, WA: Washington State Employment Security, Labor Market and Economic Analysis Branch, 1998), 2.

out of the region. But Boeing did not attribute the finding to the city's beauty, instead speculating the rate was due to the number of housewives, students and other transient workers that dropped out of the workforce altogether.[59] The EDC's contention groundlessly extrapolated the statistic to the unemployed workforce as a whole. It also did not account for other, more likely, but less business-friendly explanations: that the poor state of the national aerospace economy provided Seattle's unemployed workers few alternatives, or that union protections like seniority gave Boeing workers confidence that they would be rehired if the company turned things around.

While Seattle was taking a beating in the press, the EDC was also concerned that business was taking a beating in public relations. As the organization pitched Seattle and its workforce as a product *to* business, its local outreach sought to convince the city itself of the indispensability of the private sector to ending the city's unemployment, an effort to burnish business's withering reputation in the public eye. A stump speech delivered to regional civic organizations by EDC emissaries sounded the alarm. Though "the private enterprise economic system" was "the single most important contributor to the greatness of America," it was also "in terrible danger because the general public doesn't believe it." "Study after study of public attitudes," the speech claimed, showed that most people believed the government should guarantee jobs, limit business profits, and control prices, and that corporations should pay higher taxes and higher wages. The speech counseled the political mobilization of business, the necessity of lobbying and campaigning for politicians and legislation, and emphasized the importance of organizations like the EDC in making the push.[60] The rallying cry echoed a

[59] Eugene Rodgers, *Flying High: The Story of Boeing and the Rise of the Jetliner Industry* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1996), 285.

[60] Though the original author is unclear, the speech titled "The Inevitability of Growth" was delivered on at least two occasions with minor variations: once by John Merry to the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce on November 5, 1973, and again a week later by D.E. Skinner to the Washington Society of Certified Public Accounts; Box 5, Speeches,

broader political push by business in the early 1970s.[61] Despite its nominative neutrality, the EDC thus weighed in publicly on many political matters throughout the decade, for example mounting opposition to state corporate income tax Initiative 314 in 1975 and Initiative 325, an anti-nuclear measure, in 1976.[62]

As the EDC press blitz commenced, the city OED thought it had landed on another key strategy for selling the city of Seattle in attracting motion picture and television productions. The idea was especially attractive to the image-conscious Wes Uhlman, who appointed a Film Industry Coordinating Committee that met under the auspices of the OED. City economic development staffer Peter Shepard explained the initiative's logic to skeptical city councilmember. "When the film or commercial is shown, Seattle appears as the beautiful exciting City it is, not a disaster area. While there may be some who find the Appalachia West image to their liking, I personally feel that it is now operating as an impediment to recovery."[63] The city created a dedicated staff position for the effort and dispatched them to Hollywood on what *Variety* called a "film prod 'n lure" mission, promising tax-breaks and personal assistance in securing permits to any production that would choose Seattle.[64] An irony was that of the few

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1973, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington.

[61] Benjamin C. Waterhouse, *Lobbying America: The Politics of Business from Nixon to NAFTA* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

[62] Minutes of EDC Board Meeting, October 1, 1975, and Minutes of EDC Board Meeting, November 10, 1976, Box 2, Minutes and Agendas; D.E. Skinner, "Opening Remarks," EDC News Conference, October 17, 1975, Box 5, Speeches, 1975, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington.

[63] 4/27/72, Peter Shepherd to Liem Tuai, April 27, 1972, Subject Files Record Series 5287-01, Wesley C. Uhlman Departmental Correspondence, Box 30, Folder 6, Office of Economic Development, Seattle Municipal Archives; Monthly Economic Report, March 1972, Subject Files Record Series 1610-01, Office of Economic Development Publications, Box 1, Folder 2, Office of Economic Development, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[64] Seattle Model City Program Project Summary: Economic Development Project, May 1, 1972, Subject Files Record Series 5287-01, Wesley C. Uhlman Departmental Correspondence, Executive - Economic Development Task Force,

productions the city managed to land, they invariably portrayed the city as a town of vice and crime – full of sailors, sex workers, drug dealers, murderers, corrupt cops and other criminals – drawing upon the shadows of the city's downtown highway viaduct to accentuate a sense of noir. The depiction did not appear to bother Mayor Uhlman, who made an eager cameo in one such picture, *Harry in My Pocket*, as the unwitting victim of a petty thief.[65]

"The International Center Concept:" Race and Empire in the Postindustrial Pacific

By the end of 1972, Seattle's first year of economic development initiatives had gone about as well as the motion picture recruitment campaign had. With little to show for their efforts, and Boeing slowly recovering, boosters' economic development efforts would narrow their focus to building cross-Pacific connection and the recruitment of capital from Japan, then the world's fastest growing economy. Rather than a natural outgrowth of expanding markets, this task was constituted through imperial power abroad and racial power at home. While Seattle elites sought to leverage U.S. international trade policies that disadvantaged Japan, in line with the practices and ideologies of racial liberalism, they also mounted local campaigns against anti-

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Box 53, Folder 7, Office of Economic Development, Seattle Municipal Archives; "Seattle Dropping Film Prod'n Lure," *Variety*, September 19, 1974, 2.

[65] Young, "Wes Uhlman: A Politician of His Times," 13. The ironies were compounded when actor John Wayne came to town to film *McQ*, a *Dirty Harry* rip-off that saw the aging actor play a maverick cop beating up hippies, interrogating pimps, and uncovering police pay-off schemes, an uncanny if unintentional echo of Seattle's own recent law enforcement scandals. On Seattle's police scandals, see William J. Chambliss, *On the Take: From Petty Crooks to Presidents* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978). Also uncanny: the fact that Wayne's yacht, afloat in the waters of Alaska, had been the site of the pivotal deal between Pan Am maven Juan La Trippe and Boeing executive William Allen to create the giant 747 plane - the decision arguably most responsible for the city's unemployment crisis, and ultimately by extension, the campaign that had brought Wayne's picture to Seattle; see Rodgers, 237.

Japanese discrimination that might forestall investment. At the same time, they worked to accommodate the racism of Japanese investors against Black workers, revealing how the project of the postindustrial Pacific was ultimately an effort to undermine the power of labor more broadly.

Despite an initial spurt of growth and activity, economic development efforts in Seattle sputtered out quickly. In 1972, the EDC had merged with the Seattle Area Industrial Council, eliminating a redundant competitor, but ineffective leadership and a late start to its efforts had hampered the EDC's initially well-funded operations. Despite thousands of miles logged in promotional junkets and the extensive press coverage garnered for Seattle's economic prospects – which staff dutifully clipped into an EDC scrapbook – there was little evidence that either the OED or EDC had yet to land any significant number of new jobs for the city's unemployed.[66]

Then came a development that seemingly undermined the reason for the two groups' very existence: Boeing started hiring again. An improving national economy and an increase in airplane sales, particularly those to international customers, paired with new government contracts, allowed the corporation to post $1.3 billion in new business over the lean year of 1971. As Boeing slowly got back off the ground, the Seattle economy followed, posting a gain of 24,000 jobs between 1972 and 1973, of which the OED estimated as much as 75 percent were owed to aerospace.[67] The trend was enough to motivate area politicians and the Seattle Chamber of Commerce to proclaim that the worst of the recession was over, and that recovery was nigh. Organized labor thought the celebration premature. "A lot of this economic recovery stuff is just a lot of numbers. It still hasn't reached the working stiffs of this area," groused James Bender,

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[66] Johnson, 175-183.

[67] Monthly Economic Report, January 1974, Subject Files Record Series 1610-01, Office of Economic Development Publications, Box 1, Folder 4, Office of Economic Development, Seattle Municipal Archives.

executive director of the King County Labor Council.[68] Bender was right. Unemployment remained stubbornly high, well above the national averages, and economic diversification remained a pipe dream, facts the OED readily admitted in its monthly reports.[69] But the narrative was turning, and the urgency for economic development, if not the economic troubles themselves, was waning.

Without the anti-Boeing wind in their sails, the OED and EDC both faced mounting budget cuts and narrowing missions as the decade progressed. In 1974, with City revenues beset by ongoing inflation and the oil crisis, the OED fell victim to budget cuts, forcing the end of its motion picture efforts and the publication of its Monthly Economic Report. The EDC also contracted, slashing its budget by 29 percent between 1973 and 1975 and reducing its staff.[70] Perhaps indicative of the EDC's declining relevance, by 1974, Uhlman – once one of the most vocal boosters for economic development – had stopped attending EDC meetings, despite his membership on the board. OED staffer Karen Rahm begged him to make an appearance after an eight-month lapse in attendance.[71] In an effort to broaden its local support, the Council changed its name from the Economic Development Council of Seattle-King County to the geographically more inclusive Economic Development Council of Puget Sound.[72]

[68] Stan Federman, "Seattle Looks with Cautious Optimism for End of 'Disaster Years,'" *Oregonian*, December 17, 1972.

[69] Monthly Economic Report, June 1974, Subject Files Record Series 1610-01, Office of Economic Development Publications, Box 1, Folder 4, Office of Economic Development, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[70] "EDC to Continue Through '73," April 17, 1973, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.

[71] Karen Rahm to Wes Uhlman, March 6, 1974, Subject Files Record Series 5287-01, Wesley C. Uhlman Departmental Correspondence, Box 30, Folder 12, Office of Economic Development (May-Dec.), Seattle Municipal Archives.

[72] Minutes of EDC Board Meeting, April 1, 1975, Box 2, Minutes and Agendas, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington.

While the Council's local scope became larger, however, its activities narrowed considerably. Proceeding to what it called "Phase II" of its mission, the EDC shifted from general promotion and mass marketing of Seattle to targeted recruitment of firms and capital. Having struck out in attempts to attract business from within the United States, the EDC chose to focus specifically on international capital. "It is our conviction," the Council board declared in a statement, "that Puget Sound opportunities for business expansion and diversification are most pronounced in terms of so-called 'foreign' investment and in related development of the region as a prime center of international business and commerce." Advancing what it described as "the International Center Concept," the EDC literally reimagined Seattle as the center of the world – "smack in the middle of things," as they put it – producing a map that depicted the city as a direct route between Singapore and London, with the large markets of the Pacific and the United States in between (Figure 1).[73] The pivot represented a full embrace of the postindustrial Pacific, an economy of service, not things, and the conviction that Seattle stood to most benefit from the uneven development of global capitalism. As explained by staff member John Anderson to the EDC Board, the theory went "that the Puget Sound Area's future opportunities resided jointly in Seattle's geographic location, and emergence of Pacific Basin Economies and the worldwide trends facing business to emphasize satisfaction of the supply and production side of business, rather than the Historical emphasis on market and product development."[74]

[73] D.E. Skinner, "Remarks to Seattle Symposium," May 1, 1973, Box 5, Speeches, 1973, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington; *Distribution Worldwide Magazine*, December 1974.

[74] Minutes of EDC Board Meeting, February 5, 1974, Box 2, Minutes and Agendas, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington.

The city's advantages within the Pacific were not an accident of natural geography, but a product of the geopolitical geographies wrought by United States military and economic dominance. By no accident, Japan became the centerpiece of Seattle's economic development international strategy. Emerging from the devastation of World War II, the former Pacific imperial rival had developed into a critical component of U.S. empire in the Cold War, representing a key market for American goods and a base of military operations. The United States contributed to Japan's postwar economic build-up by footing the country's defense bills, undertaking massive investments in the region for the Vietnam War, and tolerating the country's protectionist trade policies and its state-driven economic development, which rested on capitalist investments coordinated through interlinked manufacturers and banks.[75] Japan's growth culminated in a frenzied 57-month explosion of productivity and investment over the latter half of the 1960s, in which the country's exports quadrupled, making the country the world's fastest growing economy, and the prime driver of Seattle's growing international trade traffic.[76] As one OED staffer put it in response to a survey of attitudes towards international trade, in contrast to China, Japan had "accepted the capitalist modus operendi [sic], and has traditional obligations to the U.S."[77]

While a history of "traditional obligations" mattered, brewing events in the early 1970s also made Seattle's economic development mavens believe Japan was a key target. As one

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[75] Robert Brenner, *The Economics of Global Turbulence: The Advanced Capitalist Economies from Long Boom to Long Downturn, 1945-2005* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 83-84.

[76] Robert Brenner, *The Economics of Global Turbulence: The Advanced Capitalist Economies from Long Boom to Long Downturn, 1945-2005* (London and New York: Verso, 2006), 83-84, 119-120.

[77] "Who's Who Survey of U.S. - Japanese Relations," 1973, Subject Files Record Series 5287-01, Wesley C. Uhlman Departmental Correspondence, Box 30, Folder 9, Office of Economic Development (May-Dec.), Seattle Municipal Archives.

internal EDC assessment put it, Japanese business faced a "threatening horizon."[78] Actions taken by the Nixon administration to blunt the economic power of the US's international competitors, such as the December 1971 realignment of currency exchange rates and new surcharges on imports, were creating new incentives for Japan to shift investment into the United States.[79] The new trade barriers, they believed, would make it more profitable for Japanese companies to conduct manufacturing within U.S. borders for the American market, rather than produce in Japan for export, similar to Japanese capital investments in other Southeast Asian countries.[80] They also thought that rising labor costs and productivity declines in Japan made Seattle's legions of unemployed attractive to that country's investors.[81] A note in *Business Week* about a looming Japanese general strike, for instance, was passed around the EDC office with a hopeful note that it indicated "growing unrest in the labor force which makes Seattle more competitive."[82] For these reasons, a flood of American interests had descended upon the Japanese business world, waging trade missions, hosting seminars, and opening offices. Beginning in 1972, trips to Japan thus became a regular feature of EDC operations, with staffers

[78] "Trip Report - Japan Number 1 - Anderson/Arnold," November 1972, Box 4, Trip Report – Tokyo #1, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-001, Special Collections, University of Washington.

[79] Summary Report - EDC Objectives, Programs and Organizations, 1973, Box 1, Historical/Organizational Features, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington; Brenner, 127-128, 135-136.

[80] Speech to League of Women Voters, April 5, 1973, Box 5, Speeches, 1973, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington.

[81] Monthly Economic Report, January 1972, Subject Files Record Series 1610-01, Office of Economic Development Publications, Box 1, Folder 2, Office of Economic Development, Seattle Municipal Archives; D.E. Skinner, Speech to Building Owners and Managers Association of Seattle, May 19, 1973, Box 5, Speeches, 1973, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington.

[82] "Tanaka Takes Steps to Avert General Strike," *Business Week*, January 25, 1974; R.H.W. to W.H. Arnold, Memorandum, n.d., Box 16, Japan – General, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington.

spreading the word about Seattle's desire for foreign investment through promotional literature, participation in trade shows, and one-on-one visits with business prospects.[83]

One example that gave economic developers optimism in their quest for foreign funds was a celebrated December 1971 sale of city land brokered by the OED to Chiyoda, a Japanese petrochemical firm. The deal emerged from one of the earliest activities of the OED, the compilation of a list of city-owned land with industrial potential, and the work of Taul Watanabe, a Japanese American who had recently fled what he saw as urban crisis in California. An executive director of international trade for the Burlington Northern Railroad, Watanabe pulled double duty as a handsomely paid business consultant for the OED building connections with Japanese firms for Puget Sound concerns.[84] Watanabe tipped off the OED to Chiyoda's desire to establish an equipment manufacturing plant in the Pacific Northwest, a move calculated to get out ahead of Alaskan oil development.[85] The OED identified a 20-acre piece of unused city property along the Duwamish River, a dangerous industrial sludge lagoon that had once hosted a sewage-treatment plant.[86] The City of Seattle worked overtime to recruit Chiyoda, with Mayor Uhlman dropping by one of the company's Yokohama factories while on a Japan trade junket, while Uhlman's wife saw a group of "Chiyoda ladies" (employee's wives) around Seattle.[87] The OED, for its part, supplied information on taxes, immigration law, utilities, land

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[83] "Trip Report - Japan Number 1 - Anderson/Arnold."

[84] Jerry Large, "Taul Watanabe, Who Crashed Barriers To Japanese Americans," *Seattle Times*, January 14, 1995.

[85] Alf Collins, "Japanese company orally committed to big investment here," *Seattle Daily Times*, October 20, 1972, A14.

[86] Monthly Economic Report, July 1972 and August 1972, Subject Files Record Series 1610-01, Office of Economic Development Publications, Box 2, Folder 4, Office of Economic Development, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[87] T. Kamada to Wes Uhlman, Department of Community Development 1612-01, Downtown Core Development Records, 1972-1976, Box 1, Folder 9, Data for Chiyoda, Seattle Municipal Archives.

and labor.[88] Seeking to quell any concern caused by the ILWU's ongoing strike, OED provided tips for routing shipping through Canada instead.[89] The city was so eager to recruit Chiyoda, in fact, that staffers reportedly discussed simply giving the property away to the company for free. After a year of negotiations, the property was sold, but below cost to the company at less than its appraised value.[90]

The deal was heralded by partisans of Seattle's economic development with great public fanfare as a harbinger of the city's economic future. But it ultimately better served as a cautionary example of how heedless enthusiasm over Japanese capital could substitute for actual job creation, and the potential pitfalls of unloading public assets to the private sector. Seattle media, lauding the deal, reported the development promised hundreds of positions for laid-off Boeing workers, nearly 1,000 jobs in one estimate.[91] Caught up in the excitement, the Seattle-King County Board of Realtors awarded Chiyoda executive Akiyoshi Tamaki its "Industrialist of the Year Award of 1972," bestowed to "an industrialist who has made a significant contribution to the Seattle economy."[92] Mayor Uhlman, for his part, touted the choice of Seattle as Chiyoda's

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[88] Seattle Model City Program Project Summary: Economic Development Project, May 1, 1972, Subject Files Record Series 5287-01, Wesley C. Uhlman Departmental Correspondence, Executive - Economic Development Task Force, Box 53, Folder 7, Office of Economic Development, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[89] Celeste Martin, "The Market for Refinery Construction in the Petroleum Industry," Urban Problems Unit, University of Washington, Seattle, December 1971, and Peter Shepherd to Chiyoda, December 15, 1971, Department of Community Development 1612-01, Downtown Core Development Records, 1972-1976, Box 1, Folder 9, Data for Chiyoda, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[90] Polly Lane, "Japanese Firm still hopes to build plant," *Seattle Daily Times*, March 14, 1976, B11.

[91] John Bell, "Chiyoda first; More Japanese firms may settle here," newspaper clipping, December 17, 1971, Department of Community Development 1612-01, Downtown Core Development Records, 1972-1976, Box 1, Folder 1, Press (Chiyoda), Seattle Municipal Archives.

[92] Department of Community Development 1612-01, Downtown Core Development Records, 1972-1976, Box 1, Folder 9, Data for Chiyoda, Seattle Municipal Archives.

