

WAUGH'S NEWS



One of the busiest places in town right now is our shoe department. When you stop to consider the excellent values and styles you get here for the price you pay the reason is plain.

We are showing about twenty different styles in low shoes for children in patent or full leather and also in white and tan.

The prices run as low as 39c for the smaller sizes up to \$3.00 for the larger ones in the best quality.

We have an especially good assortment of boys' shoes and oxfords right now and nothing will please your boy more than a snappy looking pair of 3 button tan oxfords. These will cost from \$2.00 to \$3.00 according to the size. The selection of pumps and other styles in low shoes for ladies is almost unlimited. Patent kid still sells best but full leather, cravanne or velvet are all close behind. Prices for the very best grades are \$4.00 but excellent qualities can be had for \$3.00 and even cheaper.

J. S. WAUGH

J. S. WAUGH UNCLE SAM MAY INVADE CUBA

(Continued from page One)

for this purpose 1,300 additional marines will be taken on at New York and Norfolk.

The attitude of the Cuban government in welcoming the dispatch of American marines to Guantanamo on the Pacific is accepted as an indication of its perfect willingness to allow these marines and bluejackets to be landed without express permission from the local Cuban authorities where danger impends. In any case the American naval commanders will exercise their discretion.

CONTRACT IS LET

J. D. Cray and Associates Will Start Work on the Electric Building at Broadway and Heron

Thursday afternoon, the contract for the construction of the Electric building at the corner of Broadway and Heron street was let to the Advance Construction company, of Portland. The building when completed will cost \$50,000. The contract requires the building to be completed by November 1, but the contractors say that it will be ready for occupancy by October 1. The piling has been driven and the work of the superstructure will go forward immediately.

Columbia Double-Disc Records

FOR JUNE NOW ON SALE

Dublin Bay, Baby Mine, "Dawg Song," Trolley Car Swing, Brass Band, Ephraim Jones, Two Accordion Records by DeLro.

On Double-Disc Records, 55c.

EMENEKER PIANO CO.

208-210 South H. St.

Tickets for Musical June 3, on sale at our Store

LONGSHOREMEN'S CONTROVERSY

(Continued from page One)

determined that the only qualification asked of employees should be their ability and willingness to earn their wages, 30 cents an hour, no alteration being made in the wage scale or working conditions. At this time, the Rothschilds Co. of Tacoma, was operating on Grays Harbor, and about a year later, the two concerns were consolidated, the Rothschilds buying one-half the stock of the Grays Harbor Stevedore Co. and the millmen retaining the other half. In selling this stock, the millmen stipulated that they should control the labor policy of the company, so that the matter of returning to the closed shop advocated last week by officials of the International Union was really up to them, and not to Manager Delaney.

How Open Shop Worked

After the consolidation, 18 of the union men went to work, and notwithstanding the fact that they labored assiduously to unionize the entire force, they received the most work for the simple reason they were more experienced. The open shop plan worked well for both employers and employees for more than two years, and until the recent invasion of the Industrial Workers of the World. How matters fared with the company since then may be told in few words.

The I. W. W. Movement

When the pioneer I. W. W. agitators arrived in Aberdeen their first move was to seek out some dissatisfied workmen, and the longshoremen's union was singled out as being the material with which to initiate the trouble they came here to start. The union men tried to believe the agitators were about to restore their old time monopoly, jumped at the opportunity, and their leaders at once became the apostles of this anarchistic, trouble breeding organization, and they proved profitable ones, too. Their acquaintance with the workmen of the city was the means of bringing plenty of coin to the purses of Train Thorp & Co. in the way of initiation fees, and those leaders were prominent in every I. W. W. movement until the agitating grafters were driven from the city.

Some of the non-union employees of the stevedore company were induced by these leaders to join the I. W. W. under various pretenses, and without a word of notice, or making any demand they declared a strike and walked out. At this juncture, the attempt to unionize the force of the stevedore company was renewed, and to assist in the plan, the initiation fee was reduced from \$50 to \$5, and every possible effort made to force the employees into the union.

About 40 of the men refused to go on the strike and stayed by the company and 12 positively refused to go into the union. To return to union labor, the company would have to break faith with those men and discharge them.

The Employers Viewpoint

When the matter of returning to the closed shop plan is put up to them, the employers cannot but contrast the peaceful manner in which ships have been loaded under the open shop system, with the trouble and harassments that had prevailed for several years prior to the abandonment of the union. It is not a matter of cost. No reduction has been made in wages, but there is the utter absence of friction, so pleasant in any line of work, and the freedom to demand a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, in the doing of which each man knows that he has only the employer, who pays the bills, to please.

The employers are but human, and they very naturally desire as little trouble in the dispatch of vessels as possible. Again, they have the men who stood by them loyally in times of trouble to consider. To comply with the demands of the union would mean the discharge of those men, a number of whom are veterans of the Spanish war, and have brought their families to Aberdeen to make homes on the promise of permanent positions made by the stevedore company. The thought of violating such a promise is repelling to any man with a spark of manhood in him, and really, this was the worst stumbling block in the way of the conference requested by the international officials. They reasoned that the refusal to operate on the closed shop system need work no hardship on the union men; that they can have as much work and earn as much money under the present plan if they so desire, that is if they wish to work with an eye to the employer's interests and the workman who has not has no place on any pay roll.

The statement of the Post, that

It's Trunk, Bag and Suit Case Week

Taking care of your summer vacation and supplying your traveling necessities at a lower figure than ever before make this your opportunity, as hordes are doing during this remarkable sale.

