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University of California  
Berkeley, California

Germain Bulcke

LONGSHORE LEADER AND  
ILWU-PACIFIC MARITIME ASSOCIATION ARBITRATOR

With an Introduction by  
Sam Kagel

An Interview Conducted by  
Estolv Ethan Ward  
in 1983

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## Germain Bulcke — Leader of Longshore Union

Germain Bulcke, a founding member and leader of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, died Wednesday in Santa Rosa at age 91.

Mr. Bulcke was born in Belgium, and came to work on the San Francisco waterfront in the 1920s.

In 1933, a movement began among longshoremen against the "shape-up" system, under which dockers were required to apply for work each day.

Payoffs and discrimination were rife, and the only organization that claimed to represent the men, the so-called Blue Book union, was considered corrupt.

A tumultuous West Coast maritime strike began in May 1934, and culminated in the "Bloody Thursday" street fighting of July 5, 1934, in which police and strikers battled along the Embarcadero, from Telegraph Hill to Rincon Hill.

At the corner of Steuart and Mission streets, near the longshore strike headquarters, longshoreman Howard Sperry and cook Nick Counderakis-Bordoise were

shot to death by police.

When the fatal shots were fired, Mr. Bulcke, a union picket captain, was fixing a flat tire in a garage that then stood at the spot. He recounted the incident many times in later years, in film and television documentary interviews as well as in an oral history he produced under the auspices of the Bancroft Library at the University of California.

In a 1986 interview with Chronicle reporter Rick DeVecchio, Mr. Bulcke recalled that he carried another man wounded in the shooting to safety, then returned to cover the bloodstains on the street with roses.

After the 1934 conflict, which developed into a short general strike in San Francisco, Mr. Bulcke took a prominent role in waterfront labor politics. With the reorganization of the longshoremen's union and foundation of ILWU in 1937, he held a number of posts, rising to a vice presidency of the international.

Mr. Bulcke was long a combative partisan of the left and was often involved in controversy during the West Coast waterfront factional wars of the 1940s and '50s.

He was active in the Harry Bridges Defense Committee and in events protesting the Reichstag Fire Trial held in Germany under Adolf Hitler. He supported the In-

ternational Workers' Order in the 1939-41 "The Yanks Are Not Coming" campaign against U.S. involvement in World War II.

He was president of the local council of the then-Congress of Industrial Organizations during a battle against the Taft-Hartley Act under President Harry Truman.

In the 1960s, Mr. Bulcke served as a longshore labor arbitrator until his retirement, after which he was active in the ILWU Pensioners' Association.

Mr. Bulcke is survived by his wife, Helen; his son, Ken, of Windsor; daughter, Muriel, of San Jose; and his stepson, Bruce Benner, of Grass Valley.

A memorial service is pending.

— Stephen Schwartz



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

On behalf of all future users of this oral history, the Regional Oral History Office thanks those persons who made its production possible.

Labor historian Estolv Ward, after completing oral histories of Louis Goldblatt and Henry Schmidt, went ahead to interview Germain Bulcke, even though at that time funds for publication did not exist.

To complete the triad by preserving the memoirs of these three key persons in the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, Ward and Bulcke spent the year of 1983-84 planning, researching, and interviewing.

As in previous oral histories done by Estolv Ward, his wife Angela, herself a labor activist from the early CIO days, did a large share of the production work, first transcribing the interview tapes into rough typescript and then typing the finished copy.

Then the Regional Oral History Office called upon the ILWU local unions which had been helped by Jerry Bulcke in his various roles as President of Local 10 (San Francisco Longshoremen); International Vice-President; and ILWU-PMA arbitrator in Southern California. Funding was forthcoming from the unions and from individual labor supporters listed below.

We also wish to thank Sam Kagel, Coast arbitrator, for the introduction he wrote on behalf of Jerry Bulcke, his long-time co-worker in the sensitive business of labor arbitration.

Willa Baum  
Division Head  
Regional Oral History Office

### Donors to the Germain Bulcke Oral History Project:

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International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union

Oral History Series

Goldblatt, Louis, Working Class Leader in the ILWU, 1934-1977, 1980.

Schmidt, Henry, Secondary Leadership in the ILWU, 1933-1966, 1983.

Bulcke, Germain, Longshore Leader and ILWU-Pacific Maritime Association  
Arbitrator, 1984.

Leonard, Norman, Life of a Leftist Lawyer, 1986.

Ward, Estolv Ethan, Organizing and Reporting on Labor in the East Bay,  
California and the West, 1925-1987, 1989.





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## INTRODUCTION

Jerry Bulcke was an active trade Unionist who became an acceptable, competent Labor Arbitrator. Jerry's labor history is, I'm sure, set forth in the following pages.

In order to judge his background in labor relations, it should be noted that he was elected President of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, Local 10, in 1938, 1942, 1943, 1945 and 1946; that he was elected to the Union's International Executive Board in 1945; that he was President of the San Francisco CIO Council in 1947; and that from 1947 until 1960, he served as the second Vice President of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union. From 1951 to 1959, he was the ILWU's Local 10 representative on the Area Labor Relations Committee, and from 1952 to 1960, he was a member of the Coast Negotiating Committee.

This short resume of his trade union activities is noted in order to understand his work when he became an Arbitrator under the terms of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union and the Pacific Coast Maritime Contract. This background resulted in Jerry not only knowing the industry, but also provided him with the opportunity to become acquainted with the problems of Longshoremen, Clerks and the Employers. It gave him an intimate view and understanding of Employer/Union relationships on the Pacific Coast in the longshore industry, and an intimate view of the Collective Bargaining Agreement covering that industry.

This background bore fruit for the Longshoremen, Clerks and Employers in the industry when, in 1960, he was appointed the Southern California Arbitrator under the terms of the ILWU-PMA Collective Bargaining Agreement. In order to understand the importance of that position, let me give a brief history of the arbitration procedure and process of the Pacific Coast Longshore industry.

In 1948, at the end of a Coastwide strike, the Union and the Employers determined that in order to provide for settlement of disputes that occur on the job, there would be set up a Coast Arbitrator covering issues involving the entire Coast and for the appointment of Area Arbitrators--one for the State of Washington, one for the State of Oregon, one for the San Francisco Bay area, and one for Southern California. These Arbitrators were to be and are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week for the settlement of disputes.

From the point of view of the Union, the immediate settlement of disputes is extremely important since many of them arise because of conditions onboard ship or dock, and a ship has schedules which may not retain it in port; therefore, the need for an Arbitrator to view the evidence that might be involved

must be done while the ship is in port. From the point of view of the Employers, disputes should be settled immediately. Ships should not be held up while arbitration hearings are going on, since there is a need for a fast turn-around of ships, and the cost of retaining a ship in port beyond its schedule is extremely expensive.

It is with these principles in mind that the Union and PMA determined to set up what I refer to as "instant" arbitration. To carry out this design, an Arbitrator was appointed in each of the areas noted above.

In 1948, in two of the areas, persons with Union backgrounds were selected as the Arbitrators. In Southern California, the first Area Arbitrator was an attorney, not connected with either the Union or the Employers. He was an excellent Arbitrator but the problem of his availability led the Parties in 1960 to determine that they wanted to have someone who would be available for immediate hearings and decisions on cases that would arise.

By that time, the Parties had agreed to appoint as Arbitrators in the four areas men who were practical, who came out of the industry and who knew the industry; and that two of the Area Arbitrators would be selected from the Employer ranks, and two of the Area Arbitrators from the ranks of the Longshoremens.

This is the only system of this kind, of which I am aware, in the United States in which the Area Arbitrators come directly out of the ranks of either Management or the Union. Each Party to the Agreement retained the right to dismiss an Arbitrator at any time. Since this system has been in effect (1948), neither the Union nor the Employers have availed themselves of that right. In short, Arbitrators have served out their terms and have only been replaced when they decided to retire or have died.

It was within this arbitration mechanism that there came the need for an Arbitrator, out of the industry, for Southern California; and, Jerry Bulcke was agreed upon, by both the Employers and the Union, for that position in 1960. When he was so appointed, Jerry resigned his various longshore positions.

Jerry retired from his position as Southern California Area Arbitrator in 1966 and, during his tenure as Arbitrator, he heard over 400 cases.

I have been the Coast Arbitrator since 1948 and I am, of course, completely familiar with the Decisions that were rendered by Jerry. His Decisions were succinct, dealt with the issue involved, were based upon an understanding of the Agreement between the Parties, and clearly took into account the "practical" responsibilities of his Decisions. Jerry, as an Arbitrator, was highly regarded by the Employers, just as he was highly regarded when he was a Union representative. Jerry's monument is not only his work as a trade Unionist, but also his very successful career as an Arbitrator. As such, he "called them as he saw them" and that's all anyone can ask of an Arbitrator.

Sam Kagel

10 February 1984  
San Francisco, California

## INTERVIEW HISTORY

It was a time to remember: the San Francisco waterfront of the Thirties and Forties; class warfare out of which grew one of the most vivid and colorful organizations of working people America has ever seen. The San Francisco longshoremen.

"Lords of the Docks," they were called. And they came to think of themselves with that glow, too. They had earned the title in battle; they were blooded.

Out of the 1934 Coastwise longshore strike and its dramatic climax in the San Francisco General Strike, plus other struggles to survive and consolidate the gains of their new union, a learning leadership surfaced.

From the top down, most of this leadership was foreign-born. This was quite natural, for in those days (and probably to this day) most Pacific Coast longshoremen had come from far away to make their living in the Promised Land. At least eighty percent, men say.

First was the Australian, Harry Bridges, who came early to the fore because he already knew what must be done. Union-building, however, is not a one-man job. Volunteers rushed in to help, and from their ranks came the leadership that saw the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union through its youth and adolescence into the days of public acceptance, maturity, and a reasonable way of conducting the necessary relationship with employers.

Among the foremost of these volunteers were two young men of European origin, union-minded but inexperienced, eager to learn. They were Henry Schmidt, of German-Dutch parentage, and Germain Bulcke, son of a pair of Belgian radicals. Both had come to America under stress of one kind or another, and during the early, difficult years of their American experience they alternated in the presidency of the San Francisco Longshoremen, Local 10, ILWU.

First as a newspaper reporter and later as a CIO official, it was my privilege to see these men in action and to know and work with them. The years have gone by and it is now time to remember. So I have done or helped to do the oral histories of several ILWU leaders, including Schmidt and, at long last but by no means least, Jerry Bulcke.

With Bulcke, as with most of the other leaders, it was a labor of love and hope, laced with humor and tragedy, with success most of the time. And out of it came Jerry Bulcke, now in his eighties, above all else a union man and a family man. He is a story-teller. And he has a wife, Rusty, who helps him tell his stories. Says she knows every one of them. I believe her. I also know that what he tells is true. It could not be otherwise. He is not an embroiderer or fictioneer.

The oral history interviews took place half-and-half, some at the Bulcke home in the Potrero district of San Francisco, some in my Berkeley home. Although Rusty does not appear as a speaker in the script, she was an important adjunct to the effort. For when she began to shake her head at her husband, I knew he had forgotten or mis-remembered something.

Apropos, Rusty tells this family story: She, "Jerry, how could you get along without me?" He, "I'd get me another woman."

As we neared the end of what Bulcke wished to say, a strange mechanical malfeasance interrupted. The tape speeded up somehow, for reasons as yet unexplained, to the point where what he said became increasingly difficult to understand. Result, we had to re-do the last hour of his tapes.

Rusty congratulated us. She said his final finale was much better than his original finale.

So be it.

9 February, 1984  
Berkeley, California

Estoly Ethan Ward,  
Interviewer-Editor



## I BEGINNINGS, BELGIUM AND AMERICA

(Interview 1: 14 June, 1983)##

Family Background

- Ward: This is Interview #1 with Germain Bulcke, former vice president of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union and even more formerly at various times president of Longshore Local #10, the parent local of the longshore industry on the Pacific Coast and Hawaii. Germain, I believe you are better known as Jerry, isn't that so?
- Bulcke: That's right -
- Ward: - and how do you spell Jerry? With a G or with a J?
- Bulcke: I spell it with a J.
- Ward: All right; I believe you have just passed your 81st birthday.
- Bulcke: That's correct - on the 18th of May I became 81.
- Ward: All right, Jerry, let's go back 81 years and tell me where you were born, the circumstances of the family, the kind of people your parents were, and where you grew up.
- Bulcke: I was born in a little village called D U D Z E L E and it is near a larger city known as Bruges in French or Brugge in Flemish.

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##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes see page 222.

- Ward: Oh, yes. I've seen Bruges - it is a wonderful city, very old, very medieval, lots of castles and canals, lovely flowers and things -
- Bulcke: That's correct. It attracts people from all over the world. It's very interesting. I went to school there . . .
- Ward: And you graduated under peculiar circumstances?
- Bulcke: Yes; during the war years when the Germans were in control of the country most of the schools were closed, and used as barracks for the German soldiers. I was fortunate that I got special tutoring from a teacher, so that I was able to keep up with what would have been normal schooling. During the last few months of the war I was able to attend the college in Bruges that was specifically set up to teach children who had lost out on most of their schooling; in other words, it provided more concentrated teaching than would have been available under normal circumstances.
- Ward: Let's make this clear; the country of your birth is Belgium?
- Bulcke: Belgium - that's correct - the town I mentioned is in West Flanders between Bruges and the North Sea.
- Ward: Bruges is not too far from the sea, is it?
- Bulcke: No, it's probably 10 miles at the most.
- Ward: Your dad was a tailor?
- Bulcke: My dad was a tailor; he was born with something wrong with his right leg and he never walked on two legs. His right leg was normal to the knee and then it got a little small and crooked. So, he learned to walk on crutches. In those days a person so afflicted physically either became tailors or shoemakers mainly because they could work inside. My dad started to learn the tailor trade when he was 13 years old; lived with a family - the man was a tailor. When he was 16

Bulcke: years old he went to Paris and worked there for two and a half or three years in the tailor trade. This where you learn to make . . .

Ward: Sewing machines?

Bulcke: No - no - no - paper things . . .

Ward: Oh, the patterns!

Bulcke: Yes, that's where you learned to make patterns.

Ward: I see.

Bulcke: And for all the years I remember, my dad only made four or five patterns, and those were for the steady customers who did not change. Otherwise, he would merely take the customers' measures and would draw them on the cloth - on the coat or whatever; did not use patterns at all. He was well known with a steady trade. We generally had from three to five men who worked for dad in the tailor shop and lived with us.

Ward: Oh, your economic situation was fairly good, then?

Bulcke: In those days, it was good, yes, very good. My mother had, all told, ten children. Of course, unfortunately, only three of us survived.

Ward: What was the cause of the deaths?

Bulcke: That I don't know - most of them - all but two had passed away before I was born. I have an older sister. She's 87 and lives here in San Francisco. My younger sister passed away in the early Sixties in Belgium.

Ward: You're the only male survivor.

Bulcke: I'm the only male survivor in the family.

Ward: What was the political thought in your family, if any?

Bulcke: My dad was at that time what was called a Democrat, which was pretty much left-wing; he was very active politically; particularly at election time he would go off and speak for those candidates that he felt were of similar opinion to himself. He was quite outspoken and active in the political field.

Ward: Was he anti-Royalist?

### A War Adventure

Bulcke: Yes, very much so. In 1914 the first World War broke out and I had an odd experience. My dad had agreed that I should go to what was called a boarding school. At that time I wanted to become an electrician, so in that school the rules were that it was a boarding school and you had to be there two weeks before school started. This was in Liege which is on the border of Germany and which was at that time a defended city - they had forts around it. This is where the war broke out, by the way - the first movement. Well, I arrived there.

Ward: What was the name of that city?

Bulcke: Liege - it's spelled -

Ward: Oh! famous!

Bulcke: Yes, famous. The school was on the outskirts and I arrived there as instructed two weeks before the term started. However, on August the 4th the war broke out; most of the teachers were former soldiers and were pulled into the service. The dean of the school told us to go back home. Of course, everything was a mix-up and I managed to get on a train that was going to go back where I was from. But when we got out of town, probably thirty or forty miles, we were pulled to the side to allow military trains to go through - troop trains - and there we sat.

Ward: German troop trains?

Bulcke: No, no - no, these were Belgian. The war had just started - reinforcements rushing to the front. So, we sat there and there was no food on the train and we all got quite hungry and . . .

Ward: How old were you then?

Bulcke: I was twelve years old - a little past twelve. So, I noticed a farm not too far away from the tracks and I asked one of the train men if it was all right if I went there to see if I could find something to eat. And he said, well, he didn't know how long the train would be there; might be another day. Maybe it would be a good idea. So, I got to the farm and of course the people had left and the cattle were still there - the chickens and the pigs. The house was - there just was no one there. And I found quite a bit of food - cheese and ham -

Ward: Any locked doors?

Bulcke: No, the doors weren't locked and so I had myself something to eat and made up a parcel of food, started back and the train took off. There I was, stranded. So I walked to the next village; there again most of the people had left. I found myself a bicycle, took it and started home. Two days later I got home. On the way --

Ward: Any food in the meantime?

Bulcke: I got fed by people that were left; the further I went the more people I found. There were all kinds of scary stories about what the Germans were doing, and so on.

So, I got home in good shape and then there was a short period when it was very hard to find out anything; how the war was progressing, or what. Where I lived it was very close to Holland and quite a few people left and went there. Some even went to England. I remember the Mayor of the town - he went to Holland too.

Ward: But your parents were still there?

Bulcke: My parents were still there; we stayed. A lot of people stayed. So, about a week after I got home, I'm walking across the little town square one morning and here came a soldier on a motorcycle; he had a small machine gun between the handles and I looked at it and I couldn't figure him out. I knew he wasn't Belgian and I had a picture in my mind that all German soldiers wore spiked helmets, but he didn't have a spiked helmet on. He had a leather hat or cap or something. He stopped and called me over. He spoke perfect French, and of course at that time I spoke French too. So, he asked me where the Mayor was - the Mayor's office - and I pointed to it and I said, "The Mayor isn't here; he left for Holland." So, he said, "Where's the Chief of Police?" And I said, "He's down the street a ways." "Would you go with me and show me?" he said. "So, okay." He pushed his motor bike and I walked next to him and I was still wondering what he was; I hadn't recognized the uniform.

Ward: No symbols?

Bulcke: Well, nothing to indicate. He spoke perfect French but I had a feeling that he wasn't French. We got to the door and I knocked on the door. Well, we only had one policeman and he was the whole police department.

He showed up in his uniform which normally he didn't wear and he recognized the man as a German soldier, all right. The policeman took his side gun off and handed it to the German, who said, "Oh, no - you're the peace man here; you keep your weapon and keep going the same way you usually do."

And he said, "Before long, in an hour or two, we'll have a few hundred German soldiers here." And sure enough about two hours later in marched a whole regiment - they call them "soldiers of the sea"; we call them Marines. They went to the various houses and asked how many people lived there and they assigned a certain number of soldiers

Bulcke: to each house. I remember that we had a large attic that was made off into three bedrooms where the men who worked for dad used to sleep. So, they assigned 16 German soldiers to our house. Nothing strange happened. I mean, they were quiet. Immediately there were orders put out that you had to be off the street at 8 o'clock at night and not be on the street before 6:30 or 7:00 - I forget which.

Ward: No resistance?

Bulcke: Oh, no, there was no fighting there -

Ward: No violence?