American headquarters, representing "the first major Japanese corporation to establish a subsidiary in the United States."[93]

The truth was that Uhlman and the city had little clue as to what Chiyoda actually planned to do with the property. By December 1972, only a year after the sale, no developments had been initiated, and city staffers were struggling to get any information as to the company's intentions. They knew the company had hired a research consulting firm to complete further studies of the site, but the OED had to admit internally that the celebrated sale was proving to be an economic development dud. "It now appears certain that no actual fabricating will be carried out in Seattle," a staffer reported. "A laboratory and engineering office are likely, but I get the impression that the former is up in the air and the latter may not be on the 20 acre site. Employment will probably not exceed 30 persons in 1973."[94] Contacting Chiyoda's American attorney for more information, the staffer instead received unsolicited "stories about whorehouses in Montana" – a very clear, if untoward sign that the attorney knew about as much as the OED did, which was nothing.[95]

By the two-year anniversary of the land sale, the OED surmised that Chiyoda's workforce in the entire US only totaled 10 people, just two or three of which were American engineers. OED staffer Karen Rahm had to confess to Mayor Uhlman, confidentially, that "Chiyoda will probably not provide the quantity and type of employment in Seattle that we had

[93] Wes Uhlman, "Mayor's Comments on Seattle's Economic Situation," Subject Files Record Series 5287-01, Wesley C. Uhlman Departmental Correspondence, Office of Economic Development, Box 30, Folder 6, Office of Economic Development, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[94] Richard Marks, memorandum to file, December 15, 1972, Department of Community Development 1612-01, Downtown Core Development Records, 1972-1976, Box 1, Folder 4, Chiyoda Correspondence, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[95] Richard Marks to Karen Rahm, March 13, 1973, Department of Community Development 1612-01, Downtown Core Development Records, 1972-1976, Box 1, Folder 4, Chiyoda Correspondence, Seattle Municipal Archives.

hoped."[96] While the deal created zero jobs for Seattle's unemployed, it did create lucrative opportunities for city and business insiders. City engineer Robert J. Gulino, who supervised the technical aspects of the sale, was hired away by Chiyoda in late 1973, while Watanabe – whose Burlington Northern had been in position to service the site, had it been developed – joined the company's board the same year. The deal's failure emerged years later as a small item of interest in the back pages of a local newspaper, but otherwise the complications of the Chiyoda affair were kept quiet, doing nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of Seattle's ongoing economic development campaign for Japanese capital.[97]

Despite its ignominious conclusion, the Chiyoda deal gave Seattle's economic developers confidence that they had a better chance than most at securing investment in the run on Japan capital. While other sunbelt economies in the rural American south were trying hard for Japanese dollars, Seattle had geography, history, and a reputation for racial liberalism on its side.[98] A quirk of the Earth's curvature meant Seattle was the shortest shipping route for Japanese exports into the United States, and by air travel it lay equidistant – 10 hours each way – between Tokyo and London. What was more, Seattle had its own longstanding Japanese community, a fact that the EDC awkwardly riffed on in a scripted speech to Japan's businessmen delivered by EDC representatives. The Japanese American community was so assimilated, the script insisted, that no social facts were known about them - their per capita income or labor characteristics, for

[96] Karen Rahm to Wes Uhlman, "Chiyoda Status Report," confidential memorandum, December 12, 1973, Department of Community Development 1612-01, Downtown Core Development Records, 1972-1976, Box 1, Folder 4, Chiyoda Correspondence, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[97] "Duwamish-site purchase under scrutiny," *Seattle Daily Times*, March 14, 1976, B10.

[98] On Japanese business in the American South, see James Charles Cobb, and William Whitney Stueck, eds. *Globalization and the American South* (University of Georgia Press, 2005); Timothy J. Minchin, *America's Other Automakers: A History of the Foreign-Owned Automotive Sector in the United States* (University of Georgia Press, 2021).

instance, were a mystery. “We can’t *separate* them from everybody else,” the scenario read, “because they aren’t separated from everybody else in where and how they work and live.” There was “all kinds of evidence, however,” the pitch continued, “that they are very real:” in citizens clubs, Buddhist and Christian churches, grocery stores, and Japanese-language newspapers.[99]

The presentation was both ignorant and disingenuous. A state council on Asian American affairs, which held public hearings contemporaneous with EDC’s campaign in 1973, reported that institutional and interpersonal racism against Japanese Americans and other Asians in Washington state were widespread.[100] In fact, the EDC’s dissonant language around invisibility and assimilation – the invisibly visible Japanese American – reflected the reality that Asians were not leaders in the city’s economic development agenda.[101] They were key liaisons to foreign countries, in some instances, but overall Asians were junior partners in the larger economic development agenda outlined and pursued by white politicians and local business. Like pre-World War II trade development and the 1962 World’s Fair before them, the racial liberalism of economic development delivered inclusion on compromised terms.

EDC contentions to the contrary, anti-Asian racism proved impossible to ignore. As their campaign moved forward, the EDC quickly discovered that foreign investment was more than a

[99] The speech was delivered at least twice to Japanese executives by separate EDC personnel; D.E. Skinner, Remarks to Seattle Symposium, May 1, 1973, and John Anderson, Remarks to Japanese/California Association, January 25-27, 1973, Box 5, Speeches, 1973, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington).

[100] Asian-American Advisory Council, *Report to the Governor on Discrimination against Asians*; *Public Hearing Conducted on March 3, 1973*, (Seattle, Washington, 1973).

[101] Similarly, Caroline Chung Simpson has described the systematic effacement of Japanese Americans within American popular culture after World War II as an “absent presence;” see Caroline Chung Simpson, *An Absent Presence: Japanese Americans in Postwar American Culture, 1945–1960* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002).

simple exercise in dollars and cents. Leveraging currency reevaluations and trade policies were one thing; in the context of US empire, where capitalism was always racial, the EDC had to confront the same racism and discrimination that they had passed over in their pitch to Japanese business. As staffer John Anderson explained to the EDC Board in early 1974, "We have begun to encounter non-economic but potentially serious problems relating to the entry of Japanese citizens and companies into this area."[102] The major "non-economic" problem was the hostile reception of Japanese business by Washington state's overwhelmingly white public, many of whom believed foreign investment in the United States represented an "economic Pearl Harbor," a hostile takeover of American jobs, goods and land. One local paper depicted the supposed threat with an image of Seattle's iconic Space Needle eclipsed by a rising red sun (Figure 2). Hard numbers of the size and scale of foreign investment were difficult to ascertain, but rumors flew regardless of Japanese "land grabs" of Washington agricultural land. Available numbers did show Canadian investment far outpaced Japanese interests in Washington state, but that country was not viewed as a threat due its shared history with the United States as a product of white settler colonialism, a "51st state," as it were. And it was not simple proximity that excused the Canadians; French investments, too, outpaced those of the Japanese. [103] The stubborn fears of foreignness, stoked by racial difference, remained.

In response, the EDC explained how to pitch Japanese investment to avoid negative scrutiny, producing recommendations that themselves reinforced racism. The EDC closely monitored area attitudes and were paid by the Japanese government to conduct a survey of local

[102] Minutes of EDC Board Meeting, February 5, 1974, Box 2, Minutes and Agendas, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington.

[103] Steve Johnston, "Are Japanese Businessmen Invading the Northwest?" *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, August 11, 1974, 3–4.

opinions on United States and Japanese relations to ascertain “under what conditions Japanese trade and investment are acceptable in the community.”[104] They also spoke regularly to local civic associations and in the press about the opportunity that Japanese investment represented. Fearing racist reaction was being provoked by a lack of tact on the part of Japanese interests, the organization coached Japanese investors on how to conduct themselves through printed guides and presentations, including an annual month-long course for Japanese managers at the University of Washington on American business methods.[105] The EDC explained that Japanese business could not appear to be “procuring ‘bargains’ in cheap resources” for immediate export, for instance, but needed to process or market products within the United States. They had to employ American workers, and “employ management practices and policies which are understandable, compatible, and acceptable.” Environmental impacts had to be considered too. And Japanese investors had to be carefully introduced to the local community, “providing visible intent of cooperation” by working closely with public and private officials.[106]

The EDC worked to accommodate Japanese business in Washington state because it promised to pay off in capital investment. The organization accommodated anti-Black racism by Japanese business for the same reasons. As the EDC learned more about their labor needs, Japanese companies expressed an explicit aversion to hiring Black workers. Lacking the tact of racial liberalism that kept such inclinations tacit but unstated, companies’ sentiments may have

[104] Minutes of EDC Board Meeting, January 7, 1975, Box 2, Minutes and Agendas, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington.

[105] Michael J. Parks, “Japanese Firms Consider Heavy Investment Here,” *Seattle Daily Times*, March 16, 1973; Wright H. Arnold to Michio Nagai, February 8, 1974, Box 12, “J”, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-001, Special Collections, University of Washington.

[106] D.A. Bell, “Public Attitudes Regarding Japanese Investment in Central Puget Sound and Washington,” Presentation to the Study Mission for Japanese Direct Investment, University of Washington, November 29, 1974, Box 5, Speeches, 1973, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington.

reflected the high value that imperial Japanese culture placed on racial homogeneity. It was likely driven by the high-profile movement for affirmative action led by Black workers, with which Seattle liberals like Wes Uhlman were contending. Whatever their motivation, it was clear Japanese businessmen identified Black workers as a threat to a controllable workforce. A news profile in *Nikki Business*, a Japanese magazine equivalent to *U.S. Business Week*, carried a feature on the Kohkoku Chemical Industry Company, a Tokyo firm that had established a factory in the Puget Sound city of Everett in part due to EDC's recruitment efforts. Reviewing the reasons for the company's location in the Pacific Northwest, a Kohkoku executive cited tax deferments, cheap electricity, proximity to Japan, and the potential for Alaskan oil development. He also added, matter-of-factly, that the region had "not many black people, and the quality of labour is good." Ignoring the remark, the EDC requested copies of the article to circulate among potential investors.[107] More than an offhand comment, the executive's sentiment represented an underlying theme in the EDC's investment conversations with Japanese companies. Representatives of the car manufacturer Nissan, for instance, looking to build a factory in the United States, told EDC contacts that they preferred Seattle over Michigan and Kansas City due to their concern over "the minority question," which meant "being in an area with large minority groups, being forced to hire them."[108]

Affirmative action was a relevant concern for Japanese business because, at its core, the appeal to Japanese businessmen rested on the promise of a more controllable workforce. The

[107] English translation, *Nikkei Business* newspaper clipping, October 27, 1975, and letter from John Anderson, Box 3, Folder: Kohkoku, 1973, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-001, Special Collections, University of Washington; Minutes of EDC Board Meeting, December 3, 1975, Box 2, Minutes and Agendas, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington.

[108] Nissan Contact Report, January 28, 1975, Box 1, Folder: Nissan, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-001, Special Collections, University of Washington.

well-trained, willing, available, and devoted Seattle worker, which the EDC had imagined as the core "business product" of the area economy, was offered as an alternative to the increasingly more expensive Japanese workforce. In their conversations with Nissan, EDC tried out the old line that Seattle workers never left their companies because the environment of the Pacific Northwest was so exceptional. According to an EDC contact report, the company representative did not buy it, believing material concerns were just as likely for labor's immobility. "If workers really don't like to leave Seattle, fine," the report recorded his reply. "But how do you document this is because of higher wages or because of area beauty?"[109] To assuage such concerns, EDC consultants regularly furnished Japanese firms with industry data favorably comparing Seattle wage rates with those of other regions, and they cataloged the various other ways that Seattle workers were cheaper and more manageable. One EDC presentation to Japanese investors described the typical Seattle workplace as one where workers were uninterested in a union, work stoppages and strikes were rare, and fringe benefits were fewer. A core benefit, the presentation argued, was the American principle of at-will employment; compared to Japan, where layoffs were difficult to implement, workers in the United States could be let go at a moment's notice. The presentation pointed to Boeing's mass layoffs as an example, another economic development spin that made a positive for business out of something that was otherwise regarded as a wholesale disaster.[110]

In a state as highly unionized as Washington, the EDC worked hard to convince Japanese firms that unions would not be an impediment to profitable investment. They shared examples of

[109] Nissan Contact Report, October 9, 1974, Box 1, Folder: Nissan, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-001, Special Collections, University of Washington.

[110] Wright Arnold, Speech to Osaka Rotary, June 8, 1973, Box 5, Speeches, 1973, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington.

union contract agreements, and supplied detailed strategic advice for avoiding unions that was collected from industry insiders and industrial relations consultants.[111] For Nissan, the EDC went so far as to draft a step-by-step guide, "Sequence to Follow in Achieving 'Optimum' Union Representation in a New Manufacturing Facility," which instructed the company on how to fend off the United Auto Workers, which Nissan viewed as undesirable due in part to its strong connections with Japanese unions. The EDC thought union representation in the highly organized auto industry was likely inevitable, so it tried to convince the automaker that Washington state's largest union, the International Association of Machinists, was more favorable, providing a side-by-side comparison of the two union's orientations on issues such as "control over local unions," "wage philosophy," and "employer flexibility in utilization of work force." [112] The EDC even discussed the possibility of enlisting Washington state Senators Warren Magnuson and Henry Jackson, known for their close relationships with organized labor, to neutralize the UAW. As they collected the information, one staffer wondered, "Are we pro-Machinists?" EDC manager William Lotto explained that the prerogative was with the company. "The answer should be what is best for them (that is, what is best for Nissan)."[113]

The EDC's behind-the-scenes efforts at union avoidance contradicted the common economic development claim that their work was a neutral collaboration between business,

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[111] Seattle-King County Economic Development Council, Industry report for unnamed Japanese motorcycle manufacturing plant, Subject Files Record Series 1612-01, Box 1, Folder 19, EDC Plant Location (Motorcycles), Seattle Municipal Archives; Box 9, Affirmative Decisions I-P, International Nickel Company, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington; Box 3, Folder: Asahipen Corporation - 10/4/74-12/23/75, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-001, Special Collections, University of Washington.

[112] "Sequence to Follow in Achieving 'Optimum' Union Representation in a New Manufacturing Facility," Folder: Technical Information from November 2-5, 1976 Seattle Visit - Nissan, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-001, Special Collections, University of Washington.

[113] Wright Arnold and William Lotto, Contact Report, Box 1, Folder: Nissan - 1976, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-001, Special Collections, University of Washington.

government, and labor, a pluralist power share that would cancel out the noise of politics and patronage for the economic well-being of all. In reality, the focus on "job creation," by privileging the prerogatives of private capital, removed workers themselves from decisions pertaining to the city's economic future. The role of organized labor in economic development initiatives was minimized, not by accident, but by design. From the beginning, organized labor thus played almost no role in Seattle's economic development efforts. Absent from the founding roster of the EDC Board, the Washington State Labor Council's President was nominally included on the Board beginning in 1972, but the Council's actual participation in the organization was virtually nil. Invited to address the State Labor Council's 1974 convention, EDC staffer John Anderson admitted to the assembled workers that it was the EDC's first time speaking before *any* labor organization in its three-year history, despite its frequent presentations to area civic organizations.[114] The State Labor Council's lack of participation in the EDC only continued thereafter, with the Council President attending just two out of twenty-six EDC Board meetings between 1975 and 1977.[115]

EDC's anti-union activities came to a head with organized labor in 1976, when Asahipen, a Japanese paint manufacturer, began operating near the Seattle waterfront in a factory formerly owned by the Dutch Boy company. The result of a campaign by the EDC to recruit Asahipen, the development was touted widely by the organization as another coup for its foreign investment campaign, the first time a Japanese company had established a plant in the United State that

[114] John Anderson, Remarks to Washington State Labor Council, August 28, 1974, Box 5, Speeches, 1974, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington.

[115] Minutes of EDC Board Meetings, 1975-1977, Box 2, Minutes and Agendas, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington.

would produce exclusively for export to the Japanese market.[116] The previous workforce had been represented by a union, but to organized labor's frustration, Asahipen enlisted an anti-union consulting firm that thwarted efforts to reorganize workers at the new facility. Aware of EDC's role in helping Asahipen relocate, the leadership of the King County Labor Council sensed a pattern emerging and fired off angry letters to both the EDC and Mayor Uhlman. "We are going to take a hard look at the EDC of Puget Sound," wrote Council President James Bender, "because this is not the only incident in which we have been burned by their encouraging a foreign corporation to settle in Seattle." Uhlman, defending his support for foreign investment in his reply, blamed the matter on the "short-run" difficulty of Japanese firms adapting to American practices. [117] Unbeknownst to Uhlman or the Labor Council, however, the practices were thoroughly of American origin: Asahipen had enlisted the anti-union personnel firm at EDC's direct advice.[118] Rather than a short-run peculiarity of cultural misunderstanding, lessening labor's power was a long-run feature of the economic development agenda, a shared objective of Japanese investors and the Seattle economic developers who courted them.

The story of Seattle and economic development in the 1970s ultimately reflected a moment in what historian Charles Maier terms the transition from an American "empire of production" to an "empire of consumption," in which the world's factory became the world's market. Losing its manufacturing supremacy to ascendent economies like Japan, the power of the

[116] "Japanese-plant here to paint up Japan," *Seattle Daily Times*, June 15, 1976.

[117] James Bender to Wes Uhlman, November 10, 1976, and Uhlman to Bender, December 16, 1976, Subject Files Record Series 5287-02, Box 46, Folder 1, Economic Development, Seattle Municipal Archives.

[118] Wright Arnold to Kouichi Maruyama, "Meeting With Terry Lay, NL Industries' Representative in Seattle," July 20, 1976, and Dave Baylor to Wright Arnold, "Asahipen – personnel recruitment and labor relations," Box 4, Asahipen Corporation - 5/3/76 to, Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-001, Special Collections, University of Washington.

United States pivoted in the 1970s and 1980s to finance, service, and trade, becoming the investment beacon for world capital.[119] Lost in many accounts of that moment is the fact that the United States did not strictly deindustrialize, nor – no matter what the dreams of Seattle's economic development alliance – was any postindustrial world possible. The era did not inaugurate a new "postindustrial" reality. Postindustrialism was an ideology and rhetorical strategy of capital. Instead, the country underwent a more complex moment of restructuring that featured simultaneous decline and rise in manufacturing and production, jobs, and productivity, in which the world's capitalists, like Japanese business, navigated the turbulence of global finance, the assertion of American monetary muscle, and the strength of national labor movements, to find new homes for investment – like Seattle.[120]

Seattle's economic development elite navigated this changing terrain while simultaneously laying its groundwork. They realized the city's business had taken the Boeing bonanza for granted; it may have made them rich and built the modern metropolis, but a large, state-supported manufacturer could no longer be counted on as a consistent source of capital. Convinced government investments would not solve the city's unemployment crisis, local business and politicians worked to redefine Seattle, not as a product of the subsidized Jet Age, but instead as a lucrative place of opportunity for the private sector. Bringing together prominent figures in the public and private sectors, these efforts sought to both sell business on Seattle as a lucrative site for investment, while simultaneously selling Seattle on the importance of public

[119] Charles S. Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 240.

[120] Sam Gindin, and Leo Panitch. *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy Of American Empire* (London and New York: Verso Books, 2012), 210.

support for business. Under the banner of economic development, business sought to generalize its particular interests by claiming to be advancing "Seattle" as a whole, not unlike the efforts of business nationwide to convince the public that strikes like those of the ILWU hurt "America."

Similar economic development initiatives took place in cities across the United States and Canada in the same period, but Seattle's quest for capital had two exceptional hurdles: the geographic isolation of the city, and the strength of organized labor. City elites sought to overcome both hurdles at once by turning to the growing economies of the Pacific and increasing international connection. Working surreptitiously around organized labor as often as directly against it, economic development sought to undercut the power of unions and Black workers. The focus on "job creation" divorced economic well-being from labor rights and working-class power, putting the power in the hands of "job creators" – that is, capital.