Another Three Days of Linen and Bedding Sale

HANDSOME TABLE SETS

With full size napkins to match; all sizes in cloths for round or square tables, handsome and exclusive designs of genuine Irish and Scotch manufacture, going at these prices:

\$ 7.95 TABLE SETS NOW	\$ 5.45
\$10.45 TABLE SETS NOW	\$ 6.95
\$11.45 TABLE SETS NOW	\$ 8.95
\$12.45 TABLE SETS NOW	\$ 9.95
\$14.95 TABLE SETS NOW	\$10.95
\$16.25 TABLE SETS NOW	\$11.95
\$17.45 TABLE SETS NOW	\$12.45

\$22.50 Table sets, now	\$16.95
\$37.50 Table sets, now	\$29.95
\$50.00 Table sets, now	\$36.45

Blankets and Comforters

A Spring Sale of Wool and Cotton Blankets offers the best savings of the year

RICH DOUBLE DAMASK

By the yard of richly full mercerized and real Scotch and Irish linen, magnificent designs of floral and plain effects, all widths from 54 to 72 inches wide at these prices:

50" TABLE DAMASK NOW	39c
75" TABLE DAMASK NOW	59c
\$1.00 TABLE DAMASK NOW	69c
\$1.25 TABLE DAMASK NOW	79c
\$1.50 TABLE DAMASK NOW	1.19
\$1.65 TABLE DAMASK NOW	1.33
\$2.00 TABLE DAMASK NOW	1.69

George J. Wolff

Aberdeen's Greatest and Best Store

\$2.25 Table Damask	\$1.89
\$2.50 Table Damask	\$1.98
\$2.75 Table Damask	\$2.29

the employers imported I. W. W. agitators is deliberately false, printed for no other purpose than to arouse a wrong sentiment against the millmen. The truth is, as the Post well knows, that the agitators came here and secured employment for the purpose of making trouble, and the thought that the millmen would import men for that purpose is too absurd even for the Post to believe.

President O'Connor Threats

In his address before the Chamber of Commerce, President T. V. O'Connor did not stop to select words with which to denounce the members of the I. W. W., and he told of 12 members of that organization that he said were now in the employ of the stevedore company. Inquiry at the office of the company reveals the coincidence that those 12 men were the identical 12 who would be neither called or intimidated into joining the union and stood by the company during the strike. Mr. O'Connor appeared to be ignorant of the fact that the I. W. W. had received its heartiest support from the local longshoremen's union. They may have withdrawn their membership from that anarchistic organization, but the fact remains that they were, and doubtless are, in sympathy with those agitators.

Mr. O'Connor expressed himself as favoring industrial peace—in which expression the Herald believes him to be perfectly honest—but he gave out covert threats of tying up the commerce of Grays Harbor in case his demand for union recognition was not complied with. Later, in replying to W. B. Mack, who had said the mills would not furnish lumber to a line of vessels that was about to contract with the union to load them, President O'Connor called Mr. Mack's attention to the fact that such action would be a violation of the interstate commerce law, and promised in case such action was taken, that the International would carry the case to the highest court in the land.

While he was citing the law, President O'Connor might have recalled a decision by Judge Hanford, in the federal court at Seattle, that would show how his threat to tie up the commerce of this harbor would be a violation of the Sherman anti-trust law. He might have cited the decision of Judge Hanford, rendered on August 15, 1908, in which he enjoined the union longshoremen of Seattle from interfering with the vessels of the Alaska Steamship Co., holding that any interference by acts of violence, threats, etc., was a violation of Section 4 of the Sherman law. Any interference with Grays Harbor commerce in any United States port would fall directly under that decision.

The Interest of the Public

The threat of the International president is repeated by the Post and may be accepted for what it is worth. The citizens of Aberdeen are interested in maintaining industrial peace—so are the mill operators. If industrial war is to ensue, the International Union—which evidently wants the dues from Grays Harbor—will inaugurate it and take the blame. The thousands of people in this city who have absolutely no connection with the operation of mills or shipment of lumber, usually stand the greatest losers in those industrial

wars, and, as usually, make no mistake in fixing the blame for them.

In this instance, there is absolutely no necessity for trouble. Labor is not assailed. No reduction of wages is threatened, nor is there a black list contemplated. There was a sign in the window of the City Employment Bureau the other day that read: "Experienced Stevedores Wanted. No other qualification but 'experience.'" No question as to the applicant being a union or non-union man, nor we are assured by the stevedore company, will there be further than, as said above, a willingness to do an honest day's work for a fair day's pay.

ABERDEEN TAKES SECOND PLACE

(Continued from page One)

made by Marshall, after he had misjudged a long drive to his field.

Scores by Innings:
Aberdeen . . . 0 1 3 2 0 0 0 6 x-12
Centralia . . . 0 0 0 0 1 0 0 0 0-1

Notes of the Week

Aberdeen won three out of four games on her home grounds. The game lost Friday was a gift and the writer does not wonder that Kelly's hair turned from red to grey in a single day.

The playing of Wentzel, a youngster from California, was good yesterday and he will be a good playmate for Rheams and they should pull off many double plays, as both are speedy.

Father Tom Kelly may replace Marshall at right field. Marshall is suffering from a bad leg and cannot get over the ground.

President Albers of the league was a guest here yesterday and saw the contest. He was well pleased.

Umpire Golden caused considerable amusement yesterday, when he delayed the game for two minutes in order to run a policeman out of the grounds.

The fans like Golden's work and, as long as he keeps up that kind of umpiring his job should be safe. He gives the plays as he sees them regardless of teams.

It is a shame to see men who say they have played the game all in the grand stand and bleachers and bait the umpire. A baseball director should be the last man to do this—a hint should be sufficient.

SCHOOL PICNICS

The senior and freshman classes of the J. M. Weatherwax High school went picnicking Saturday, the seniors going to North Beach and the freshmen to Westport, both classes going and returning on the steamer Champion.

COMPANY MUST PAY

In the Chehalis county case of W. T. Younger against the Union Cooperation Company, appellant, the supreme court has upheld the lower court in awarding damages for personal injuries sustained when the plaintiff was attempting to escape from an explosion in a boiler shop.

NEW RANGE PLANNED BY GUARD OFFICERS

Chehalis County Militiamen Would Discard Present Practice Ground Near Montesano

Abandonment of the state rifle range southwest of Hoquiam, the purchase of a new range near Montesano and the erection of two club buildings, one by the national guard of Chehalis county and the other by members of Company G, are plans now being developed. A committee composed of Maj. G. W. Robertson, Capt. R. H. Fleet, state inspector of small arms practice and Lieut. Comenau of Company G, has been named to take up the proposition with the adjutant general.