#### Behind The Lines

Bulcke: No - no violence. So, this is how the Germans took over. All during the war they used this area, not only in my home town but others near it, as a rest area. The trenches were 18 to 20 miles from us. You all know the history of Belgium, that for the whole war -

Ward: Those trenches remained very static.

Bulcke: They would move back and forth, back and forth. There was no break-through until close to the end of the war. And that's how we had the situation. During those years (this was mostly farming country) the Germans took over; the farmers had to declare how many acres they had in various produce, like potatoes, or whatever.

Ward: They commandeered food?

Bulcke: They commandeered food.

Ward: Did people get enough to eat?

Bulcke: No, we didn't get enough to eat, but we were able to manage in various ways. For instance, the farmer would sell you a calf or a pig and he would

Bulcke: report it stolen. It was up to you to get this stuff home.

If the Germans caught you sneaking foodstuffs home, you were deported to Germany; salt mines and stuff like that. Well, I remember one thing - we had bought a little pig, killed on the farm, and I brought it home in a baby buggy covered up just like a little baby.

Various things like that, you know, we would get by with. Also, the German soldiers stationed in our house had to go on patrol at night to protect the potato fields from people stealing. And the soldiers always came home with two or three sacks of potatoes; they shared them with us.

Ward: Oh, oh . . .

Bulcke: Oh, yeah, the soldiers - many - quite a few, which surprised us, were very much opposed to that war, but like any other soldier, they had to obey orders . . .

Ward: Some of them were decent fellows?

Bulcke: They were, they were. We had no real bad incidents in my home town during that whole time, except one. Our mailman- there was some way that people were able to sneak mail over from Holland and our mailman was helpful enough to distribute that mail and he got caught at it and they deported him. He never did come back. That's the manner in which things went on during the war years.

Ward: I see. How many languages do you speak?

Bulcke: Of course, during the war years I learned German which is not too different basically from Flemish or Hollands. Of course, my dad had insisted that we all spoke French at home, so I spoke French and Flemish, and then during the war years I learned German. My home town is close to the sea coast where during the summer months we had a lot of English speaking people who came there to the summer resorts, so I picked up a certain amount of English, not fluently, but I could get by with it.



Ward: Hmmm - well, then you had three or four languages?

Bulcke: Yes, well, three of them definitely. Of course, I really learned English after I came here.

### Mother's Tragic Death

Ward: Let's talk about your mother for a while - she must have been pretty busy, bearing ten children.

Bulcke: Well, it happened to my mother during February, 1915. We don't think it was a bomb. A lot of aircraft came over.

The Germans built an assembly place - there was a canal that goes to the North Sea and the Germans built an assembly plant for submarines on this canal right in our home town. And this was bombed by the Allies during the war years. They did not have precision bombing in those days and the bombs never hit it.

They hit everything else around there so there was a lot of anti-aircraft going all the time. By February, my dad and my sisters became blasé or something. At first, we all used to run down to the basement when the anti-aircraft started, and after a while we sort of forgot about it.

Ward: You felt lucky.

Bulcke: I guess so; anyway - my mother, she always ran down to the basement. This particular night there was bombardment as usual; you could set your clock by it. All of a sudden there was a big crash and we ran down to the basement; we think it was an anti-aircraft shell that exploded when it hit the house. Mother didn't get hit by the shrapnel but was hurt by the concussion. Also, she was badly bruised and shook up. She passed away two weeks later.

Ward: A tragedy; but what kind of a person was she?

Ward: Your father's politics, for instance, did she go along with that?

Bulcke: Oh, definitely. Of course, he was most active. Mother went along, you might say. She didn't do any public speaking or anything like that. My dad did that.

Ward: Well, that's the way it was in those days - the woman took care of the house?

Bulcke: That's right; she had her hands full, particularly when in normal times we had four or five guys that worked for dad and they lived with us. She had to do all the cooking. We also had a bar and a couple of billiard tables so we had quite a busy place.

Ward: But now the bar - did you sell to customers there?

Bulcke: Yeah, it was a regular bar; we sold beer, wine and whiskey; whatever, cigars and cigarettes. We had quite a clientele; the bar generally was fairly busy on weekends and nights.

Ward: Now, anything particular around age 12, 13, 14 that you want to talk about? Let's see now; in 1914 when the war broke out you were 12?

Bulcke: I was twelve; as I explained, well before the end of the war, I went to this college in Bruges.

Ward: Yes.

Bulcke: I finished that shortly after the war was over; things were getting back to normal. So in 1918, when I became 16 years old, Belgium passed a new law making military service mandatory for all males. This had not been in existence before. My dad was convinced that although the war had ended, it was not over. He said they made a peace agreement because they were just worn out - did not have the money to go on. He didn't think the peace agreement was a good one and he predicted that another world war would start in 1932.

Ward: Just a little bit previous?

Bulcke: Yeah, but the one thing he agreed with me on - he didn't want me to be a soldier and I didn't want to be a soldier, so . . .

Ward: At what age would you have been conscripted?

Bulcke: Eighteen -

Ward: So, you had two years to go?

Bulcke: Yeah. The system was that they called you in for a medical examination and if you were medically okay you were not allowed to go out of the country. You might be called up at nineteen or whatever . . .

Ward: Whatever they felt?

#### Getting Out of There

Bulcke: Yeah, I fortunately had relatives in America; they were the two sons of my mother's sister and they were around Rochester, New York.

Ward: They were your cousins, then?

Bulcke: They were my cousins and they had emigrated. I knew that before you could get a passport you needed a letter from someone in America to state that you would not become a public charge, so I started to get my passport. It took time to do that and eventually I got the letters from my cousins.

So, eventually I got the passport. It was okayed by the American Consul, all set, but the problem was transportation. In those days, there were no airlines and you had to go by ship. Most of the ships, of course, had been destroyed during the war and there was not the normal shipment. I fortunately had an uncle who lived in Antwerp, which is the big port in Belgium; he had a bar and restaurant and hotel and most of his clientele were mates and captains of ships. He had been there many years and was well established, so I got in touch with

Bulcke: him and he managed to get me a second class ticket on a ship. But the ship didn't leave until the latter part of October, I think it was.

Ward: That would be 19--?

Bulcke: I'm talking now about 1920.

Ward: Oh, that means you were already of draft age?

Bulcke: Oh, yeah, I was. I got my passport and everything before I was eighteen, but I couldn't get transportation before October, 1920. The secretary of our township came to me one day and said, "Jerry, you better make yourself scarce - I just got your notice to go in for military examination." He knew I was going to leave or try to leave. I called my uncle in Antwerp and he said, "Come here." Which I did . . .

Ward: Could you call on the telephone, then?

Bulcke: Oh, yeah - we only had one telephone in town, but you could call out . . . .

Ward: And everybody listened?

Bulcke: Everybody listened. So, in the meantime a fellow who was from a neighborhood town and had been in America for a number of years (as a matter of fact, he was in the service during the First World War) came back on a visit, met my sister and in two weeks time they got married. That changed the picture quite a bit. He had a return ticket from Antwerp to New York and through my uncle I changed my ticket to steerage passage on the same ship as my sister and brother-in-law, so that all three of us came over together in September. But while waiting, I was staying with my uncle and he said, "I'll bet the police will come looking for you." It was no secret that I had a passport and had not answered the call. The secretary of my home town had reported me missing, see, so my uncle arranged for me to get on board ship two days before it was leaving. I was aboard and when the people started coming I stood next to the gangplank watching them

Bulcke: come aboard. Pretty soon here come two policemen and they asked for the guy who was checking off people; of course, he didn't know me. They gave my name and asked if I was aboard. He said, "No," and they said, "Well, we'll be down here and when he shows up, give us the signal." Of course, I was already aboard. At four o'clock - toot-toot - the ship went and that was it. So, that's how I got over here.

First Glimpse of America

Ward: How was Rochester?

Bulcke: I didn't go to Rochester; my brother-in-law lived in Detroit and naturally I went with them. There it was 1920 and there was a lot of unemployment. The automobile factories were down, depression had set in. My brother-in-law took me around and showed me --

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Ward: Jerry, you were saying something about your brother-in-law in Detroit -

Bulcke: Yes, he took me around and showed me where the various automobile factories were. He was a brick-layer by trade and he also wasn't, well, at that time he wasn't employed regularly, because things were slow. I had no luck at the factories; they were not hiring.

So a man who was a tailor who had learned his trade from my dad lived in Detroit. Naturally, I looked him up to say hello. He said, "You know how to sew?" And I did, though naturally I wasn't an expert yet. And he said, "I'll see what I can do." He got me a job with a pants maker; he made nothing but pants. I got \$10 a week, and I was glad to get it.

Ward: Did you live on it?

Bulcke: Well, I was paying \$8.50 board and room at my sister's.

Ward: That gave you \$1.50 to spend?

Bulcke: Yeah, and it cost me ten cents a day for car fare, so I had 60 cents left at the end of the week. And I'd go to a ten cent show and the rest bought one package of cigarets and that was it.

Well, anyway, at this tailor shop he was making pants for various clothing stores and I noticed that they were not high grade pants. I could tell; I learned to make pants at home; and we shrink them and stretch them - shape them - and they were never shaped here. So, after I was there a couple of months, I said to the man, "Look, how come you don't shape the pants?" We did that on all dress pants; we didn't on work clothes. He said, "Oh, my god, I don't know how to do that." "Do you?" "Sure I do."

He was getting a dollar a pair for the pants we made; we made 40 pair a day. We had a young lady there doing the hand sewing, things like that. And I did the pressing. Anyway, he said, "Are you sure?" And I said, "Of course, I'm sure. I learned this, I know how." So, he came in with two pair that he got from a clothing store; he watched me doing them and said, "Oh, my God, you are ruining them." I said, "Oh, no," and sure enough, he took the two pair back and got an understanding whereby he would get all these kinds of pants, at \$2, double the money he got before. It meant a lot more work for me, and after about two weeks of that I said to him, "Look, I want a raise."

We argued for a while and he said, "How much you want?" And I said, "\$25 dollars a week." And he finally came up to \$16 or \$18, I forget, and he wouldn't go any higher. So, I said, "Okay, I'll give you two weeks notice. If in two weeks time, you don't raise my wages to \$25, I quit." Well, he didn't believe it; the last day, I said, "Well, that's it." And he said, "I'll raise your wages to \$20." I said, "Too late, I quit."

Bulcke: I forgot to tell you this, but at home we also had a barber shop; my dad was a barber . . .

Ward: All over the place!

Bulcke: Yeah, we only operated the shop on Friday afternoon and Saturday and my dad taught me how to shave and cut hair. As a matter of fact, a lot of the older men preferred me to shave them because they said I had a softer touch than Dad did. Most of the time that Dad was cutting somebody's hair I would shave him. If he wasn't cutting the hair I would soap up and then Dad would shave him and then the next one.

Anyway, I knew how to do that all right but I was scared of this barber shop with the hot towels and tonic and stuff; it scared the pants off of me, I didn't dare do it. So, this tailor friend of mine said, "Why don't you go to the barber school? You'll learn quickly there."

Ward: You mean, this is - -?

Bulcke: In Detroit, yes, after I quit being a pants maker, presser, I went to the barber school. The man that ran it happened to be Czechoslovakian; he spoke English, of course.

I told him that I don't have to learn to shave or cut hair; I know how to do that, but this business of the hot towels and massages and all the other stuff they did in a barber shop, I didn't know how. I wanted to learn that.

He picked up a razor (those were the days they had straight razors) and handed it to me and said, "Can you test that? See if it's all right." So, I tested it the way my dad had taught me and I said, "No, that razor is dull; it needs to be honed." He didn't say anything, laid it aside and picked up another one and gave it to me to test. I told him, "That one is all right." He gave me a third one and I said, "Well, it's sharp but it's been honed too much on one side. It's crooked."

Bulcke: He said, "Well, you sure know your business. I'll make a deal with you." He says, "I can show you the hot towel and the massage and the tonic things in five minutes." He said, "I need someone here to help me."

So, he offered me the job at \$25 a week to be an instructor. I accepted, of course, and I was there a couple of months or so. I noticed a man who had been sitting there. (At the school they don't charge anything; the customers are shaved free.) I had seen this man, fairly well-dressed, sitting there quite a while even though there were a few empty chairs, so I finally went over to him and said, "You're next."

"No," he said, "I'm looking for a good barber and I haven't seen any here except you, the way you went around and corrected and took over when the guy almost ran out of hair, or the guy who was having trouble shaving. How about coming to work for me?" (In those days, it was 15 cents for a shave and 25 cents for a haircut.)

Ward: That was pretty steep.

Bulcke: Yeah, and so anyway they paid \$25 a week and half over fifty. In other words, you got \$25 whether you made it or not and if you get more than \$50 in a week, you would get half of that. That was the way the thing worked.

I had to apply for a license which I had no trouble getting; I passed the test and went to work for him. As a matter of fact, he had three shops. He didn't do any work himself; he'd be around and have somebody in charge. Starting out, the shop I worked in had six chairs and I had the sixth chair. It took me quite a while to build up any trade because people generally picked the first chair, you know. Only the left overs would get to me -

Ward: You were way down the line, in back?

Bulcke: Yeah, so I never made \$50. Anyway, I eventually decided that this was not getting me anywhere,



Bulcke: So I decided to open my own shop. I rented a little place in downtown Detroit, made it a two chair shop and did fairly well; it took me a little while but I told some of my former customers I was going to open my own shop, so I had a certain following.

Ward: Those were the days that a man didn't shave himself.

Bulcke: Very few people did. A lot of my customers were salesmen in the stores and they had to be shaved every day, stuff like that, so it wasn't bad. I was there about four months when the building was sold. As a matter of fact they built a high rise there; though the new owners said they would see to it that I would have a shop in the building, they raised the rent twice what it was. I could not afford that; I couldn't have made it. In the meantime my brother-in-law, even though being a bricklayer, had bought a little place where they sold near beer. It was right across from the Freuhaft Trailer Company which was a very busy place. There were hundreds of workers there. The place did pretty good business, so I opened up a shop in that building. Of course, besides near beer and home brew, we had whiskey.

Ward: Where did you get the whiskey?

Bulcke: Oh, bought it from the bootleggers who smuggled it in from Canada, right across the river; no problem about liquor there, or home brew.

Well, so one day I had a customer who had a bad cold and said, "Gee, what I need is a shot of whiskey to help me with the cold," and like a stupnagel I said, "Well, we happen to have some." And we kept the bottle of whiskey in my sister's sewing machine; you know the head puts down, and we had the whiskey under that. So he saw where I got it and I gave him the shot of whiskey. He paid for it and said, "Thank you, that's good."

Out he goes, and comes back two hours later with a warrant. I was the only one home; my sister was away somewhere and my brother-in-law was off working.

Bulcke: So, they arrested me; took me down to the jail and I was there overnight. My brother-in-law got me out the next morning. I had to go before the judge and got fined \$200, but my brother-in-law paid for it and that was that.

Ward: Why did he pay for it?

Bulcke: Well, it was his business. I mean, I wasn't really selling the stuff. I just had my little barbershop there, but I took care of the business during the day when there wasn't much going on. I got trapped in that one, but in those days it didn't mean much; you know, hell, people were . . .

Ward: Probably brought you more business.

Bulcke: Well, that was my experience in Detroit. Then my brother-in-law sold the place when my sister and he separated.

#### Working in the Auto Plants

Bulcke: One of my customers was working in one of the automobile plants where they were hiring people. So, I told him I was out of business. "Why don't you come work for us? I'll get you a job." So, I went to the plant and he hired me and I worked in the stock room. It was a body building plant; they made all kinds of automobile bodies.

Ward: Parts? Handling parts?

Bulcke: Yeah, in the stock room; whatever they needed, you know. Then the foreman of the stockroom transferred to a different part of the plant; he liked me very much and he worked in what they call "final assembly." There, when the bodies were all finished, you put in the door locks and you cleaned off the upholstery.

I transferred to his department, and then I transferred to another one which made more money. In those days they put tops on the cars; you had

Bulcke: the leatherette sort of top. It was piece work; we got \$10 a car but there were six of us in the gang, see - one on each corner and one on each side. Bang, bang, spit tacks - we had a mouth full of tacks with a tack hammer, and of course, we were smart enough not to make too many because they would cut the rates.

We quit when we made \$11 a day each. If we did not average over \$10 a day, that was fine and we didn't have to work our tails off. Sure enough another group was hired. They were hungry, I guess; they started making \$12, \$13 a day and first thing you know instead of a dollar the company cut the rate to 75 cents. So, I said the hell with this noise. I transferred back to final assembly, which was not piece work.

I then heard about Ford paying \$5 a day at piece work and you could make more. So, I hired out at Ford and I was put on one of the first assembly lines. I was assembling magneto needles. That was before they used batteries.

I was there probably four or five weeks when on a Sunday I went to a wedding and you know, a lot of home brew, what have you; I had a hell of a hang-over the next morning, on Monday. Also I had developed a bit of a diarrhea. In the plant they had a men's room and they had a guard who took your number when you went in . . .

Ward: How long you stayed in there?

Bulcke: Yeah, and how often. Shortly after I got to work I had to go, and about an hour later I had to go again. And the guard said, "You were just here? What's the matter with you?" "Oh, I said, "something I ate didn't set well and it's given me the runs." "Why don't you go see the nurse?" "Well, if it keeps up, I will."

Sure enough, twenty minutes later I had to go again. So, he said, "Damn it all, did you see the nurse?" I said, "She was out." I hadn't, but then I thought I had better go see her. The nurse asked

Bulcke: me what was wrong. I told her. She told me what to take; they didn't have it there, but by that time I am over it pretty much and I go back to my bench. There were men working on both sides; it was a long bench, and you had a packet of tickets. When you did your part you put your ticket on it. It was piece work.

I was kind of mad at what happened and I said to no one in particular, "What this joint needs is a union." The only unions in the plants in those days were the Tool and Diemakers - they were the only ones organized. And I really didn't say it to anyone in particular. I didn't really know the guys working; we were working too fast trying to make a dollar.

So, about fifteen minutes later one of the high school boys they use for runners came and said, "They want to see you in the office." So, I go in the office and there is my check all made out. And I said, "What for? Why? What happened?"

And the guy, the clerk who gave me the check, looked around and said quietly, "You were heard to say 'this place needs a union'; that's poison. I agree with you, but there's nothing I can do about it. Good luck!"

Ward: Oh, ho!

#### Marriage, Parenthood, and Moving

Bulcke: And I was out; I went to work, oh, in a couple of different factories. It wasn't difficult. At that time, if you had any know-how at all you could go to work in most automobile plants, and I went to work in an automobile plant. Then I got married.

Ward: And your wife's name was?

Bulcke: Marie, Marie.

Ward: What kind of background did she have?

Bulcke: Her father was Belgian and her mother was too, but her mother came over when she was a little girl.

Ward: I see.

Bulcke: Her father raised that famous Belgian endive - very expensive, and it was even then. He learned how to raise it in the old country, I guess. And they used to take it to the market and to certain hotels; I mean, he did pretty well.

By the time I met my wife, her dad had passed away and they had an 80-acre farm, which they later sub-divided because the dad was gone.

Well, anyway, I got married with her; her mother had bought some property about 40 miles north of Detroit, at Anchorville. It used to be a harbor for lumber, but the lumber was all gone.