American capital, though it was quick to discriminate against workers on grounds of race, did not discriminate against another nation's capital in the same way. While leveraging American trade policy against Japanese investors, Seattle boosters simultaneously waged a campaign to combat xenophobic panic. In doing so, they were doing domestically exactly what political economists Sam Gindin and Leo Panitch argue the United States had long pressed foreign states to do: "creating and strengthening the conditions for non-discriminatory accumulation within their borders."[121] While making Washington state safe for international capital, they simultaneously sacrificed the well-being of Seattle's Black workers by quietly accommodating Japanese businessmen who feared militant affirmative action would disrupt their workforces.

[121] Gindin and Panitch, 7.

Ironically, it would be federal action, not business innovation or industrial recruitment, that would slowly resuscitate Boeing and stem Seattle's recession by 1972. Ineffectual in the short term, Seattle boosters' efforts at economic development were nonetheless consequential for the political power of business in the city of Seattle, crafting a narrative of the city's recovery through private sector development and building the political and cultural power of the city's professional managerial class. The discourse of economic development elided the foundational and ongoing role of the federal government and U.S. empire in Seattle's urban growth, and denigrated the power of the region's working class, increasing economic inequality through uneven development and class division. When another, even larger economic recession landed in the early 1980s, the hardships of the city's workers would be overshadowed by the continued rise of Seattle's professional sector, a key beneficiary of the new political economy of American empire.

CHAPTER 5

THE COST OF LIVABILITY

SEATTLE AND THE NEW POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AMERICAN EMPIRE

Since at least the days of Seattle's Boeing bust, the economy of the United States had been unsettled by the contradictions of its global dominance. As the last major economy left intact after the Second World War, the United States had leveraged its industrial capacities to become the world's factory, an "Empire of Production," that provided industrial giants like the Boeing Company the opportunity to supply the world with its products. At the same time, the devotion of the United States to building capitalist infrastructure in the devastated postwar economies of Western Europe and Japan, constructed through the Marshall Plan, overseas military operations, and trade relations that advantaged America's Cold War allies, had led to new international competitive pressures that the United States struggled to overcome. To retain the country's central place in the world economy, the U.S. government deployed a range of measures from high interest rates and wage and price controls to the separation of the U.S. dollar from the gold standard and increased global marketing on behalf of U.S. manufacturers.[1] The familiar formula of military Keynesianism, meanwhile, appeared to be reaching its end. The unpopularity of the brutal U.S. war in Vietnam among the general public rendered increased

[1] Robert Brenner, *The Economics of Global Turbulence: The Advanced Capitalist Economies from Long Boom to Long Downturn, 1945-2005* (London and New York: Verso, 2006); Allen J. Matusow, *Nixon's Economy: Booms, Busts, Dollars, and Votes* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1998); Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire* (London and New York: Verso, 2012); Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

military expenditures politically untenable, at least temporarily, leaving the Nixon administration to explore new avenues for routing American power in the world, such as facilitating private arms deals to friendly regimes.[2] In fighting to maintain its supremacy in a decolonizing and increasingly multipolar world, the United States also reconfigured its immigration restrictions, abolishing national origin quotas in 1965 in favor of hemispheric quotas preferencing family connections and educated professionals. The change accelerated the numbers of Asian migrants into the country through the 1970s, while subjecting thousands of others, particularly migrants from Latin America, into "illegal" status.[3]

Maintaining dominance amidst global crisis thus required new strategies of power: new economic policies, new methods of military alliance, and new racial formations. As an imperial city, Seattle experienced these transitions intimately. The Boeing Company, a global business highly dependent on ready lines of credit for its massive airplanes and a prime beneficiary of defense spending, was especially susceptible to trends in international economics and the vagaries of U.S. fiscal policy. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Nixon administration had valued Boeing's importance to U.S. global economic strength, aiding the company's international business through marketing plans and, perhaps most consequentially, effecting a generational change in Cold War policy to allow airplane sales to communist China. As a result, the company recovered quickly. By 1973, Boeing was hiring again, and by the late 1970s, even as it continued its big swings in hiring and firing, it was posting the highest profits in its history. First half profits of 1977 were $84.6 million, nearly double the first half of 1976, and the highest since the

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[2] Jonathan Isaac Ng, "The Unquenchable Fire: The Arms Trade and Reproduction of the US Empire, 1960-1988," Ph.D. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 2021.

[3] Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 258-264.

Jet Age heyday of 1966.[4] Growing international business was a hallmark of the company's recovery, symbolized by a visit to its Seattle-area factories by Chinese Communist Party leader Deng Xiaoping in February 1979, the final stop on the official's groundbreaking tour of the United States.[5]

While the company's imprint on the regional economy remained outsized, Seattle's ties to American empire broadened beyond Boeing. Though U.S. military spending declined in the 1970s – temporarily, it would turn out – Seattle still enjoyed the benefits of decades of U.S. military activity overseas. As we saw in Chapter 3, the Port of Seattle, the signature highlight of the city's economy during the years of Boeing's crisis and the central pillar of local elites' international business strategy, owed much of its growth to U.S. military shipping during the war in Vietnam. The country's military operations in Southeast Asia doubled as an economic subsidy to Cold War allies in the region, generating the surplus of Japanese capital that Seattle business worked hard to redirect back to their city.[6] And as the business pitch to Japanese investors suggested, owing to its location on the Pacific, Seattle was a growing home to new populations of Asian immigrants. Many, like growing numbers of Southeast Asian refugees, were pushed there by war and dislocation, while others were drawn by the professional economy that remained the global dominion of the United States. Between 1970 and 1980, the overall population of the city and surrounding King County would increase by only 7 percent, but its

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[4] Michelle Celarier, "Old Wounds and New Profits: Why 17,000 Struck Boeing," *Northwest Passage*, November 24, 1977; Robert L. Twiss, "Boeing Nine-Month Sales, Earnings Set Record." *Seattle Daily Times*, November 7, 1977.

[5] Wendy Liu, *Connecting Washington and China: The Story of the Washington State China Relations Council* (New York: iUniverse, 2009), 7-8.

[6] National security officials in the Johnson administration roughly calculated that thirty-eight cents to every dollar that the Department of Defense spent on the war in Vietnam returned to the United States as trade. See Roy Wehrle, "Summary of Balance of Payments Costs of Vietnam," April 5, 1968. Vietnam 1B(2), 1/1968-9/1968, Economic Activity and Planning [2 of 2], Box 58, Vietnam Country File, National Security File, LBJ Library, Texas. Thank you to Simon Toner for sharing this document with me.

Asian population would nearly double, growing from 29,141 to 58,712 and bypassing African Americans as the region's largest non-white group.[7]

As Boeing's layoffs signaled, and Seattle's economic development campaigns illustrated, these transitions required the defeat of workers' economic and political power, making the decade of the 1970s an era of heightened class conflict. [8] Entering the crosshairs of U.S. policymakers were the reigning postwar policies of Keynesianism, which understood that state spending could alleviate capitalism's tendency towards crisis through the provision of full employment. By the early 1970s, however, American business had grown intolerant of Keynesian policies because of their tendency to embolden working people, putting a crimp in profits and productivity. State spending fueled labor militancy and increased social movement demands for social expenditures, witnessed in Seattle by the stridency of striking dockworkers and welfare rights activists. Inflation, rampant in the 1970s, had many possible explanations – from rampant war spending on Vietnam to global oil shocks – but American business and conservative economists pinned the blame on workers' wages and lack of work ethic, part of a renewed politicization of American business that included an increased investment in public relations and government lobbying. [9]

In its effort to refurbish its image and redirect blame, one of the foremost rhetorical devices that business landed upon was a panic over the waning productivity of the American

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[7] James Gregory, "Seattle's Race and Segregation Story in Maps 1920-2020," *The Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project*, University of Washington, https://depts.washington.edu/civilr/segregation_maps.htm, accessed November 20, 2023.

[8] On class conflict in the 1970s, see Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin' Alive: The 1970s and the Last Days of the Working Class* (New York: New Press, 2010); Panitch and Gindin, 135-137, 171-172; Lane Windham, *Knocking on Labor's Door: Union Organizing in the 1970s and the Roots of a New Economic Divide* (University of North Carolina Press, 2017).

[9] Cowie, 221-227; Benjamin C. Waterhouse, *Lobbying America: The Politics of Business from Nixon to NAFTA. Politics and Society in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013).

working class, which it advanced widely in publications and media through concerted advertising and marketing campaigns. Younger generations of American workers, they claimed, failed to appreciate the importance of hard work to the national economy, compounding the growing weakness of American power in the world in the face of international competition. Such admonishments took on a range of forms; some focused on the declining responsibility of male breadwinners, while others placed rhetorical emphasis on the importance of "quality" in work, a softer messaging alternative to the scolding tone of admonishments to work harder that polled unfavorably. [10] New Asian immigrants, meanwhile, were held up by the press and politicians as a foil against Americans unwilling to work, showcased as a "model minority" for their hard work, sacrifice, and social mobility – a depiction at odds with the economic realities for most migrant workers.[11]

Business matched its anti-worker words with deeds. In addition to plant closures and relocations to the non-union American South and the Global South, businesses also invested profits into research and technology that sought to increase productivity at the expense of labor hours, severely decreasing the numbers and leverage of employees in the workplace. Whereas the corporate business model of the post-World War II era had been the vertically integrated corporation, in which all of a company's operations coalesced within a single firm, the growing trend in the 1970s was for corporations to outsource work to independent, decentralized companies specializing in a wide variety of specific business functions required of production

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[10] Natasha Zaretsky, *No Direction Home: The American Family and the Fear of National Decline, 1968-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 108-140.

[11] On the model minority myth and Asian Americans, see Claire Kim, "The Racial Triangulation of Asian Americans," *Politics & Society* 27, no. 1 (1999); Keith Osajima, "Asian Americans as the Model Minority: An Analysis of the Popular Press Image in the 1960s and 1980s," in *A Companion to Asian American Studies,* ed. Kent A. Ono (Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005); Michael H. Truong, "On their Own: Asian Americans, Public Assistance, and Construction of Self-Reliance, PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 2004).

and distribution, from communications, real estate, and transportation to legal, financial and research services. [12] The weakening of labor, coupled with business restructuring more broadly, reinvigorated the dominance of the United States in the world economy to the benefit of a select few. By the early 1980s, U.S. empire had been reconstituted on a new material basis, premised not on manufacturing and broad-based Keynesian state spending, but on financialization, high technology, consumption, and business service industries.[13]

Again, Seattle served as a beachhead for these transformations, both as a site of new wealth and of reconfigured class and racial formations. Owing to the growth of its professional sector, the city that had once been pilloried in the early 1970s as "Appalachia West" was suddenly, only a few short years later, celebrated in the national press as the "Most Livable City in the United States." As Seattle professionals enjoyed the fruits of the new political economy of American empire, however, a steep price was being paid by the city's workers more broadly. The renewed strength of Boeing, whose airplanes were a pillar of global travel and trade, might seemed to have bucked the trend of manufacturing decline, but the company's workers were subject to the same hostile business management practices that predominated in American industry elsewhere. If the size and scale of an airplane factory, with its attendant population of skilled workers, made it harder to relocate than other manufacturing facilities, labor relations were far more pliable. By 1977, Boeing's harsh labor practices had galvanized the International Association of Machinists District Lodge 751 (IAM 751, or the Aero Mechanics) to mount its first successful strike in its forty-year history. While Boeing employees flexed their union muscle, workers excluded from the city's labor markets had little power left to exercise in the

[12] Panitch and Gindin, 135-148, 191.

[13] Panitch and Gindin, 172.

wake of the defeat of the welfare rights movement and the transition of social movements from claiming power to providing services. As the geopolitics of empire opened American borders to a new wave of Asian migrants, the experience of Seattle's newly arrived Vietnamese refugees testified to how racism continued to deeply structure the city's economy.

Seattle, the "most livable city" for some, was an extremely hostile pace for others. Boeing employees and Vietnamese refugees, both subject to the high cost of living and turbulent job markets, experienced that in common. But not unlike union members and welfare rights activists years before, their conditions otherwise widely diverged. In closely examining how Seattle's new economy impacted union members and refugees, two seemingly disparate groups of Seattle workers, this chapter argues that the professional economy had a flipside: the disciplinary logic of productivity. Productivity measured the worth of workers by their perceived contribution to American power in the world. Boeing workers labored in an industry central to the country's ongoing economic dominance; while subject to its turbulence, that dominance also gave them key leverage as workers. Vietnamese refugees, on the other hand, were material surplus to that economy; subject to the inequalities of racial capitalism, their lingering use to American empire was principally as a symbol of its generosity and opportunity, not as labor. The divergent experiences of both groups of workers represented a new phase in the longer history of American empire, one that would advantage Seattle within a global hierarchy of cities into the twenty-first century but disadvantage the city's workers more generally.

A CITY TRANSFORMED: SEATTLE THROUGH THE 1970S

Ultimately, the entry of professionals into Seattle city government that began in the late 1960s, discussed in Chapter 4, proved a harbinger of the growing dominance of the professional service sector in the city's economy across the 1970s. Though overall employment growth in the Pacific Northwest mirrored national trends between 1974 and 1986, the composition of that growth was notable. Over 91 percent of the region's employment gains were attributable to the services sector, made up of the increasingly decentralized firms that managed the legal, logistical, and physical infrastructure of expanding global supply chains.[14] The bulk of this growth centered in Seattle, where the ranks of the new economy – attorneys, engineers, accountants, architects, bankers, project managers, planners, consultants, and the like – filled the proliferating office spaces of the city's downtown. Between 1970 and 1980, the Seattle workforce grew by 23,488, from 226,629 to 250,117 workers, with nearly all growth represented by white-collar professions. In 1980, nearly two out of three of the city's residents worked managerial, professional, technical, or administrative white-collar jobs. The other 37 percent labored in blue-collar industries (like manufacturing, construction, and transportation) and pink-collar positions (traditionally female service jobs like retail, clerical, and domestic work), a decline of 10 percent from a decade prior.[15]

Seattle's white-collar workforce was paid handsomely. Among the thirty-five largest cities in the United States in 1980, only San Francisco boasted a higher per capita personal

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[14] William B. Beyers, "Trends in Service Employment in Pacific Northwest Counties: 1974-1986," *Growth and Change* 22, no. 4 (1991), 35-37.

[15] *General Social and Economic Characteristics, City of Seattle, 1970-1980*, Current Planning Research No. 45, December 1983, (Seattle: City of Seattle, Department of Community Development, 1983), 40.

income.[16] Average rates of pay, however, hid significant inequalities between young urban professionals and families, white people and communities of color, and Seattle and its larger region. As the composition of the city's economy changed, so did its demographics. Between 1974 and 1979, 30,000 new households moved into Seattle, a number equal to the increase in households seen during the years of Boeing's boom from 1965 to 1970. Yet the city still managed to lose population over the course of the 1970s, a 7 percent decrease from 530,831 people to 493,846.[17] The change was due to a sharp decline in the average household size. The Boeing layoffs, combined with white flight to the suburbs in the wake of school busing efforts, led to an exodus of white working families. By 1980, one-third of Seattle households were single-person, a reflection of the fact that most new city residents (over 60 percent) were young people under the age of thirty who by and large did not have children. The families that were left, meanwhile, though fewer in number, were more likely to live in poverty than ten years before. [18]

While jobs requiring little education or skills declined in the city, the increasing number of new professional jobs drew a remarkable influx of college-educated people. By 1980, individuals in Seattle with a year or more of experience in higher education outnumbered those who had not completed high school by nearly 100,000. It was a dramatic reversal from ten years before, when there had been more Seattle residents without high school diplomas than residents with any college experience.[19] A regional survey of the owners of business service firms

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[16] *General Social and Economic Characteristics, City of Seattle, 1970-1980*, 1.

[17] *General Population Characteristics, City of Seattle, 1970-1980*, Current Planning Research No. 44 (Seattle, WA: City of Seattle Department of Community Development, 1982), 1; *Seattle Displacement Study* (Seattle, WA: City of Seattle Office of Policy Planning, 1979), ii.

[18] Kirsten Louise Martens Pochop, "Learning Liberalism: Seattle Schools and the Changing Face of American Racial Politics, 1960-1980," Ph.D., University of Washington, 2014; *Seattle Displacement Study*, ii; *General Social and Economic Characteristics, City of Seattle, 1970-1980*, 55.

[19] *General Social and Economic Characteristics, City of Seattle, 1970-1980*, 23, 40.

corroborated the connection between education and Seattle's new professionals, revealing a population privileged with advanced degrees and personal capital. Seventy-seven percent of service firm founders boasted at least a bachelor's degree, a stark contrast to the 18.8 percent of people statewide with similar educations. Furthermore, the vast majority had capitalized their businesses with their own wealth, suggesting the sector was merely compounding already established affluence.[20]

The marked increase of single-person households in Seattle placed new pressures on the city's housing market, even as the city population declined. After 1975, the vacancy rate for single-family homes never went above two percent, leading to an increase in the average sale price for a Seattle home of nearly 30 percent *per year*. As a result, gentrification began threatening the city's Central District neighborhood, the center of Seattle's Black community for nearly four decades, where homes were cheaper and located near the office jobs downtown. The neighborhood's percentage of Black residents tumbled from 50 percent to 39 percent between 1970 and 1980, while the number of Central District households identifying their occupation as professional or managerial increased from 26 percent to 38.5 percent. Displaced by growing rents and diminishing housing stock, and segregated from the city's growing suburbs, many of Seattle's Black residents moved southeast to the city's Rainier Valley neighborhoods, where they joined a growing population of Asian families.[21]

Relocation to Rainier Valley was no accident, but rather an outcome of the city's economic transitions. Boeing's rapid expansion in the 1960s had driven an overheated Seattle

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[20] Beyers, *The Service Economy: Understanding Growth of Producer Services in the Central Puget Sound Region* (Seattle, WA: Central Puget Sound Economic Development District, 1986), 208.

[21] Michael H. Schill and Richard P. Nathan, *Revitalizing America's Cities: Neighborhood Reinvestment and Displacement* (New York: SUNY Press, 1983), 95-100.

housing market that promptly collapsed in the wake of the company's layoffs, leading to a foreclosure rate that was among the highest in the United States. At one point in the early 1970s, in fact, the Federal Housing Authority represented the largest landowner in the region, as former Boeing employees defaulted on their mortgages.[22] Much of this housing stock sat in Southeast Seattle, and in the Rainier Valley in particular, a short distance away from Boeing's Seattle facilities. As housing opened in the wake of the bust, the Valley became an affordable alternative for the city's people of color. They had previously been limited to overcrowded and segregated housing in the Central District neighborhood and the pan-Asian International District, where mostly small apartment housing was more suited to single men without families. As a result, the Rainier Valley had undergone the largest racial transition of any neighborhood in Seattle in the 1970s, as mostly white former Boeing employees left their homes to the bank and fled Seattle for the suburbs or other areas of the country.[23]

While the white population of Seattle fell during the 1970s by 14 percent, from 463,870 to 396,293, the size of the city's communities of color grew. Black city residents increased by about 10,000, from 37,868 to 46,565. The largest growth, however, came from new migrants from Asia, particularly those from China, the Philippines, and Vietnam, bringing Seattle's total Asian population to 38,936 by the decade's end. Combined with the Asian population in the city's suburbs, which was small but larger than the total of suburban Black residents, Asians represented the largest non-white group in the Seattle region by 1980.[24] The increase was made

[22] Berkley Gerald Johnson, "Seattle: The Lean Years," AB Thesis, Dartmouth College, 1973, 165.