HARRIMAN LINES BUY EQUIPMENT

(Continued from page one)

bulldozers, filling similar orders for the Harriman system. That order alone, it is said, exceeded this one in size.

"We have to keep going right ahead," said A. L. Mohler, president of the Union Pacific and Oregon Short Line here today. "Our new equipment orders are intended, especially to take care of the enormous crops that we are sure to enjoy on all parts of our system this year."

GRAYS HARBOR RAILWAY and LIGHT COMPANY



A Big Lamp

To make a big light that pretty well describes the big 500 Watt Mazda Lamps that you see in so many stores now-a-days.

These merchants are using them because they can save money and get more light by doing so, we will make a special reduction in the cost of installation to any one who will install one or more of these lamps at this time—Call us on the phone for full information.

THE ELECTRIC SERVICE AND SUPPLY COMPANY

Phone 8411

207 E. Heron St.



1923 -

MURDER OF WILLIAM McKAY

The Red Coast

**RADICALISM AND ANTI-RADICALISM
IN SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON**

Aaron Goings, Brian Barnes, and Roger Snider

Oregon State University Press

Corvallis

10

Fellow Worker William McKay

In the early afternoon of May 8, 1923, more than a thousand workers paraded through the streets of Aberdeen, Washington, carrying banners and waving red flags. The workers marched in commemoration of their fallen comrade, William McKay, an Irish-born logger, who had been shot in the back of the head by a company gunman while picketing.¹ Yet although this parade sought to be many things to its participants—a commemoration, a show of solidarity during the still ongoing general strike, and an overall demonstration of power in a town long known for its militant working class—the truth is that McKay's memory did not last. Stories of the shooting appeared in local and regional newspapers, and the radical press pushed for the gunman's conviction.² But by the end of May, McKay's killer had escaped any punishment, and the Wobbly's death, like that of so many working people, was forgotten to all but those closest to him.³

McKay's murder came in the heat of battle, as thousands of Grays Harbor men and women had joined their fellow workers in many parts of the world in a general strike to free class war prisoners such as those, like James McInerney, imprisoned as a result of the Centralia tragedy. The strike and funeral march that followed were vivid demonstrations of working-class power in the community. Striking Wobblies had closed down logging camps, docks, and lumber mills, including the notorious Grays Harbor Commercial Company in Cosmopolis, the lone mill in Grays Harbor to have never before been closed by a strike.

The Wobblies consistently threatened the power and profits of Grays Harbor lumbermen throughout the 1910s, but much of the IWW program during the 1920s revolved around its defense of those class war prisoners held in the Leavenworth, San Quentin, and Walla Walla penitentiaries. Authorities throughout the Red Coast arrested Wobblies and suspected Wobblies on

charges of criminal syndicalism under the notorious 1919 law that criminalized membership in, and support for, the IWW. Dozens of IWWs were arrested in the Red Coast between November 12, 1919, and 1922.⁴

The struggles to free these political prisoners took on many forms. Wobblies wrote propaganda pamphlets, collected donations for the defense fund, and sponsored speaking tours by the likes of long-time militants James Rowan and James P. Thompson.⁵ But the IWW preferred direct action to political electioneering or legal maneuvers.⁶ Thus, few could have been surprised when, during October 1922, the IWW General Executive Board decided to call for a general strike to free all class war prisoners.⁷ This strike, which eventually spread across the nation and affected tens of thousands of workers, became the centerpiece of the Wobblies' struggle to free their fellow workers. As could be expected, however, the Wobbly preference for militant direct action also gave employers reason to bear their fangs. Indeed, once the general strike commenced, this is precisely what happened, and with the assistance of a sympathetic state apparatus, these employers were able to get away with murder.

Meanwhile, organization in Grays Harbor continued in haste. Letters poured in from the towns and camps of the Harbor throughout 1922-1923, and IWW membership around the nation rapidly climbed. In late 1922 the IWW laid an ultimatum at President Warren G. Harding's doorstep: release all class war prisoners held in federal and state penitentiaries or face a general strike beginning May 1, International Workers' Day.⁸

Beginning in the first decade of the twentieth century, Red Coast workers celebrated May Day by parading in the streets. On occasion, as on May 1, 1903, May Day festivities were planned and carried out by branches of the local labor movement with little clear participation by more radical elements. This parade differed little from a traditional Labor Day celebration as unions, including the sailors, longshoremen, tailors, and molders marched alongside the Aberdeen Fire Department Band. The pro-business *Aberdeen Herald* remarked on its "success," but noted that a "general parade" had to be canceled, otherwise participants would have carried out a "much larger street demonstration."⁹

Sometimes workers used May Day as an occasion to strike against local employers. Brewery workers employed at the Aberdeen Brewing Company joined union members throughout Western Washington in declaring a strike on May Day, 1905, to force employers to recognize the closed shop.

Although the six-months-long strike ended in a compromise between workers and employers, the contract included language that incorporated the strikers' demands: "Only union men in good standing who are members of the International Union of United Brewery Workmen of America shall be employed in all breweries and malthouses."¹²

Most May Day events were organized by radical groups, chiefly Grays Harbor socialists, Wobblies, and members of the local communist movement. In the early 1910s, as Harbor socialists grew in membership and influence, they turned out in force to celebrate the First of May. Grays Harbor socialists planned an elaborate series of activities for May Day 1911, including a parade led by the Red Finn band, a series of street meetings and hall orations, a public feast, and an evening of dancing and socializing at the Red Finn Hall.¹³ Northwest Wobblies also commemorated the workers' holiday by declaring strikes and making demands on employers and the state. On May 1, 1912, the *Industrial Worker* ran an eight-page commemorative May Day issue calling on Wobblies to "Drop Your Tools—Show Your Power" in a front-page headline.¹⁴

On April 25, 1923, the *Industrial Worker* ran a giant headline reading: "Strike One—Strike All!" Many workers across the nation had already begun to pour off the job. Three-thousand dock workers struck in San Pedro, California, and striking workers tied up shipping along the East, West, and Gulf coasts. By the end of April, thirty logging camps were closed down in the Portland area alone.¹⁵