There was an old general store there, and she bought the property with the store and everything. She asked me to take over the store. Her husband (she was married by that time) was a builder and he built a new building for us, new store, more modern, of course. The property had a couple of summer homes in the back, one of which the mother-in-law used. I ran the store for a couple of years.

In a neighboring town, not very far away, an A&P opened up (Atlantic and Pacific) and my business started to go down. Couldn't compete. In those days most people did their own baking, particularly the farmers; flour was a big item. I couldn't compete with A&P on the flour. When they had a special sale, I went there and bought 20 or 25 sacks and sold them at the same price, trying to hold my customers. But that didn't work out. I could see it go down and I realized that the thing was going to hell.

Bulcke: But a few months before, a friend of my brother-in-law, also a Belgian -

Ward: You moved socially in Belgian -

Bulcke: No, I didn't; I stayed away from them, but my brother-in-law, my sister - lots of times when I was there, these people were there . . .

Ward: Why did you stay away from them - the Belgians?

Bulcke: Well, in Detroit particularly, there were about 25,000 Belgians - the stores - they talked Flemish all the way; I wasn't ashamed of it but I wanted the American way of doing things.

Ward: You wanted to become an American?

Bulcke: Right. So, this guy, I had met him before; he had gone to San Francisco and he was back on a visit, so I said to him, "What do you do in San Francisco?" "Oh," he said, "I work on ships."

I thought he meant the shipyards. "What do you mean?" He said, "No, no, I load cargo and discharge cargo." Something dawned in my mind, and I said, "If I came out there, do you think I could get a job?" He said, "I think so." That stuck in my mind for about four or five months before I finally sold the store. One other reason why I wanted to come to California, and particularly San Francisco, was that an aunt of mine was a governess with a rich family before the first World War and they had traveled California. She had come back with books full of dried flowers; just wild about California, you know. She had lived in Santa Barbara and San Francisco.

Ward: You'd heard a lot about California?

Bulcke: Our daughter was about nine months old. So, I said to my wife, "Look, you stay with your mother. I'm going to San Francisco and find out whether or not I can get a job there."

Bulcke: So, this fellow lived in Daly City; I had his address and went to see him, asked him what it looked like, could I get a job? He was working at the Admiral Line and said, "Well, I think so; you come along with me."

He took me down and showed me the boss, Peterson, who was the superintendent and told me, "That's the guy you ask," so I went up to Mr. Peterson. I said, "What's the chance, you know, of coming to work here?" He looked me up and down; I was all of 23 years old, and he said, "Have you ever done this kind of work before?" I said, "Yes," and he said, "Where?" I said, "In Detroit."

Well, in Detroit they are all cargo ships, you see. Of course, he knew that. And he said, "Well, at least you knew the difference between a ship and a streetcar; join the union and be here at 8:00 o'clock in the morning." And that's how I started on the Admiral Line. I went and joined the Blue Book Union. Of course, at that time . .

Ward: You had no option?

Bulcke: No option. I didn't know anything about it, but I found out later on. And that is how I started longshoring and I've stayed here ever since.

### A Long Look Back

Ward: That's quite a story. Before we started taping you said you had a story to tell, something that happened after you were eighteen. Have you included that in what you just told me now?

Bulcke: The thing I didn't tell you that just occurred to me; you know, I told you about my mother getting killed. I got hurt too, but not that time. When I was 14 years old, the Germans ordered all 14-year olds to work for them -

Ward: What kind of work?

Bulcke: Oh, we worked behind the trenches, about the second line of defense. We repaired communication trenches, we discharged ammunition out of box cars, that kind of work.

Ward: I see.

Bulcke: And we built our own shanty, a lean-to thing where we slept. We got fed from the field kitchens like the soldiers did and, of course, the bombardment was every so often, you know, from the other side.

Well, this particular time there were 48, 52 young men my age and a little older sleeping in this thing and a shell hit the end of it; killed eight or nine of them and hurt quite a number. I was lucky to be on the other end.

Of course, the thing started burning and the rest of us, we all ran out. They were still shelling; a shell dropped, I can't tell you how, but they were dropping all around and I'm running, you see, and a shrapnel piece hit me right here - (showing left hand)

Ward: Oh, yes!

Bulcke: Well, the back of my hand was laying right over here. (turned back toward the wrist). I got to a first aid station, but they were busy taking care of German soldiers who had been hurt, and they let me sit there for quite a while. I finally got to the first-aid man; he was not a doctor, he was just a medic. He threw some powder on it and I wrapped my hand and he said, "The hospital is a couple of miles back." So, I stumbled down ..

Ward: Did you walk there?

Bulcke: That's the only way you could go.

Ward: You were fourteen?



Bulcke: I was fourteen; about fourteen and a half, thereabouts, because it was in September and I was 14 in May. So, I got to the hospital and of course, there were ambulances and German soldiers laying outside on stretchers. Naturally I was a civilian, so it took quite a while before I got to see a doctor. He unwrapped it, looked at it and said, "I'll have to cut your hand off." It was all swollen and I said to him, "You are not cutting my hand off." "Well," he said, "blood poisoning will set in and it will kill you." I said, "Okay, but I am not going to have my hand cut off." So, he put some stuff on it, wrapped it up good and then I had to walk home from there, but fortunately I got lifts.

Ward: You got a lift?

Bulcke: Yeah, you know, German soldiers were the only ones driving around. They would see me with this hand all wrapped up and I would hold it up and they'd stop, so I got home all right. And the thing healed; there's some nerves that were cut but it never bothered me.

Ward: Yes, you have full control.

Bulcke: Full control.

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(Interview 2: 17 June, 1983)

### Those German Officers

Ward: Jerry, I believe you had a story to tell about an incident in your father's barber shop.

Bulcke: That's correct. At home we had a barber shop which operated normally on Friday and Saturday. We also had a bar room where we sold liquor, cigars and cigarettes and so forth, and we had a couple of billiard tables.

Bulcke: During the war when the German Army was occupying our area many of the soldiers would come to the barber shop to have their hair cut or get shaved or whatever. One day there were probably, as I recall, eight or nine German soldiers awaiting their turn to be taken care of when in walked one of their officers. He was a typical Prussian in his actions, a young man who obviously had been through all the military training. Immediately, all the soldiers jumped up and saluted him, and he immediately went to the chair.

Ward: Ahead of all those who were waiting, huh?

Bulcke: Yes, he just ignored them - he looked at them - he did return the salute as I remember, but he went right away to the chair. He didn't wait for anyone and sat down and he wanted a shave. Dad was going to shave him and he said, "If you cut me, I'll kill you." He had his sidearms on and at that moment, the way he talked, it sounded like he meant it. So Dad, says, "I will not shave you under a threat of that sort." And I said to Dad -

Ward: Oh, you were there?

Bulcke: I was there; I was working with my dad because I used to - I already knew how to shave - and so on - and I said to my dad, "Well, never mind, dad, I'll shave him." Dad didn't say anything, so I started to prepare the officer, put the towel on him; we didn't have any fancy barber chairs in those days. There was a slight thing which they could rest their heads on while they were being shaved, but not the modern type that we have now.

Anyway, I went ahead and soaped him up and shaved him and after it was over, he said, "How come you dared to shave me when I told your dad that if he cut me, I would kill him?"

I said to him, "If I had cut you I would have slashed your neck off completely; you were not going to have a chance to kill me." He looked at me and said, "I think you meant it." I said, "I sure did." And he said, "Well, a good thing it didn't happen," and off he went.

Bulcke: Those are some of the things that happened during those days with the officers. They were all quite arrogant and how those soldiers took it, I sometimes wondered about. I've noticed many times when they came out of the trenches where they had been for a month or so or six weeks, naturally they were tired and dirty. They would have to line up early in the morning; many of the officers somehow or other, were not as tall as most of the soldiers. The officers would bawl out the soldiers if their helmet wasn't just right, if there was anything out of the ordinary or not in order with the rules and so forth.

A number of times I've seen officers reach up and slap the soldier with open hand on both sides of the face, bawl them out and call them all kinds of names, and so forth. Most of them were really typical, Prussian-trained militaristic in their approach, and absolutely no regard for the soldiers and their problems. It was a time that really gave us a chance to see the difference between the average soldier and their officers.

Ward: Okay, that is a very interesting story and a frightening one, because I have had enough experience to know that in almost any army in this world some of that spirit still prevails.

### The Parental Prophecy

Ward: Now, you told us the story in the previous tape about your father's prophecy about World War II. He figured, as I recall, that it would occur probably around 1932, seven years before it actually did occur. Could you give me the background of your father's thinking on that subject?

Bulcke: Well, he came to the conclusion that although the peace had been signed both sides were pretty much at the end of their rope as far as money and supplies were concerned, and that the reason for which the war was started had not been accomplished.

Bulcke: One reason Germany sued for peace long before any of the Allied troops entered Germany was that they obviously knew that if they kept fighting a lot of their industrial establishment would have been destroyed, and they did not want that to happen. That was my dad's opinion why the Germans sued for peace, to protect their investments and the development they had established in many factories and coal mines and so forth. These had not been touched during the whole war because the war was fought away from Germany itself.

Ward: Did the developments on Germany's Eastern (Russian) Front have anything to do with that suing for peace, do you think?

Bulcke: It may have had a bearing on it, all right, but primarily my dad's opinion was that Germany didn't want to continue and have this destruction in their own land. Also by that time they had lost their colonies in Africa. They had lost out in China and were naturally in a weakened position. But as dad pointed out, the basis for which the war was fought was not reached by either side.

Ward: Was there any revolutionary talk in sympathy with the Bolsheviki among the German soldiers?

Bulcke: Not that I was aware of. There may have been, but at that time the soldiers who were stationed where I lived had been on the Western Front from the beginning. They were shifted around somewhat in France, and maybe some might have been shifted all the way around (to the eastern front) but most of them would be in the trenches for six weeks, four weeks, and then they would come back to what they called the rest period. Many of them were the same soldiers, and we saw them time and time again.

Ward: I see.

The Dissenting Draftees

Bulcke: A little incident. Two of the soldiers who were assigned to our home we got fairly well acquainted with. Both were from Alsace-Lorraine and they were not favorable to what was going on. Of course, they couldn't help themselves. They had been drafted into the German army, and they were not liked by the rest of the soldiers in their company because they were considered to be French.

They talked quite often; we met them a number of times; they asked, "Was there any way that they could get to Holland?" At that time Holland was neutral. The Germans had built an electrified fence on the border between Belgium and Holland and there were certain places where the roads went through where there were gates. Now a lot of the Belgian farmers had land in Holland which they used, so the Germans always let the farmers go in and out to bring back the produce - - -

Ward: They needed it.

Bulcke: - which the Germans would take away from them.

Anyway, my uncle was a farmer who had land in Holland which he used to work, and I got the idea, in talking to those two soldiers, that there might be a possibility for them to sneak across into Holland with the help of my uncle.

Ward: That was the way you got across, wasn't it? Into Holland?

Bulcke: No, I don't think so. I talked it over with my uncle and we arranged for the two to be covered up with a load of manure and they were driven into Holland. Of course, the land that my uncle was working was away from towns and they got away.

After the war was over, I got a letter from one of them; his father was a banker, or in the banking business, in Paris. In the letter was

Bulcke: a statement by his father saying he would appreciate it if I could come to Paris so that he could meet me and thank me for what I had done which I did. I spent about three weeks with them and had a nice vacation. The son was home by the time I got there, but he left and I forget where he went; anyway, he went away . . .

Ward: That was before you came to America?

Bulcke: Oh, yeah, that was within a month after the war was over.

Ward: A German was a banker in Paris?

Bulcke: No - no; he was from Alsace Lorraine. He was actually French.

Ward: I see.

Bulcke: But he happened to be in Alsace-Lorraine when the war broke out and he was drafted in the German Army. Anyway, we had a nice get-together and after that I didn't hear or see from them anymore. We learned later on that quite a few, Germans as well as Belgians, got away over the border and were interned for the war time in Holland. Of course, when the war was over, I guess they went home.

### The Nazi Dream

Ward: Yes, now, I got a drift in your comments that Nazism was not then known in Europe and Hitler had never been heard of.

Bulcke: It was not - never been heard of.

Ward: But there was a dream in the minds of the top Germans about world conquest, wasn't there? How did that express itself?

Bulcke: That's right. When Hitler became popular and there was a big publicity campaign on, telling everyone what the Nazis would do for the people, naturally

Bulcke: the people at first did not realize what might happen and they supported Hitler, feeling that he was going to do a lot of things for Germany.

Not until he was actually in power did the non-German people, Belgians, French, British and so on, realize what this man was up to. They allowed him to rearm Germany contrary to the agreement that was reached in the peace agreement, and he built up the military quite openly without anyone doing anything about it.

Ward: Yes, but I got the idea from you, Jerry, that Nazism really had some roots before that because of this early dream of world conquest. How did that express itself?

Bulcke: Well, as I say, until Hitler got into power you didn't hear much of that.

Ward: How do you know that there was that dream before, then?

Bulcke: Well, our contacts with people - with German people when Hitler started to become more and more popular, we started to hear about the program that Hitler was pushing, by some of the Germans who came into Belgium, salesmen and people on vacation - the same kind of people who later expressed themselves as being happy that the war was over. These people were already impressed by the program, you might say, that Hitler was projecting.

Ward: But you didn't hear, in 1920, anything like that?

Bulcke: No - but I left in 1920, and up to then we hadn't heard anything at all. As a matter of fact, there were some problems in Germany with their government - they had the Weimar . . .

Ward: Oh, yes, the Weimar Republic.

Bulcke: The Weimar Republic and so forth, and there were some strikes in the coal mines and the factories - of course, that was one thing that Hitler . . .

Ward: How did it come to your attention before you came to this country that in any way gave you that impression that there was a pre-Hitler dream or thought of world conquest?

Bulcke: Well, we always felt - it was my dad's opinion - that the war had not settled it. We were well aware of the fact that Germany would try again to do what they started out to do, and the fact that it took the form of Hitlerism made no difference. I mean it was accepted by the majority of the Germans that they had the right to go ahead and try to conquer the world.

Ward: In other words, you were not privy to the thinking of the Bismarckians?

Bulcke: No, I sure wasn't. No.



## II LONGSHORING IN SAN FRANCISCO

Talking Union On The Docks

Ward: Now, getting back to where we left off on Tape 1. You came to San Francisco, you did get a job longshoring and you left the wife, Marie, and your nine-month old daughter; what as her name?

Bulcke: Muriel.

Ward: You left Marie and the little baby in Detroit. How long was it before they came out?

Bulcke: About three months. After I got established in San Francisco, got a job as a longshoreman, which it appeared it was pretty steady employment, I immediately sent for my wife, told her to come with the baby, which she did.

Ward: What part of town did you set up shop in?

Bulcke: I lived in Daly City - that's where my friends lived who had told me about the possibility. I found a place right close to him and we went to work together. And so I lived in Daly City for quite a while.

Ward: You practically had to have an automobile then, didn't you?

Bulcke: I didn't have one; I never got an automobile until some years later.

Ward: Oh, really!

Bulcke: Well, at that time the streetcar system wasn't too bad. I would get the 14th Street car in Daly City and it would go right down to the Ferry Building and I walked to Pier 16 and 18 which were right handy.

Ward: How long would that street car take?

Bulcke: Oh, we allowed ourselves about 40 minutes - it wouldn't take that long, but to make sure to be on time on the job, we generally showed up on the job 15 to 20 minutes before it was time to go to work -

Ward: Well, with the way the traffic is now -

Bulcke: Oh! not now - no, no.

Ward: You didn't take the jitney?

Bulcke: No, I didn't; I don't think they were running in those days. You're talking about 1925, 1926.

Ward: All right, what conditions did you find on the docks?

Bulcke: Well, first of all at the Admiral Line, (the Pacific Steamship Company) where I was employed they had about 18 gangs numbered from one to eighteen -

Ward: And a gang would be how many men?

Bulcke: Basically, they were 16 men; and depending on the work, the type of cargo you handled, there would be men added if needed.

Ward: Yes.

Bulcke: At first I was working on the dock only, in other words, preparing the loads to be taken into the ship; or the reverse, when the loads came out of the ship to be stacked on the dock.

One thing that I came to dislike after I was there awhile was the system they had which started with putting on the blackboard the time the gang

Bulcke: was supposed to show up for work the next day. Many times, the gang I was in first was gang nine, and there would be the number nine on the board 8:00 a. m.

We'd show up at 8:00 a.m. and on the blackboard it would say "smoke" beside it, meaning "standby". Lots of times you would stand by until 11:00. You didn't get paid for the time you stood by, of course, and then a gang that was working would go to lunch and you would relieve the gang for an hour.

Then at 12:00 another gang would go to lunch and you would relieve that gang for an hour, then "smoke" again until maybe 5:00 o'clock. You would then relieve another gang that probably was going to work overtime, and some times you would get two more hours.

In other words, you were around all day and you got four hours of work. I got to talk to some of the old-timers who had been there many years, some who had belonged to the union previously when it was a union, and I complained about it to them. When I joined the union, the 1925 union, I got a little booklet that was supposed to have the working conditions outlined, and there was very little in it. I couldn't find anything about "smoke", so in talking to these old-timers I said, "How long has that been going on?"

"Oh," they said, "ever since this company union - that's the way it is." And one of these old-timers said to me, "Why don't you take it up with the union?" So, at that time the union had a place on Clay Street where later on the ILWU was, and the Marine Cooks and Stewards was on the second floor. I found out what time they met, once a month, and I went up there to the meeting. Outside of the officers and two business agents there were probably three or four people there.

Ward: At a meeting?

Bulcke: At a meeting, yes. This was the Blue Book union meeting. Oh, they went through the rigamarole of reading correspondence, minutes of the last

Bulcke: meeting and then the chairman or the president said, "Is there anyone here who has any questions?" So, I raised my hand and said, "Yes, I do have a question." "Yes, what is it?" So, I explained about this "smoking", and the business agent got up - he was a big, husky man - he grabbed me by the back of the neck and the seat of my pants and said, "You haven't been here long enough to be dry behind your ears, and you're going to tell us how to run our business?" And he shoved me down the steps; he didn't throw me but he shoved me.

A couple of days later, on the job, one of the old-timers who had suggested I go to the meeting said to me, "Well, how did you make out?" I told him what happened and he laughed; he thought it was a big joke. Right then and there, I made up my mind that that union was not a good union, and as time went on we eventually got rid of it. I'll go into detail on that later.

#### Ways Of The Waterfront

Ward: You used to tell a lot of yarns of the docks. Lots of interesting things must have happened down there besides the story you just told.

Bulcke: One thing that was prevalent in those days was, a lot of men in order to keep their job would buy drinks for the gang foreman, paint his house with paint they "snuck" away from the docks. There was all kinds of favoritism of that sort going on. Also the companies would see to it that the gang foremen had quite a bit of latitude; if you got fired by a gang foreman you were generally placed on a blacklist. The word went around through the company union that you were a trouble maker. Very few guys with that reputation could stay on the waterfront; they would disappear, couldn't get any jobs.

Ward: Because they had that reputation.

Bulcke: Another thing that was going on at the time, each company had certain days that they paid; many times you couldn't get to the pay office because you happened to be working somewhere else, and so on. So there was a system developed, because a lot of the guys were living from hand to mouth, of cashing in your check; as they called it, the 5 percent deal. That was quite prevalent on the waterfront.