[23] Mikala Woodward, "Decade by Decade Summary of Southeast Seattle History, 1940s to Present," Southeast Seattle History Project, City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, Historic Preservation Program, 2011.

[24] *General Social and Economic Characteristics, City of Seattle, 1970-1980*, 11, 13; Gregory, "Seattle's Race and Segregation Story in Maps 1920-2020."

by possible by the 1965 Hart-Celler Act, which had eliminated national quotas in federal immigration policy that had come to be viewed as racist in the context of a growing civil rights movement and decolonization struggles in Africa and Asia. In exchange, the Act implemented new hemispheric quotas that re-opened immigration from Asian countries while severely limiting immigration from Latin America. The new laws also favored the entry of skilled professionals, an exemption favored by both corporate executives and national security strategists who sought to draw upon global pools of expertise in maintaining American economic and military dominance.[25]

The restructured immigration regime allowed some educated migrants to take advantage of Seattle's growing business service economy, but also increased inequalities within and between Asian communities, fueling racist tropes about "model minorities" that hid harsh political and economic realities. The level of Asian college graduates in 1980, for example, close to 30 percent of Seattle's population, was equal to that of whites in Seattle, and much higher relative to the total percentage of college-educated people in Washington state (18.8 percent). But the proportion of Asians in Seattle with only elementary educations, who struggled to find entry-level employment, was also the highest of any racial group, and rates of poverty were also higher overall for Asians in Seattle, particularly among the city's recently arrived refugee communities from Vietnam and Cambodia.[26] The relative privilege of new arrivals also led to political clashes, such as in Seattle's Filipino community, where divisions over support for the

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[25] Paul A. Kramer, "The Geopolitics of Mobility: Immigration Policy and American Global Power in the Long Twentieth Century," *The American Historical Review* 123, no. 2 (2018), 407, 422; Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 258-264.

[26] *General Social and Economic Characteristics, City of Seattle, 1970-1980*, 25, 55.

brutal regime of Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos reflected the divergent class backgrounds of earlier and later generations of migrants.[27]

The rise of Seattle's professional service sector, rather than distributing affluence broadly, bifurcated the region's economy between the rising urban business services sector and declining goods-producing industries. In contrast to earlier eras, Seattle's business service sector had primary business connections less and less with the immediate hinterland, and more with other cities outside the Pacific Northwest.[28] Manufacturing at Boeing recovered and remained a strong presence in the state economy, but the company remained an exception rather than the rule, as other blue-collar jobs were outsourced or subject to automation. Washington's shipbuilding industry, a prime beneficiary of the Vietnam War, contracted sharply following defense cuts and foreign competition. The region's aluminum industry, once a prime source for Boeing, suffered the same fate. And while the state would continue to boast one of the world's most productive wood products industries, it came by way of new technology, not new jobs.[29] The trend even began to transform Seattle's traditional metropolitan geography. By 1980, the city grew to boast a higher proportion of managerial and professional jobs than its surrounding suburbs, a statistic that a city planning office deemed a "surprising reversal" over 1970. As blue-collar jobs moved to the segregated suburbs, and the professional service economy came to dominate Seattle, gainful employment remained out of reach for much of the city's Black

[27] Ligaya Domingo, "Building a Movement: Filipino American Union and Community Organizing in Seattle in the 1970s," PhD diss., (University of California, Berkeley, 2010).

[28] Carl Abbott, "Regional City and Network City: Portland and Seattle in the Twentieth Century." *The Western Historical Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (August 1992); Beyers and Michael J Alvine. "Export Services in Postindustrial Society," *Papers in Regional Science* 57, no. 1 (1985), 36.

[29] Timothy A. Gibson, *Securing the Spectacular City: The Politics of Revitalization and Homelessness in Downtown Seattle* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2004), 63-64; Gary Kamimura, *Fifty-Year Perspective of Employment Trends in Washington State, 1947-1997* (Olympia, WA: Washington State Employment Security, Labor Market and Economic Analysis, 1998).

community, which represented 14.5 percent of the city's unemployed in 1980 despite only comprising 7.9 percent of the overall population. [30]

Grim statistics and growing dislocation were ultimately overshadowed by the city's aggregate affluence, fueling a celebration of Seattle in the national press as "the most livable city in the United States," an exception and antidote to the ongoing crisis in American cities elsewhere. [31] From *Harper's* to *Time* magazine to the manifestos of urbanist think tanks, the story went that Seattle had an educated workforce and an ascendent professional service economy to counter the factory closings of someplace like Detroit; low-tax, anti-labor, and pro-business bona fides to battle the fiscal municipal defaults of New York City; and a liberal and mostly white population that could avoid the violent racial conflagrations overtaking Los Angeles and elsewhere. For *Harper's,* a survey of American cities put "eminently civilized" Seattle at the top, while to the urbanists of the non-profit Partners for Livable Places, who produced a study on the city, it was a place of permanent leisure, where parks and the proximity of nature made living there "like being on vacation." A *Time* magazine profile in 1977, meanwhile, linked Seattle's bourgeois tranquility to its whiteness by remarking that the city had "too few blacks for any real racial problems." [32] Mostly, Seattle's boosters saw what they wanted to see, not an engine of inequality, but a clean, cultured cosmopolitan city confirming that America's ascendent professional service economy was the cure to its urban economic ills. Looking closer at the experiences of aerospace workers and Vietnamese refugees, however,

[30] *General Social and Economic Characteristics, City of Seattle, 1970-1980*, 35, 41.

[31] James Lyons, *Selling Seattle: Representing Contemporary Urban America* (London: Wallflower, 2004), 90-94.

[32] Roberto Brambilla and Gianni Longo, *Learning from Seattle: What Makes Cities Livable?* (New York: Institute for Environmental Action, 1979), 1; Arthur M. Louis, "The Worst American City," *Harper's,* January 1975, 67-104; Lyons, 90-94; "Dixy Rocks the Northwest," *Time*, December 12, 1977, 26-36.

shows how the supposed livability of the professional service economy extended to neither the shopfloor at Boeing nor the streets of the city's Rainier Valley.

"Take This Job and Shove It:" The Aero Mechanics Strike of 1977

On September 20, 1977, at the invitation of their unions, the International Association of Machinists District Lodge 751 (IAM 751, or the Aero Mechanics) and the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA), employees of the Boeing Company filed into Seattle's brand-new public stadium, the Kingdome. Roughly a year and a half old, the stadium was meant to signal Seattle's midcentury entrance into the big leagues of American cities. In the wake of Boeing's catastrophic unemployment crisis in the early 1970s, it had become a key piece of the city's effort to build a service economy alternative to its ailing aerospace industry.[33]

Now, as the site of a monumental union meeting, the Kingdome was playing host to a conflict that the economic trends of the 1970s had engendered. Seven years before, Boeing employees and their unions had largely met their company's layoffs with resignation. Unaccustomed to hardship after decades of American economic ascendence, they had blamed the crisis on just about anyone and anything – the federal government, New Left radicals, even their own professional inadequacies – except the Boeing Company itself. As the company swiftly recovered beginning in 1973, however, it had slowly dawned upon Boeing workers that the

[33] Bill Mullins, *Becoming Big League: Seattle, the Pilots, and Stadium Politics* (University of Washington Press, 2013).

company had avoided bankruptcy at their expense, balancing its books on their backs. A growing global economy needed air travel to sustain transnational connection, and it was being very good to Boeing. It was also being very good to Seattle. The increasing worldwide reach of business and trade demanded new financial, legal, and consumer services, fueling the growth of the city's service sector of the kind the Kingdome was meant to build. But that new economy had also created a new crisis for Boeing's blue collars workers: a high cost of living, compounded by high rates of national inflation, that made it harder to get by in Seattle, with or without a job.

A year of record profits for Boeing, 1977 also happened to be a contract year for IAM 751 and SPEEA. Alarmed at the discrepancy between the company's profits and the inadequacy of its collective bargaining proposals, the two unions' leaderships had called the mass meeting in the Kingdome to make their case to their memberships for the authorization of a strike. It was a gamble. Neither union was known for oppositional stances or protest. Between the two, only the Aero Mechanics had ever struck, and the two times it had, in 1948 and 1965, had been disastrous failures. What was more, poor attendance within the cavernous, 60,000-capacity concrete venue, which had cost the unions a pretty $50,000 to rent, would be magnified. The place also stunk terribly, having yet to be cleaned after hosting a rodeo the day before.[34]

The conditions, it turned out, were optimal, and not only because the stench provided a ready, humorous metaphor for the "horseshit" contracts the unions believed they had been offered by the Boeing Company. Between the company's huge profits and the accelerated cost of living, the workers were ready to fight. Ultimately, an estimated 25,000 angry union members

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[34] Jerry Bergsman, "Union Strike Vote a Big Production," *Seattle Daily Times*, September 21, 1977; Jerry Dargitz, interview by Tom Lux, n.d., interview 2C, recording, IAM 751 Oral History Project, https://www.iam751.org/LaborHistory/oralhistory.htm, accessed August 8, 2023; Al Wydick, interview by Tom Lux, n.d., interview 1A, recording, IAM 751 Oral History Project, https://www.iam751.org/LaborHistory/oralhistory.htm, accessed August 8, 2023 .

packed the stadium, cheering the unions' proposals, jeering the Boeing Company, and authorizing a strike, should the leadership call for one. The two unions pledged to coordinate their bargaining for the first time in their history. SPEEA's negotiations were forthcoming; the Aero Mechanics' contract was up for renewal first. After voting down the Company's last and final offer a few weeks later, the Aero Mechanics walked off the job October 5, 1977, enroute to the most impactful strike the union had ever undertaken. "This membership is furious," observed Al Schultz, a member of the union's bargaining team. "I've never seen anything like it."[35]

For a generation, IAM 751 had struggled to mobilize its members, who – with plenty of encouragement from the union – had understood themselves more as individual self-made members of the American middle-class, rather than a collective body subject to the business prerogatives of their employer. The experience of the Boeing bust, however, followed by the ups-and-downs of the decade's inflationary economy, gave union members a new fighting spirit. Although characterized as a "therapeutic strike" driven by long-brewing emotional grievances, the 1977 strike was due to far more than hurt feelings.[36] Placed in the context of Seattle's economic restructuring and the precarious standing of the region's worker power, it is clear how high the stakes had become for workers at Boeing.

The company's employees had certainly been put through the wringer. Between 1969 and 1971, Boeing had slashed 60 percent of its Seattle area workforce, reducing it from 100,000 to 40,000. Hardship and harrowing headlines had resulted. However, through the efforts of company chief executive T.A. Wilson, Boeing managed to escape bankruptcy and emerge as profitable as ever. The stress of the ordeal was real for Wilson – he suffered a heart attack, mid-

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[35] Bergsman, "Boeing at Standstill, Says Union," *Seattle Daily Times*, October 5, 1977.

[36] Eugene Rodgers, *Flying High: The Story of Boeing and the Rise of the Jetliner Industry* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1996), 332.

bust, in January 1970 – but in the practice of mass layoffs, he found an antidote to what ailed his company. Like corporate firms throughout the United States in the 1970s that were increasing productivity at the expense of labor-saving management techniques and technology, Boeing's layoffs enabled the company to heighten its efficiency and maintain profitability. "Quite frankly," he explained later to *Fortune* magazine, "I'd have to say that as the layoffs went on, some of our people began working a little harder." A colleague put it a different way. "T. didn't worry about people issues. His attitude was 'Screw 'em.'"[37]

While manufacturing industries were declining in Washington state, they were not disappearing. Boeing, the airplane maker, was a testimony to that. Technically, even throughout the bust years, the Company had posted consistent profits (creative accounting may have helped).[38] By the late 1970s, however, the Company was posting the highest profits in its history, and its best since the mid-1960s bonanza that had driven its development of the gargantuan 747 jet.[39] New international business, made possible in part by the financial and marketing efforts of the U.S. government – including, some speculated, CIA operations – was particularly important to the company, and by 1976, exports accounted for almost half its sales.[40] The international oil crisis caused Boeing's Seattle-area employment to fluctuate from 54,000 in 1974, to 45,000 in 1976, but the overall trend was up, growing again to 47,000 total Seattle employees in April 1977 with more hiring anticipated.[41]

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[37] Rodgers, 259-263.

[38] Rodgers, 317.

[39] Twiss, "Boeing Nine-Month Sales, Earnings Set Record."

[40] Celarier, "Old Wounds and New Profits: Why 17,000 Struck Boeing;" Rodgers, 362.

[41] Kamimura 9; "A Brighter Job Picture," *Aero Mechanic*, April 25, 1977, 5.

More jobs and company success did not immediately translate into worker well-being, nor did they protect Boeing employees from broader political economic trends undermining worker power. While Boeing had undoubtedly rebounded from its early 1970s crisis, the fortunes for IAM 751 were less than sanguine. The layoffs of the early 1970s had gutted the union's membership from over 40,000 to just 11,000 by 1972. Boeing's recovery brought the figure back to closer to 20,000 in 1973, but the extreme fluctuation was hard to handle for a union like IAM 751 that lacked a union shop agreement and thus was dependent on voluntary union dues. The resulting financial hardship forced the District Lodge into supervision by the international union, and staff positions and union programs were cut across the board. Turmoil continued in frequent turnover in the union's leadership, with multiple single term presidencies, and angry rebuttals of charges of mismanagement running in the union's *Aero Mechanic* newspaper.

The union's social democratic initiatives, which had been advanced at the height of its organizational strength a decade before, came under pressure too. The Lodge had to fight to retain ownership of its low-income housing properties, which had been constructed in the last days of 1960s through a joint venture with the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Citing lax mortgage payments, HUD seized one of the properties in rural Kent, Washington, but IAM 751 kept the five others.[42] Problems evidently persisted; a bargaining press conference in 1977 was disrupted by a protest of mothers and children, residents at the union's apartment complex in the South Seattle neighborhood of Rainier Valley, who claimed IAM 751 was not adequately maintaining the facility.[43]

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[42] Bill Walkama, "Dirty Campaign: Falsehoods and Facts," *Aero Mechanic*, February 18, 1977, 1.

[43] "Two Unions to Bargain Jointly with Boeing," *Seattle Daily Times*, August 5, 1977.

Such difficulties made the success of a strike in 1977 seem like a tall order. The union's history appeared to be against it. Over its forty-two years, IAM 751 had struck only twice. The only thing the District Lodge had won during its first and longest strike in 1948 was its survival. Facing both a recalcitrant Boeing Company that refused to bargain and raids by the business-friendly Teamsters union, that strike had ended after 20 weeks without a resolution.[44] In 1965, another strike effort had folded much faster. Jerry Dargitz, a longtime union staffer and official, recalled it was a "disaster." The strike vote passed by a slim margin, and an unprepared IAM 751 provided no strike pay, transportation to picket lines, or measures to maintain member discipline. As a result, 10,000 workers crossed the picket line in the first week, and the union called things off after nineteen days. Difficulties with leading the strike were further compounded when District Lodge President John Sullivan died of a heart attack part way through the strike.[45]

History suggested that Boeing employees were attitudinally predisposed against protest and adversarial action. The company's corporate culture, which heavily employed the metaphor of a workplace "family" working together, and the widespread self-identification of workers as "middle class"

regardless of the color of their collar, appeared to mitigate against worker mobilization whenever the company's hammer fell.[46] The principal responses of laid-off employees to the Boeing bust, after all, had been either self-blame, self-help retraining courses, or lobbying the federal

[44] John McCann, *Blood in the Water: A History of District Lodge 751, International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers* (Seattle, Wash.: District Lodge 751, IAM & AW, 1989).

[45] Jerry Dargitz, interview by Tom Lux, n.d., interview 1A, recording, IAM 751 Oral History Project, https://www.iam751.org/LaborHistory/oralhistory.htm, accessed August 8, 2023.

[46] Polly Myers, *Capitalist Family Values: Gender, Work and Corporate Culture at Boeing* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015).

government on behalf of the company. New Left efforts to organize collective protests against the Company had been remarkable only for their glaring lack of Boeing employees.[47]

Nevertheless, in 1977 dissatisfaction with the Boeing Company had been building within the union's membership since the last contract vote in 1974. In fact, a strike vote in that year had passed in Seattle but failed narrowly after a smaller faction of the bargaining unit in Boeing's Wichita, Kansas factory swung the other way.[48] The delayed discontent went back to the bust. One consequence of Boeing's early seventies struggles had been a workforce divided by age. While older, longtime company employees held on to jobs or found a place back at the company thanks to seniority rules, a much younger wave of workers landed jobs at the firm during its post-crisis recovery.[49] The generational divide shaped workers' grievances and their willingness to strike. Twenty percent of Boeing workers were on pace to retire within five years; in eight years, 60 percent were expected to retire. Without big contract gains in wages and retirement benefits, Boeing workers would be ending their working lives in poverty. And owing to the company's stringent workforce practices, they knew what poverty felt like. Most older IAM 751 members had been through a layoff once, twice, or more, dating back to even before the big layoffs of the early 1970s.[50]

Younger workers on the other hand, though less experienced, had less to lose, with fewer family obligations and less loyalty to the company. National polls shared in the union's newspaper reported that young workers believed that work ethic no longer translated into

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[47] "751 Wants No Credit For Boeing March Last Week," *Aero Mechanic*, November 9, 1970, 7.

[48] Celarier, "Old Wounds and New Profits: Why 17,000 Struck Boeing."

[49] Rodgers, 332.

[50] Celarier, "Old Wounds and New Profits: Why 17,000 Struck Boeing."

economic reward.[51] Reflecting the mood of the moment, perhaps, was the fact that country musician Jonny Paycheck's hit song "Take This Job and Shove It" was sold out in Seattle area record stores and in heavy rotation on the radio. Performed by Paycheck at labor conventions and taken up on picket lines, the musical tale of an aggrieved factory worker fantasizing about quitting their job had become an informal working-class anthem.[52]

The most critical issue for Boeing workers, both old and young – ironically, given Seattle's "high livability" reputation – was the area's high cost of living. At one time, a job at Boeing had been enough to live comfortably, and the company's barrier of entry for employment, at least for able-bodied white men, had been so low, that even a basic education was not a prerequisite. IAM 751 President Al Wydick, for example, was a farm boy from the Midwest who had never attended, let alone graduated high school, who followed family members to Seattle and got a job at Boeing during its mid-century heyday. A job at the company and a close relationship to mentors at the union had been all Wydick needed to secure a livelihood.[53]

In the 1970s, though, that was all changing. Even by the standards of the decade, which was characterized by high inflation across the United States, Seattle was a city steeped in price hikes, housing especially, thanks to the influx of affluent professionals flocking to the city's surging service economy.[54] Between 1969 and 1977, the Seattle-Everett consumer price index

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[51] "Work Ethic Gone?" *Aero Mechanic*, June 27, 1977, 4.

[52] Erik Lacitis, "Country Sellout: 'Take This Job and Shove It,'" *Seattle Daily Times*, November 12, 1977. Historian Jefferson Cowie argues that the song's significance lies in the fact that the worker given voice to in the lyrics never takes action despite his dissatisfaction, a reflection of the general political impotence of American labor at the time; see Cowie, xxxiv.

[53] Wydick, interview by Tom Lux.