Grays Harbor was one of the centers of strike activity. At the start of May, loggers had shut down at least forty camps. Wobbly James Pezzanis wrote that there were "30 or 40 men in each mill, distributing hand bills and talking to the workers as they come off the job."¹⁶ In all, between four thousand and five thousand Grays Harbor mill workers, loggers, longshoremen, and clam diggers struck in late April and early May 1923 to free class war prisoners.¹⁷

Among the Wobblies' greatest successes was the aforementioned strike at the Grays Harbor Commercial Company in Cosmopolis. Dubbed the "penitentiary" because of its strict labor discipline and hyper-exploitative hiring practices, this was the lone mill in the region to avoid being closed by a strike during the 1910s. "Penitentiary" management regularly used imported strikebreakers, barbed wire, and armed guards to keep picketers away from the plant. Their violent anti-unionism failed, however, to prevent "penitentiary" workers from shutting the mill down on May 3, when 450 out of the

600 Commercial Company's mill workers walked off the job. Determined to spread the strike, these workers marched en masse to the Bay City Mill, where they set up informational pickets outside the mill gates.¹⁶

Unlike the Commercial Company, the Bay City Mill had been closed by strikes on numerous occasions during its long history. Formed as the ironically named "Union Mill" (the name referred to the Union side in the Civil War), Harbor lumbermen S. M. Anderson, A. W. Middleton, G. E. Anderson, and H. N. Anderson purchased it in February 1912. They reorganized it as the Bay City Lumber Company only a month before the massive IWW lumber strike of that year. In 1914, the mill employed 125 workers and produced 150,000 board feet of lumber per day.¹⁷ Like many Northwest mills, the Bay City produced only lumber, not shingles, and thus had little interaction with the unionized shingle weavers, the lone group of unionists to maintain their organization during the early twentieth century. The firm's owners maintained an intense hostility to unionized workers and strikes. In April 1912, the IWW's *Industrial Worker* described the actions of one of the mill's owners during the Wobbly-led lumber strike: "Mill owner Anderson, swinging a heavy club and brandishing a revolver, urged his thugs to shoot down the workers. . . . He had shot a workingman who had come after his pay and who was leaving the vicinity of violence. Shot from behind. He may recover."¹⁸ The Bay City owners' enmity toward unions extended to AFL organizations as well. A 1915 pamphlet produced by the International Union of Timber Workers separated Northwest lumber operations into categories based on their management's views of unions. Produced to aid union workers in finding jobs, it sorted logging camps, lumber and shingle mills, and other wood products operations into "opposes union," "tolerates union," and "fair to union" groups. The Bay City Mill was solidly in the "opposes union" camp.¹⁹ To keep the Bay City Mill "union free," its owners employed a gunman to guard the plant.

IWW logger William McKay was one of the workers who picketed at the Commercial Company and Bay City mills on May 3, 1923. McKay was an Irish immigrant who came to North America at an early age. Stopping first in Chicago, he found his way west to British Columbia, where he took up logging. Like tens of thousands of Pacific Northwest loggers, McKay was drawn to the radical message of the One Big Union. This message made McKay and other fellow workers potential targets of the wrath of the timber bosses, who themselves organized to fight unionism. James Rowan, another

Irish immigrant logger and one of the founders of the IWW lumber workers' union, in fact, described Pacific Northwest lumbermen as "the One Big Union of the bosses in the timber industry."²⁰

McKay joined the IWW during its first big organizational push in British Columbia between 1906 and 1910. He was active in the agitation surrounding the Vancouver Free Speech Fight of 1912, during which numerous Wobblies were run down and beaten by mounted police. Following the conclusion of the fight, McKay traveled along the British Columbia coast, working as a logger and organizing for the IWW. For his agitation during the Canadian Northern Railroad strike of 1912, McKay was marked an agitator and black-listed from employment in the British Columbia lumber industry.

McKay was one of the millions of migratory workers who harvested the fields, cut the trees, and built the railroads of the West. Like most of them, he changed jobs with the season. But because of his difficulty in securing work in British Columbia after 1912, William "voted with his feet" and moved to Washington at the conclusion of the Canadian Northern strike. Tragically, this move took him away from his family—a wife and two children—who lived on a farm near Vancouver, BC. Separated from his loved ones for political reasons, McKay sent home his pay to put food on the table for his family, who waited for the happy reunion when their husband and father could return home. Little is known what became of them after William's death.

In the spring of 1923 his work brought him to Grays Harbor County, the largest lumber-producing region in the world. Like so many Red Coast workers, McKay was living in a boardinghouse, renting his quarters for a small fee, when he joined his fellow workers in picketing the Bay City Mill on May 3, 1923. When the picketers arrived at the gate they were met by E. I. Green, a hired gunman for the Bay City Mill. Green had a long history of violent activities. He had fought in the Spanish-American War and World War I, and according to the *Southwest Washington Labor Press* "was known as a man quick to use a gun and had done time because of it previously."²¹ The confrontation immediately bred trouble. C. E. Barton, a non-IWW bystander, recalled that Green "was standing a short distance away [from the pickets], loudly taunting the crowd of men with abuse and vile language, including in his remarks something to the effect that no one belongs to the Industrial Workers' Union but foreigners who cannot speak English." Outraged at the taunt, McKay stepped forward, shouting, "Do you mean that for me?"²² The scene played out just as the Bay City Mill manager's intended. Green and

McKay met in open battle over political and economic issues. All the while, the employers who exploited their labor and the legislators and judges who condemned the Wobblies to prison sat comfortably in their large, safe homes on Broadway Hill and in the Broadways Hills around the nation.