So, all those things went on as long as the company union was in control. Then, in 1933 when section 7a of the National . . . .

Ward: The National Labor Relations Act.

Bulcke: That, of course, gave us the idea of getting a union of our own and a number of men - - -

Ward: Jerry, I think you said there were some rumbles in '28 and '29; let's talk about that.

Bulcke: In '28 and '29, as I remember it, because of the speedup. First of all, they had cut our wages. When I started working on the waterfront we were getting 90 cents an hour straight time and a \$1.10 overtime; overtime was not time and one-half, it was simply twenty cents more. They cut our wages to 75 cents an hour.

Ward: That was when?

Bulcke: Well, it was '29, I think. It might have been early '30s.

Ward: Did it have any connection with the crash?

Bulcke: Yes, it did. The depression had set in back East much sooner than it did on the Pacific Coast, but shipping went down because everything slowed down and the companies decided to cut the wages and there wasn't anything we could do about it. Instead of getting 90 cents an hour, we got 75 cents an hour.

Ward: And what was the overtime?

Bulcke: And the overtime was about - it was \$1.00. Oh, it was 95 cents I think it was, as I recall it, 75, 85. That's right! It was 75 and 90! That made most of the longshoremen disturbed and mad; that's when we started to talk about having a different union.

Ward: Would you say that there's nothing like a wage cut to make a man move?

Bulcke: Yes, it sure did. And also the speed-up, the company superintendents and representatives constantly harassing the men to work faster. For instance: I worked at the Grace Lines where they had five steady gangs, and one gang was the so-called black gang.

Ward: That was the one black gang on the waterfront?

Bulcke: No, there were two. I found out that in the previous strike in 1920, '21, they had used a lot of black people to scab. In those days, of course, there were no black people working on the waterfront except under those circumstances. Anyway, by my time, one black gang was at the Luckenbach docks and the other black gang where I worked was at the Grace docks.

They were no longer what you might call black in the sense that we know them. They were a mixture of Chileans, South American people. As I remember in the gang where I worked there were only three Negroes. The winch driver was 100 per cent native Indian from the Hoopa reservation; he had sailed on steam schooners . . .

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Bulcke: He had worked on schooners and learned to drive winches and then was employed as a longshoreman. Being Indian, he was naturally placed in the so-called Black gang, with which we got well-acquainted.

Bulcke: I might say that when we eventually organized our present union, all of them joined, although they were a little scary at first. Some of them told me, "Well, you white guys are going to have a good union, apparently, but our history is that we have never been able to belong to a union. You go on strike, you win the strike and then you kick us all out."

I assured him that this was not that kind of a union, that they would be accepted and they would be equal as far as any work opportunities were concerned. And they all joined the union except one, and he was not from that gang - he was from the gang at Luckenbach. He did stay in during our first strike and scabbed, of course. When the strike was over he disappeared, but within a very short time afterwards we had no discrimination against anyone, even those who scabbed; we had quite a few that joined our union.

Ward: I got the impression that you said you worked in the black gang at one time or another. Did you?

Bulcke: No - oh! Later on after the union was established, then we had black members in various gangs but not as a gang. We saw to it that they were not concentrated in one gang.

This reminds me of another incident when the employers started the drive to promote more production. It used to happen all the time; they would go to the hatch where the black gang worked and say, "You better get with it - you're ten tons behind." Then they would call into our gang or another gang and come to our hatch and say, "Hey, what's the matter with you fellows? You're ten tons behind the black gang down there." Of course, we knew this and paid no attention to it. This was one of the harassment methods used by the employers, trying to speed up the work.

Ward: When you got through a day's work down there you were pretty tired and I understand you had some experiences on the street car ride home.

- Bulcke: Yes, that was one thing that was in a way rather pleasant, particularly when packing green hides, or shoveling bones - you would smell awfully bad.
- Ward: You said there were maggots on the bones.
- Bulcke: The maggots, we used to say, when we took the tarpaulin off and we took the hatches off, we used to say, "We don't have to take the beans out because the maggots will push the beans right up" - you could see them crawling all over, you know. There were ships that came from Argentina in South America and the bones were not very clean and naturally a lot of meat left on them - the stench was something unbelievable.
- Ward: What were the bones used for?
- Bulcke: They were used for fertilizer to some extent, but mainly they were processed and used in sugar factories.
- Ward: Sugar factories?
- Bulcke: Yeah, after they were processed the bones they made - - - there was a factory just outside of San Francisco which was called a bone factory where they would process these bones into things; they would use them for refining sugar.
- Ward: I'll be darned.
- Bulcke: Yeah, I don't know the process but . . .
- Ward: I can't see any connection between bones and sugar.
- Bulcke: Yeah, I know it. The plant also would give off an awful odor when you went on the freeway; no freeway then, now 101.
- Ward: Then you'd get on the street car.
- Bulcke: I would get on the streetcar and I had been shoveling that stuff or packing green hides or whatever; naturally the odor was terrible and



Bulcke: within one block and a half, I had the whole end of the street car to myself. People would come in, sit down, sniff the air and get up and go in the middle of the car. I had no trouble getting a seat.

### Meeting Harry Bridges

Ward: I gather you met guys like Bridges and so forth around '28 - '29.

Bulcke: Yes, I met Bridges - I can't pinpoint it - I think it was 1928, maybe '29 when I first became acquainted with him. Because of his heavy Australian accent he was known as The Limey.

Ward: Did they call him The Nose, then?

Bulcke: Later on, but in those days he was generally known as The Limey; during lunch hours or before we went to work, he was often around. Generally, we would be discussing the problems that we had and what to do about them, so I got to know who Harry was in those days.

Ward: He worked in steel and you worked in general cargo?

Bulcke: Well, I worked steel, too, you see. He worked steadily on what they called the steel dock, but when they needed additional gangs, quite often my gang boss would get a job there and we would handle steel. They handled a great deal of steel when they were building both bridges. I mean, all that steel was shipped in from back East and we would have quite steady work there because of the amount of steel cargo coming in.

Ward: How did Harry get around on the lunch hour, wandering around from dock to dock and gang to gang?

Bulcke: No - no; the movement of gangs. When there was more than one ship in there would be more gangs. Sometimes there would be three ships so, you'd

Bulcke: have maybe twenty gangs there. The conversation would start and we would discuss these problems. Eventually, of course, after we had the charter established and the real drive for membership came on, then it was necessary to call a strike. Harry was the chairman of the strike committee. He was not the president of the local at that time.

Ward: I know.

Bulcke: He became that later.

Ward: After Lee Holman got exposed.

Bulcke: Holman and also another fellow - his name was Burglar (Bill) Lewis, his nickname.

Ward: Did that name have any union connection?

Bulcke: I understand that came from the fact that things used to stick to him quite a bit when he walked off the ship after working; that sort of thing.

#### The Disappearing Pianos

Ward: He didn't get away with the grand piano, though?

Bulcke: No, no - not him.

Ward: Do you think that story was true?

Bulcke: I know it was true. I told you about running across the longshoreman who had one. Did I tell you that story?

Ward: No.

Bulcke: Well, many years later when I was president of the local . . . or to back up. What happened was, a shipment of grand pianos came in to the Luckenbach dock from back east, going to Sherman Clay. I don't remember if I ever did know the exact

Bulcke: number, but there were quite a few of them. So, when the day came that they had to take delivery, there wasn't a piano left on the dock.

So, the son of Luckenbach came out from New York and fired everybody - all the gangs that worked - everybody but two watchmen; one watchman happened to be off sick at that time. He got rid of all the longshoremen, fired all the gangs. Of course, he had to hire others. Those were the days that we had the steady gangs and before our union.

Anyway, many years later, during my term as president of the local, I was called one evening by a longshoreman who I knew casually; I mean I knew who he was. He lived only a few blocks from where I was living and he was sick. He asked me could I drop in and discuss a matter with him and see what we could do, which I did. We had a nice little discussion and I noticed there was a baby grand piano there. That didn't mean anything to me; I mentioned that it was a nice piano.

"Oh, yeah, my daughter plays it," he says; "she lives only two houses from here, and I'll call her and have her come over and entertain you for a little bit." She did; she played the piano for oh, maybe twenty minutes or so and left.

So, after a while our discussion was over with; he was satisfied with my information, so I got up to go out and said, "Oh, by the way, tell your daughter I appreciated her coming over and playing the piano." And he said, "Oh, you may not know this, but this is one of Luckenbach's pianos." So, at least one longshoreman got one, that I know of.

Ward: Well, I must say, Jerry, that is oneupmanship on your part. I heard it was only one piano.

Bulcke: No, no; it was a whole shipment.

Ward: A whole shipment!

Bulcke: Yeah! And I located one of those pianos, many years later. It must have been in the middle Thirties somewhere.

Ward: Now, let's have one of the funny stories you tell so well, Jerry. This was about a guy, as I recall, who was very gregarious, liked to run around and talk to everybody and he was called "Asshole". Why was he called "Asshole"?

Bulcke: The reason he was called "Asshole" was that whenever he was talking to anybody or about anything, every other word was, "Oh, that asshole" or this "asshole". He got to be known as "asshole" because of this habit of using that word constantly and under any circumstance.

Ward: He was sort of half-bum and half entertainer, wasn't he?

Bulcke: Yes, like many longshoremen he was a former seaman that sailed quite a number of years, knew a lot of people on the ships. Whenever a ship came in that he had sailed on or knew the crew, you wouldn't see Asshole on the job at all. He would have a good time with the crew and when that ship sailed, he would be back on the job again. He was quite an alcoholic; in other words, he drank quite a bit. We all knew him; he was a good worker when he worked. That part was all right.

Ward: He was one of the characters?

Bulcke: Yes, one of the real characters down there. Anyway, it turned out that for some time we didn't see him; everybody knew him pretty well and it got to be quite a conversational piece: "I wonder what happened to Asshole?" Somebody observed that maybe they would find him behind a warehouse some day.

Ward: Dead drunk?

Bulcke: Dead or dead drunk. One Saturday morning it was the usual thing for the Salvation Army to show up at the corner of Mission and the Embarcadero and address the people and play their music and ask for donations.

Bulcke: And this particular morning I got off the street-car and went up the Embarcadero toward Mission. I noticed there was a much larger crowd standing around the Salvation Army band that was playing and I wondered what was up. I noticed that most of them were longshoremen and normally they didn't stay around there, so I said to one of the longshoremen I knew, "What's so special today? Such a crowd here." And he said, "Well, look who's behind the big drum."

Sure enough, all dressed up in a Salvation Army uniform, looking clean as could be, healthy as could be, was Asshole. They went through their performance and made their speech and finally they called on Asshole to say something because they realized he was a waterfront person and here were waterfront people. So he goes into his speech, saying, "Well, you fellows know what a bum I was, I would drink up all my money, gamble and lay around; now, look at me; I'm dressed and clean, I found Jesus," and on in that vein. Eventually, he gets to the end of this speech and says, "And all I have to do is beat this fucking drum."

#### Labor's Liquid Lunch

Ward: That's funny. Now you've got a story about a midnight lunch.

Bulcke: Yes, the Grace Lines ran combination cargo and passenger vessels between New York and San Francisco. On the aft end of the ship they had a special hatch which was smaller than a normal hatch that went down to a locker which had been built for mail. However, this is where they carried the liquor; they always brought in quite a bit of liquor from the East Coast, New York.

Ward: They were pretty careful about that?

Bulcke: The locker had heavy steel doors with a chain and big padlock on it. The mate would open it up when we went down there to discharge it; we had to have

Bulcke: special gear because it was a small hatch and there were special boards made to fit the narrow opening. So, there was no light down there. We had what they called a cluster light that you plugged in -

Ward: What light?

Bulcke: Cluster, yeah, that you plug in. We would pile the dunnage - the boards which are in between the cases - on one side and they had a watchman down there to see that we didn't get away with any liquor; but in moving the dunnage there were always two or three cases of liquor somehow or other got moved with it.

Ward: You had broken the case?

Bulcke: No, no, the whole case was hidden in the dunnage. I was steward of the gang and I got to know the mate pretty well and he would always complain to me, how come the hatch had not been opened since they left New York and they still were short two or three cases. I would tell him, "Look, you stopped off in Los Angeles, didn't you?" "Yes, but we didn't open that hatch." "Well, don't bother me with your problem."

What happened - and they should have known - the hatch ahead of that little mail locker was always loaded in Los Angeles with fresh fruit and it had an air conditioning system. A man had to go down with the crew through a manhole that went through this little locker and through another opening in order to service this air conditioner. We never put any cargo on that end of the hatch because that was saved for Los Angeles to put in fresh oranges, fruit and stuff like that.

So, anyway, this particular time, we had gotten hold of a case of Ron Rico Rum, as I remember, a case of Queen's Banquet Scotch and some other stuff; there were three cases. Oh, by the way, the next night - we worked nights then - one of our men would go down through the manhole and bring up the liquor.

Bulcke: Anyway, this particular time there was a transfer ship - a McCormack came alongside to pick up some cargo that we had discharged; there were kegs of beer to be loaded on that McCormack ship, and also we were loading California brandy, which came in 50 gallon barrels.

So, the gang on the dock sent in a couple of little metal containers of beer; they held about ten gallons, I guess. You've seen them. Also, of course, we tapped one of the barrels of brandy. So, here we had an array of brandy, scotch, whiskey, beer and -

Ward: Rum!

Bulcke: - and rum. The rule was you took away two loads between drinks and then had a drink, to see that we didn't get drunk.

Well, one of our members got an idea and he went up to the first class stewards' department and said, "How would you guys like some brandy?" Would they! So, we filled every kettle they had in the kitchen with brandy. In turn they gave us platters full of fancy cold cuts, mostly for first class passengers. It was night time and nobody paid attention, you know.

Two or our guys in the gang borrowed white jackets and chef's hats and we built sort of a table out of cases of canned goods, covered it with wrapping paper and we set up a nice lunch counter there, with all these cold cuts and all these drinks. Two guys weren't working at all; they were being bartenders. My god, they sent plenty of stuff down there.

Ward: No caviar?

Bulcke: No caviar. Of course, the rest of the gangs that worked that ship knew about this, and two by two the men would come down. Came midnight lunch time and we didn't go to lunch; we had all the lunch we wanted.

Bulcke: About two o'clock in the morning - there was a long ladder from the top deck clear down to the lower hold - all of a sudden my partner says, "Look, who's coming down the ladder." It was Art Holdstein, the chief superintendent of the Grace Lines.

In all the years that I worked there I never saw Art go on a ship, but for some reason here he came down the ladder backward. Somebody said, "What the hell you going to do?" And someone else said, "What the heck can you?" You couldn't see this from the dock; we were underneath, on the ass end, and from the top deck you couldn't see our banquet set-up. No way we could hide it, you know.

So, Art came down, he turned around and he saw our little party. He said, "Son of a bitch, I've never seen anything like this in my life." I knew him pretty well, and I said, "Art, you never can tell; have one on the house." I figured, well, we might as well bluff it out.

He said, "Well, you know, I think I will." So he stepped up to the bar. I knew he liked scotch, so I said to the bartender, "Give him a double scotch." He dumped it down, looked around and said, "I'll have another one."

So we poured another one; he chased that down, walked up to the ladder and said, "If any of you sons-of-bitches say you saw me down here, you're a bunch of liars. Good night." And up the ladder he went.

But some years later, when I was president, there was some beef on the Grace Lines. I don't remember the details. So, I went down to the dock and settled the darn thing. We were walking out together - - -

Ward: This was the same guy?

Bulcke: Oh yeah, Holstein. We were walking down and we got to his office at the head of the dock. He said, "Oh, Jerry, come in and have a drink."



Bulcke: I said, "Sure, Art," - he reaches back into his desk and brings out a bottle of Queen's Banquet scotch. I looked at it and I said, "Did you get it out of the same case?" And he said, "Damn you, you haven't forgotten that, have you?" I said, "No." So, we both laughed.

Ward: He must have been quite exceptional.

Bulcke: He was. He'd been a mate, I think, at one time; anyway, he had sailed, and then had been with the Grace Lines for years.

When we first started organizing our union and we wore our union button an assistant to him told us one day, "Look, I don't want you guys to wear any union button." So we all stayed out; the guy with the whistle blew, and we didn't go in. We decided to hell with this.

Art came out and said, "What's the trouble?" And we told him, so-and-so told us we couldn't work here with our union buttons on. "Oh, he don't know from nothing, go on to work." He wasn't a bad guy.

#### On The Serious Side

Ward: Good guy. Here comes along FDR, the National Labor Relations Act and its famous Section 7(a) and naturally, you guys on the waterfront read about it and talked about it.

Bulcke: Correct.

Ward: Then what?

Bulcke: Well, under the Section 7(A) it said that workers could organize unions of their own choosing. This immediately opened the eyes of a number of our guys. And they met and decided to apply for a charter from the ILA, which is the longshore union still in existence in the Gulf and the East Coast

- Bulcke: and had been previously the union on the West coast. As a matter of fact, one port maintained their connection, and that was Tacoma, Washington. They always were in the ILA even in the time that we were a company union. Later an ILWU charter was granted to Tacoma.
- Ward: And you were Local 38-79 again.
- Bulcke: Yeah, that's right. 38-79 was the number: 38 was the West Coast district and 79 was the local number. As soon as that was known, three or four guys, I am not sure anymore, went around signing up longshoremen to join the ILA.
- Ward: There was no big rush at first, was there?
- Bulcke: Well, there were quite a few who signed up in a hurry. Then it seemed to kind of slow down, but the organizers were constantly at work. They would meet guys, get there during the lunch hour when the guys were outside, or before we went to work in the morning, and asked them to join the union; charged fifty cents to join. As soon as I knew that the charter was granted I signed up in the union, but I didn't get initiated right away. Although I was signed up, I was not technically a member of the union until I was initiated and received my book. As I remember, it took maybe almost a couple of months before I could get to a meeting and get initiated.
- Ward: You were working a lot nights, isn't that the reason?
- Bulcke: I worked a lot of nights, so when they had the union meeting I couldn't get there. Anyway, my book shows that I was initiated even before Bridges. It doesn't prove anything. The gangs I was working with, some of them had signed up. One of them particularly who signed up was by the name of Bill Marlow. The reason I mention him, he was the man who designed and figured out our plug board system-- the system by which the men are dispatched. Each man has a registered number and he is given a metal plug with a number on it.

- Bulcke: You put it in the category you work in in a board that has holes; the dispatcher calls your number as he goes down the board pulling plugs.
- Ward: That system came after the shape-up.
- Bulcke: Oh, yes, this was after the shape-up and after we went back to work, but before we won the strike. We went on strike on May the 9th and . . .
- Ward: Bloody Thursday occurred on July 5th.
- Bulcke: On July 31st, we went back to work under the old conditions, but by that time we had control of the waterfront. Oh, one of the first things we adopted was no more prospecting, as we called it - guys running around from dock to dock; we required they go to the union hall, and that's where we established the plug board.
- Ward: Before all this happened, after you got the charter and you were organizing and so forth, there was an incident at Matson, wasn't there? That broke the dam and everybody came rushing - - ?
- Bulcke: Yes; one of the first things we did was establish gang stewards, and the Matson incident was where one of our gang stewards got fired for insisting on certain safety conditions. The whole bunch walked out and we won that; they had to put our steward back to work again. That was one of the first tests of the union strength against the bosses.
- Ward: At that time the NLRB Board in San Francisco was new and full of young attorneys who were all fired up, so you got a good decision and a quick decision, compared to now?
- Bulcke: That's right.
- Ward: Just to make sure, the first thing you did on the docks as a new union was to establish the steward system, and you were one of the first stewards?