[54] "Consumer Prices in Area Still Rising," *Seattle Daily Times*, December 22, 1977.

climbed 63 percent, with 28 percent alone occurring between 1974 and 1977, the span of IAM 751's expiring contract.[55] Fortunately, IAM 751 members had an effective line of defense against on-going inflation, namely the generous Cost of Living Allowance (COLA) in their contract.[56] It awarded machinists a quarterly cent-an-hour wage increase for each three-tenths a point increase in the consumer price index.[57] Over the course of the 1974 contract, COLA adjustments had added over a dollar an hour to the wages of aero mechanics' lowest labor grade, a boost of 17 percent to their base pay.[58] While COLAs were a common feature of union contracts, IAM 751's was considered a cut above the others, recognized, they claimed, "as one of the finest in industrial unionism."[59] Some contracts in the industry allowed COLA funds to be redirected to fringe benefits. IAM 751's did not, resulting in an average COLA increase almost twice that of the industry average. Some local labor officials expressed concern that organized labor's singular focus on COLA increases came at the expense of demands for a share in productivity gains.[60] Considering the cost of living in Seattle, however, it was easy to see why surveyed IAM 751 members ranked the defense of their COLA as the top bargaining issue ahead

[55] On cost-of-living increases in the mid-1970s, see Grassroots Hearings on the Economy: Hearings before the Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs, House of Representatives, Ninety-Seventh Congress, First Session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O., 1981), 345-346.

[56] The COLA clause was first introduced to the contract in 1963 under threat of a strike delayed by a Taft-Hartley Act injunction ordered by President John F. Kennedy; *Knowledge Is Power: District 751 Historical Reference Book*, (Seattle, WA: International Association of Machinists, District Lodge 751, 2012), 40.

[57] "Boeing Offer 3 Pct. before Talks Break off, Says Union," *Seattle Daily Times*, October 3, 1977.

[58] Bergsman, "Strike Imminent; Refusal of Boeing Pact Urged," *Seattle Daily Times*, October 3, 1977.

[59] *Aero Mechanic*, January 31, 1977, 1.

[60] "Productivity Raises Ignored in Wage Talks," *Seattle Daily Times*, December 11, 1977.

of negotiations in 1977, and why IAM 751 made “Help Save COLA” the rallying cry of that year’s membership drive.[61]

As union grievances mounted and the cost of living rose, contract negotiations quickly went sour with Boeing in fall 1977. To the union leadership, the company’s proposals failed across the board, offering no gains or improvements in seniority and job assignment rules or fringe benefits, such as medical and retirement. Though it preserved the contract’s valuable COLA, Boeing’s proposal included a meager 3 percent wage increase based on the pre-COLA wage rate, which was essentially a pay cut when measured against inflation.[62] Consequently, on September 20, IAM 751 called its massive strike vote meeting at Seattle’s Kingdome. Joined by members of the allied Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA), the mechanics listened to their unions’ case against Boeing and readily authorized a strike should negotiators call for one.[63] A follow-up meeting on October 3 at the smaller Seattle Coliseum rejected Boeing’s “best and final offer” by a supermajority of 9,489 to 1,483, or 86 percent in favor of going out on strike.[64] “The union bargaining team was cheered throughout its presentation yesterday in the Coliseum,” the *Seattle Times* noted. “Normally the Aero Mechanics give hearty boos to their negotiators.”[65] Now, the boos were reserved for Boeing.

The angry Aero Mechanics, numbering some nineteen thousand workers in the Seattle area, hit the bricks beginning October 4, 1977. Hard lessons learned from the fiasco of 1965

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[61] “Members’ Contract Survey: Would Strike Over COLA!” *Aero Mechanic*, July 18, 1977, 1; *Aero Mechanic*, August 8, 1977, 1.

[62] “Company’s Contract Offer: Outrageous, Insulting, Miserable, Grossly Deficient,” *Aero Mechanic*, October 13, 1977, 1.

[63] Bergsman, “Union Strike Vote a Big Production.”

[64] Bergsman, “Boeing Walkout Complete, Says Union.”

[65] Bergsman, “Paychecks to Be Issued at Kingdome,” *Seattle Daily Times*, October 4, 1977.

prepared IAM 751 to better support its members through the strike. Jerry Dargitz, then the Lodge's Secretary-Treasurer, recalled "improvements galore." Regular strike bulletins kept members informed, while the union rented "every van in the city of Seattle" to transport members to 5,418 weekly picket shifts, staffed twenty-four hours a day, at each of the Boeing company's facilities across three counties. On the line, it kept them fed with coffee, cookies and sandwiches, and after three weeks, began issuing strike benefits of $40 a week.[66] Meanwhile, a few picketers took matters into their own hands, picking fights with scabbing employees, or covering factory entryways with broken glass and nails (whoever did it had the courtesy to post warning signs for motorists). [67]

Even as weeks went by without improvement in negotiations, workers held tight. The local press found a few reluctant strikers, but all interviewed were supportive. "I didn't want to go out," explained union member Ila Vahsholpz. "But what's fair is fair. The cost of living took another jump today."[68] Members found further motivation when, a month into the strike, the Boeing Company announced yet another round of record profits, posting nine-month net earnings that more than doubled the profits of 1976 over the same period.[69] Fairness, as Vahsholpz suggested, would mean those profits being shared with workers.

Boeing's profits were more than a motivating factor in the strike. All the anger and preparation in the world would come to nothing without a strong bargaining position. And thanks to the company's strong business, IAM 751 had leverage. Nationally, organized labor appeared

[66] Jerry Dargitz, interview by Tom Lux, n.d., interview 2d, recording, IAM 751 Oral History Project, https://www.iam751.org/LaborHistory/oralhistory.htm, accessed August 8, 2023; Bergsman, "Strikers, Boeing preparing for mediation," *Seattle Daily Times*, October 12, 1977.

[67] "Nails, Glass Found on Boeing-Plant Roads," *Seattle Daily Times*, October 31, 1977.

[68] Lee Moriwaki, "Worried strikers get last Boeing checks," *Seattle Daily Times*, October 7, 1977.

[69] Twiss, "Boeing Nine-Month Sales, Earnings Set Record."

well-positioned, with a prominent month-long strike at Ford by the United Auto Workers in 1976 ending in gains for the union, and the Democratic Party returning to the White House with the election of Jimmy Carter.[70] But it was Boeing's booming business that had created a growing backlog of commercial jet orders it needed to fill, which a prolonged strike would most certainly jeopardize. Its regular posting of record profits, furthermore, prevented the corporation from pleading poverty in the face of worker demands. As an anonymous stockbroker explained, that was why Boeing's stock was climbing even amidst the labor turmoil. "Now [Boeing] realize they have to solve the contract disputes," explained a broker. "A company with that much of a backlog isn't going to stay depressed."[71] Consequently, observers recognized the stakes of the union's negotiations were industry-wide and would set the bargaining goals for other unions in the aerospace industry at companies like Lockheed, McDonnell Douglas, Rohr, United Technologies, and General Dynamics.[72] It was much easier for workers to go out on strike knowing the company needed them, and that they had the leverage to set the industry standard.

IAM 751 members also knew that the Seattle community had their back. Other major unions pitched in, such as United Auto Workers, which swore a solidarity statement, and the ILWU, which found casual work for strikers on the docks to tide them over.[73] The machinists' most critical ally, however, was SPEEA, the Boeing engineers' union that had joined IAM 751 in convening the raucous Kingdome meeting. For the first time ever, SPEEA and IAM 751, together representing 35,000 of Boeing's 50,000 total Seattle workers, had vowed to coordinate

[70] Panitch and Gindin, 165.

[71] "After Down Week; Boeing Stock Continues Upward Trend," *Seattle Daily Times*, October 5, 1977.

[72] Bergsman, "Aerospace Unions Look to Boeing for Pattern Pact," *Seattle Daily Times*, August 3, 1977.

[73] Bergsman, Jerry. "UAW Pledges Boeing Strikers 'Complete Support,'" *Seattle Daily Times*, October 5, 1977; Celarier, "Old Wounds and New Profits: Why 17,000 Struck Boeing."

their bargaining. It was a huge step for SPEEA, whose contract was due to expire that December.[74] Even more than the machinists, the engineers' union had a long-standing reputation for individualist politics and closeness to the Company.[75] But like the machinists, the turbulence of the bust years had changed their outlook. "The leadership is more activist now," explained SPEEA official Dan Mahoney, "and we define ourselves as a union rather than an association." SPEEA member Ira Rushwald concurred. "People have begun to realize: 'I'm a worker here. When times are good, they keep me, and that's it."[76] The union pitched in with an "SST" – "SPEEA Support Truck" – delivering beverages and donuts to the picket line; coordinated "Blue Fridays" where all members wore the same color to show support to the machinists; and held firm with a pledge to not conduct any production work for the duration of the strike.[77]

The prospect of a prolonged strike alarmed government officials, who worried over the impact the event would have on welfare benefits and regional consumer spending, should it continue.[78] Negotiations finally resumed in early November at the behest of a federal mediator.[79] After a week of talks, IAM 751 negotiators reached a tentative agreement with Boeing at three in the morning on November 14.[80] Won after forty-eight days on strike, the final contract was an improvement over the company's original offer in nearly all areas. While IAM 751 did not win

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[74] Bergsman, "Boeing at Standstill, Says Union."

[75] Bruce Mork, "Boeing Engineers, Their Union, and an Employment Crisis," MA Thesis, University of Washington, 1972.

[76] Celarier, "Old Wounds and New Profits: Why 17,000 Struck Boeing."

[77] "Strong SPEEA Strike Support," *Aero Mechanic*, October 13, 1977, 3; *Aero Mechanic*, November 3, 1977, 3.

[78] Burt Lyle, "State Jobless-Benefits Fund Not Affected by Boeing Strike Yet," *Seattle Daily Times*, November 9, 1977.

[79] Bergsman, "Mediator Calls Boeing, Union Officials into Talks," *Seattle Daily Times*, November 3, 1977.

[80] Bergsman, "Tentative Accord at Boeing," *Seattle Daily Times*, November 14, 1977.

its union shop, it had guaranteed a wage increase of 6.9 percent effective immediately (and 3 percent per year thereafter), more than double what Boeing had initially proposed. Seniority rules were strengthened, vacation time improved, medical benefits were increased (including, for the first time, convalescent care, hearing, chiropractic, and reproductive health coverage), and medical insurance and better pension payments for retirees were secured.[81] Most importantly, the contract preserved the coveted COLA clause, and had prevented any COLA money from being diverted into fringe benefits. Following strong membership approval of the contract (8,765 in favor, 2,327 opposed in Seattle), Boeing workers returned to the job on November 17.[82] The engineers would follow a month later, settling a contract on December 15 without a strike.[83]

The success of the Aero Mechanics' 1977 strike showed how American organized labor, internally fractured or confronting renewed employer and government resistance in other sectors, still had something going for it.[84] It was telling, however, how the union interpreted the strike's significance. Writing in the union newspaper to congratulate his members on their victory, President Al Wydick turned nationalistic. "Now that it's over," Wydick saluted, "you can pause for a better look and see that what you did seems to be an American specialty – to come up with the ability, the stamina, the courage, to rise up and get tough at a time when it's being said, 'Americans are soft. They've had it too easy. They can't win; hell, they won't even fight.'"[85] Wydick offered the Aero Mechanics' strike as evidence against the panic over productivity

[81] *Knowledge Is Power: District 751 Historical Reference Book*, 9-17.

[82] Bergsman, "Boeing Workers Return," *Seattle Daily Times*, November 18, 1977.

[83] Bergsman, "Engineers, Boeing in Tentative Agreement," *Seattle Daily Times*, December 15, 1977.

[84] Cowie; Windham.

[85] Wydick, *Aero Mechanic*, November 28, 1977, 1.

advanced by American business. Aero Mechanics were heroes, not because they resisted the compulsion to labor under capitalism, but because they worked harder than anyone else to advance its success.

The Aero Mechanics, in short, were patriots of productivity. This political economic position put the union and its members in a place both privileged and precarious amid the decade's lengthy economic crisis. Following the strike, their industry continued to boom. The backlogs at Boeing, which had given the Aero Mechanics their leverage in 1977, grew even further into the 1980s, driving the total aerospace workforce of Washington state to 79,000 at the turn of the decade.[86] Diversification of the state economy, the clarion call of economic development dogma in the early 1970s, lost its urgency in light of the company's resurgence, and over ten percent of the metropolitan area's workforce still found employment at Boeing by 1980.[87] While that percentage was half of what it had been a decade before, it was still remarkably high, continuing to expose Seattle and its working people to fluctuations in the global economy that Boeing operated within.

And fluctuate it did when, determined to drill inflation out of the U.S. economy once and for all, Federal Reserve Chairman Paul Volcker introduced skyrocketing interest rates, subjecting the country's economy to an extended recession beginning in 1979. Boeing's customers depended upon complicated financing to raise the funds necessary to buy the company's airplanes, and the Fed's anti-inflationary campaign threw a wrench in those schemes. Bust followed boom, just as it had done before, and by 1983, there were 14,000 fewer jobs in

[86] Kamimura, 8.

[87] Testimony of Norm Rice, Costs of Unemployment: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Domestic Monetary Policy of the Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs, House of Representatives, Ninety-Seventh Congress, Second Session, August 12 and 17, 1982 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982), 102.

aerospace.[88] Though better protected by their 1977 contract, thousands of Aero Mechanics still found themselves unemployed again, back in public relief lines and testifying before government panels on joblessness and poverty. And despite the union's new adversarial posture in contract bargaining, this new crisis would reveal that the politics of unemployment in Seattle had changed very little since the Boeing bust.

"The American System:" Vietnamese Refugees and the Politics of Productivity

On October 18, 1981, representatives of small business, organized labor, and local government gathered at the Seattle Federal Building for the Grassroots Hearing on the Economy, a congressional panel that was traveling the United States collecting testimony from communities hit hard by the recessionary policies of the Federal Reserve. "You will be pleased to hear we are not here to talk about government," Tom Baker, president of IAM 751, informed the Democratic congressmen, who had just endured a testy exchange with a panel of small businessmen who blamed government spending for out-of-control inflation. "We are here to talk about jobs."[89] Placing jobs first, above all else, was not a new line of argument for Democrats or the Aero Mechanics. Indeed, it had been the major argument against welfare programs well before anti-welfare became a major piece of the Republicans political platform, and social

[88] Kamimura, 8.

[89] Testimony of Tom Baker, Grassroots Hearings on the Economy: Hearings before the Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs, House of Representatives, Ninety-Seventh Congress, First Session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O., 1981), 508.

spending had been a central foil of the union's argument for federal aerospace funding in the early 1970s.[90]

Baker then introduced a panel of unemployed union members. Marie Sorensen, a disabled power machine operator nine months removed from a layoff at Boeing, described her difficulty landing a job through employment rehabilitation programs. "When you go out and try to get a job and you are handicapped, no way," she testified. "You can't. Not in my field. It is hard because there are so many Vietnamese, things like that, in my field; Chinese."[91] The worker did not elaborate, but she also did not have to for the audience to understand her meaning. The racist charge that Asians were stealing jobs from Americans, and her confused grouping of Vietnamese and Chinese together, as if they couldn't be distinguished, were both common. They were also entirely false. They stemmed from a history of racism over a century old, in which organized labor had targeted non-whites as enemies of American industry. White supremacist campaigns against Chinese workers in the late nineteenth century on the West Coast, and in Washington State in particular, had been extremely violent. Chinese in Seattle were forcibly removed from the city, even murdered. [92] But no one in the audience challenged her, nor were any panelists invited to testify on issues impacting Asian workers, or any workers of color, in Seattle.

[90] Marisa Chappell, *The War on Welfare: Family, Poverty, and Politics in Modern America* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

[91] Testimony of Marie Sorensen, Grassroots Hearings on the Economy: Hearings before the Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs, House of Representatives, Ninety-Seventh Congress, First Session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O., 1981), 515.

[92] On anti-Chinese violence in Seattle, see Megan Asaka, *Seattle from the Margins: Exclusion, Erasure, and the Making of a Pacific Coast City* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2022). On the white supremacist roots of the early Pacific Northwest labor movement, see Carlos A. Schwantes, "Protest in a Promised Land: Unemployment, Disinheritance, and the Origin of Labor Militancy in the Pacific Northwest, 1885-1886," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (1982): 373–90.

Thousands of Vietnamese refugees might have testified, had they been invited. Tran Thi Dich was one of them. Coming to Seattle in 1980 from Vietnam at the age of 24, Dich had lived through the worst of the recession. Shortly after arriving, her husband had left, and she was caring for their three children on her own, jobless and on welfare, never leaving her apartment except to visit a social worker. To the *Seattle Times*, which profiled her in 1985, she was typical of refugees from Southeast Asia: unable to speak English, struggling to navigate her new city, dependent on the state, and burdened by children. They had first arrived in large numbers in the United States following the end of the American war in Vietnam in 1975. Owing mostly to the recruitment efforts of Washington state government officials, Republican Governor Daniel Evans in particular, the Pacific Northwest became one of the largest concentrations of Vietnamese refugees in the country. By the early 1980s, thousands had taken up residence in Seattle's Rainier Valley neighborhood, where they were assisted by the city's other long-established Asian communities.[93]

Straining to paint a picture of a helpless refugee, the *Seattle Times* may have overstated Dich's destitution. Its words were no doubt maudlin ("Asked about the future, she looks blank. She has never thought of doing anything but taking care of children."). But her economic situation, and those of Vietnamese refugees more broadly, was common in Seattle throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s for reasons other than cultural dislocation. These were things the business-friendly newspaper was less inclined to discuss: discrimination, segregation, declining worker power, a lack of good jobs for those who could work, and the withering of welfare benefits for those who could not. All were political outcomes of conflicts and decisions spurred

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[93] Carey Quan Gelernter, "Refugees Seek a Place in New Land," *Seattle Daily Times*, April 28, 1985; Quan Gelernter, "After the Fall: Vietnam 10 Years Later," *Seattle Daily Times* April 28, 1985, C2.

by the first Boeing crisis of the early 1970s, and products of Seattle's growing professional economy.

In April 1975, following U.S. military withdrawal from the country, the communist People's Army of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam had quickly taken control, confirming what critics of the U.S.-led war had long argued: that the anti-communist state of South Vietnam had been a political fiction, lacking popular support, made possible only by continued U.S. backing. In the days following the fall of Saigon, the Seattle City Council had passed a resolution calling on the U.S. government to evacuate Vietnamese "who might otherwise face extinction," and welcomed the refugees per Seattle's "tradition." The resolution did not specify which past events constituted this tradition, suggesting it was as much about burnishing Seattle's – and America's – image as a force for freedom than it was about relocating people in need.[94]

A haphazard and disorganized exodus brought thousands of Vietnamese, mostly military officials and educated professionals and their families, through the outposts of U.S. empire in the Pacific – Guam and the Philippines – to Camp Pendleton, a makeshift tent city in San Diego, California. Governor Evans, moved by images of refugees he saw on television and rankled by California Governor Jerry Brown's opposition to the resettlement, ordered state agencies to arrange for their recruitment, leading to the opening of the state's own refugee tent city near Tacoma, Washington, called Camp Murray, on May 19. "We had been fighting in Vietnam for half a dozen years or more," Evans recalled later. "We had a number of Vietnamese who had helped us, who had been enormous aid to our fighting forces when they were in Vietnam. And

[94] "Resolution on Refugees Bogs down in City Council," *Seattle Daily Times*, April 29, 1975; "No Welcome Mat for Viet Refugees," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, April 29, 1975; "Council Hearing on Refugees Welcome," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, April 30, 1975; Debby Lowman, "Welcome Mat out for Refugees," *Seattle Daily Times*, May 6, 1975.

now they were desperately trying to flee because they weren't sure what was going to happen with the Communist takeover. And I thought to just leave them after they had helped us, was not a very moral thing to do."[95] It would be the only state-based refugee resettlement program in the country.[96]

Washington state's recruitment letter to refugees, authored by the state Department of Emergency Services and distributed at Camp Pendleton, read like an advertisement for the region's livability. Promising to make their "transition into the American way of life as smooth and easy as possible," the letter offered refugees a "pleasant and mild" climate; "very reasonable" prices for Asian food products "when compared to other areas of the United States" (a less than accurate claim given the region's high cost-of-living); and a government commitment to train them for work.[97] Tens of thousands would answer the call over the next decade and move to the Pacific Northwest.