Accounts of the confrontation vary significantly, and all that is certain is that Green's repeated taunts led to a bitter argument with McKay. During the quarrel, Green pulled his revolver, and McKay, seeing the weapon, attempted to flee. As McKay ran, Green fired two shots. One of the bullets struck McKay in the back of the head. At the coroner's inquest later that day, three doctors and six community members confirmed the horrific details of the murder. According to the autopsy, McKay died from a single bullet that entered two inches above his right ear, "traversed through brain substance," and bounced between many parts of his skull.²³

The Wobblies celebrated McKay's life on the streets and in print. More than a thousand working people marched from the Elerding funeral parlor in downtown Aberdeen to Fern Hill Cemetery in a massive funeral parade. Photographs of the parade were reprinted as postcards and widely distributed around the United States. Articles on McKay's life and his murder followed for weeks thereafter in the radical and labor press. But the Wobblies did not march or write in McKay's honor merely to celebrate his life, but to attack the arbitrary and authoritarian power of American capitalists that made the murder possible.

At the funeral, two young Finnish girls carried a giant banner reading: "Fellow Worker McKay: Murdered at Bay City Mill by a Co Gunman May 3rd 1923. A Victim of Capitalistic Greed. We Never Forget?"²⁴ The question mark in their sign appears to be a challenge. Sadly, we have mostly forgotten the lives lost and struggles waged by working people across this nation. After receiving a few short blurbs in the mainstream press, McKay's death went unmentioned in every major history of the IWW, and his name was lost to posterity.

The IWW press pushed fruitlessly against the levers of power for Green's prosecution and urged fellow workers to "be ready for trial" of "the gunman who murdered Fellow Worker McKay." Nonetheless, in a decision that some workers compared with the "Centralia frame-up," members of the coroner's inquest refused to affix blame for the murder and thus "tacitly condoned the killing by holding that Green was 'on duty.'"²⁵ Reacting callously to McKay's murder, the right-wing *Hogwain American* opined: "A man who listens to the

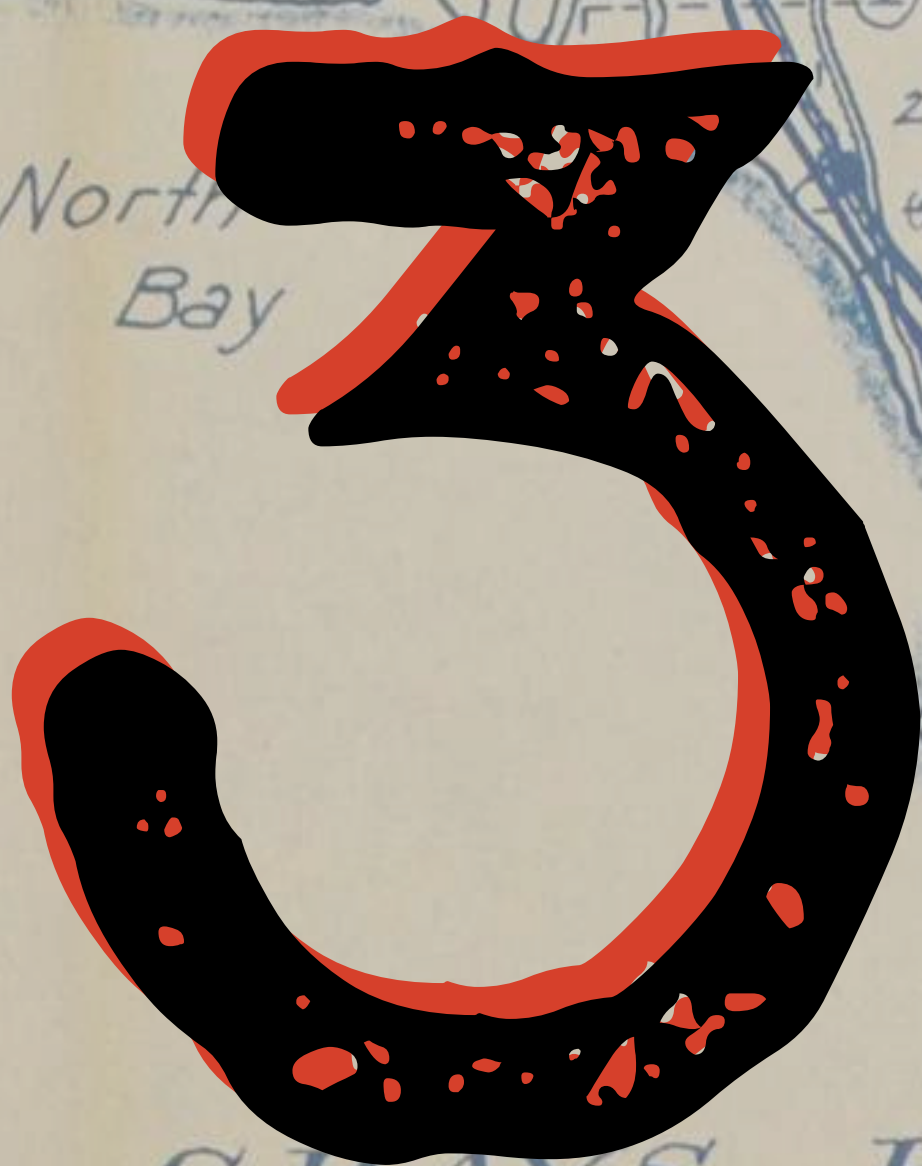


Thousands of workers marched through town on their way to the funeral of Fellow Worker William McKay in Aberdeen, Washington. Photo courtesy of Roy Vataja.

talk of an IWW is on a par with the man who looks down the muzzle of a loaded gun while fooling with the trigger."²⁶ Grays Harbor County prosecutor, A. E. Graham, declared that he would prosecute Green for the murder. Yet after an initial hearing, the gunman was freed on bail and was never tried for the murder.²⁷

In looking back for lessons to draw from his life and death, we should not see McKay's murder as a simple mistake. Instead, his death was the result of a series of decisions made and executed by powerful elites, first to declare the IWW illegal and then to toss its members into prison. Even more directly, Grays Harbor lumbermen had made the conscious choice to hire and arm belligerent gunmen to stand watch outside their mills. Showing no sorrow over the tragedy, the practice of hiring and arming gunmen continued to be a mainstay of Grays Harbor labor relations. Shortly after McKay's death, a Grays Harbor Company mill guard named Jackson gained notoriety for strutting about the mill flashing his gun at any man who walked by, proclaiming, "If my son joined the I.W.W. I would shoot him." With this as the context, it is fortunate that more picketers did not end up like McKay.