Bulcke: That's right; I was one of the first stewards and I was elected by the gang itself.

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(Interview 3: 14 July, 1983)

Family Life

Ward: Jerry, let's go into your personal life a little more now. At this time you were getting some place on the docks; you were already a steward in the reborn union and things were kind of interesting, but what was going on at home? Let's go back a moment. You married a neighbor of your family in Holland, didn't you?

Bulcke: No, I met my wife in Detroit. Her grandfather and grandmother had come over from Belgium, and one of the daughters was the mother of my wife. My wife was born in Detroit and we got married in 1923. My mother-in-law had bought some property on Lake St. Clair - - -

Ward: Oh, you had a store that you ran?

Bulcke: I decided to get out of that business and sold it.

Ward: Let's pick up from there about the arrival of your family in San Francisco -

Bulcke: I started to work on the waterfront in April of 1925 and stayed on the waterfront. At first I lived in Daly City; later on I lived in different places in the City. Many years later Marie and I were divorced, although I kept close contact with my former wife and my daughter. She is now 59 years old.

Ward: What's her name?

Bulcke: Her name is Muriel and she married a man from

Bulcke: Connecticut and moved to Connecticut for several years. When her husband retired they moved to Arizona to a place called Payson about 90 miles northeast of Phoenix. I visited her on my last birthday, my 81st. We were together there for about ten days; we keep in close contact.

I was married again to a woman from the state of Washington by the name of Hilda. She had been married before and had a daughter. After we had been married a few years Hilda became quite ill and passed away. So, I kept close contact with the daughter who is also married and had two daughters.

Ward: You were the stepfather?

Bulcke: I was the stepfather. I see one of the daughters quite often who is now married too and has two children and lives in San Francisco. The other daughter is married but she moved to Oregon, so we see her only occasionally. I forgot to mention that after my own daughter was sixteen years old, I became the father of a son by the name of Kenneth.

Ward: Oh, yes, I remember.

Bulcke: In other words, I had two children with my first wife. Kenneth is married.

Ward: Then he's somewhere in the early forties.

Bulcke: He was born in 1940 so he's 43. He married and had a son who is now 20, I believe. Kenneth was divorced and has married again and has three more children so he has four all told. He lives in a place called Windsor, near Santa Rosa. He is in the automobile repair business; that is the family we have at the present time.

Later on, I married my present wife better known as "Rusty", though her name is Helen. She had been married before and has one son by the name of Bruce who is a teacher and lives in Alameda. He was married and divorced and had a

- Bulcke: daughter whom I just introduced you to; she is our grand-daughter. Bruce has remarried, but no further children.
- Ward: You're a man of family as well as parts. How do you keep them all straight?
- Bulcke: Well, sometimes it gets confusing but I must say that we keep close contact with one another and we get along very nicely.

#### Leftism In The Family

- Ward: Your politics, I gather, were somewhat to the left from childhood on up. How do all these children and grandchildren and stepchildren look at you politically?
- Bulcke: Well, I can say that they think I'm generally correct in my positions politically. I must say that my own son is not politically active but my stepson, Bruce, is very politically active and pretty much agrees with the positions that I take; we understand one another very well. My daughter is not politically active, neither is her husband, so well . . . .
- Ward: They put up with you?
- Bulcke: They listen to me and generally we reach agreement, but they are not as politically active as I am. But we get along pretty well that way.
- Ward: Well, that sounds rather normal - with some you just agree to get along, and then you win a few. Anything else you want to tell about your family life?
- Bulcke: No, I don't think there is much more except that there was, as is well-known, a big demonstration at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory. Over a thousand men and women were arrested for demonstrating, and one of them that was arrested is my

Bulcke: wife, Rusty. She just spent ten days in jail along with many others; there were some 480 women that were arrested and they spent ten days and some more than that, in the Santa Rita jail.

It was a demonstration that has been written up in the papers quite a bit. All that watched it feel that the demonstrators did a tremendous thing and really brought to public attention what is going on there.

The purpose of the demonstration is sometimes misunderstood. They were demonstrating not to close the lab but to have the lab brought back - converted - to what it was originally established for. As a matter of fact, I saw in the paper the other day, or I heard it on the TV or radio, that Mrs. Lawrence, widow of Dr. Ernest O. Lawrence, is now asking that her husband's name be removed from that laboratory because it was not his intention that the lab should be used for the purpose of developing atomic weapons, as they are now doing.

Ward: Do you feel that the demonstration in which Rusty took a part may have prompted Ernest Lawrence's widow to take such a stand?

Bulcke: I think so; at least I like to believe that it is true.

Ward: I would too. Because what she did was really quite dramatic; the whole thing was really something.

Bulcke: There were three more wives of retired long-shoremen, plus several retired longshoremen themselves who also participated in this demonstration and were arrested. And the ILWU Pensioners' Club to which I belong just had a meeting yesterday where this whole thing was discussed. The feeling of the members was that it was a tremendous thing to have this demonstration and they were certainly proud of the fact that some of their members had participated and had spent time in Santa Rita.

Ward: Wonderful! Is that about all you wish to say on personal matters?

Bulcke: I think that covers it pretty well.

Clashes Within the ILWU

Ward: Now, let's go back to the ILWU. Here you are establishing a new union, and there must have been conflicts and ideologies; can you describe them?

Bulcke: Well, after our union was established we had been able to get an agreement through the arbitration procedure where we practically got all of the demands for which we went on strike; it naturally took some time before things ran smoothly. We had a lot of problems with the employers who were still attempting to take away some of the conditions we had been able to establish - - -

Ward: To put it mildly?

Bulcke: Yes. Well, I'll say there were a lot of - I won't say disagreements, but a lot of debates as to what way would be the best.

Ward: Weren't there some who thought in the way of old-line AFL unionism?

Bulcke: Yes, and after all we were chartered by the ILA and they are an old-line union. One major problem was that the sea-faring unions had not received as good conditions as we had during the '34 strike.

Ward: That's why the '36 strike took place?

Bulcke: That's the reason the '36 strike took place, and it was primarily the sea-faring unions that were heading it up. Now prior to the 1934 strike the president of the ILA - - -

Ward: Joe Ryan?



- Bulcke: Joe Ryan, he came out to San Francisco and made a back-door agreement with the employers. In 1936 when that strike was over, the seamen were successful in correcting a lot of the things that were wrong and got a pretty decent agreement. Then we held our biennial convention in Seattle, Washington. That was in 1937 after the '36 strike was settled. During that convention we decided that the ILA leadership and its actions were not the kind of policies we liked to follow and the convention voted to disaffiliate from the ILA; we became independent.
- Ward: Let's discuss the intricacies of that vote; it was not unanimous, was it?
- Bulcke: Well, the vote in the convention, as I recall, was not unanimous.
- Ward: But it was pretty good, wasn't it?
- Bulcke: Oh, yes, I don't recall the exact amount, but it was an overwhelming vote. I know that three of the locals in the Northwest - Tacoma, Port Los Angeles, and some other small local - - -
- Ward: Everett?
- Bulcke: No, not Everett.
- Ward: Anacortes?
- Bulcke: Anacortes, yes. And also a local in Alaska voted to stay ILA, so they did not any longer belong in our organization. Many years later, except for the Alaska local, they all came into the ILWU.
- Ward: What happened? The Alaska local didn't come in?
- Bulcke: I can't remember, but we were independent for a little while; but John L. Lewis started the CIO and we decided that was where we belonged and we joined the CIO.

Ward: John L. Lewis started what was known as the Committee for Industrial Organization in '35, but it didn't become a formal organization - a Congress of Industrial Organization, until '38.

Bulcke: That's right.

Ward: So, in '37 when you disaffiliated, there was a hiatus there.

Bulcke: Right, for a little while, but it was shortly afterwards that we applied for a charter, and joined the CIO. That's right.

Ward: Now, in all the goings-on, the disenchantment of the longshoremen with the ILA and all those things, they did not just occur pleasantly or easily; there must have been a lot of discussion and argument going on.

Which ideologies of the right and the left played a part? I understand that Fred West had something to do with the break-away from the company unions, way back in the beginning, and he had some odd ideology; and there were other things of that nature - the Communists and Holman and "Burglar Bill" and all that. How did these differences express themselves?

Bulcke: Well, after we joined the CIO a movement started here in San Francisco among the longshoremen. Holman, who had been thrown out as president of the local earlier, and a few other dissidents started a new ILA local. They took over the old 113 Stuart Street place which had been our headquarters for years; that's where they established themselves.

Of course in our membership meetings there would be heavy and hot debates going on as to the merits of our present affiliation and the affiliation with the ILA. Naturally, there was quite a bit of red-baiting going on. In other words, the Communists were accused of having manoeuvred all this and there would be many debates.

Bulcke: Some of our members were quite outspoken in saying, "yes," they belonged to the Communist Party, but that didn't have anything to do with the program or the policies of our union. Generally, they were well-accepted; these men would be quite outspoken as to their support for the present organization, that is, the CIO organization. However, our meetings were quite rambunctious many times.

Ward: Rambunctious?

Bulcke: Well, once or twice I've seen guys get into fisticuffs after the meeting, but never during the meeting. It took some time, but eventually the Holman organization died on the vine, you might say. They were never able to convince any number of our members that their program was a better one. Naturally the local and coast-wise locals maintained unity and stuck together.

Then came the trial of Brother Bridges which was well publicized; of course, he eventually won out.

In 1937 Local 10 decided that although up to that time we had had a president, a non-paid vice-president, two business agents, secretary-treasurer and secretary, it was necessary to have a full-time vicepresident. The vice-president up to that time would only serve if the president was absent as chairman of the meeting or something of that sort.

Well, I had been quite active in establishing our stewards' council; I was a member of the executive board and was well-acquainted with the functions of the organization, so when the election was announced I was one of the candidates for the office of vice-president of Local 10. At that time Henry Schmidt was president. He had been elected president when Harry became CIO Regional Director of the Pacific Coast.

Ward: He was president of the International, wasn't he?

Bulcke: Harry was also president of the ILWU.

Ward: And so somebody else had to be president of the local?

Bulcke: Right. And Henry Schmidt was elected as president. That same year, later on, I was elected as vice-president under Henry. Now, there's a rule in our local and it is still in effect - -

Ward: The two year rule?

Bulcke: You're elected for one year and you can stand for election the second year. The third year you go back to work on the docks. When Henry's second year was up I was elected president of the local. So, I was in one year as vice-president and one year as president. We changed the election dates so that new officers took office at the end of the year. We used to, at first go into office in September, but during my term as vice-president we changed it so you assumed office at the first of the year. From then on we went from January to January. Well, I served one year as vice president and one year as president.

Shortly afterward I was requested and ran for the position of secretary-treasurer of the San Francisco CIO Council. I agreed that I would serve for only one year, because I felt my place was on the waterfront, not up-town. So, I did stay a little longer than one year in order to accommodate my successor, who was an officer of the Radio Operators union and his office was in New York.

Ward: What happened to Herman Stuyvelaar?

Bulcke: I followed Herman Stuyvelaar.

Ward: Oh, that's it.

Bulcke: Yeah, Herman Stuyvelaar was the first secretary; he was a member of the ILWU Ship Clerks and I followed him in office.

Ward: And you were succeeded by Mervyn Rathborne?

Bulcke: Mervyn Rathborne from the Radio Operators took over that office. I came back to the waterfront and worked.

A man who was elected vice-president of Local 10 only served, as my recollection goes, about two months; then he became quite ill. He was quite elderly. I can't for the moment think of his name, but he called me up. He was in St. Luke's hospital and he called me up, wanted to see me.

I went to visit him and he said, "The doctor told me I cannot do this job; too strenuous for me." He spoke of the man that was president of Local 10 at that time and had been president during the 1934 strike. What the hell was his name? Joseph Johnson!

He was followed in office by Bridges. Anyway, he was elected as president again. The other man in the hospital was vice-president. He said, "Brother Johnson cannot do this job very well and it would please me very much if you would run for vice-president. I'll feel much better if I know that you are in there giving him a hand."

So I did run for vice-president, and I was elected and worked together with Brother Johnson. He was not up to the situation. When his term was nearly up I told him I intended to run for president.

I said to him at the time, "Of course, you have every right to run (because he had another year to go) but I think it would look better if you just did not run, rather than get defeated. I am quite sure that the membership will support my position to become president."

I was elected president but because this was for only part of a year I was re-elected for two more years; in other words, the following year

Bulcke: and the year after that. That brings us up to the time that the war broke out. I was in office at the time of Pearl Harbor.

Ward: There was a period there when you and Henry Schmidt more or less alternated as president.

Bulcke: Yeah, after my, after . . . .

Ward: Your first shot at it.

Bulcke: Yeah, Henry followed me back in and served two years. I'm losing track of the - - -

Ward: But didn't you succeed Henry again after that two years?

Bulcke: Yeah, he followed me in; yeah, I followed him in. That's right we were around twice - - -

Ward: Something like a yo-yo!

Bulcke: Yeah, it was either Schmidt or Bulcke who was in there as president. Anyway, during the war years Henry served on a special committee to do with shipping and stuff, which I eventually served on too. Then in 1946 I was elected president again, and in 1947 I became a candidate for International vice-president. I was elected and served until 1960 - 13 years.

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### III SERVING THE INTERNATIONAL

#### Getting Elected

Ward: Jerry, you were telling about the time you were elected International vice-president. You had opposition, I understand.

Bulcke: That's right. What happened was this. The procedure for electing International officers is that the nominations are made in the

Bulcke: convention, and eventually by a vote of the delegates the candidates for each office are narrowed down to two. The main opposition I had was by a fellow by the name of Cole Jackman. He was a member of the Coast Committee which specializes in longshore problems, enforcement of the contract, and so forth. We have other contracts covering warehouse matters, and so on. Henry Schmidt and Cole Jackman were the Coast Committee at that time. Until two weeks before the convention Cole Jackman and I were friends -

Ward: You were both more or less leftwingers?

Bulcke: Yes, we were both considered progressives. He was from Portland, Oregon, a very capable person.

Cole came to me about two weeks before the convention and he said, "Jerry, I hope you don't feel bad; I'm also going to be a candidate for vice-president." I said, "Cole, that's your right, but what made you change your mind? A week ago you were telling me how you were going to support me?"

"Well," he says, "actually President Bridges has convinced me that I should be a candidate." I said, "Well, that's strange, but I guess he has the right to express his opinion."

So, I went and talked with Harry and I said to him, "I don't quite understand why you are opposed to me being a candidate for International vice-president." At that time, I was president of Local 10.

Harry said, "Well, Jerry, you are doing such a good job in Local 10, I want you to stay there." And I said, "Harry, you were president of Local 10, why didn't you stay there?" So, we both laughed and I left it at that.

Well, in the convention there were four nominees, as my memory goes, but it was narrowed down to two.

Ward: You and Jackman?

Bulcke: Me and Jackman. And the big delegation that had a lot of votes was from Hawaii and in the preliminaries they voted in favor of Jackman, and some others did too, for that matter.

It disturbed me a little bit because the Hawaii delegation always votes in a block; they have a little caucus and they decide; it's a block vote and there are a lot of votes. At that time, I think, they had somewhere around 28,000 members.

Ward: That was what year?

Bulcke: That was 1947. I had represented the Hawaiian Islands on the International Executive Board, of which I had been a member for several years. Although I had never been to Hawaii, I had been in a lot of communications with them and their problems, so they knew me pretty well.

What happened was that a delegate from Hawaii, from Hilo, came to me; I knew him pretty well because we had corresponded. He said, "Jerry, don't worry; when we get to Honolulu, we're going to have another caucus."

When the results came in, well, Hawaii had voted practically unanimously for me. I was elected by an overwhelming vote to the office of International Vice-President.

Ward: Was it only the first time that you had opposition?

Bulcke: After that in the seven following conventions, I think only once was there opposition during the thirteen years that I served.



Becoming An Arbitrator

Bulcke: In 1960, we had been having some difficulties with our local in San Pedro, Local 13. We had established arbitrators by that time on the coast. There were four arbitrators, one for Southern California, one for Northern California, one for the Oregon area and one for the Seattle area. And Sam Kagel was appointed and still is the coast-wide arbitrator. The procedure is that an arbitrator on a local level makes a decision for or against the union. That decision must be lived up to by both parties but is subject to appeal. The appeal goes to a joint committee of employers and the Coast Committee on the union side.

Ward: That procedure I have from Henry Schmidt.

Bulcke: Yes, but what happened in San Pedro was that the arbitrator was an attorney and he was on a retainer. He was not available full time, and there were many problems in San Pedro.

I remember Harry and I discussing the need for a full-time arbitrator, because many times when the arbitrator was needed he was in court. His main business was being an attorney; he made good decisions as far as the union and the employers were concerned, but many times -

Ward: He was not available?

Bulcke: He was not available. The harbor of San Pedro is part of Los Angeles, and the Harbor Commission is appointed by the city of Los Angeles.

Well, the Board of Supervisors was advised that some of the steamship companies (the Japanese Line was one and I forget the others) were threatening to not come into San Pedro any more but would go to Long Beach. Long Beach is an independent harbor in competition with Los Angeles. These shipping lines threatened to pull out because of the many work stoppages

Bulcke: which were occurring, delaying their ships. So the situation was quite serious, because the Board of Supervisors intended to pass an ordinance making all waterfront employees civil service, which would have meant destruction of the union, or at least weakening the position of the union tremendously. Paul St. Sure, the president of the Pacific Maritime Association, and Harry Bridges appeared before the Board of Supervisors and promised them that the union would put in a full time arbitrator that knew the contract and knew the work and would be available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, so that any dispute would be handled quickly with as little delay as possible.

Ward: That was one of the occasions where St. Sure was definitely helpful to the ILWU.

Bulcke: Definitely. He also could see many problems that would develop if this thing went into effect about having Civil Service at San Pedro, instead of the way it was.

Anyway, Bridges and St. Sure were able to convince the Board to delay action on this proposed ordinance for ninety days. Harry called me (I still remember) on a Wednesday from down South and told me of this development. I mentioned to Harry, "You remember not so long ago we were talking about the need of a full time arbitrator." And he said, "Yes, Paul St. Sure and I have agreed that we would appreciate it if you would take the position." It was a Wednesday night, around 8:00 o'clock.

Ward: That would mean you would have to resign as International Vice-President?

Bulcke: Oh, yes, yes, and I said "How much time do I have to consider this?" Harry said, "I'll be in the office Friday morning. Keep it to yourself and if you don't want to or can't, no harm done; but I want your answer; we can't delay."

Bulcke: Well, I came home and discussed it with Rusty, and she said, "You do what you think is right." Well, I thought it over; I felt that I could do the job because of the many years I had been an officer of the union. I had attended every convention, I was generally a member of the negotiating committee, I knew the contract, I knew the work and I felt I could do the job.

When Harry came in on Friday morning, I agreed to take the position, so there was a slight delay because we were in negotiations; and St. Sure agreed. We had what we call fishbowl negotiations where the membership sat in, plus the employers. I was requested to stay and act as chairman of that particular fishbowl negotiation, which I did.