But nothing about the move was smooth and easy. Dropped into a turbulent economy that was growing more racially and economically divided by the day, Vietnamese refugees were instead more exposed to the depredations of the recession than anyone. The transition to "the American way of life," promised by Governor Evans, was not only a cultural transition for Vietnamese, a matter of new foods, a new language, and new environs. Their roles within the political economy of U.S. empire changed as well. As historian Andrew Friedman has written,

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[95] Daniel Evans, interview by Feliks Banel, transcript, "Vietnamese Refugees in Washington," KCTS 9 Public Television, April 23, 2015, http://web.archive.org/web/20151120072644/https://www.kcts9.org/programs/vietnam-war-40th-anniversary/vietnamese-refugees-in-washington, accessed August 4, 2023.

[96] "Refugee, immigration controversy has long history in Washington," *MyNorthwest*, November 11, 2015, http://mynorthwest.com/147827/refugee-immigration-controversy-has-long-history-in-washington/, accessed August 4, 2023; Andrew H. Malcolm, "Refugees Are Welcomed By One State, at Least," *New York Times*, June 15, 1975, E2.

[97] Letter distributed at Camp Pendleton, n.d., Washington State Department of Emergency Services, https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2065407-05-washingtonpendletoninvite.html, accessed August 5, 2023.

entry into the United States required “a racial ‘rehabilitation’” of the Vietnamese people, a transformation from “from geopolitical intimate to American Dream immigrant.” The process entailed a “demotion in class, power, and authority, and the threat of violence, exclusion, and revoked status that had defined the US project in Vietnam.”[98] In Seattle, this rehabilitation took place in the wake of the political battles spurred by the city’s early 1970s unemployment crisis. Rather than an expanded welfare state, the crisis had resulted in the government prioritization of jobs over relief, and business over labor – an ethos that firmly informed the state’s refugee recruitment efforts. As Ralph Munro, a key staffer for Governor Evans, later recalled, “We decided we didn’t want anybody on welfare; we were going to try to keep everybody off welfare and get them into jobs.”[99]

Within the context of American economic uncertainty, particularly in Seattle, labor was a key ingredient of the alchemy transforming grateful refugees into hardworking immigrants. Both opponents and supporters of the effort imagined Vietnamese refugees through the roles they would play within the U.S. economy. Left-leaning *Washington Post* columnist Nicholas von Hoffman, writing about Seattle’s resolution welcoming “the thousands of smarmy fugitives,” mocked resettlement by assigning various jobs in domestic service to stereotypes of Vietnamese, such as military officials, spies, illicit traffickers, sex workers, and torturers. “We will get something out of this war yet,” von Hoffman declared. “A field marshal mowing the lawn, a Red agent dusting the living room, a black marketeer in the house boy’s white jacket, a Saigon lady

[98] Andrew Friedman, *Covert Capital: Landscapes of Denial and the Making of U.S. Empire in the Suburbs of Northern Virginia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), 216. Friedman’s framing draws upon Jodi Kim, *Ends of Empire: Asian American Critique and the Cold War* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

[99] Ralph Munro, interview by Feliks Banel, transcript, “Vietnamese Refugees in Washington,” KCTS 9 Public Television, April 23, 2015, http://web.archive.org/web/20151120072644/https://www.kcts9.org/programs/vietnam-war-40th-anniversary/vietnamese-refugees-in-washington, accessed August 4, 2023.

of the night for a baby-sitter and keeper of tiger cages to walk the dog."[100] Governor Evans on the other hand, defending resettlement in comments to the *New York Times*, associated anti-refugee sentiment with the country's panic over productivity. "Governor Evans speculates that the hostility toward Vietnamese refugees expressed elsewhere in the U.S.," the paper explained, "is based on ignorance and fear that the new refugees may work harder and succeed better than many so-called native Americans."[101] Welcomed or reviled, Vietnamese refugees were rationalized as workers.

More specifically, as the unemployed Boeing worker's confusion over Vietnamese and Chinese suggested, Vietnamese refugees were understood as *Asian* workers, a racialization that both subjected them to new traumas of discrimination and segregation once within the United States and provided them potential allies in long-established Asian American communities. As migrants into the United States with legal status, refugees had a limited advantage in pursuing work over undocumented people, but the types of jobs available to Vietnamese refugees were still contingent on their race. Nothing illustrated this more bluntly than a casting call that circulated in a newsletter published for residents of San Diego's Camp Pendleton seeking Vietnamese applicants for a bit part as Chinese American martial artist Bruce Lee in a movie or television show.[102]

As word of Washington state's refugee resettlement program spread, Asian Americans in the state, intimately familiar with the impacts of racialization, grew concerned that the relocation

[100] Nicholas von Hoffman, "Good Citizens Don't Ask Why," *Washington Post*, May 2, 1975, B1.

[101] Malcolm, "Refugees Are Welcomed By One State, at Least."

[102] *Newsletter,* No. 45, July 10, 1975, Box 3, Folder 4, Refugee Resettlement Project, Program Newsletter, Demonstration Project for Asian American records, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries, Seattle, WA.

effort would only reproduce racism without their input. "There continues to persist an assumption that 'white' America can manage the refugee problem without significant participation of Asian Americans in the planning and service delivery aspects," argued a letter addressed to federal officials from Asian community groups in Seattle and Tacoma. "As Asian Americans, we take strong exception to this consistent exclusion of our concerns, skills and ethnic background."[103] Another letter from the "Amerasia Task Force" of a Seattle area Episcopal Church argued similarly, stating, "There is a sense among concerned Asian Americans that they have a particularized expertise to offer in helping these new immigrants come to terms with 'the American system' and the subtle and unsubtle dimensions of racist attitudes and behavior toward Asians."[104]

While Asian Americans sought to help refugees navigate racism in the United States, they also saw resettlement as an opportunity to bring attention and funding to Asian employment issues more broadly. "Our experience tells us that the Asian agencies will have to struggle with the inevitable problems which will emerge long after the Vietnamese Assistance Center at Camp Murray closes," argued one proposal. "To do this, Asian agencies will need additional resources."[105] In response, Washington state created an "Asian Desk" at Tacoma's Camp Murray, staffed by Asian Americans, where refugees could receive information on local Asian communities, the availability of Asian foods, and English language training, and the state

[103] "Position on Refugees," n.d., Box 3, Folder 1, Refugee Resettlement Project, Organizational Features, Demonstration Project for Asian American records, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

[104] John Huston, "Proposal for Resource Alternatives in Cultural Education," n.d., Box 3, Folder 1, Refugee Resettlement Project, Organizational Features, Demonstration Project for Asian American records, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

[105] Asian American Affairs Desk, Camp Murray Vietnamese Assistance Center to Agencies, Refugees, Potential Sponsors, "Functions of Asian Desk," n.d., Box 3, Folder 3, Refugee Resettlement Project, General Correspondence 1975-1976, n.d., Demonstration Project for Asian American records, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries.

contracted with Asian American organizations to provide refugee services and study refugee experiences.

The most prominent agency to take on refugee job training, Seattle's Employment Opportunities Center (EOC), had also represented the largest Asian American effort to combat Seattle's unemployment crisis of the early 1970s. A direct result of the early 1970s layoffs at Boeing, the EOC was founded at the height of the bust in December 1971 as a project of a Japanese American church where engineers and machinists among the congregation were hurting for work.[106] While unemployment was bad for all Seattle workers, it had been much worse for the city's non-white groups, who faced racism and segregated job markets.[107] Particularly damaging to Asian workers, the EOC argued, was the "model minority" myth, the racial stereotype that Asians were preternaturally disposed towards professional jobs and business ownership as productive and economically successful hard workers. As a result, EOC's founders believed the government had neglected social services for the Asian community, leaving Seattle's Asian population with little resource for finding jobs. "Those who do receive counseling," explained project director Alan Sugiyama, "are usually automatically channeled into universities, leaving a void in vocational areas and fostering Asian stereotypes due to the employment trends." While Seattle's Asian population totaled 5.3 percent of all Seattle residents in the mid-1970s, Asian representation in vocational programs was almost statistically zero. Only 1 percent of people enrolled in local union apprenticeships were Asian, and Asians made up less than 1 percent of enrollment in job programs at the area's community colleges.[108]

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[106]Alison Sing, "Voices of the CID: Alison Sing's Essay," InterimCDA, March 2, 2017, https://interimcda.org/voices-of-the-cid-alison-sings-essay/, accessed August 5, 2023.

[107] Richard Benjamin Rainey et al, *Seattle's Adaptation to Recession* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1973), 26.

[108] Alan Sugiyama, "Employment Opportunities Center" in *Resources for Change* (The Fund, 1978), 230.

The EOC's political origins were within the rising Asian American movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, in which young Asian Americans, inspired by the Black Freedom Struggle and Third World liberation struggles, had organized against the war in Vietnam, fought for Ethnic Studies programs in schools, and demanded housing and neighborhood preservation, among other campaigns. Finding their identities within that struggle as young people, many early staffers of EOC, such as Alan Sugiyama, had staged disruptive protests at Seattle Central Community College, or like Craig Shimabukuro, traveled with fellow Asian activists to Wounded Knee to support the American Indian Movement in 1973.[109]

Despite that lineage, the organization took a different tack than collective protest. The EOC was described by its director, Alison Wo Sing, "as an attempt by ethnic minorities to work within the system to bring about a change in institutional racism which has made job-finding difficult."[110] Working within the system, in this case, meant literally *working,* landing a lucrative job in the private sector. As a service organization, the EOC prioritized individualized job training, vocational counseling, job placement, and educational outreach to employers. In contrast to the Welfare Rights Organization, or even a more traditional union, the EOC was like other self-help programs that had been common among Boeing's white unemployed, with the important exception that it was staffed by bilingual Asian Americans.[111]

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[109] Gary Iwamoto, "Craig Shimabukuro - The Rebel with a Cause," *International Examiner*, April 7, 2004; Lloyd Hara: JFK Is My InspirAsian," *International Examiner*, October 7, 2009; Alan Sugiyama, interviews by Trevor Griffey, Jennifer Speidel, and Sarah Miner, November 16, 2004 and November 2, 2005, recording, Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, https://www.iam751.org/LaborHistory/oralhistory.htm, accessed August 8, 2023.

[110] "Methodists give $12,000 to job center," *Seattle Daily Times*, May 2, 1973, B5.

[111] Mork, "Boeing Engineers, Their Union, and an Employment Crisis."

Initially run by volunteers within donated office space in Seattle's International District/Chinatown neighborhood, the EOC grew quickly when it secured a grant from Model Cities in 1972. A late War on Poverty effort that funneled federal funds towards community organizing efforts within inner city neighborhoods, Model Cities was slowly being dismantled by the Nixon administration through "Planned Variation," an initiative that allowed select cities to channel funding beyond the original Model Cities neighborhoods. In desperate need of any federal assistance during its unemployment crisis, Seattle was chosen as a participating city in Planned Variation, and promptly expanded the program to districts city-wide, including Southeast Seattle. [112] The grant required the EOC to serve Seattle's Southeast Model Neighborhood district in Rainier Valley, where it moved its offices. By March of 1973, the EOC reported that its "manpower services" – job counseling and placement efforts – had served 1,712 people a year, 20 percent of whom it had successfully placed in full or part-time jobs.[113]

In June 1975, as Vietnamese refugees began to arrive in Washington state, the EOC partnered with Seattle's Asian Counseling and Referral Service to launch "Project Pioneer." Funded by state, federal, and private sources, the program "processed" 426 refugees in its first six months, providing job training courses, counseling refugees through their job searches, and providing referrals to employers.[114] As the Vietnamese community grew rapidly in Seattle, so did EOC's focus on refugee services. By 1980, EOC had become the largest contractor for refugee services in the state of Washington, and refugee job training was its organizational

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[112] Jeffrey C. Sanders, *Seattle and the Roots of Urban Sustainability: Inventing Ecotopia* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 97-98.

[113] "Job Center to Open for Asian Community," *Seattle Daily Times*, January 2, 1972; "Methodists Give $12,000 to Job Center;" Sing, "Voices of the CID: Alison Sing's Essay."

[114] Keh-Ming Lin, Laurie Tazuma, and Minoru Masuda, "Adaptational Problems of Vietnamese Refugees," *Archives of General Psychiatry* 36, no. 9 (August 1, 1979), 955.

priority.[115] By 1982, 25,000 refugees from Southeast Asia had settled in Washington state, representing the third largest population in the United States, and they were increasing in number. Roughly 16,000 had settled in King County, near Seattle, and several thousand of those had made the city's Rainier Valley neighborhood their home.[116]

There, rather than abundant livability, refugees found segregated housing, a tight labor market, and diminishing and inadequate services, particularly as the economic crises of the 1970s wore on. In housing, as with job training programs, the combined histories of racial segregation and the Boeing crisis of the early 1970s shaped the landscape for incoming refugees, making the Rainier Valley, the epicenter of Seattle white flight, a predictable landing spot. In their letters to government officials, Seattle's Asian American community advocates therefore urged consideration of the neighborhood for resettlement due to its large number of Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino residents, its many Asian food stores and restaurants, and the availability of Asian-oriented services like the EOC.[117] The neighborhood's two large WWII-era low-income housing projects, Rainier Vista and Holly Park, both aging artifacts of a previous boomtime in Seattle's development, were also cited as reasons for Vietnamese resettlement in the Rainier Valley.[118]

The jobs which Washington state officials had promised were limited too. While Asians had been of high utility to the U.S. military in Vietnam, back in the metropole, the American economy had little use for them, particularly as unemployment and precarity among the

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[115] Kathryn Chinn, "Flores to reorganize EOC," *International Examiner*, October 15, 1980, 7.

[116] Testimony of Norm Rice, Costs of Unemployment, 110.

[117] "Position on Refugees."

[118] John Hoole, "Public Housing in Southeast Seattle: 1940 – Present," Southeast Seattle History Project, City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, Historic Preservation Program, 2011.

established white labor force grew. Seattle's growing service economy had two tiers, professional and "unskilled," and whatever their status back in Vietnam, refugees inevitably fell into the lower rank. In 1976, a year into resettlement efforts, a University of Washington study by Asian American doctors recorded that, despite the efforts of Project Pioneer, nearly 50 percent of Washington state's refugees were still unemployed. Of those employed, a third were in service jobs such as dishwashing and janitorial work, which was a severe reduction in status for many who had been well-educated or working in professions back in Vietnam. Furthermore, the study found employment had little beneficial effect on the health and wellbeing of refugees, which it attributed to the "temporary and highly unstable" nature of their jobs, as well as the "humiliating condition of 'status inconsistency'" that service jobs represented. Hardships were compounded for women in the community; "forced to seek jobs or enter job training programs in order to help support the family financially," they also had to attend to childcare and housekeeping.[119]

While the university study was early in Vietnamese resettlement, the same problems persisted well into the 1980s. As the years passed and the size of the community grew, poverty rates and unemployment remained stubbornly high, with 37 percent of refugees in Washington still jobless in 1985.[120] While the initial wave of refugees in 1975 had been mostly military personnel and educated professionals from urban areas in Vietnam, another wave arriving from 1978 onwards had fewer marketable skills within the United States, had more rural origins, and held fewer personal connections with U.S. officials. Seattle city councilmember Norm Rice, testifying in August 1982 to Congress about unemployment, despaired that the city had become

[119] Lin, Tazuma, and Masuda, "Adaptational Problems of Vietnamese Refugees."

[120] Quan Gelernter, "Refugees Seek a Place in New Land."

"a 'magnet' for unskilled often illiterate Indochinese refugees," from around the United States and directly from Southeast Asia, who needed "multiple, intensive and long-term services before they will be able to compete productively in the local labor force."[121]

Social services of any variety, in the austerity environment of the 1970s, were in short supply. In Seattle, there were no Cost-of-Living Adjustments for welfare recipients. Since 1969, the value of public assistance in the metropolitan area had diminished precipitously, increasing 112 percent less than the increase in the area's cost-of-living.[122] In tight economic times, state officials routinely sought ways to reduce public assistance by increased policing of means testing (efforts abetted, unsurprisingly, by IAM 751, which urged its members to report suspected welfare cheaters to the authorities).[123] Moreover, as new arrivals were pilloried as mere "economic" refugees in contrast to the earlier "political" refugees of 1975, the U.S. Congress drastically cut back social assistance for refugees in 1982.[124] Over 6,000 refugees in the Seattle area were impacted by the measure, which reduced the limit on federal relief from three years to eighteen months, forcing recipients to turn to local services for their needs.[125]

Assistance was particularly susceptible to cuts because of the intentional anti-welfare structure of refugee services. Washington state's refugee services were widely premised on the notion, articulated by a church-led jobs program, that "'early employment' and *diversion* of new

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[121] Testimony of Norm Rice, Costs of Unemployment, 111.

[122] Testimony of Paul Tyner, Grassroots Hearings on the Economy: Hearings before the Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs, House of Representatives, Ninety-Seventh Congress, First Session (Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1981), 336.

[123] "State Fights Welfare Fraud With 'Hot Line,'" *Aero Mechanic*, January 10, 1977.

[124] On federal refugee policy, see Michael H. Truong, "On Their Own: Asian Americans, Public Assistance, and Constructions of Self -Reliance," PhD Dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 2004; Odessa Gonzalez Benson, "Refugee Resettlement Policy in an Era of Neoliberalization: A Policy Discourse Analysis of the Refugee Act of 1980." *Social Service Review* 90, no. 3 (2016): 515–49.

[125] Testimony of Norm Rice, Costs of Unemployment, 111.

arrivals from federal/state cash assistance 'dependency'" was the primary path towards refugee well-being.[126] In doing so, they had decided that the demands of the profit-driven economy, and not the survival needs of the community, would dictate living conditions for refugees. These demands were ultimately set by employers, a fact that greatly limited the effectiveness of the EOC's job training and placement efforts. Indeed, at times the EOC's work could appear as much a direct service to employers as it was to Asian workers. In June 1980, the EOC was enlisted by the Thaw Corporation, a manufacturer of outdoor recreational supplies hard hit by the recession, to interpret the company's announcement of massive layoffs to the majority Asian workforce at its non-union Seattle sewing factory. When workers questioned Thaw's practices, including low pay and the seemingly arbitrary nature of the layoffs, the interpreter could only translate the company's directives. "The employers kept saying to work hard," the EOC interpreter explained.[127]

But working hard was not enough. Competing in a job market with workers with stronger English language skills, refugees were forced to make themselves attractive to employers in other ways, mainly through the acceptance of low wages. Interviewed in the press about the EOC's programs, employers were forthright. "We first decided to hire refugees because it was cheaper," explained the manager of Can Go Shippers and North to Alaska Inc., an outdoors clothing distributor. "And because we could get a tax break."[128] The EOC thus prioritized employment in service sectors with the lowest barriers of entry, funneling refugees into

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[126] Indochinese American Resettlement & Job Program, program summary, page 2, Box 3, Folder 16, Washington Association of Churches, 1975-1980, Demonstration Project for Asian American records, Special Collections, University of Washington Libraries, Seattle, WA.