In memory of McKay, one IWW stated that McKay had once declared, "I would rather die fighting the masters than be killed slaving for them."²⁸ Indeed, McKay had certainly labored alongside scores of loggers who lost their lives while enriching Pacific Northwest lumbermen. That he died in a struggle to end the exploitative practices of capitalism—to "Dump the Bosses Off our Back"—should not be forgotten.



3

1940 -

MURDER OF LAURA LAW

A labor leader's wife is brutally murdered, leaving a mystery that remains unsolved

Who Killed Laura Law?



Even Dick Law's enemies liked his wife Laura. "She was a Methodist, not a Red," her mother told police. (Daily World Archives)

NOTABLE DATES IN THE LAURA LAW CASE

JAN. 5, 1940

Laura Law found murdered.

JAN. 18, 1940

Dick Law, Laura's husband, is cross-examined at a coroner's inquest. The alleged Communist seethes that the authorities ought to quit "covering up" and subpoena ten suspects.

JUNE 4, 1940

The Aberdeen inquest adjourns following the jury's finding that Laura Law had been murdered "by an unknown person or persons."

1950

An anti-Communist "expert witness" testifying against ten allegedly Communist aliens facing deportation, brings up the Law case and implies she was assassinated to prevent her from revealing the "inside story" of Communist Party activities.

JULY 1, 1953

Dick Law, 45, commits suicide in an Olympia hotel room.

October 6, 1998

Editor, *The Daily World*, Aberdeen —

Is the City of Aberdeen ever going to arrest the person or persons who murdered my grandmother in 1940? Or are they going to sweep it under the rug forever?

My name is Eric Law, youngest son of Richard S. Law Jr. Richard S. Law Sr. and Laura Law were my grandparents.

When I was sixteen, my father and I were driving across the Arizona desert, when out of the blue he started telling me this fantastic story of murder and power abuse by the mill owners and the City of Aberdeen.

I was taken aback by my father's story. You see, he has never been a man to tell of his past. But he told me he thought it was time for me to know the truth about some of the things that haunt our family.

Now that I am 27 I've spent some time looking into the history of that tragic event. I'm still left with the question: "Is someone going to find out who did this?" Likely most of the people involved are now dead, but I know some are not.

Thank you for whatever you can do to help to find out who killed Laura Law.

Eric Law

Corpus Christi, Texas

WHO KILLED LAURA LAW?

Decades after one of the most sensational crimes in American labor history, the question lingers, from the Polish Club tavern on gritty old Grays Harbor to labor temples and lecture halls in Seattle, San Francisco and New York.

Latter-day leftists, historians and amateur detectives are still poking through the State Archives, where Laura's bloody slip reposes with the flotsam from her front room — *Life* magazines, fuel oil bills, mysterious telegrams. There are files thick with police mug shots, witness interviews and FBI dossiers signed by J. Edgar Hoover.

"Who killed Laura Law" begs a thousand other questions — "Why?" for starters. There's a maze of theories, all of them the stuff of film noir: spies,

thugs, scabs, defiant labor leaders, cigar-smoking publishers.

Was it Laura's husband, Dick, 32, an alleged Communist supposedly carrying on with a bookkeeper in the woodworkers' union? Or was that rumor just part of the plot against the labor leader — part of a "reign of terror" by mill owners against the "working class" on the Harbor?

The *Timber Worker*, house organ of the International Woodworkers of America, declared that local prosecutors immediately "began openly to lay the groundwork of a thoroughly organized attempt to frame" Law "by trumping up a fantastic 'sex triangle' explanation of the murder."

Helen Soboleski, described by the press as "the plump, bespectacled," allegedly "not-so-secret other woman in Dick Law's life," wore a black, full-length coat with fur collar and turban-style hat at the coroner's inquest and was quickly dubbed "The Woman in Black."

Was it the Red-baiting local Better Business Builders, a group dedicated to ridding the unions of "Communist gangsters" and other "un-American radicals"? Dick Law had been their poster boy. In 1939, with allies in the American Federation of Labor and renegade "white bloc" conservatives in the Congress of Industrial Organizations, the Business Builders had distributed hundreds of bright red "We're Coming" hammer and sickle handbills and "wanted" posters — complete with a prison mug shot — headlined "Why won't Dick Law let us work?"

The left branded the Business Builders "Sawdust Caesars" and "small-town fascists."

Was it a professional "liquidation" by a hit man dispatched by Moscow because Laura — a Finnish girl incensed over Russia's 1939 invasion of her homeland — was reportedly threatening "to spill the beans on Dick and his Commie pals"?

Did Laura know too much?

What did she know?

Even Dick Law's worst enemies liked Laura. Attractive and spunky, she had "a sort of mirth in



Laura Law lies dead around 11:30 p.m., January 5, 1940. In the background, Aberdeen Police Officer John Gillespie talks on the phone. When Dick Law arrived at home, he sank to his knees and cried out, "Why do this to her, a poor innocent kid?" (Jones Historical Collection)

her voice." "She was a Methodist, not a Red," her mother told police. "She was liberal-minded but not a Communist. ..."

The police investigation, inquest and press accounts of the sensational crime revealed a community so bitterly divided into ethnic, labor and political factions that the question "Who killed Laura Law?" seemed to defy answer.

As the factions appropriated the question to further their own interests, the murder acquired immense symbolic importance and attracted national attention. Laura Law's death became the focal point of conflict between "Red" Finns and

"White" Finns, business and labor, the AFL and the CIO, Communists and anti-Communists.

Dick Law symbolized the effort not only to unionize the timber industry but also to push the labor movement in the radical direction advocated by Harry Bridges, the powerful leader of the longshoremen's union.

Russell V. Mack, the politically ambitious publisher of the *Grays Harbor Washingtonian*, Hoquiam's morning daily, was a leader in the use of anti-Communism as a weapon against the local unionization movement. He was destined to become a Republican congressman.

AS THEY SAW IT

"The murder of Mrs. Dick Law was an outrageous, horrible crime.