Ward: So you couldn't be both the fishbowl chairman - ?

Bulcke: No, and as soon as that was over with I proceeded down to San Pedro and started my new job. It was rather amusing, as I look back; the first four or five or maybe six weeks, when I made a decision against the union, I would get static back: "I wonder how much that son-of-a bitch got for that one." If I ruled against the employers, the static would come back: "What do you expect? He's a member of the union." But, the static didn't last very long, because my knowledge of the job was such that the men soon recognized that I knew what I was talking about, and they went along.

Ward: You established confidence?

Bulcke: Oh, yeah. The men realized that quite quickly because I used to say to the employer representatives, "You see, the weakness you people have is that you never worked as a longshoreman. You read the contract, you read the language, but you can't spell out everything." I said, "You have to know the work." I had a good relationship the whole time I was there.

Well, I made 712 decisions in the six years I was there and I had 13 cases appealed. Of the 13, eight were by the union and five by

Bulcke: the employers and they went to the appeal procedure. I think five or six ended up before Sam Kagel, but I never lost a decision; they were all sustained.

Ward: All thirteen?

Bulcke: All thirteen, yes. One incident was a little amusing, in a way. I was called out one night - I was available day and night - on a so-called safety beef. It was in the lower hold of the ship. They were working the lower hold, which is the lowest part of the vessel and there was cargo stowed on the next deck, right up to the edge of the hatch. Normally they had dunnage - pieces of board - put across to keep it from falling down. Well, there were no boards there and the men stood by on the grounds that it was unsafe.

Well, I took one look at it and realized what happened, I knew darn well that the ship did not come in without the dunnage being there. The cargo would have dropped down. So I knew that they had manoeuvred so they could stand on the safety rule. If the arbitrator ruled that the men were right they would get paid for the time they stood by.

So, by the time the business agent came out and argued with the employer representative, then got on the phone and called me there was about an hour and a half that they had stood by. I took one look at it and said to the longshoremen, "You know, the contract provides that when conditions are unsafe, the first thing you have to do is to make them safe. You guys did not do that, you stood by. You should have gotten some dunnage and made it safe.

"I'm sorry; get the dunnage, make it safe, go back to work, but you're not going to get paid for standing by because you were wrong." Then when I got to the business agent, (I knew him well) I said, "Pete, what in the world made you call me out on a bum beef like this?" Why

Bulcke: didn't you tell the guys what to do?" "Well, he says, "Jerry, I'm running for reelection, and if I had done that, I wouldn't have gotten any of the votes."

I says, "Pete, in my experience the men have much more appreciation when you tell them that they're wrong than to go along with a trick like this." "Yeah, he says, "I guess you're right."

I walked off the ship; it was around midnight and I was walking toward the head of the dock where my car was when a young fellow who had been working on the dock against that hatch came out and said, "Are you the arbitrator?" I said, "Yes, I am; if you want to argue the decision, the business agent is right there. The thing is resolved."

He had heard what the decision was, you see. "Well, what a hell of an arbitrator you are. What do you know about longshore work? I spit on you." He spit but he didn't hit me. I ignored it and started walking on. His partner came out - an older man - who used to be my partner in San Francisco and knew me for years.

So, very politely, he said, "Mr. Arbitrator, may I ask you a question?" And I said, "Well, you just heard what I told your young partner. I don't discuss my decisions after they are resolved."

"No, no," he said, "I heard what my partner said. I just wanted to ask, what year did you start working as a longshoreman?" He knew. I said, "Well, in 1925." And then he turned to his young partner and said, "You see, he was doing this work when you were a gleam in your pop's eye. I worked with him, and he's an expert longshoreman." The young man looked at me. "You are a longshoreman! I'm sorry, sir," and stuck his hand out and apologized. I saw the young man a number of times afterwards, and I always felt it was an amusing little incident. I felt as an arbitrator I was able to resolve

Bulcke: the problems satisfactorily within the framework of the agreement. There were no more threats of shipping being pulled out of the harbor and everything just went along smoothly. So, those were my years of experience as an arbitrator.

Ward: Did you enjoy being an arbitrator?

Bulcke: I did and I didn't - I'll tell you what the biggest drawback was, which has now been corrected. As I stated, I was available twenty four hours a day and seven days a week. Rusty was working.

Ward: Well, you couldn't take a vacation?

Bulcke: Well, yes, we did get a month's vacation every year. But the rest of the time you were nailed down. So, what would happen was this: on a Saturday afternoon, Saturday night and Sunday, from the employer's side there was some guy in charge that didn't know from nothing; and on the union side, one business agent. No matter what the beef was, those guys wouldn't agree to anything. The easiest way out was to call the arbitrator.

Many times we would be invited out to dinner to some friends. I would phone in to the business agent's office or to the employer's office, whatever occurred to me, saying, "If necessary, I'll be at such and such a number."

Nine times out of ten, when we'd get there the lady of the house would come out and say, "Jerry, there's a call for you - Long Beach," or whatever it was.

You know, this really bothered me, it got to be so regular. One time it went seventeen days that they didn't call me. Rusty said, "I bet they fired you and didn't tell you." I mean, eventually it became a little too much that you had no way of doing anything - - - -

Ward: On your own?

Bulcke: On your own. Sure, I had a month's vacation, but after eleven months of that kind of thing . . . As time went on this got worse and worse. Finally, when they signed up the new contract I informed both sides, "Thank you very much, but I will not continue." So, they gave me a nice luncheon before I left - the employers and the union, both. They really felt that I had done a good job, and I am very pleased about that.

When I got back to San Francisco, the Coast Committee asked me would I act as a relief arbitrator here for this area and I said, "I was doing fine in San Pedro and if I wanted to be an arbitrator I would have stayed there, thank you."

Ward: Something about a trip to Japan?

#### A Tangle With Mayor Yorty

Bulcke: Yes, what happened was, Sam Yorty was mayor of Los Angeles. Well, the Board of Supervisors - -

Ward: You and Sam Yorty had tangled before?

Bulcke: Yeah. The Board of Supervisors and the Chamber of Commerce decided that in order to improve the shipping from the Far East, it would be a good idea if a committee would visit the Philippines, Japan, the Far East, you know.

One of the members of the Harbor Commission of San Pedro came to see me and asked if I would be willing to be a part of that committee because I had the knowledge of the harbors, movement of the cargo, and blah, blah, blah to do with the contract.

I said I would be happy to do that provided I got the consent of my two bosses, the ILWU and the Waterfront Employers. If they would agree that I could go, I'd be happy to accommodate them.

Bulcke: "Oh," he said, "that should be no problem." Maybe a week or ten days went by - I don't recall exactly - when he called me again and asked me to have lunch with not only him, but the whole Harbor Commission. We had lunch in San Pedro in a restaurant, and he said, "I don't know how to tell you this, but in order for this commission to go, it needed the approval of the mayor of Los Angeles, Sam Yorty. He approved of everybody, but when he came to your name he said, 'Oh, no - not him.' He won't let you go; as a matter of fact he's going to take your place." And he did.

So, I was unable to make that trip, but the result was the people in Los Angeles and the Harbor really raised the dickens with Yorty afterwards. He had no business going along with that commission, and when they found out - - - -

Ward: He was taking a free ride? He didn't know anything?

Bulcke: Yeah, on a subject about which he didn't know anything. There was a lot of adverse publicity, stories in the papers, afterwards. Well, this is how Sam Yorty cheated me out of a trip that I probably would have enjoyed.

Ward: Did you ever go to Japan?

Bulcke: Never went to Japan.

Ward: You spent several months in Hawaii?

Bulcke: Well, when Jack Hall was on trial, Harry asked me to stay over. I was there from September until April. Then at the holidays when there were no court sessions, I came back and picked up Rusty and Bruce, and we stayed there until the Jack Hall trial was over -



A May Day Celebration

Ward: I hear you went as a delegate from something or other to East Germany. What was that all about?

Bulcke: It was a May Day celebration in East Germany, in East Berlin. It was called by the Trade Union Federation of East Germany, similar to what we say of the CIO or the AFL here. It represents all the unions in East Germany, and it had invited delegates from every country in the world that had trade unions. There were 69 countries represented. Dick Lynden, from Local 6 - he has since passed away - and I were sent by the International to attend that conference.

Ward: You had German of course, but Dick, did he?

Bulcke: No - no. After I was there a week or ten days my German came back. I always understand it, but it got so that I could converse. Dick Lynden said, "East Germans - West Germans, they're all Germans; they will only show us what they want us to see."

This was his attitude. They had an interpreter for every group, so the interpreter assigned to us was a man who had been in the export-import business with England, and lived in England for a number of years. He spoke beautiful British English, and he was with us all the time.

Ward: Just the two of you?

Bulcke: You see, Dick and I were the only Americans there. There were 69 countries represented - Australia, everybody, including us representing the so-called American trade union movement. Every day they would hang up notices to show where they would take people.

Ward: Oh, tours?

Bulcke: That's right. Dick said, "Sure", and I said "No, Dick, you don't want to go on a tour. They will take us wherever we want to go. Can't you see that here are people from 69 countries, how would they know how to go around and look at anything; they have to have directions."

Anyway, I said to the interpreter, Hans, that day, "If it's all right, we don't want to go on the tour today." He said, "Oh, sure, what do you want to do?" I said, "Well, can't we just drive around and see what we'd like?"

So, he gets the chauffeur and the car and we get in and drive around a ways and we saw a small manufacturing plant. I said, "Can we go in there?"

He says, "Sure" and we drive up to the gate, and the director came out, all dressed up, business man, necktie. Hans introduced us and the director said, "I'll be most happy to show you around."

I said, "Hans, you are dressed like a business man, you are too." Of course, I was wearing a necktie, too.

I said to the director, "If you don't mind, with all due respect, I would like to walk around, just talk to some workers so they won't feel the boss is looking down their neck." And, of course, I'm speaking in English all this time; the director spoke good English too. But Hans said, "Jerry, these workers don't speak English." "I know," I said, "I speak German." He like to fell over.

Anyway we went into the plant and saw a guy who wasn't too busy, fooling around with some machine. I introduced myself and Dick, saying we were a couple of delegates to the Trade Union Federation convention May Day celebration and that we're from the Longshoremen, we're from San Francisco, work on the waterfront; we started talking. The guy was very cooperative;

Bulcke: first thing you know, I had about 12 guys standing around me. In our discussion the guy said, "I suppose you have an automobile?" He lived three blocks from the plant in a new apartment house, and he had a motorcycle and two kids. I said, "Well, as a matter of fact, I have two automobiles." The change in their expression! "What does this mean, he's a worker; he's got two automobiles?" They were on a waiting list, see; they were manufacturing automobiles and hoped to get an automobile sometime.

I said, "Well, don't misunderstand. What do you need an automobile for?" "Oh, it would be nice to drive on a weekend with the wife and kids." I said, "Yes, that's for pleasure, but where I am I need an automobile for my work. My wife works and she couldn't do her work without an automobile. There it is a necessity, not a luxury like it is here."

They saw it and they agreed, and we exchanged a lot of talk about a lot of things. Eventually this guy invited Dick and me and we had dinner at his house. It was quite an experience.

Ward: Is there anything else?

Bulcke: Well, we enjoyed the conference very much. There's another incident I want to talk about, but I don't think we have time.

Ward: Why don't you try it and see?

Bulcke: Well, there was a Japanese delegation and there were three of them. They were supposed to be from the Railway Union in Japan. The system was that when a new delegation arrived our hosts would take them down to the dining room and - - -

## (Interview 4: 18 July, 1983)

Ward: Jerry, you were talking about the German Trade Union Federation Conference in East Berlin. What year was it?

Bulcke: 1960.

Ward: 1960, and you were going to tell us about the Japanese delegation.

### Hiroshima All Over Again

Bulcke: Yes, as I stated, a delegation of Japanese arrived at the conference and the practice was that when a new delegation arrived, they would be taken around in the dining room and introduced to all of the various delegates. It was the system of having a flag designating the country you were from on each table and when they came to us, two of the delegates were very friendly and seemed pleased to meet us, but the third delegate, as he looked at me, I could feel that he could have killed me, really staring at me in a very peculiar way.

They went on from there and it bothered me, so later that day on a sightseeing trip on a small pleasure boat, I noticed the Japanese sitting a ways behind us on the opposite side with their interpreter. He was a professor of Oriental languages and was able to speak Japanese.

So, I went over and talked with the interpreter first, and explained to him that I felt there was something not right the way this one man had acted and looked at me. The interpreter talked to them in Japanese for a few minutes and then explained that this man was not really a delegate from any organization; he was a victim of Hiroshima and they had brought him along for special treatments that he expected to get in East Germany. So, through the interpreter I explained that as

Bulcke: far as our own organization is concerned, the ILWU had not been in favor of what happened at Hiroshima and we felt it was a very bad thing. After these explanations, the Japanese man became friendly, and through the interpreter he explained that the moment he saw anything American he would immediately get mad, realising that at Hiroshima he had lost his family, his children; he was a real victim.

After that whenever we went anywhere, and particularly if we didn't go with the conducted tours, the Japanese would always ask if they could go along with us, so for a number of days they would be with us. Through the interpreters we would have a nice conversation and talk about the conditions we worked under and they worked under and so on. That ended up by having a real friendly feeling amongst all of us.

I thought that was quite a thing, because a relative of my wife who was in the service went down in the Battle of the Coral Sea and was picked up by the Japanese. He was a prisoner for the rest of the war, and was imprisoned at the other place where they dropped the bomb, Nagasaki. He eventually came back but he wasn't feeling too well, and we were quite sure that it must have been the effect of the bomb. He passed away a few years later.

I told the Japanese about it and they understood that I was well aware of what had happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. So that was the situation there.

Ward: Now, Jerry, you went to the American Consulate in Berlin for some reason. What was that?

Bulcke: Yes, Dick and I decided that although we had a list of trade unions both in East Germany and West Germany, it might be worth while to go see the American Consul who had his office in West Berlin. At that time there was no problem - -

Ward: No wall?

Bulcke: No wall. You got on the subway and went. The only thing that happened is when you came back on the subway, if you had any parcels or packages, the customs guard would look at them.

Ward: What do you mean when you came back?

Bulcke: When you came back from West Berlin to East Berlin; the subways were run by East Berlin. We decided it might be a good idea to go and see the Consul, tell why we were there and ask for a list of West German trade unions. We had a list, of course, but we wanted to make an excuse for a sort of courtesy call.

When we got there the Consul was not in. However, he had a person who spoke for him who was obviously German but spoke sufficient English. He told us he had spent three years in the United States. We explained our mission and he said that wouldn't be difficult but it would take him a couple of days to get the list together. I said that was fine and I appreciated his help.

He said, "Now, where are you staying?" So, I gave him the address in East Berlin and suggested that he could phone us. "Oh, no," he said, "don't you know that the Communists have cut off all the telephone connections between East and West Berlin?"

I said, "That's news to me. This morning at the hotel I called the airport in West Berlin to make arrangements for our further flights in Western Europe and we had no difficulty. Also I have used the phone a number of times to people I know that live in West Berlin, and when did they cut these lines off?"

He said, "Oh, it's been that way for quite a long time!" I realized he was caught up with, so I said, "Well, that's strange; when I get back to the United States I'm certainly going to let people know the treatment I

Bulcke: received here in the American Consulate. I know for a fact that the lines are open." I pointed to the phone and said, "Just to satisfy me, and you too, why don't you phone the number that I give you at the hotel?" He refused to do so, so I said, "Well, I'll make sure this is known when I get back." And we walked out. (So, when I came back I did call a number of Senators and Congressmen I knew and told them of this treatment.)

Then we went from there to the airport to make arrangements for our additional flights in West Germany with Pan Am where I had connections. In explaining where we wanted to go and trying to figure out the timing and so forth, one of the last things the clerk asked me was, "What's your address, where are you staying?" I gave him the name of the hotel in East Berlin and he marked it down and said that he would see to it that our tickets were sent over - no problem.

Well, behind me was a man and wife and an eleven year old boy who had overheard this conversation. As I stepped back he said, "Pardon me, I couldn't help but overhear your conversation. You mean you are staying in East Berlin?" I said, "Yes, I am." He said, "We were warned not to go over there, that there would be all kinds of trouble, but I was anxious to go over there and see what it is like."

I said, "There are no problems and if you want to come with me, I'll be leaving in a few minutes and I'll wait until you get through, and help make your arrangements. I'll take you along."

He said, "Can I stay at the hotel that you're at?" I said, "No, unfortunately you can't, because it's a hotel that is operated and owned by the trade union movement, the Confederation. However, there is a hotel right around the corner where I'm sure you can be accommodated."

Bulcke: He looked at his wife and said, "Well, what do you think, honey?" And she said, "Let's go." And so they came along with Dick and me on the subway and I took them over to the hotel. About three days later he came over to the hotel where I was staying and thanked me very much. He was on his way back and he said, "When I get back to Cincinnati, (that's where he was from) I'm certainly going to make that newsworthy." So, this is another example of the stuff that went on at that time and the misinformation that was given to people.

Ward: That's interesting to me, because Lou Goldblatt had a similar experience in Moscow at the American Embassy a year earlier, in '59.

Bulcke: Oh, yeah!

Ward: The incident was a little different, but the idea was the same.

Bulcke: Well, another thing I noticed, there is a beautiful war memorial in East Berlin. It's well-known and it attracts thousands of people. We went there a couple of times and there I saw about six big United States Army busses; of course, here were American soldiers. They didn't have any arms with them, but they were in uniform and they were brought over to take a look at this nice memorial. So, obviously, there was no difficulty getting there.

I must say that a year later, for my vacation, I took my wife back to East Berlin. I wanted her to see what I had seen. We had no difficulty getting there. I wrote to the Trade Union Federation and they told me all they needed to know was the information on my passport. They met us at the airport in East Berlin, and they had a big bouquet of roses for my wife. The president of the trade union federation was there and some others.



Bulcke: They took us up to his office where we had a nice luncheon and wine to drink. And then they assigned us to the same hotel I stayed in before. I wanted to visit an acquaintance of mine that lived about oh, 40 miles I think it was, from East Berlin.

I asked, "How do I get there? Do I take a bus, a railway, or how do I get there?" They said, "When do you want to go?" And I said, "Well, tomorrow." I had that in mind. They said, "Don't worry, we'll take you there." So, they assigned a car, a chauffeur, an interpreter and took us where we wanted to go.

There they said, "How long are you going to be here? Don't be in any hurry." "Oh," I said, "we'll be here about three hours." And they said, "We'll be back," and they disappeared; about three hours later there they were and they took us back.

Not only that, they drove us from the Czechoslovakian border to the Baltic - up and down - and took us to every place of interest to see. And wouldn't allow me to spend a nickel. When we went to restaurants, they took care of it.

When we finally decided that we were going to leave I had made no return arrangements with the airlines. I wanted to go to Belgium where I had a younger sister who was still alive, and visit her. I asked them to make the connections, and it is a good thing I understood German because they were about to pay for my ticket, which I didn't allow them to do. They just couldn't do enough. They have a monthly magazine - the Federation does, and I have been receiving this magazine ever since.

Ward: I think I saw it on your table.

Bulcke: Yes, yes; it has information about what goes on in the trade unions in East Germany, and other news too of interest. I always look forward to seeing it. So, those are what I call my East German visits.

