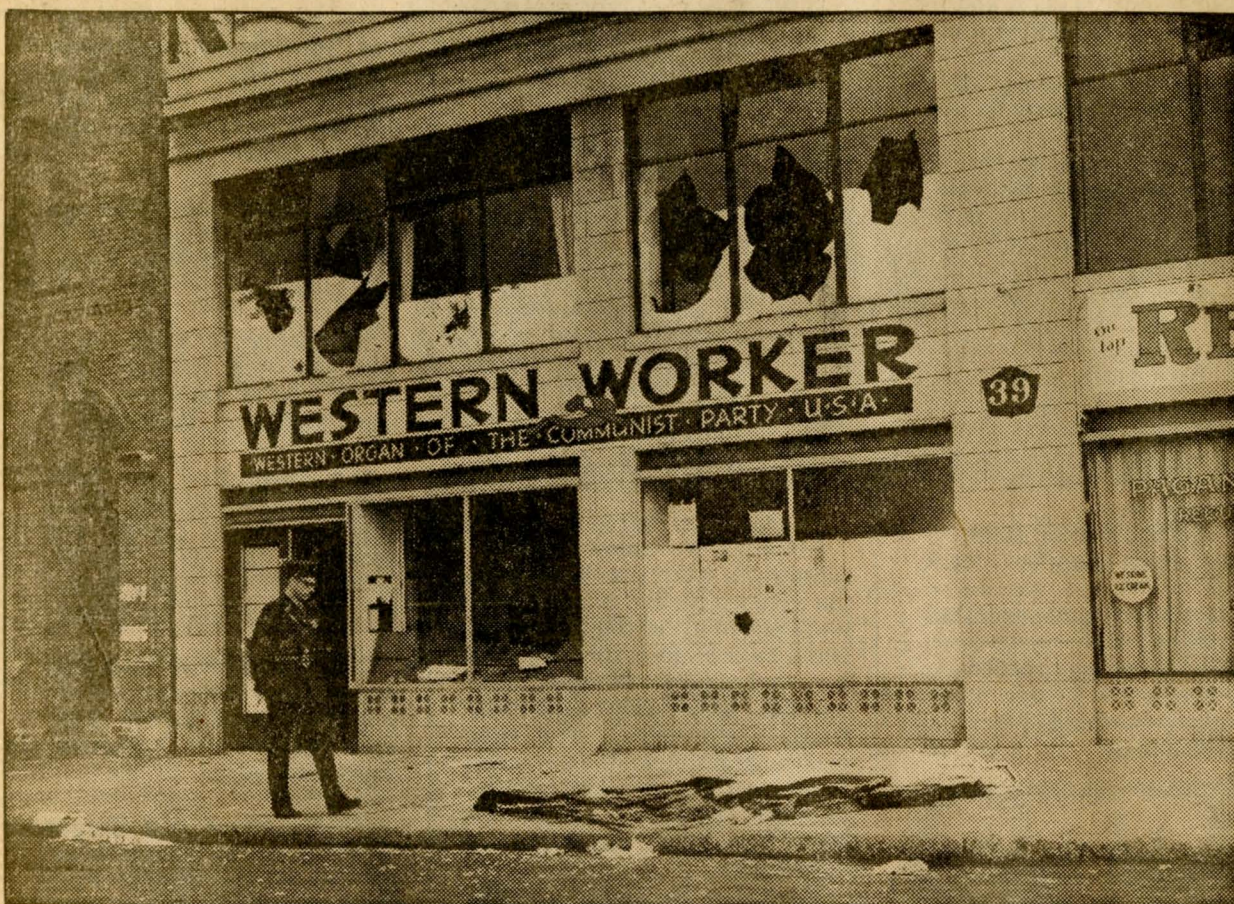


LIFESTYLE



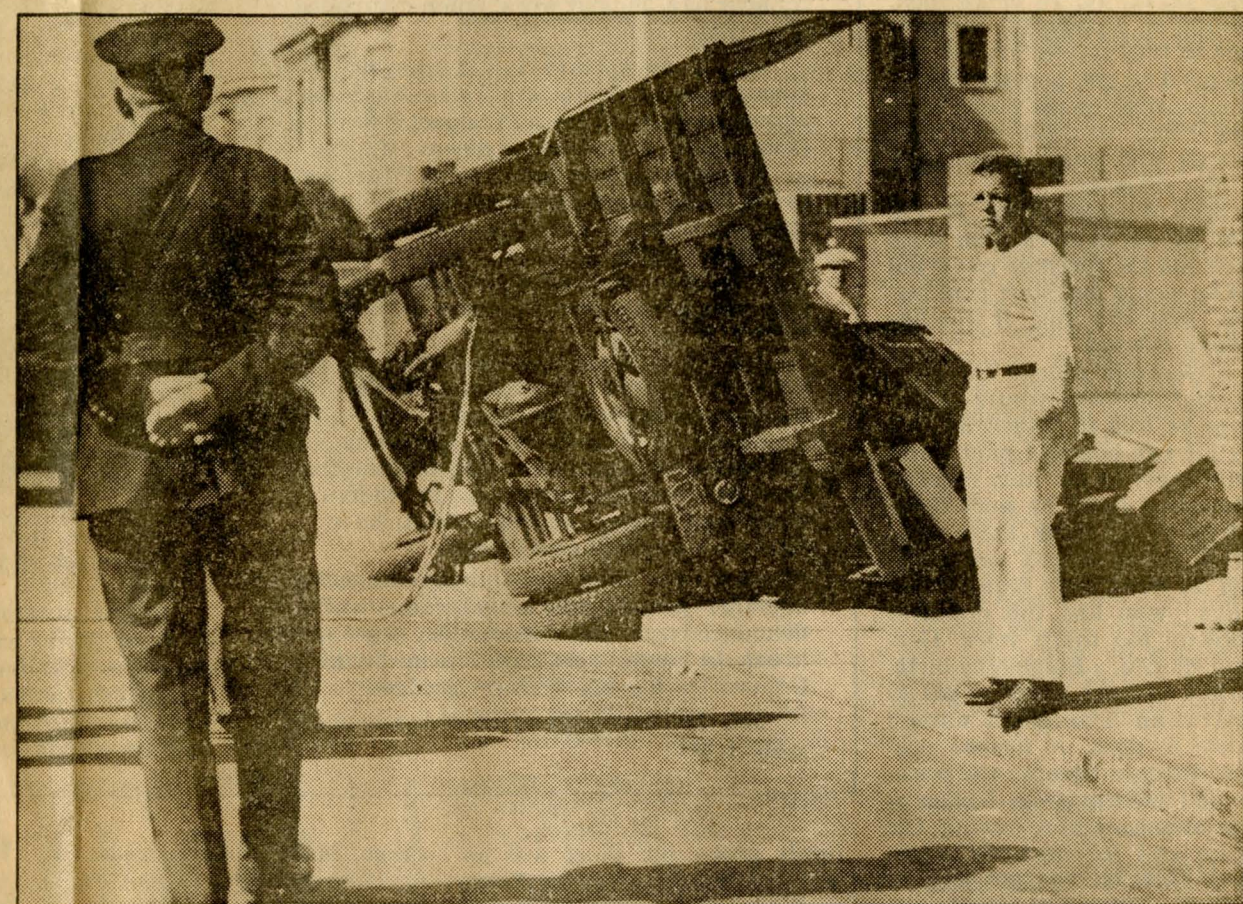
Fall furs; bigger and wider

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Tribune photo

San Francisco offices of the Communist Party were wrecked by vigilantes during the general strike.



Tribune photo

This produce truck was turned over and its driver threatened by strike sympathizers in S.F.

1934: Looking back at the big Bay Area strike



*How that long, hot summer
changed the labor movement*

By Harriet Swift
The Tribune

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Rincon Hill where the Bay Bridge now stands.