[127] Karen Chinn, "Garment Workers Laid Off," *International Examiner*, June 15, 1980.

[128] Lori Taki, "Employment situation still looks bleak for refugees," *International Examiner*, February 1, 1984.

precarious and low-wage work in food preparation, electronics assembly, and custodial services. The practice grew frustrating for Asian service providers. One lamented, anonymously, "What do we really want the refugees to become? Do we really want them to become plain janitors, housekeepers, gardeners, hospital workers? Why not train them in jobs that will put them on par with other Americans and, thus, make their future a little bit secure?"[129]

In addition to the absence of material resources or government support, Vietnamese refugees also lacked the political resources that could mount a challenge to economic inequality. On the whole, refugees were not likely to engage in collective action focused on the job. American labor unions like the International Association of Machinists, in their support for the U.S. war, had frequently cited the civic importance of trade unions to the country of South Vietnam, but whatever importance they held there, it did not hold within refugee communities.[130] Even if it had, Vietnamese labor politics faced serious hurdles in the United States. To begin with, white-dominated, racially exclusionary unions were hardly a hospitable or welcoming place for workers of color.[131] Furthermore, the Asian Americans most involved in labor organizing were typically leftwing in their ideology, a further deterrent to a Vietnamese community in which anti-communism, often oriented towards justifying the war in their homeland, was the norm in community politics.[132]

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[129] Greg S. Castilla, "Indochinese Refugees Confront the Issue of Survival," *International Examiner*, December 1, 1982.

[130] Robert G. Rodden, *The Fighting Machinists: A Century of Struggle* (Washington, D.C.: Kelly Press, 1984), 253.

[131] On the struggle against racial exclusion in Seattle organized labor, see Trevor Griffey, "Black Power's Labor Politics: The United Construction Workers Association and Title VII Law in the 1970s," PhD Dissertation, University of Washington, 2011.

[132] On Asian American labor politics in Seattle, see Michael Schulze-Oechtering, "Blurring the Boundaries of Struggle: The United Construction Workers Association (UCWA) and Relational Resistance in Seattle's Third World Left," PhD Diss., (University of California, Berkeley, 2016). On Vietnamese American politics generally, see Anna Nguyen, "Resistance Nationalisms: Vietnamese Political Identities and Refugee Narratives in the United States, 1945-1995," PhD Diss., (University of Washington, 2023).

Lacking a platform as employees, some Vietnamese sought to become employers themselves, for which they were celebrated by American business, newspapers, and politicians. For Japanese American realtor Will Shiomi, an International District/Chinatown landlord who was renting to Vietnamese businesses, this was simply how Asians made it in the United States. "Like our parents, who felt to get ahead in this capitalistic system, owning your own business is one way to get ahead. I see it happening all over again."[133] The hyper focus on refugee business owners' "hard work," however, frequently overlooked other extenuating circumstances for their advancements in business, or plain disregarded the high costs of isolation and hardship that economic productivity required.

In 1985, the *Seattle Times* profiled Duc Nguyen, whose proprietorship the paper attributed to "traditional immigrant virtues – hard work, family unity, sacrifice." Nguyen, the *Times* reported, had spent five years working his way up from night dishwasher to become head bartender at the restaurant within Seattle's Space Needle, before striking out on his own as a jeweler and grocer.[134] The paper neglected to mention Nguyen's political connections, however; he and his family had all been professionals and business owners back in Vietnam, and their 1975 resettlement, sponsored by the employees' council of Seattle's Westin Hotel (owner of the Space Needle), had included private English lessons from a former U.S. intelligence officer.[135] A gig at the Space Needle, moreover, was a union job, a step-up from the entry-level work elsewhere in Seattle's service economy.[136]

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[133] Quan Gelernter, "Businessmen Building a 'Little Saigon,'" *Seattle Daily Times*, April 28, 1985.

[134] Quan Gelernter, "Fulfilling the American Dream in Vietnamese Way," *Seattle Daily Times*, April 28, 1985.

[135] Marjorie Jones, "They Recalled Forefathers - and Sponsored 27 Refugees," *Seattle Daily Times*, August 13, 1973.

[136] Tomas Guillen, "Restaurants open, but hotel pickets remain," *Seattle Daily Times,* June 8, 1981, C2.

In another instance in 1982, the *Washington Post* told the story of Quang Tran, a former lieutenant in the South Vietnamese Navy, previously trained in boat repair in New York City by the U.S. government, who was now building a "business empire" in ship construction on the Seattle waterfront. According to the *Post*, Tran's hard work was single-handedly refurbishing the refugee community's reputation, "setting such an example of energy and excellence," local businessmen claimed, that he had "given many people in Seattle a different impression of the huge refugee community, which often has been criticized for its drain on the city's resources." Tran worked so hard, he told the *Post*, that he had been fired from a union iron welder job (secured through the EOC's Project Pioneer) for making the white employees look unproductive. Deciding to start his own business, he was now working 24 hours a day (keeping a sleeping bag in his office for that purpose), had taken no vacation since arriving in the United States seven years earlier in 1975, and insisted on doing all the dangerous work of iron welding himself. "If I get hurt," Tran explained, "it's okay, because I'm still single." Asked to explain why he had no family, Tran blamed work. "Who would want to get involved with someone who works all the time?"[137] Oblivious to the tragedy of Tran's grueling life, U.S. Senator Ted Kennedy had the article entered into the Congressional record as exemplary evidence of refugee productivity.[138]

Seattle's livability was clearly not for Vietnamese refugees. Rendered a surplus population by the failure of the U.S. imperial project in Vietnam, a project that had brought economic returns to the city's development, Vietnamese refugees were equally superfluous to Seattle's vaunted professional service economy, itself a central front in the effort of American

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[137] Jay Mathews, "Energetic Vietnamese Refugee Builds a Business Empire in U.S," *The Washington Post*, August 12, 1982, A2.

[138] Senator Ted Kennedy on August 13, 1982, 97th Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record* 128, pt. 26:21033.

business and the state to reassert global economic dominance. This was racial capitalism at work in Seattle: behind claims to a placid quality of life were punishing commands to productivity for segregated populations whose labor was needed only to the extent it abetted American power in the world.

The arrival of Vietnamese refugees illustrated how the military dimension of American empire continued to shape Seattle alongside the commercial dimensions seen in the city's growing service economy. And like the rise of that service economy, the influx of Vietnamese refugees signaled how that empire was coping through a period of uncertainty, and how working people paid its price. Similar to the Aero Mechanics, many refugees believed sincerely in the American project, to which they had allied themselves in Vietnam. And like Boeing's unemployed, the Vietnamese were enlisted and disposed of as their utility to American empire waxed and waned: from a community whose welcoming was meant to burnish the bona fides of the American mission to secure democracy around the world, to a surplus population of impoverished outsiders, whose civic inclusion was contingent on their productivity within the national economy.

Subject to the same fluctuations in the imperial economy – hostile management, unemployment, and high costs of living - Boeing employees nonetheless found belonging within it due to their central role as productive workers at the center of American industry, even as they had to fight to secure a share of that productivity. In the successful strike of 1977, the Aero Mechanics had applied the painful lessons of the Boeing bust, namely that the profits of the Company were made on the backs of its workforce, and that collective protest, not company-friendly lobbying or individualized job training, was an effective method of securing worker well-being. Seen within the broader context of the 1970s, the strike thus illustrated the searing

class conflict at the center of the decade's economic crises, which ultimately ended in defeat for workers at the hands of the unemployment crisis manufactured by the U.S. Federal Reserve, which imposed exorbitant interest rates in its zeal to overcome inflation once and for all.

The Boeing bust had taught Aero Mechanics the value in fighting back, but other lessons of the early 1970s went unheeded. In sidelining non-economic means of survival as "welfare," and centering jobs as the only way to make a living, both organized labor and Asian American social services were unprepared for the crises of the early 1980s. They had ceded enormous power to employers, as the principal job-creators, to set the agenda. In the absence of adequate government assistance, lacking any economic platform centered on rights in the workplace, and long excluded from the American labor movement, refugees had little recourse to survival within Seattle's economy. The exception was a small, privileged minority who found a measure of control over their own livelihood through business ownership. While business was celebrated, and productivity valorized, it was ultimately the defeat of labor that conditioned the new era in the continuing history of American empire.

CONCLUSION

THE NEW IMPERIAL CITY

Seattle began the 1970s as an international poster child of urban economic crisis. The monikers were unflattering: "Appalachia West;" "City of Despair;" "Food Stamp Capitol." Forget the Space Needle. It seemed like the most recognizable symbol, reproduced around the world, was a sign reading, "Will the last person to leave Seattle please turn out the lights?" Few understood it was just two businessmen's idea of a joke. The novelty of breadwinning engineers queuing in breadlines was a potent symbol of America in crisis. By mid-decade, however, the story was very different. No longer a city in crisis, Seattle was hailed as its antithesis, "the most livable city in the United States." Whereas New York City was suffering from near bankruptcy, growing crime rates, and white flight, "Seattle Took Medicine, Averted N.Y. Disease," according to a 1976 *Los Angeles Times* headline. Seeking a foil for the compounding urban crises of other American cities in the 1970s, national publications celebrated the success of Seattle's urban professionals, routinely profiling their jobs, affluence, and cultural tastes.

It is a story of exceptional urban success that has persisted into the present. But then, as now, the glowing profiles concealed ongoing economic dislocation. Despite the touted recovery, unemployment in Seattle had remained above the national averages throughout the 1970s.[1] By 1981, amidst the worst national recession since the Great Depression, the amount of people out of work in the Seattle metropolitan area was higher in total numbers than the nightmarish bust

[1] Trevor Griffey, "Black Power's Labor Politics: The United Construction Workers Association and Title VII Law in the 1970s" (PhD dissertation, University of Washington, 2011), 253.

years.[2] Just like a decade before, blue-collar workers were getting the worst of it, particularly workers of color. But this time, professionals were not joining them on breadlines. Instead, the number of white-collar professional jobs had grown through the 1970s, a result of a changing global economy and the actions that governments – federal, state, and local – had taken, and had not taken, during the previous recession a decade before.

The Seattle-King County Economic Development Council, by then rebranded as the Economic Development Council of Puget Sound, claimed to have created 8,000 odd jobs for the area economy over the course of their nine-year history. But as the 1970s ended, EDC officials still worried that the organization's founding goals of decreased unemployment and economic diversification remained largely unachieved.[3] EDC leadership stayed on their postindustrial grind, soliciting financial support from the public and private sectors to fund their varied efforts at boosting international trade and white-collar industries like high technology. Echoing the anxiety of ten years before, incoming EDC Chairman Gordon Sweany warned members in May 1980 that the future remained unwritten. "These are unsettling, uncertain times."[4]

If Seattle was still a city on the edge, however, you would not have known it from reading the popular press of the time. By then, the city had been ranked by national publications as "the most livable city" in the United States for going on half a decade. "Best city" lists in magazines appealing to a professional-managerial class readership like *Harper's*, *Christian Science Monitor*, and *Western Living* began placing Seattle on or near the top. The data

[2] Testimony of Charles Royer, Grassroots Hearings on the Economy: Hearings before the Committee on Banking, Finance, and Urban Affairs, House of Representatives, Ninety-Seventh Congress, First Session (Washington: U.S. G.P.O., 1981), 213.

[3] Sellers, Thomas E. "Economic Outlook? Well..." *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, January 7, 1978; Ferguson, Adele. "Top Economists At Odds on Recession," *Bremerton Sun*, January 7, 1978.

[4] "30,000 New Jobs Necessary in Decade Ahead," *Seattle Business Journal*, May 19, 1980.

informing these pithy, pseudo-social-scientific rankings included measures like median income, prevalence of educated professionals, and public amenities. Cost of living rarely came into these assessments, and qualitative dimensions often overshadowed quantitative measures. As the author of one of these studies declared after having visited, Seattle just seemed "an appealing and immensely civilized place." [5]

Though the EDC believed its mission was still unfilled at the decade's end, it had helped establish the narrative in the national press that Seattle's growing professional economy made it exceptional, and that public-private economic development had been the critical factor in establishing Seattle's "livability" following the crisis years of the early 1970s. Seeking to explain why Seattle was succeeding where other urban centers were failing, national outlets routinely rang-up the EDC office for easy copy. The 1976 *Los Angeles Times* piece headlined "Seattle Took Medicine, Averted N.Y. Disease" took EDC leaders' claims at face value, listing the organization's campaign to change the city's media image and recruit non-Boeing businesses alongside municipal budget austerity and the defeat of organized labor as the reasons Seattle had avoided the crisis then engulfing New York City.[6]

Left unmentioned by the EDC and the national media coverage of Seattle's "livability" were the $1.5 billion in federal aid that had flowed into the state during the 1970s recession. Local economists had attributed the city's recovery from the unemployment crisis squarely to re-hiring at Boeing – the one company that economic development was trying to diversify away

[5] Arthur M. Louis, "The Worst American City," *Harper's,* January 1975, 67-104.

[6] "All the efforts by the city and its business community could been too little or to no avail," the *L.A. Times* claimed, "if Seattle's labor unions had drawn a battle line against them." John Getze, "Seattle Took Medicine, Averted N.Y. Disease," *Los Angeles Times*, January 11, 1976.

from – and otherwise credited Seattle's survival to the influx of federal dollars.[7] Also left unmentioned were the many Seattleites still unemployed and underemployed, including the influx of Southeast Asian immigrants and refugees coming to the region after the end of the American war in Vietnam. Nevertheless, "livability" discourse feted the new economy, flattering urban professionals by prescribing the qualities of their lives – their jobs, affluence, and cultural tastes – as the solution to the dislocations of economic restructuring.

In 1979, the livability agenda graduated from the lifestyle pages of commercial publications to become the platform of Partners for Livable Places (PLP), a national urban development non-profit of architects and planners that championed public-private partnerships in the postindustrial vein. Convinced that urban design could solve America's urban problems, the PLP sought to document and circulate stories of urban success. In a booklet-length study, *Learning from Seattle: What Makes Cities Livable?* the PLP claimed to plumb the city's recent past to "pinpoint the historic decisions" that had rendered it so desirable, producing a political economic roadmap for other urban areas to follow. Their sources, however, were exceedingly narrow, essentially comprised of interviews with people they called "'connoisseurs' of the quality of life in Seattle": all white, college-educated urban professionals and municipal officials enjoying the fruits of the emergent service economy. One source was Bruce Chapman, one-time opponent of welfare rights candidate Bernadine Garrett, and a central architect of the city's historical preservation and economic development efforts. Another was David Brewster, editor of the *Seattle Weekly*, a newsprint guide to the city's new consumer economy.[8]

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[7] Berkley Gerald Johnson, "Seattle: The Lean Years," AB Thesis, Dartmouth College, 1973, 39, 45.

[8] Roberto Brambilla and Gianni Longo, *Learning from Seattle: What Makes Cities Livable?* (New York: Institute for Environmental Action, 1979), xi, xv.

Urban planning, in this guise, was a professional-managerial echo chamber. Not surprisingly considering their sources, PLP concluded that Seattle's "new urban vitality" owed most to city government's "new stratum" of young urban professionals, whose prioritization of aesthetics and experiential consumerism, seen in the city's neighborhood preservation efforts, extensive parklands, hostility to big government projects, and small business-friendly policies, had rescued the city from urban crisis. Seattle, Partners argued, was a city bereft of all social conflict. There was "some poverty," they admitted, but it was "not very easy to see." Indeed, poor made the city more colorful. "Since Seattle discourages clashes of all kinds," they wrote, it was "sometimes possible to perceive poverty as another example of 'diversity,' so long as it is neither strident nor disruptive." The Partners report claimed the city's affluence had even afflicted the region's labor unions, "who tend to share the aspirations of their employers and frequently identify with management." Instead of oppositional collective politics, Seattle's new economy offered once-disaffected workers business opportunities. "This change in Seattle's direction has resulted in the assimilation of entirely new strata of the population into the commercial and creative mainstream," they wrote. "Small businesses which required little capital could be started by men or women, blacks or whites, hippies or farm boys, middle-aged couples or post-adolescent entrepreneurs." Seattle was a pluralist utopia where life was pure leisure. "Living in Seattle," their report declared, "is like being on vacation."[9]

This heroic centering of Seattle's private sector truly entered the historical record in the pages of a book that Partners' report declared "our bible:" *Seattle: Past to Present*, an impressionistic 1976 account of the city's history penned by University of Washington Professor

[9] Brambilla and Longo, 3-11.

of English Roger Sale.[10] A century-spanning "biography" of the city, the book remains in print and stands as one of the few accounts of Seattle's 1970s experience. Sale's nearly contemporaneous retelling of the Boeing bust included a closing essay, "The New City," that shaped the narrative of the economic crisis for decades afterwards. Sale recognized that Boeing's prominence had yet to be shirked, that a diverse economy was a long way off, and that the future of the city remained an open question. But his answer to that open question was drawn straight from the pages of the economic development playbook, right down to the half-truths and selective omissions designed to privilege the private sector. Sale repeated the self-congratulatory story that Boeing's unemployed had never left, and the mistaken impression that the city's economy had weathered its crisis "without any massive help from the federal government," conveniently ignoring the $1.5 billion increase in federal funding for Washington state during Seattle's recession. One passage on the "hopeful potential" of the Seattle-King County Economic Development Council, which included a laundry list of non-aerospace industries the EDC was working to promote, was a straight recitation without attribution of an EDC publication.[11]

According to Sale, Seattle's salvation had not come at the hands of government, nor through the actions of working people. Forget community organizers and welfare rights activists. Not even the famous Neighbors in Need program, the grassroots food bank program that had garnered international attention for its efforts to feed Seattle's unemployed and hungry during the Boeing crisis, merited inclusion in Sale's story. To him, organized labor simply represented

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[10] Brambilla and Longo, xi.

[11] Roger Sale, *Seattle: Past to Present* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2019 [1976]), 236, 238. For the EDC publication that Sale was drawing from, see "Origin," undated, Box 1, Historical/Organizational Features Economic Development Council of Puget Sound records, 1970-1984, Accession No. 3424-002, Special Collections, University of Washington.