- Ward: Doesn't sound horrible at all.
- Bulcke: No, they were very enjoyable trips and the people couldn't just do enough for us.
- Ward: You couldn't return the compliment by inviting them over here?
- Bulcke: I did. I told them I hoped that conditions were such that they could make the trip to the United States; they would be most welcome. Of course, they never did make it.
- Ward: You couldn't speak for the White House?
- Bulcke: No, of course not.
- Ward: I know that in my wife's family there is one cousin in Italy who would have very much liked to come to this country (he's dead now) but he couldn't because he was a known Communist.
- Bulcke: Well, just a few years ago we had the ILWU bi-annual convention in Seattle, and there were three or four Russian newspaper representatives who were in Vancouver, Canada, attempting to come to our convention. They had been invited, but they were not allowed to cross the border.
- Some years ago my wife went to Kenya to visit a friend of hers that was in the Peace Corps. This lady had asked her to come because she was going to have her vacation and she wanted my wife to join her, which she did.
- Ward: Whereabouts in Kenya?
- Bulcke: She was teaching school in a place about 40 miles from Nairobi. Anyway, while they were in Mombasa doing some shopping my wife noticed a sign on the building that showed this was the headquarters of the longshoremen so she said to her friend, "Let's go in there and introduce ourselves. I'll tell them that my husband is a longshoreman in San Francisco."

Bulcke: So they met with the man who was in charge of the port and he was very friendly. Then he said that he had just received a letter from George Meany critising him for allowing a delegation from the ILWU to visit the Kenya area and the Port. Meany was very critical because the Kenyans had been kind enough to allow this delegation to visit their country and examine the conditions. When he told my wife that, she wrote to me immediately; I happened to be at the convention in Seattle and I was able to read that into the record - -

Ward: Oh, I see, while she was still in - - -

Bulcke: While she was still in Kenya, and so our ILWU convention records the fact that the head of the AFL-CIO had critisized this man in charge of the port of Mombasa for allowing a delegation of the ILWU to come there.

By the way, two of our members that had been in Mombasa and Kenya were also delegates to that particular convention. They immediately supported my motion to the effect that we should contact Meany and tell him to keep his nose out of our business.

You see, in the ILWU we have for years sent delegations of workers all over the world, to different countries to compare conditions; this happened to be one of those. That's the time when the Russian newspaper men were in Vancouver, B.C., trying to come to our convention.

We of course protested to the State Department and the Department of Labor and we understand that shortly after that, the system of having Meany okaying the visiting people from other countries was taken away from him.

Communist Members

Bulcke: In the ILWU, particularly in Local 10, there were, I wouldn't say many, but there were six members of our union who openly made it clear that they were members of the Communist party.

Ward: Yes, Archie Brown - - -

Bulcke: Archie Brown, for one; Bebe Jones, and some others that have passed away. Whenever in our meetings a member would get up and try to blame the Communist party for something that wasn't going right, generally one of those fellows would get up and explain that he was a member of the Communist party and that was not the policy of the Communist party, which was not in any way interfering in the internal affairs of our local or our International.

We had this happen often, I mean not too often. Whenever the situation arose, there would always be one or more of those members who openly and frankly admitted membership in the Communist party. As a rule it would turn out all right and caused no internal friction or problems within the union.

Ward: Did anything about parallelism come up? If Local 10 adopted a resolution in regard to oh, say, Spain, and the Communist party had a somewhat similar stand on it, would questions like that arise?

Bulcke: Well, such things did, but generally, as I recall, they caused no difficulty in the union at all. The fact that the Communist party adopted a resolution dealing with Japan, or whatever, and we adopted a similar resolution did not mean it was done because of or in spite of the Communists. We felt that whenever the Communist party resolution dovetailed with our position it was good; it never caused any great amount of problems within the union.

- Bulcke: I remember when I was International vice-president that - not too often - leaders of the Communist party would come in and discuss trade union activities.
- Ward: I was going to ask about that; such discussions were friendly, I guess?
- Bulcke: Oh, yes, they would ask permission to come and talk about things that affected the trade union movement, and ask what our position was and what we were going to do about it. They would state their position, and many times it was similar to ours. If not, we so stated. They had the right to adopt whatever position they wanted, but that would not necessarily be the kind of position we would take or had taken. Our relationship was always very friendly.
- Ward: Was your relationship with them similar to that of representatives of other political parties, like the Democratic party, for instance?
- Bulcke: Well, yes, I mean that naturally occurred more often during election times. We would, as a local union and as an international union, take positions supporting people for certain offices. It was quite possible, (I can't think of any such situation offhand) that the Communist party would support certain candidates that we supported; it may have just happened that way.
- Ward: Incidentally, you've met with leading Democrats and you have met with leading Communists. Did you ever meet with leading Republicans?
- Bulcke: Leading Republicans . . . ?
- Ward: If you did, it apparently didn't make much - - -
- Bulcke: If I did it didn't make much of an impression. I'm not sure . . .
- Ward: All right. In your relationship with the employers, did any difficulties arise over questions of politics, left-wing politics?

- Bulcke: No, not that I can recall. We never had any problems in that way. In our relationship with the employers, presumably most of them might have been Republicans.
- Ward: Probably were.
- Bulcke: No, we never had any problem with that particular phase of it.
- Ward: Nobody said, "I'm a shipowner; I won't deal with any Communists?"
- Bulcke: No - no. As a matter of fact, one of our members by the name of Archie Brown got into some difficulty and the employers wanted him discharged.
- Ward: Yes, that's a good point. He was on one of your committees in Local 10, I believe.
- Bulcke: Yes, he was elected to the executive board. Because he was a Communist, charges were filed against him by the government and it went to the Supreme Court. It was thrown out and he maintained his membership and his position on the executive board.
- But I'm thinking of an incident dealing with the military, and . . . .
- Ward: Dealing with the military?
- Bulcke: In the early part of the war there was a ruling that longshoremen should not talk about what they were loading, so we had the statement, "Zip Your Lip"; don't talk about what you are loading, where it is going, and what have you.
- This was religiously followed by our members, so one night I was called up at home by a steward out of a gang; they were loading a ship at the Army docks in San Francisco. He asked me to come down.

Bulcke: He said, "I'm aware of the rule and I can't talk about what I want to tell you but I want you to come and see it." I knew the man and I knew he was a sincere steward, so I went down the Army docks. I knew the hatch he was working at, and here's what happened. When I got to the ship, the steward met me and asked me to come on down and he would show me what he wanted me to see. In those early days of the war, each of the military branches, Air Corps or Army, Marines, whatever, each had what they called a loading officer, who was in charge of cargo designed for that particular group.

What had happened was this: they had loaded airplanes with the wings detached; they were boxed. They had put the planes in the lower hold at the bottom of the hatch and then they had put dunnage, which is lumber, on top of the planes. Then they had loaded small tanks on top of this. So, the steward had complained to the loading officer, who said he had nothing to do with the airplane parts and he was only interested in getting his stuff in - - -

Ward: Which were the tanks?

Bulcke: Which were the tanks, all heavy stuff that normally should have been on the bottom.

Ward: The tanks should have been on the bottom?

Bulcke: Certainly. Well, I got the General in charge of the port out of bed at 1:30 in the morning. It took me some time to get him, but I got him and I told him what was going on. I wanted him to see it and stop it, correct the situation.

He grumbled but agreed to come along, but by the time we got to the dock the ship had pulled out and was going to the Army base in Oakland. So we went over to Oakland and waited for the ship to get in and sure enough even in that short distance the tanks were on the bottom and the planes were all destroyed or badly damaged.

Bulcke: Of course, the General pleaded with me - please, please, don't ever mention this. I didn't mention it, at that time, but this was the situation in the early part of the war. I imagine it also happened in other places.

Certainly it was a shame to have this kind of situation develop. The members of the gang, some of them had sons in the service and they realized that the destruction of that stuff was going to hurt us more than it would the other side.

We also had a situation at the Matson docks one time. I was put on a committee which had a representative of the government, the employers, and myself representing the union, to try to utilize manpower more efficiently. At that time the employers were getting 10 per cent above the payroll. So, the larger the payroll the more they made. They were wasting manpower many times over.

Ward: These were the stevedoring companies?

Bulcke: Yes, the stevedoring companies and the shipping companies. Many times they had men standing by for hours on end with no work. That didn't make any difference, you know; the employers were getting their ten per cent. So, we were trying to work out means to utilize the work force more efficiently.

One of the Matson liners came back from its regular trip to Australia and the military were very anxious to get that ship discharged because they wanted to take troops . . . .

Ward: They wanted a quick turn-around?

#### A Quick Turn-Around

Bulcke: A quick turn-around because they were taking troops over to the Philippines. We had a conference with the military and the Matson Company



Bulcke: representatives and tried to figure out how fast we could get the ship unloaded. As I recall it, the Matson Company maintained that using all possible manpower it would take 135 hours to discharge the vessel, to be ready to be turned over. I questioned that and I stated that if I was allowed to choose the gangs and the supervision, we could do it in much less time than that.

##

Bulcke: I was sure that I could get the ship unloaded in less than 100 hours.

Ward: You cut out 35 hours.

Bulcke: And immediately the Matson Company objected, saying that after all they were the experienced people and they knew what the ship was like, the cargo was like and what have you. They couldn't see how it could be done in less than 130 hours.

The military representative immediately told the Matson Company that I was to be given a free hand to do what I wanted, even if it only saved five hours.

The result was that I picked certain gangs and certain supervision that I knew, told them of the situation where they really had to put out as best as they could to get the ship discharged.

We got the ship turned around in 90 hours. Naturally, that didn't make Matson very happy, but the military was quite satisfied.

Ward: You could speak to the General after that?

Bulcke: Oh, yeah. Later on we had another situation that occurred over at the Army docks over in Oakland. As I stated before I was on a committee that went around to utilize the manpower to

Bulcke: the best of our ability. So, I noticed a tanker laying there and the gangs were not working. I went over and talked to one of the stewards of the gang and I said, "What's going on?" He said, "I don't know. This is the second night that we sat here and we haven't done a tack of work. We're supposed to load airplanes on top of the tanker."

I said, "Well, where are the airplanes?" He said, "I don't know, but if you look further down on some barges, you could see some airplanes."

So, I went into the dispatcher office, and I knew the man at the desk there. I said, "What's going on? There were five gangs of men standing by all night last night and probably all day yesterday." And he said, "Yes." And I said, "They're supposed to be loading airplanes - what's happened?"

He said, "I don't know, I don't think the planes are here yet." And I said, "Well, there are some planes down there on some barges. Have you checked them out?" And he said, "I work nights, I didn't know."

So, he looks over; there's a little spindle on his desk, and way on the bottom there was a number six. He says, "Oh, my god, yes, they are the planes." So, we got them to move the barges over.

This is an example of a waste of manpower and delay in getting the necessary equipment wherever it was going. They got them to load the planes, of course. We had similar situations off and on which I can't off-hand recall.

Ward: I get the impression, Jerry, that the examples you have just given of waste and mismanagement were more frequent during the early part of the war than later.

- Bulcke: Well, yes, though the one I just mentioned of the planes was when the war was on a couple of years; the first one about the airplane damage was early in the war. This by now was simply mismanagement; someone didn't tell someone where the planes were and they had at least wasted 24 hours, with men standing by and getting paid but no production.
- Ward: Did they use then the World War I expression "snafu" - "situation normal, all fouled up?"
- Bulcke: I think they did - yeah. Of course, it's understandable that things didn't always work out. But this was an outstanding example and we tried to the best of our ability to utilize the manpower of the fellows.
- Ward: Were the longshoremen all heroes in the war, all virtuous and hardworking or did you have problems with the men?
- Bulcke: We had no problems with the men, because the majority of them - I say, many of them - had sons in the service. Many of them, if anybody started to slack off, these guys would get after them and say, "Look, either put up or get off the ship." And they really produced; they worked very hard.
- Ward: The average longshoreman in those days was working 60 hours a week - 10 hours a day, six days a week?
- Bulcke: Right - right. They got one day off every two weeks.
- Ward: Oh, boy, they worked six and half days?
- Bulcke: Right - right. They worked six and half days - yes, one day off every two weeks.
- Ward: I remember guys saying they hardly knew what to do with the money, but they sure would like a day off.
- Bulcke: Right.

## IV LABORS IN OTHER FIELDS

Running A Central Labor Body

- Ward: Going back to the days of the San Francisco CIO Council, you were asked to step in and fill a need there. Executive Secretary, I think it was, in 1940, wasn't it?
- Bulcke: Yes. The then secretary, Herman Stuyvelaar, was not quite capable of running the council the way it really should be. The leadership of the ILWU, Harry and others, asked me to run for the job as secretary-treasurer of the CIO Council. I agreed I would run and, if elected, I wanted them to understand that I did not want to stay more than one year. I felt that my position was on the waterfront, and not uptown. I wanted to stay closer to the ILWU.
- Ward: You had to go around and service other unions, didn't you? You had some experiences during that year, didn't you? You didn't service the ILWU so much as . . . .
- Bulcke: Oh, no - no. As secretary-treasurer of the CIO Council it was my job to keep in close contact with all the affiliated locals to the Council. Many times I would appear at their particular meetings to explain the position of the Council or the need for support for certain positions that the Council had adopted. We really were able to get the Council to function in a much better way.
- Ward: Did you sit in on any of the negotiations of the other unions?

- Bulcke: I sat in on a number of them; I would sit in with their negotiating committees in attempting to reach satisfactory agreements between the parties. This was part of the duty of the secretary of the Council.
- Ward: You added a little weight to the union side?
- Bulcke: Exactly. The fact that I represented a large union that was well established had some weight in those negotiations. As I recall, generally we were able to conclude the negotiations in a satisfactory manner for the locals involved.
- Ward: Was that experience in the CIO Council less or more interesting than your experience as an officer of the ILWU?
- Bulcke: Well, it was different because in sitting in on negotiations with various locals whose members did different kinds of work gave me an opportunity to become acquainted with their activities, their kind of work and their problems. Actually it was an education to me to find out just what the problems were in other locals and how to resolve them.
- Ward: You met a different bunch of employers, too?
- Bulcke: Oh, definitely different than the waterfront employers; many of them quite difficult to deal with. But it was an enriching experience and I look back at it sometimes and feel it was quite educational. I'm satisfied that we were successful in most instances where we had problems in negotiations.
- Ward: Did it make you feel that politics did go past the waterfront?
- Bulcke: Oh, definitely, definitely.
- Ward: You got to thinking of Sacramento and way places.

Bulcke: Right, right.

Experiences In Washington, D. C.

Ward: Now, you spent 13 years as International Vice-President, and that meant you had to run around quite a bit. I understand that you had to go back to Washington once in a while on legislative matters.

Bulcke: That's right. During my term as International Vice-President it became necessary many times that one or more of our officers, myself included, were required to go to Washington, D. C. We would appear before legislative committees or deal with Senators or Congressmen regarding legislation pending that we either opposed or supported. It was necessary to go to Washington quite often.

Ward: There was something called the Longshore Harbor Act?

Bulcke: Yes, and it is still in effect. It's been amended many times and whenever any hearings were held either to change or add to that law, naturally representation from the ILWU was important.

An amusing incident comes to mind. One time we had a committee of our International executive board in Washington to visit with the various congressmen and senators from other states; and while there we had an opportunity to meet with Madame (Frances) Perkins, who was then Secretary of Labor.

Well, one of our members, while sitting in the waiting room of Madame Perkins office, noticed on the wall an engraved plaque with her name on it. He managed to take it off the wall and took it along home. So, from then on, he would mail it to someone else who had been

Bulcke: there, myself included. I would mail it on to another member, and this thing went around and around for about a year and a half.

I had it twice, but eventually someone must have kept it, but we had a little fun sending Madame Perkins around, as we called it, to remind us of our visit with her in Washington, D. C.

Ward: When was that? Oh, during the war?

Bulcke: Yes, when transportation was very difficult. One time I went to Washington, not in connection with the union but as a member of the State Fish and Game Commission.

That was early in the war. The farmers in the Sacramento Valley, particularly the rice growers, were quite disturbed by the fact that they couldn't get any shot-gun shells which they needed to keep the ducks away from their fields.

They appealed to the State Fish and Game Commission, explained their problem and asked us what we could do to help them get this ammunition. The Fish and Game Commission agreed that this was a problem that should be taken care of and they asked me to go to Washington and meet with Madame Perkins -- no, no, it wasn't Perkins.

Ward: Secretary of War?

Bulcke: No - no, the old boy - what was his name?

Ward: Harold Ickes, Secretary of the Interior?

Bulcke: Oh, yes! I went by plane and in Cincinnati I was bumped by a military officer. At that time, you know, they were flying small planes that took forever, stopped at every crossroads, so I got stuck in Cincinnati.

Bulcke: I had to make arrangements to get train transportation to Washington, D. C., which I managed to do. My suitcase was still on the plane, but I managed to get to Washington, D. C. and by the time I got there I had about half an hour for my appointment with Ickes. I grabbed a cab from the depot and went to his office.

I wasn't dressed at all - I mean I had on a pair of old slacks and didn't have a chance even to clean up or shave or anything.

I didn't think I looked too good, but I got there on time. When my name was called I started to explain to old Ickes the reason I looked the way I did and what had happened to me. He said, "Well, never mind all that; let's get down to business."

I explained the situation and was able to get his assistance; so we got the necessary ammunition for our farmers in the Sacramento Valley. My suitcase eventually did arrive about two days later. It was kind of a harried experience; at that time it was the rule that the military needed prior transportation. Although I had a good rating, it wasn't high enough to keep that guy from taking my place.

Ward: Fish and Game Commission, eh? In the first place you were supposed to go on the Harbor Commission, weren't you?

#### A Political Situation

Bulcke: Now that you mention the Fish and Game Commission, I want to explain how I got to be a member.

Ward: All right.

Bulcke: Originally, when Governor Olson was running for election, our local and myself were in his support. I was authorized and instructed by my



Bulcke: local to travel around Northern California to talk to workers wherever possible to get votes for Olson. We were successful, of course, in having him elected.

Right after the election was over with, the Governor said to me that he appreciated the work I had done and he very much wanted me in his administration. I told the Governor that I had not supported him with the idea of getting a job; I had a job and I wanted to stay where I was. I did say, however, there was one position that did not pay a salary where I thought I could be part of the administration and still serve my own people; that would be as a member of the State Harbor Commission.

Ward: Which then controlled the harbor of San Francisco.

Bulcke: Well, without getting into a lot of detail, when that came out in the newspapers there were headlines saying, in effect, "You might as well appoint Bridges!" I was Bridges' right hand man, and the Associated Farmers, the Water-front Employers - all of that group, everybody was up in arms. I wrote the Governor and called him and I told him to withdraw my name, that it was not worth the fight. He was just elected, barely in office.

I said, "They are going to make capital out of that, and it's not worth that much. Forget it." But the Governor was quite stubborn, he said, "I chose you, and you agreed, and I'm going to stay with you."

The result was that when the confirmation hearing was held only one out of the three votes was in my favor, and I didn't get appointed to the Harbor Commission.

Some months afterwards, I was in my office one day and my secretary said, "The Governor is here to see you." And I said, "Who?" And she said, "Governor Olson - he's right here." Our office was on the second floor, 142 Drum Street.

Bulcke: So, I said, "Tell him to sit down, I'm busy." I didn't have anyone in my office. I waited about five minutes, and then buzzed and told her to send the Governor in. He came in and said, "You know, I'm still mad at what happened to you on the Harbor Commission. But I have a position I think you can serve in and you won't have that problem."

