

Memorandum on Arresting Pickets on the Philadelphia Waterfront

The attached copies of clippings are from the Philadelphia Record, a pro-labor paper.

Mayor S. Davis Wilson is a Republican, seemingly pro-labor. The preliminary hearings include a general statement by Philadelphia's Assistant City Solicitor in charge of Labor Relations, M. Herbert Syme.

Harold Weisberg.

Philadelphia Record November 3, 1936

Mayor Wilson last night declared Phila's sympathy strike of waterfront workers "outlaw & illegal."

He ordered police to arrest all pickets. The order will stand unless a formal strike is called by the unions, he said.

His strike squad & dist. police immediately went into action along the waterfront. They arrested 10 pickets, charging them with disorderly conduct when they refused to "move on."

All were given immediate hearings before magistrate O'Hara. Harry F. Owens, 30, who carried cards of the Marine Transport Workers, an I.W.W. organization was given 30 days in jail as a "ringleader." Seven others were fined \$10 and costs each and two were discharged. All carried Seamens' union cards.

The strike was called by rank & file leaders of seamen, long shoremen & truckers in support of the West Coast waterfront strike.

Mayor Wilson ordered police protection for longshoremen unloading foreign ships & for truckers who drive to ships being picketed. Leaders of all 3 unions have called the strike illegal, he said.

The Mayor said "There is no strike and there are no pickets."

Anyone who wears a picket sign or attempts to picket - unless a formal strike is called by union officials - is not a picket and will not be recognized as a picket. They will be arrested if they interfere. Mayor Wilson said nevertheless that he was prepared to delegate that decision to his Labor Advisory Comm. which is made up entirely of labor leaders and would heed board's recommendation and execute them as far as consistent with public welfare.

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Dock pickets get o.k. of Mayor as he reversed stand.

Wilson relents after 3 unions recognize walk out of "Rank and File."

Mayor Wilson's reversal of policy was announced after the representatives of 3 Maritime unions called at his office yesterday and declared that their organizations had given official sanction to the strike.

They represented Marine Engineers Beneficial Association, the American Radio Telegraph Association and the Ship Cleaner's Union.

After conference the Mayor said "My policy is to permit picketing. That policy will be continued."

"The officials of 3 unions notified me this afternoon that they are on strike. I informed them that they are entitled to have pickets, providing the pickets are properly designated by the unions."

"Any other union calling a strike thru its duly constituted officials will be accorded the same consideration in the matter of picketing."

Holding that it was not in his province to decide the internal dispute between "rank & file" strikers and their leaders in any way or have no visible means of support.

"These men are outlaws."

"I will not tolerate outsiders coming to Philadelphia and creating labor disturbances where there are no differences between employer and employee."

"I am friendly to labor and my policy will not change."

"I am powerless to do anything but heed the telegrams I have received from union heads. I can come to but one conclusion, that this is an illegal strike."

Seamens Union in N.Y. wired no strike was authorized in Philadelphia.

Spoke with Dan Tobin who said no strike has been authorized by Longshoremens Union.

When 3 pickets were ordered by police to move on in front of McCann Sugar Company pier at 67 South, Owens told them not to move.

Names of arrested - Robert Bain, 40, of Pensacola, Florida, and Burt Kehey, 45, of Harrisburg, Miss.

The seven fined \$10 were arrested by a strike squad of 10 detectives. They are Fred R. Miller, Edward B. Newton, Thurman Tauplin, Elija Harrian, Edw. Harlan, Thos. Lonergan and Oliver Swanson.

The Mayor's action was protested in a telegram to Governor Earle sent by E. A. Newell, Chairman International Seamen's Union. The telegram said "over 20,000 organized Maritime workers in this area strongly condemn the arbitrary measures employed by Mayor Wilson in denying us the fundamental rights to strike and picket peacefully. We implore that you use your good offices to guarantee we citizens adequate protection against unwarranted police action taken by Mayor Wilson. We positively protest the unfair decision labelling this strike illegal and ordering our pickets arrested and jailed. You must act at once."

Mayor requested of meeting of Longshoremen 3 days time to clear up difficulties which meeting refused.

Telegram was sent to President Roosevelt by Geo. E. Bartol, Jr., President of Port of Philadelphia Ocean Traffic Bureau. They stand on maintenance of contract which runs to 1937.

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