Seattle's establishment, a "generation of quiet" that was as "entrenched" as legacy businesses like Boeing that saw "little need for anything new."[12]

What was truly needed and truly new, Sale concluded, were the cosmopolitan consumption habits of the professional service economy, and the proclivities of the small businesspeople who sought to meet them. As Sale saw it, "cottage industries appeared with such profusion" during the crisis years "that it began to seem that everyone laid off at Boeing had been nursing a secret desire to throw a pot, turn a lathe, cast in metal, or make an omelet." Taken by the laudations for neighborhood-scale urban planning advanced by author Jane Jacobs, whose theories were newly in vogue, Sale looked no further than the environs of the professional class around him, to people who enjoyed a good meal or could appreciate handmade craftsmanship. His ruminations on Seattle's future, and his book overall, ended with a love letter to a new shopping mall that had opened in the shadow of his university.[13]

A new economy *was* at the center of Seattle's transformation in the 1970s, but it was not built at the local level of the neighborhood market like Sale had it, nor was the private sector its primary agent. If consumption had anything to do with it, it was at an entirely different scale – an imperial scale. As historian Charles Maier has argued, the United States transformed over the course of the 1970s from an "empire of production" to an "empire of consumption." [14] Due to increasing international competition from countries like Japan and Western Germany, the United

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[12] Sale, 247.

[13] Sale, 251-252. Sale noted as an aside that the mall was built on land confiscated from Japanese farmers incarcerated during World War II. The site's history is discussed by Megan Asaka, *Seattle from the Margins: Exclusion, Erasure, and the Making of a Pacific Coast City* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2022).

[14] Charles S. Maier, *Among Empires: American Ascendancy and Its Predecessors* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 239-240.

States was no longer the manufacturing juggernaut it had been in the wake of World War II, when it had been the only major industrial power left standing. Production shifted to the global periphery, especially within Pacific nations like Japan, Korea, and later and most importantly China. Yet the United States remained central to the global economy, owing to the strength of its market's demand for cheaper goods, its attractiveness as a site of global capital investment, and its expanding function as a provider of business services, finance, and high technology.[15]

All these global trends benefited Seattle's celebrated professional economy. But they were not private sector decisions driven by the savvy of local businessmen, nor were they an inevitably of naturally developing global markets. Seattle's new economy was the result of a decade of efforts, often fiercely contested, that consciously sought to maintain American global dominance. The massive federal investments wrung by Warren Magnuson and Henry Jackson in response to city's unemployment crisis, for example, were achieved despite partisan opposition from the Nixon White House precisely because the aerospace sector was too critical to American power and influence. Furthermore, the threat of legal sanction by Congress against the ILWU, which broke their strike in 1971, was motivated by claims that the leftwing union's actions imperiled the nation's economy and its penetration of global markets. In this way, it was the fiscal and repressive weight of the federal government – not pot-throwing, lathe-turning, metal-casting, or omelet-making – that paved the way for Seattle's recovery.

This had always been the story of modern Seattle. Born of Boeing, a company whose fortunes rested on warfare and global markets, the city's rapid midcentury development owed to the enormous civilian and military investments made by the federal government, from hydroelectric dams to long-range bombers. In the Seattle World's Fair, the federal government

[15] Panitch and Gindin, 135-148.

had even bankrolled a celebration of the city's growing global profile as a hub of science and technology. But the 1970s were a moment when that Keynesian expenditure was in question, as was the global order that flowed from it. Political elites certainly thought so. President Richard Nixon feared America's best days were behind it, while across the political aisle and far down the ladder of political scale, Seattle Mayor Wes Uhlman was convinced the Boeing heyday was over. As prevailing assumptions about the American economy failed to hold, the shape of Seattle's future was anybody's guess.

This uncertainty provided openings to new radical social movements, like antiwar activism and the fights for jobs, community control, and welfare rights, and the reactivation of old ones, like the rank-and-file strike efforts of the ILWU. It also produced new efforts to combat racial segregation, like the Asian-led jobs training programs that became a lifeline for later refugees and immigrants. Whether in their neighborhoods or on their jobsites, each of these groups in their own way sought to reorient the economy around the survival and well-being of working people, including people those labor was non-unionized, and those who were unpaid, and in the home. Whether through international solidarity, like the ILWU, or multiracial alliance, like the efforts of Seattle's community organizers, these movements understood that barriers between workers needed to be confronted before they could succeed. They also understood how high the stakes really were, recognizing that their success depended in part on the power of federal policy, and thus required taking aim at the national government in tandem with their local campaigns.

Yet these efforts at change ran up against the allegiances of other, more politically empowered workers of the Aero Mechanics and other mainstream unions of the AFL-CIO, who assessed the moment of crisis through the lens of their relative privileges and judged that the

previous order was one worth saving. Boeing's unemployed, overwhelmingly white and male and accustomed to thinking of themselves as middle class and self-made, remained bound to breadwinner ideology even as they reluctantly joined breadlines. For them to stand politically with a Black welfare rights activist like Bernadine Garrett, who demanded that the means of survival be provided to everyone regardless of paid work, was a bridge too far. Nor did they find common cause with the community organizers or leftist labor unions like the ILWU, whose anti-imperial outlook remained an extraordinary outlier for American organized labor and its devotion to American global power. Nixon's political overtures to U.S. labor leaders never failed to thank them for their steadfast support for the war in Vietnam. While they rebuked Nixon's economic policies, they remained staunch supporters of Democratic hawks like Henry Jackson, whose political influence waned as the antiwar movement grew.

Even the most patriotic union members found themselves set adrift by the new global order. As the postindustrial quest for Japanese capital showed, Seattle's new economy necessitated both union avoidance and careful navigation of the growing power of Seattle's communities of color. Industrial recruiters' racial liberalism selectively deployed anti-Asian racism by downplaying racial segregation and coaching investors to accommodate prejudice against foreign investment. Meanwhile, they assured Japanese investors that the high-profile affirmative action demands of Black workers would not pose a barrier to profit. Manufacturing and industry did not disappear from the United States; Boeing's recovery was strong testimony to that. But new methods of management and automation disciplined a workforce that American business disparaged as unproductive. Mechanization marched forward on the docks, while the American manufacturing sector's scramble for profit through globally expanding supply chains traded relatively attainable blue-collar jobs (at least for the white male workforce) for more

exclusive positions in well-compensated professional business services. In terms of each sector's share of the Seattle area economy, manufacturing and business services essentially traded places between 1972 and 1996, with the largest fall in manufacturing's share occurring between 1980 and 1984. Whereas 24 percent of area jobs were in manufacturing in 1972, the number fell to 18 percent by 1996. Services, on the other hand, rose from 18 percent to over 22 percent over the same period.[16]

At the dawn of the 1980s, Seattle remained an imperial city. But it was a new imperial city. No longer the world's central producer, the U.S. economy nevertheless remained at the center of global capitalism as the largest consumer of the world's products and capital, and a supplier of technology and services. Seattle was both remade by this process and contributed to it. Expanded global markets meant more contracts for Boeing, and greater trade across the docks, from which members of the Aero Mechanics and the ILWU benefited. But those job opportunities were now fewer in number, especially in Seattle, where dwindling public assistance left work as the primary means of survival, and work remained largely segregated by race. It was a harsh reality that Vietnamese refugees, welcomed to save the face of an empire defeated, were quick to discover.

The private-sector-as-savior-of-Seattle story, however false, has remained seductive to the extent that later events seemed to confirm it. In 1979, two local boys from white professional families – Bill Gates, son of a banker and lawyer, and Paul Allen, born to a university librarian – brought their 15-person computer software start-up, Microsoft, back home. Headquartering in the

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[16] Timothy A. Gibson, *Securing the Spectacular City: The Politics of Revitalization and Homelessness in Downtown Seattle* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2004), 64.

Seattle suburb of Bellevue, Washington (and later the adjacent suburb of Redmond) the company's move did not owe to any industrial recruitment drive, but it was motivated by the area's desirability as a recruitment-magnet for well-educated software engineers.[17] Yet Microsoft proved to be an Economic Development Council dream come true.

Joining with the expanding trade economy, the infusion of high technology finally brought new, non-Boeing wealth to the Pacific Northwest. When Microsoft went public seven years later in 1986, the skyrocketing price of its shares created three billionaires – Gates, Allen, and Steve Balmer – and another 12,000 millionaires among its Seattle employees. Microsoft's success drove the market for more Seattle-based, trade-oriented plugged-in firms, including eventually the online retail juggernaut Amazon, first headquartered there in 1994. Driven by this growth and new wealth, Seattle did not experience another recession until the turn of the millennium.[18]

Seattle's high-technology heyday came after the period covered in this dissertation, but the events explored in the prior chapters laid the foundation for this extraordinary period of economic growth – and the yawning inequality that accompanied it. Two threads of continuity challenge the region's self-congratulatory narratives and allow for more critical conclusions.

First, Seattle's new professional economy was a long time in coming, and it was enabled by concerted action on a scale far beyond the resources at the disposal of local decision-makers. The federal government poured billions into Seattle's corner of the United States over decades, and it did so strategically, choosing to privilege sectors that policymakers believed would benefit

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[17] Bruce Cumings, *Dominion from Sea to Sea: Pacific Ascendancy and American Power* (Yale University Press, 2009), 459-463.

[18] T.M. Sell, *Wings of Power: Boeing and the Politics of Growth in the Northwest* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington, 2001), 31.

American power more broadly. Rainy reputation notwithstanding, in this way it reflected the broader development of an American urban "Sunbelt," or "Gunbelt," right down to the same patterns of population growth and suburban sprawl. Across this history, the borders between official state action and private economic actors were often porous, to the point that differentiating between the two seems at times impossible. But, in general, the stew of federal dollars wrought by multiple wars, hot and cold, cultivated the culture in Seattle that privileged professionals in the city and built its growing profile in the global economy.

In that way, Boeing engineers begat software engineers, and the imperial remains an analytic category appropriate to both. Boeing's government business returned through the Reagan administration's military build-up, to the point that today the company is now the fifth largest military contractor in the world, with defense contracts representing 46 percent of its revenue.[19] Despite the movement of its headquarters to Chicago in 2001 (then to Washington, D.C. in 2022), and the opening of new factories in South Carolina in 2009 (an effort to escape union facilities in the Pacific Northwest), Boeing remained Washington state's largest employer until 2019, when it was surpassed by the vast tech and service retail army of Amazon.[20] Amazon was but the largest example of Seattle's importance as a home to a host of export-oriented corporations, which includes global brands like Costco and Starbucks that have transmitted the American culture of consumerism around the world.[21] And though its status as a leading

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[19] "Top 100 Defense Companies for 2023," *Defense News*, https://people.defensenews.com/top-100/, accessed October 20, 2023.

[20] Katherine Anne Long, "Amazon surpasses Boeing as Washington's biggest employer. Here's what that means for how we live," *Seattle Times*, January 3, 2021.

[21] On the global reach of Costco and its leveraging of international supply chain logistics, see *The Joy of Costco: A Treasure Hunt from A to Z* (New York, NY: Hot Dog Press, 2023). On the global banding of Starbucks, see James Lyons, *Selling Seattle: Representing Contemporary Urban America* (London: Wallflower, 2004) and Bryant Simon, *Everything But the Coffee: Learning about America from Starbucks* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009).

container port has faced steep competition from the mammoth facilities of Los Angeles/Long Beach, the Port of Seattle remains among the busiest in the United States, and the second largest on the West Coast.[22]

Even with this changing of the guard, the Seattle metropolitan area has remained strategic to American power, as the internet has joined the land and air as a vector of empire. Like Boeing, both Microsoft and Amazon maintain significant levels of business with the federal government. And like Boeing, each provides products and platforms that enable the global economy to function while providing U.S. policymakers inordinate international political leverage. Explaining the U.S. National Security Agency's use of the internet to surreptitiously monitor global communications, former agency director Michael Hayden asked rhetorically, "Are we not going to take advantage that so much of it goes through Redmond, Washington? Why would we not turn the most powerful telecommunications and computing management structure on the planet to our use?"[23] As the U.S. federal government has turned these technological and financial advantages into new modes of imperial power, Seattle's history has remained a global one, and to discuss the city's development independent of geopolitics and the world economy is ultimately obfuscating.[24]

Second, crisis and social conflict were and always have been a part of Seattle's development. Boosters claimed the city's wealth had eliminated the problems plaguing over

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[22] Zahra Ahmed, "Top 10 Largest And Busiest Container Ports In The United States," *Marine Insight*, May 4, 2023, https://www.marineinsight.com/know-more/top-10-largest-and-busiest-container-ports-in-the-united-states/, accessed October 20, 2023.

[23] Michael Hirsh, "Silicon Valley Doesn't Just Help the Surveillance State – It Built It," *National Journal*, reprinted by *The Atlantic*, June 10, 2013, https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/06/silicon-valley-doesnt-just-help-the-surveillance-state-it-built-it/276700/, accessed October 16, 2023.

[24] Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman, *Underground Empire: How America Weaponized the World Economy* (New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company, 2023).

urban areas in the United States and proposed Seattle as a model to follow. In fact, Seattle's wealth was generating new divisions and exacerbating long-standing ones, and the idea that business and labor enjoyed equal access to a pluralist political economy only served to diminish much needed protections for workers. Early on, a narrative emerged about Seattle's middle-class serenity, and it persisted, from *LIFE* magazine's crowing in 1965 about the city as "the perfect middle-class vision," to PLP's claim, ten years later, that living in Seattle "was like being on vacation." But for many in Seattle throughout the twentieth century, life was no vacation, and the noted absence of crisis and conflict reflected a choice by the observer regarding where to focus, not evidence of its absence. Over the decades, for instance, Seattle's Black community remained smaller than others in the United States, but it still faced inordinate rates of poverty and segregation. At the peak of the city's midcentury prosperity, public relief loads were rising, as welfare mothers fought for a share of the federal dollars that military Keynesianism had doled out to the aerospace industry with relative abandon. Social movements across the city's neighborhoods of color, from Black construction workers to Asian community organizers, were pressing for entry into the city's segregated workforces. And even for those fortunate enough to benefit from the spoils of the city's dominant industries, like Boeing workers or dockworkers, it took the power of a union to secure their share.

Boeing's unemployment debacle of the early 1970s represented a moment when the permanent crisis at the heart of the capitalist economy – the reality that working people remain subject to the whims of their employers – became impossible to ignore. It happened again in the Great Recession of 2008 and the COVID pandemic of 2020. It remains unsolved in the wildly prosperous, and deeply unequal, Seattle of today. The continuing fissures in Seattle's economy are difficult to look past, as tent encampments of unhoused people proliferate on city streets and

greenbelts. In 2019, more people were homeless in Seattle in total numbers than any other U.S. metropolis outside New York City or Los Angeles.[25] Meanwhile, both Microsoft and Amazon had corporate valuations in the trillions of dollars. By 2023, the combined market value of the two companies exceeded the nominal GDP of both India and Great Britain.[26] Barriers of entry to the city's professional jobs remain as high as ever, with the growing economy filled mainly by new residents, not those born and raised in the area.[27]

Solving this problem, rather than merely managing it, requires resolving this systemic crisis. It requires a commitment to the principle that economic productivity is not the measure of a person's worth. It requires a commitment of resources comparable in size to the investments that gave rise to Boeing and others, and a reckoning on a scale far beyond Seattle city limits.[28] Ultimately, it requires radical change led by the people most affected. The history of Seattle in the 1970s shows how difficult that work can be. It also demonstrates that it is not impossible.

Seattle's place in empire remained. So did resistance. Carlos Bulosan, the Filipino author and labor activist whose story began this dissertation, died prematurely at the estimated age of 42 in 1956. But another Seattle radical affiliated with the ILWU, of the same generation and nearly the same age, lived to see the city's new economy. On November 30, 1999, Shaun Maloney made his last stand. At eighty-eight years old, the lifelong leftwing radical, world traveler, and

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[25] Niall McCarthy, "The American Cities With The Highest Homeless Populations In 2019," *Forbes*, January 14, 2020.

[26] Caleb Silver, "The Top 25 Economies in the World," *Investopedia*, September 20, 2023, https://www.investopedia.com/insights/worlds-top-economies/, accessed October 20, 2023.

[27] Gene Falk, "Seattle is once again the fastest-growing big city, census data shows," *Seattle Times*, May 18, 2023.

[28] In January 2023, the King County Regional Homelessness Authority estimated it would take some $12 billion to end homelessness in Seattle. Greg Kim, "Ending homelessness in King County will cost billions, regional authority says," *Seattle Times*, January 25, 2023.

one-time president of ILWU Local 19 was physically a shell of his former self, limited to a wheelchair and having lost sixty-pounds due to a series of recent strokes. His commitment to the workers of the world, however, had scarcely diminished. That day, he joined tens of thousands of people on the streets of Seattle who had traveled from around the United States and the world to march in protest against the summit of the World Trade Organization (WTO).[29]

Seattle officials had intended to host the meeting as a celebration of their city's shining place within the reconstituted American empire. The WTO, an intergovernmental organizational established in 1995, was meant to facilitate the growth of international trade that had so benefited Seattle. It attempted to do so by wagering judgements against trade barriers established by member states. But the practice alarmed countries in the Global South, who feared the dominance of the United States in trade relations reconstituted longstanding colonial relationships of exploitation and dispossession. It also drew fierce opposition from American organized labor and community organizers who believed that the terms of international trade represented by the WTO's agenda undermined the power of American workers and local communities. Together, they assembled on the streets of Seattle, some with the explicit intent of shutting the summit down.[30]

Seattle officials' surprise at the resulting riots, now famous, suggested they were not prepared for the dislocation and unrest that the global economy had created. Maloney, on the other hand, along with his fellow members of the ILWU, had long understood how corporations crossed borders to disadvantage workers everywhere. Even as growing international trade

[29] Dallas Delay, "Shaun Maloney 1911-1999," *Unofficial ILWU 19 Website*, https://www.ilwu19.com/history/loss.htm, accessed October 20, 2023.

[30] Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St Clair, *Five Days That Shook the World: Seattle and Beyond* (New York City, NY: Verso, 2000).

benefited longshore workers, they remained opposed to trade agreements that traded jobs for profits.[31] The WTO protests mirrored longstanding divisions within organized labor, as communities of color found themselves sidelined by white-led organizations, and labor leaders were quick to denounce the protest's more disruptive actions as un-American.[32] Some of Maloney's fellow workers in the ILWU, at least, understood the value of disruption, helping to channel the crowds from organized labor's march to help support the efforts of activists locked down in the streets who were under attack by Seattle police.[33]

Maloney was too old and frail to riot in 1999, like he had as a young man in the late 1930s, when he had set fire to a scab truck during a strike and spent two years in federal prison.[34] The labor movement had grown far tamer and institutionalized in the sixty years since. But his attendance at the labor march represented a continuity in struggle, just as Seattle's economy represented a continuity in global capitalism and American empire. He died twenty days later on December 19, 1999.[35] His spirit, and the movements he was a part of, live on.

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[31] John S. Ahlquist, Amanda B. Clayton, and Margaret Levi. "Provoking Preferences: Unionization, Trade Policy, and the ILWU Puzzle." *International Organization* 68, no. 1 (January 2014): 33–75.

[32] Kristine Wong, "Shutting Us Out," in *Confronting Capitalism: Dispatches from a Global Movement* edited by Eddie Yuen, Daniel Burton-Rose, and George N. Katsiaficas (Brooklyn, NY: Soft Skull Press, 2004).

[33] Jeff Engels, "Twenty Years Later, Remembering the Battle in Seattle," *Labor Notes*, November 22, 2019, https://labornotes.org/blogs/2019/11/twenty-years-later-remembering-battle-seattle, accessed October 20, 2023.

[34] Biographical Note, Archives West: Shaun Maloney Papers, 1930-2000, accessed December 19, 2019, http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv03772/op=fstyle.aspx?t=k&q=Maloney#;

[35] Delay, "Shaun Maloney 1911-1999."