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It was the fifth year of the Depression and the second year of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's presidency. FDR had promised that Americans had "nothing to fear but fear itself," although 12 million of them were out of work. There were frenetically cheerful films like "It Happened One Night" and songs such as "You Oughta Be in Pictures" to relieve some of the gloom over plant shutdowns and massive layoffs. Real life soap operas competed with the economy for the front page: Bruno Hauptmann was arrested in the Lindbergh kidnapping, John Dillinger was shot to death by the FBI, Al Capone was imprisoned at Alcatraz, Bonnie and Clyde were ambushed by lawmen in Texas. Abroad, Hitler was mobilizing Germany, there was civil war in China, frightening militarism in Japan and ever more unemployment, hunger, desperation.

But in the Bay Area, 1934 was the year of The Big Strike, the waterfront walkout and general strike that made San Francisco "labor's city" and breathed new life into unions all across the country.

The longshoremen's strike that was called in Pacific Coast ports for May 9 wasn't so different from scores of other walkouts, sit-downs and strikes all over the country in the early years of the Depression. It was big, it was angry but unlike the others, it was successful.

The anger exploded exactly 50 years ago today on July 5, 1934, with "Bloody Thursday," when rioting on the San Francisco waterfront between the strikers and police left two men dead and hundreds injured. Wielding clubs, guns and teargas, 800 policemen drove 2,000 strikers toward the bay, then up and down

Rincon Hill where the Bay Bridge now stands.

With the third police charge up the hill, the strikers and their supporters, armed with bricks and other improvised weapons, abandoned the hill for the streets, moving toward the longshoremen's headquarters a few blocks from the waterfront at Mission and Steuart streets. Policemen fired into the crowd there, killing Howard Sperry, a longshoreman, and Nick Bordoise, a union cook who was a volunteer at a strike soup kitchen.

"I heard shots and looked across the street. I saw three men laying down. Two didn't move, one was crawling on his hands and knees. I ran over there, put him on my back and with two other guys carried him upstairs (to the union offices). There were 12 or 16 guys already laying there, all in bad shape, beaten up. ... We gathered some flowers and put them on the sidewalk, where the blood was. The cops came back along and kicked them into the gutter."

— Germain Bulcke, 1934 strike leader.

Fifty years ago San Francisco was a blue collar city with a strong union tradition. The maritime industry — shipping, longshore, the tributary businesses — were the city's backbone. The maritime unions were weak after disastrous strikes following World War I, but the city was fertile ground for organizing with its rowdy Barbary Coast tradition, a long-standing tolerance for unorthodox views, a vigorous radical/socialist/communist political sector, a cosmopolitan atmosphere that was constantly cross-seeded with new ideas from the mobile popu-

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By Angela Pancrazio/The Tribune

The Fort Point boys, from left, Jack Olsen, Joe Passen, Nate Jacobson and Al Richmond take a break during a Thursday morning walk.

Fort Point Gang: Still winners after all these years

By Harriet Swift
The Tribune

In the spring of 1934, Jimmy Kendall was a 22-year-old seaman who figured he had nothing to lose by jumping ship and joining the San Francisco waterfront strike.

Jack Olsen was an unemployed political activist living in San Francisco who thought that building radical unions would change the world.

Al Richmond was organizing waterfront workers in New York City and reading everything he could get his hands on about

the Pacific Coast docks strike that was scaring the daylights out of Washington bureaucrats and union bureaucrats alike.

Bill Bailey was a seaman trying to carve out a toehold for his radical union — the Marine Workers Industrial Union — on the docks in Norfolk, Va.

Nate Jacobson was a member of the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union, working on the East Coast. Joe Passen was trying to find a job in Depression-ridden Los Angeles. Morris Evenson was a high school student in Minnesota.

Fifty years later these seven men are fast friends who meet every Thursday morning to walk the San Francisco waterfront from the Marina to Fort Point. All lifelong labor activists and union leaders, their friendships took root and flourished in San Francisco, the "good union town" of their youth and middle years.

On a recent Thursday walk, with a stiff wind coming off of the bay and the Golden Gate Bridge partly obscured by fog, the talk

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