"Every person in this city and throughout this district abominates it, with the sole exception of the murderer if he is still here.

"This city and community cannot rest or be easy until this murderer is apprehended. This is so, whatever the motive that prompted the crime.

"No person here is safe, no home is safe, so long as he remains at large. ...

"Grays Harbor has had murders before, of men mostly, but we do not recall that it has ever had a murder like this or one more atrocious. Mrs. Law had harmed no one. She was a fine young woman of a good family ... Mrs. Law was devoted to her home and her small son.

"Yet it was in the quiet and security of this home, brutally invaded and broken, that she was beaten to death. No one saw the slayer enter ...

"No one heard the killer at his awful task, the little boy did not stir in his sleep. The blows were struck, the awful deed accomplished, the house was ransacked and papers strewn about as if robbery, although there appears to have been none, prompted the crime and, his work done, the murderer left as quietly and as unobserved as he came.

"It seems impossible that it could have been so, and it is impossible, for however careful and cautious he may be, the murderer can not hide his tracks, and they eventually will lead directly to him, whoever he may be."

— "Atrocious Murder," *Aberdeen Daily World*, January 8, 1940

NEWS OF THE DAY

"Mystery today cloaked the brutal ax murder of Mrs. Dick Law, pretty wife of a CIO union leader, as local authorities announced that Luke S. May, noted Seattle criminologist, would be called here to assist in seeking a solution of what Mayor Herbert Horrocks described as 'Aberdeen's most dastardly, hideous and needless crime.'

"Mrs. Law was found by her mother, Mrs. Nestor Luoma, slumped against the davenport at her home, 1117 East Second street, last night as the parents returned from a show.

"There was no sign of a struggle, police said, although papers and magazines had been thrown about the floor and dresser drawers dumped in three bedrooms. Dick Law, Jr., 3-year-old son, was asleep in his bed in one of these rooms, the blankets indicating that he had not been disturbed while the murderer worked.

"Mr. Law was at a union meeting and was summoned home by his father-in-law. He returned home in a taxi leaving his car downtown when Luoma telephoned union headquarters and, without explaining what had occurred, asked him to hurry home.

"Law had driven his parents-in-law downtown about 6:30 o'clock and after dropping them off at the theater joined in union conferences, he told police.

"Mrs. Luoma, who shared the home with Mr. and Mrs. Law, found her daughter lying against the davenport, her head battered and split with an ax.

"Later, police discovered there were six mysterious and small wounds in the murder victim's left breast.

"Dr. John W. Stevenson, county coroner, said his examination indicated that Mrs. Law was murdered between 7 and 8 o'clock."

— "Harbor slaying mystery unbroken," *Aberdeen Daily World*, January 6, 1940

On the other front, Howard Costigan, executive secretary of the leftist Washington Commonwealth Federation, immediately recognized the political value of the Aberdeen controversy to the Popular Front movement that was trying to bring Communists and liberals into a coalition.

State Sen. Frank Morgan of Hoquiam, convinced that civil rights issues were at stake, secured the involvement of the American Civil Liberties Union.

John Caughlan, an Aberdeen native, was so concerned about police suspicion of Dick Law's involvement in his wife's death that he took a leave of absence from his position as a King County deputy prosecutor in order to defend Law. He became known as "the Commie lawyer."

On the night of the murder, Friday, January 5, 1940, 25-year-old Laura Law was at home with the couple's young son. Her husband was out attending to union affairs. Her parents, Nestor and Sally Luoma, lived in the same house at 1117 East Second Street, near the muddy Wishkah River. But they were at a double feature — "U-Boat 29" and "Taming the West" — at the Weir Theatre in downtown Aberdeen. It was "Bank Night," which attracted theater-goers with the promise of prizes. An uncle who often stayed with them was also away for the evening.

Laura and "Dickie," nearly 3, had just returned from Oregon, where they had spent Christmas with her husband's terminally ill mother.

Probably the strain of assisting in her mother-in-law's care and the long train trip had left Laura feeling tired. She bathed her son and put him to bed, then sat down on the living room couch to work on an afghan and listen to the radio. She didn't bother to empty the bath water or pick up the toys scattered on the floor around the Christmas tree.

The killer delivered savage multiple blows to her head. Laura's skull was smashed open in four places with a blunt object some time between 8:30 and 10. Her assailant — or assailants — also stabbed her left breast seven times with a stiletto or ice pick.

It was a crime so brutal that former Aberdeen police chief and longtime county coroner John Bebach, who had seen all manner of mayhem, recoiled in horror at the autopsy photos after reviewing them in 1999. "It's overkill," he said. "Vicious. Awful!"

Returning from the movies, Sally Luoma entered the upstairs of the home around 10:25 and found Laura slumped on the sofa.

"Laura," she said, "why are you laying down that way?"

There was no answer.

Sally tossed her umbrella under the tinsel tree and put her arms around her daughter.

"Laura, what's the matter?" she said, giving her a gentle shake. Then she saw some of the blood.

"Laura! Have you had a hemorrhage or a nose bleed?"

There was no answer.

Laura's forehead was cool.

She let go and Laura slumped off the couch and lay sprawled on the floor, lifeless, her glasses shattered, her afghan loom nearby. Sally saw "the terrible cuts on her head, her face turning black," the red river of blood coursing from below the sofa.

"My God! My God! What has happened here?" she screamed. The front room looked "as if a cyclone had hit it."

She rapped on the floor to summon her husband, who had used the downstairs door when they came home from the show. Then she called "central" — the operator — because she didn't know the number of the police station. "I think I'll always remember that number: Aberdeen 3800," she said later.

"They've killed Laura!" Sally declared as Nestor finally got the message that something was wrong and came running up the stairs, two at a time. Nestor rushed into the back bedroom to check on his grandson.

"The baby is all right," sound asleep, Luoma told his wife, then did as she instructed and rang Dick Law at the Woodworkers' hall downtown. "Come home! Come quick! Come quick!" he implored. Law could hear his mother-in-law screaming in the background.

Law hailed a taxi and told the cabbie to get him home in a hurry. Once there, he dashed up the stairs, sank to his knees, clutched his wife's body and cried out, "Why do this to her, a poor innocent kid?"

Dick Law told police investigators that his enemies must be responsible for the murder. He believed they had entered his house in search of information to furnish to the Dies Committee, which had been created by Congress to investigate



Laura Law's flower-covered casket is borne to a grave at Fern Hill Cemetery in Aberdeen on January 12, 1940, by fellow members of the International Woodworkers of America auxiliary, with Harold Pritchett, president of the IWA, following. The six women were Dorothy Anderson, Gladys Anderson, Esther Siefkin, Claretta Orton, Rose Dyer and Aartje Patton. About 2,000 were on hand. Pritchett eulogized Laura as "a fallen sister ... who cannot have died in vain. Howard Costigan, executive secretary of the Washington Commonwealth Federation, said she "died for this struggle." (Seattle Post-Intelligencer)

un-American activities. He was especially suspicious of the anti-union Business Builders and two of its agents, John Vekich and John Deskins.

Aberdeen Police, already viewed by the left as being in cahoots with the Business Builders, made things worse by failing to protect the crime scene, the cardinal rule in a murder investigation. Chief

George Dean, a legendary investigator, was out of town.

"It was like Grand Central Station in there," Dick Law said the next day, although many of those roaming the house were his union associates.

"When I arrived, the house was full of people who had no reason to be there," retired Aberdeen Police

ANOTHER VIEW

"The brutal stabbing and beating of Laura Law brings the reign of terror, intimidation and violence that grips Grays Harbor to a ghastly crescendo.

"This is murder — monstrous, hideous, cold-blooded. And it is the resolve of the International Woodworkers of America that not one moment's rest will be ours until the actual executors of the bloody affair are apprehended. ...

"The responsibility for the state of affairs in Grays Harbor which breeds such a crime as was committed last week rests squarely upon the shoulders of the officials of the city of Aberdeen and the county of Grays Harbor and certain members of the Better Business Builders.

"Law enforcement and police protection in both Aberdeen and Grays Harbor county has broken down, if they haven't been dismantled. ...

"The complete disregard of the city and county authorities on Grays Harbor and their imported experts for the very apparent motive is an indictment against them for dodging their responsibility for solving this murder by attempting to frame Dick Law. ... Failing in this, the attempt will be made to pigeon-hole the crime as the work of an 'ax-murderer,' a 'maniac,' a 'dope fiend.' ...

"The reign of terror in Grays Harbor must end before it spreads and others are murdered. The city and county officials there are neither capable nor inclined to do the job. This is work for the United States Government — for a Federal Grand Jury, the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice and the LaFollette Civil Liberties Committee to go to the roots of the terrorism in that community as epitomized by the murder of Laura Law.

"This is murder, and something is going to be done about it."

— "This is murder," *Timber Worker*, January 13, 1940

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Laura Law, 25, born in Finland, married to a militant union leader and herself an activist, having established the union auxiliary.

Dick Law, 32, her husband; business agent for the International Woodworkers of America.

Sally Luoma, Laura Law's mother.

Nestor Luoma, Laura Law's father; the Laws and Luomas live in the same house at 1117 East Second Street in Aberdeen.

B.B. Jones, Aberdeen photographer.

John Caughlan, deputy King County prosecutor, on leave of absence to represent Dick Law and his in-laws. His father was once a minister in Aberdeen.

Irvin Goodman of Portland, attorney for the Congress of Industrial Organizations, which was formed of unions that broke away from the more conservative craft unions in the American Federation of Labor in the mid-'30s. He was Caughlan's co-counsel.

Stanley J. Krause, Grays Harbor County prosecutor.

Paul O. Manley, deputy prosecutor.

John W. Stevenson, M.D., county coroner.

Herbert "Bert" Horrocks, mayor of Aberdeen.

Frank L. Morgan, state senator, D-Hoquiam, representing the American Civil Liberties Union.

Denee Dyer, business agent for Local 3-2 of the International Woodworkers of America and a good friend of the Laws.

N.E. Mason, business agent of the CIO's Grays-Willapa Harbor Industrial Union Council and a good friend of the Laws.

The inquest jury: Dan Mitchell, Aberdeen barber; E.L. Deering, Aberdeen service station employee; A.G. Rockwell and Frank Anderson, both Hoquiam insurance men; Stephen Girard, Hoquiam Eagles lodge leader, and M.J. McPherson, Aberdeen building custodian and former engineer.

Captain Nick Yantsin wrote in 1990 on the fiftieth anniversary of the murder. "Dick Law was there, as was his mother-in-law ... not to mention many of Law's friends. They were wandering about the house, leaving their prints on everything.

"I was appalled."

About 2,500 mourners, including union leaders from throughout the Northwest, attended the graveside service for Laura at Fern Hill Cemetery on a rolling hillside overlooking Aberdeen.

Law's suspicions about anti-union elements were shared by speakers who eulogized his wife as a labor martyr. Howard Costigan made a pointed reference to the "Centralia massacre," the bloody confrontation between American Legionnaires and the Industrial Workers of the World — the Wobblies — in 1919.

The assumption that Laura Law was the victim of union strife seemed reasonable. She had assisted her husband in his union work, helping in the soup

kitchens during the bitter Grays Harbor strike of 1935 and in organizing a Woodworkers' union auxiliary later. N.E. Mason, business agent of the Grays-Willapa Harbor Industrial Union Council, CIO, told the inquest into Laura's murder that she was the first president of the auxiliary.

"That is not just a knitting society," he said. "It is a very militant, active society taking up all the problems affecting the men."

Dick Law, meantime, had an arrest record and during 1939 had been the target of intense attacks by the business community, the AFL unions and the white bloc in his own union. The International Woodworkers of America — the IWA — leaned left, but its right wing wasn't weak. There had been numerous threatening notes and phone calls to his home.

To businessmen like Russell Mack, the militant union movement posed a threat to the economic recovery of the Harbor area. Forced by the New

The Red Finn Hall at 718 East First Street in Aberdeen the day after the vigilante raid on December 2, 1939. (Jones Historical Collection)