Ward: Confirmation?

### The Fish and Game Commission

Bulcke: It didn't require confirmation. So, I said, "What is that?" He said, "The State Fish and Game Commission." And I said, "Governor, I'm a sports fisherman and I don't know too much about what goes on." And he said, "Well, you can learn."

This was a Wednesday afternoon, and I said, "Well, how much time do I have to agree or reject it?" He said, "I have to know by Friday morning."

We have fishermen organized in our union, so I called Fishermen's locals. They were elated and said, "For the first time in the history of California there will be a labor vote on the Fish and Game Commission. Please accept." Which I did.

Well, all hell broke loose. Immediately, the anti-labor forces in Sacramento introduced a bill making the Fish and Game Commission members subject to confirmation by the State Senate.

Of course, by the time the Legislature adopted this I had already served a year and a half. The Governor said he was going to rename every one of us, and he also provided for certain years of service for each member.

Bulcke: When the new confirmation hearing opened, an older Senator - he used to publish a paper in San Rafael - came into the hearing room. He was well known and had been in the Senate for years. And he was practically blind; had to be led around by someone.

So, the meeting was just about to begin and he said to the chairman of the group, "I don't want to interfere in your business, but I thought I'd like to let you know that I have in the past voted against the confirmation of Mr. Bulcke for the Harbor Commission.

"But I have been following his work in Fish and Game and he is doing excellent work. I hope you give him decent consideration," or something to that effect. He thanked them and walked out. The chairman of the committee said, "Well, anyone else?" No one else said anything so they confirmed us. Then the Governor said, "I will not set your terms. You'll draw your name out of a hat." And I drew a four-year term.

So, the upshot of it was that about three or four months before my term expired in 1944, we had a meeting of the Fish and Game Commission in Sacramento. A note was sent in to me that the new Governor - Warren - -

Ward: Earl Warren?

Bulcke: Earl Warren wanted to see me when the meeting was over. When it was I went to his office and he was sitting at his desk and he had about six or seven letters in envelopes laying on his desk.

He said, "Mr. Bulcke, the reason I asked you to come in is that I have here a certain number of letters recommending that I re-appoint you." He didn't tell me who the letters were from. I assume they were from canneries or from people in the business - he didn't show me the letters.

Bulcke: But he said, "You're a practical man, Mr. Bulcke. I'm a Republican, you're a Democrat, and I'm obliged to appoint a Republican to your position when your term expires." I said, "I understand you, Governor, and I thank you very much." And I walked out. That's the only time I ever talked to him, and he appointed someone else.

The Fish and Game Commission had decided that in order to function properly, it had divided the State to have a Commissioner to be sort of the head man of some particular area of work. For instance, I was to take care of all the commercial fishing, both inland and out in the ocean. Anything dealing with that was referred to me and I would make whatever arrangements or recommendations I thought appropriate; then the matter would be submitted to the whole commission.

Others had other areas; some had inland game hunting, and so forth. Anything that happened on the coast or in the canneries at Monterey and San Diego and Point Richmond came to me first. So, I had to travel around inspecting these places, seeing what goes on and making recommendations to the whole Commission. Generally the recommendations of the particular commissioner would be adopted by the whole commission. It was a way of working, and it gave me a chance to travel all around California. I visited every fish hatchery. . .

Ward: You had to deal with the Fishermen's Union?

Bulcke: Yes, of course I dealt with the Fishermen's Union and its problems. I was the only labor voice on the Commission, and it was good experience.

I had an amusing experience. I was determined to make sure that I knew exactly how everything worked. Now they do it by airplane, but in those days they used to pack in little fish from the hatcheries to plant them in the

Bulcke: various streams and lakes in the Sierras; we used mules and we would ride horseback.

Ward: That was for sport fishing?

Bulcke: Yes, that was for sport fishing. I wanted to see how this worked, so I asked to go along with what they call a mule train.

Ward: This was run by rangers, weren't they?

Bulcke: No, members of the Fish and Game, employees.

Ward: Wardens?

Bulcke: They were attached to the hatcheries - they're wardens. Anyway, on these trips they had to stop every so often and refresh the water as we went up. We were quite a ways up and we ran into an awful thunderstorm which can occur in the summer time, and springtime too.

The warden in charge came to me: "Mr. Commissioner, I'm sorry, but it looks as though this is going to be a wasteful trip; we're going to lose all our fish." And I said, "How come? We changed the water." He said, "I know, but these are Golden trout and Golden trout only exist in certain lakes, you see." (Only at or above the 10,000 feet level). I had caught Golden trout so I knew what they were. He said, "The fish will not survive and we cannot get to the lakes that we were supposed to go into."

Ward: Because of the thunder storm?

Bulcke: Yes, you couldn't go up any further at the time; it was still raining. There was a lake near us - Sardine Lake, that's the name of it.

I said, "Look, why should we let all those little fish die? Let's put them in Sardine Lake." He said, "They are not supposed to be planted there." I said, "Well, are you going to waste all that fish?" He said, "Those are

Bulcke: my instructions." I said, "Look, I'm the Commissioner - put them in Sardine Lake." So we did, and I said, "If there's any problem, you refer it to me. I'll take responsibility."

Nothing happened for a couple of years. I didn't hear anything.

Then, all of a sudden, in the local papers there was excitement; they had caught Golden trout in Sardine Lake. How did they get there? Well, some stories were to the effect that maybe some seagull had gobbled up a little Golden trout and dropped it. There were just all kinds of stories on how Sardine Lake got Golden trout, but nobody ever knew the truth. I don't know whatever happened. I suppose they must have reproduced, and there's still Golden trout in Sardine Lake.

Ward: How does it feel to exert raw power like that? You evidently knew a Golden trout from a Golden trout; you must have been a fisherman.

Bulcke: I was. I had been fishing up there, particularly at the time I was with the Fish and Game Commission. It gave me an opportunity to fish in various lakes you would not get to, you know.

Ward: What did you use, bait or fly?

Bulcke: Mostly bait; I wasn't very good as a fly fisherman. Up there the fishing was easy; there's never too many people. You're up 9,000 to 10,000 feet.

Ward: Yes, the fish were not sophisticated.

Bulcke: No. Anyway, having had that experience, I liked the Sierras and thought of doing some camping up there. During that time I met my present wife and she had joined the Sierra Club. They have annual outings up in the high Sierras and she had made arrangements to go with her son on such an outing.

Ward: Whereabouts? Markleville?

Bulcke: No, no; we started out further South, I can't remember exactly where. There was no way that I could join and go because they had a certain quota of people and it was full. The only way I could go was if I was the husband.

So I had to marry her in order to go on the Sierra Club trip, which I did. The three of us, Rusty, myself and her son, Bruce, went along with the club. On our first day we started at two o'clock in the morning in order to get up high enough while it was cool.

We came to the spot where we were going to camp. They bring all your stuff on muleback and you don't carry anything but your lunch. Fine. I picked out a nice spot and Bruce had brought along a little fishing rod and he said, "I'm going to see if there are any fish in this stream."

It was just a little stream; you could step across it. Well, I didn't want to discourage him and I said, "Sure, go ahead." And all of a sudden, he hollered, "Boy, I gotta fish!" And he had about a twelve inch trout. You oughta have seen the scramble then. Everybody dropped everything, got their fishing gear out and they just lined the stream. I remember cleaning Bruce's fish and making a little fire. I roasted the fish over the fire and we ate it that night. So, that was a good beginning on the trip.

Ward: How old was Bruce then?

Bulcke: He was an early teen-ager and evidently knew something about fishing. On that trip Bruce, in crossing a stream on a log, fell in and got all wet. We stopped. There were about 200 people in the group but we were not all together; we stayed behind and made a fire to kind of dry him out. Eventually a man came along on horseback and picked Bruce up and took him on to the camp. By that time it had got dark and we could not tell where the trail was.

Bulcke: Rusty and I stumbled along and we finally saw a fire. We went there and it was private people that had their own campground. They told us where our camp was and we jumped across rocks in a creek. We looked at it later in daytime and we would never have made the attempt. It was a rushing stream and it really was dangerous, but we made it. When we got to the camp, Bruce was all set. They had set up our place for us, kept food warm for us and really took good care of us. It was quite an exciting trip.

Ward: And then you joined the Sierra Club?

Bulcke: And then I joined the Sierra Club.



V THE FAMILY AND THE FBI  
(Interview 5; 28th July, 1983) ##

Small Boy Meets Bad Moment

Ward: Jerry, you greeted me at the door with the news that your sixth great-grandchild is on the way. You have quite a brood, I believe.

Bulcke: Yes, that will make 9 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren. It's a nice family. But pretty mixed up, as I told you before. My step-son, Bruce, came to live with us when Rusty and I got married, and a year later my own son, Ken, who had been living with his mother, also came to live with us.

It was a lively scene when the two boys were adolescents. Ken had never shared his dad and Bruce had never shared his mother, and it caused quite a period of adjustment. Now they are friends; their ages are 43 and 44. Bruce is a teacher and Ken is a fine mechanic and he keeps our cars in good shape and has also given us four fine grandsons. Bruce's daughter, Shannon, who is now 20, is living with us for the summer, is a great pleasure for us.

Ward: Let me see. I have only four great grandchildren and eight grandchildren. So, you are a little ahead of me there.

Bulcke: Maybe I had an earlier start.

Ward: Now, you were going to tell me a story about one of the kids.

Bulcke: Well, shortly after Ken moved in he came home one day from school. There were two men waiting at the door; there was nobody home. Of course, Ken at that age had no knowledge of what was going on in the political field.

Ward: You say he wasn't aware, Why was that?

Bulcke: Well, he had been with us only a very short period of time.

Ward: His previous home - politics didn't exist?

Bulcke: No, he had lived with his mother and he had no such contacts, so he was unaware of any of the activities that were going on as far as the union or the political field were concerned.

So, when he started up the steps, these two men asked him was this where he lived. And he said, "Yes." Then they asked him if there were many times when there were meetings at our house and he said, "Not that he knew of." They asked him a few more questions along that line and he answered, "I don't know." Finally, they said, "What's your name?" And he said, "I don't know."

They walked away. When he told me the story I realized that they were two FBI agents. I could tell by the manner in which they asked the questions; he, of course, didn't realize that they were FBI. He just didn't understand what these men wanted. It was rather an amusing experience for him and me both.

Ward: Did you tell him what the score was then?

Bulcke: I told him that I was very much involved in politics. He knew, of course, that I was an officer of the union. I explained that the FBI generally tried to find out everything that went on and naturally they thought they had an advantage in asking him what he might have known about meetings.

Bulcke: But he was honest; there were no meetings at our house. All of the activities I participated in were in public meetings, political meetings and union meetings. Naturally, he was not aware of them.

Ward: How old was he at that time?

Bulcke: Thirteen, fourteen, somewhere in there.

Ward: How do you and Ken get along now?

Bulcke: Oh, we always got along very well. The problem, if any, was that he had never shared his dad with another kid and Bruce was in the same boat, he had never shared anyone with his mother. So, they got along all right, but they didn't get too friendly for quite a little while. Later on they became fast friends, and are today.

Ward: They are just a year apart in age, aren't they?

Bulcke: Bruce is just about a year older than Ken.

#### All About The First Daughter

Ward: Now, tell me a little bit about Muriel.

Bulcke: Well, Muriel was married -

Ward: She's in Arizona, now, isn't she?

Bulcke: She's in Arizona - she was married to a Tom McMann; they started going together when they were in high school. Tom went into the service and was gone for the rest of the war . . .

Ward: World War II?

Bulcke: Yes, World War II; after he returned, they got married. They never had any children of their own, but they adopted two children, a girl and a boy later on, Patty and Terry. They are both grown up and married - Patty has

Bulcke: two children; Terry was married last year and so far no children. They seem to be very happily married.

Muriel and her husband divorced. After her divorce she got married again, but that didn't work out too well and she was divorced again. In the meantime, my son Ken met in San Francisco a girl from Connecticut. She was on a tour and he met her at a dance place. They kept up correspondence, and eventually Jan - that was her name - came out and they got married. She stayed here for some time but she was obviously somewhat homesick; eventually, they decided to move back to Connecticut.

Some time later, Muriel, who was single again, called me and said she was going to go visit her brother in Connecticut. Muriel did go, and she was due back on a Monday. She called me on a Wednesday and I said to her, "How come? You were supposed to be back Monday."

"Well, she said, "I had such a good time, and particularly with Jim." And I said, "Oh!"

It turned out to be Jan's father; his wife had passed away a couple of years before, and he was a widower. And I said, "What's all this about Jim?" And she said, "Well, dad, we get along marvelously and he's coming out later on this year and we're going to get married."

Sure enough, some time later, he came out and they got married in our house. When you consider she married the father of her brother's wife, it is quite a complicated family. Anyway, they seemed to have hit it off pretty well. When her husband retired they came out and looked around California, and also in Arizona, for a place to live. They ended up in a place called Payson, Arizona, which is about 90 miles northeast of Phoenix.

They have a very nice home and they both like to play golf and they are in walking distance

- Bulcke: of a golf course, which caused them to retire in that particular spot. They have been there now several years and seem to be doing very nicely.
- Ward: Let's see, Muriel would be about 60 now, pretty close?
- Bulcke: She's 59; born in 1924.
- Ward: How do you get along with these children, step-children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren?
- Bulcke: Oh, wonderful, wonderful; they are nice kids.
- Ward: How do they call you, grandpa? Great grandpa?
- Bulcke: They call me grandpa or great grandpa. That reminds me when Muriel was married to Tom and they adopted two children, the older one, Patty was just learning to talk. My daughter said, "This is grandpa." And Patty came up with "PopPop" and I've been PopPop ever since to both of her children.
- Ward: Jerry, that gives to the world your family tree, which has many branches.

V ON STRIKE!

Prelude to Bloody Thursday

- Ward: Now, getting back to unionism in the early days - I found out that you were on Rincon Hill on Bloody Thursday. How about that?
- Bulcke: No, it wasn't Bloody Thursday; it was two days before on July 3rd.
- Ward: 1934?
- Bulcke: 1934. The employers had made arrangements, or so they claimed, to open the port, and they had hired a group of non-union teamsters to drive the trucks. We gathered in front of Pier 38 - McCormack docks - and there were probably a couple of thousand of our pickets there; longshoremen, seamen, all union members that were on strike.
- Ward: They knew that this was going to come up?
- Bulcke: Yes, it was publicized in the papers. Of course, the police were out in force. When the first truck left the dock going towards Third Street to a warehouse where they could deposit the stuff they were getting out, the police immediately started firing at the pickets, particularly with tear gas.
- Ward: Anything else worse than tear gas?
- Bulcke: Oh, yes; they fired bullets. So far as I remember, no one was hit by bullets.

Ward: Any buckshot? Real bullets?

Bulcke: Oh, yes, real bullets and buckshot both, as far as I know. I didn't see anyone getting hit, but I myself was hit; we were going up to the top of Rincon Hill, where the beginning of the bridge was being installed. I was running up the hill as best I knew how when I got hit on the inside of my right leg by one of the tear gas shells.

These things would explode as they landed. Fortunately I had my gloves on, because we had been getting ready to throw some rocks at the cops. I picked up the shell before it exploded and threw it back at the cops. It exploded among them. Of course, we were backed up against the hill.

We tried again and again, and three times they drove us back up the hill. Eventually we had to scatter because there was no way to do anything else. So, my partner and I went on down towards Third Street where the trucks that had been used to bring the stuff out were coming, and we jumped on one of the trucks; it was a flatback and it had sacks of rice on it. The driver was being held up by some of our pickets; they threw rocks at the windshield trying to stop the truck. As the trucks were moving very slowly, my partner and I jumped on the back end of this truck and started throwing the rice off on to the street.

Just at that moment, of course, there was quite a bit of confusion because the union teamsters, although they were not on strike, were out in force assisting us. They stopped the drivers from coming through and they dumped a couple of trucks.

So, in the meantime my partner and I were flipping the rice off the truck. A little coupe stopped right next to the truck with a couple of elderly ladies and they were all confused. I very carefully laid a sack of 150

Bulcke: pound rice right on top of the little coupe and I guess they had a pleasant surprise when they got home. They had 150 pounds of rice!

Ward: On top of the coupe?

Bulcke: On top of the coupe. The driver of that particular truck finally got out and ran away.

Ward: That was a non-union guy?

Bulcke: That was a non-union guy. By that time the police came along and they moved the truck; I don't know if they took it to the warehouse or whatever, because my partner and I went to the Third Street Railway Depot to get away from the tear gas which was all around there.

We went into the depot itself and came out in front. There was a policeman on duty wiping his eyes because there was a lot of tear gas. He could hardly see, I guess, and he said, "Don't go that way; there's a lot of problems there."

We said, "We're pickets, we got to," so we passed right by him and went on down to where the action was. It was quite exciting; quite a few of our guys, though not seriously injured, were affected by the tear gas.

Ward: There have been different stories about how many men were seriously injured that day. I have heard as high as 400.

Bulcke: Well, I have no accurate figure; there were quite a number of them injured. Most of them were bothered by the tear gas and there were some that had buckshot, but I never did know exactly how many. There were rumors to the effect that between 300 and 400 got hurt; probably true. It was hard to tell because some were longshore, some were seamen, sailors; and also there were a few members of the Teamsters involved.

Ward: Oh, you were very friendly at that time.



Bulcke: Oh, the rank and file of the Teamsters were full force behind us.

Ward: Well, they worked with you every day.

Bulcke: That's right. Sure.

Ward: I heard tell that some places like the Communist headquarters on Haight Street were thrown open to injured guys. Quite a few of them were treated at places like that, rather than going to the hospital.

Bulcke: That's what I understand.

Ward: Now, talking about the scene a couple of days later which was very violent and two men were killed.

Bulcke: Right.

The Difference Between '34 and '36

Ward: On Bloody Thursday.

I'd like you to comment, if possible, on the difference between '34 and '36 strikes. In the latter strike there was no strike-breaking attempt and no violence; isn't that so?

Bulcke: That's correct. You see, in the 1934 strike the employers had hired scabs; they had them housed on a ship at Pier 32, Matson Line, and also at Pier 37, the Grace Line. While we knew that they were not doing a great deal of work, at least with the number of scabs they had, it was an attempt by the employers to show that they could keep the cargo moving. A certain amount of work was getting done by these people.

Ward: Isn't it axiomatic that labor violence is almost always provoked by the employers?

Bulcke: That's correct. Naturally, whenever we had any information that any of the scabs were coming out, we would naturally try to intercept them. If we were fortunate enough to do so, we tried to take their money away from them.

Ward: You didn't take too much time arguing with them?

Bulcke: We didn't argue with them.

Ward: But you knew they were pretty tough customers or they wouldn't have taken that kind of a job?

Bulcke: That's right. We had one incident that comes to mind. I happened to be at the union hall, or in front of it, rather, when a well-dressed gentleman came up. Of course we had one of our members at the door to see that no one who didn't belong was allowed in there. This gentleman was talking to the guard, and as I came up I heard the conversation. The gentleman said that his son was a member of the football team from Berkeley -

Ward: U. C. Berkeley?

Bulcke: U. C. Berkeley. The father said, "I understand that my son has volunteered to work as a strikebreaker and he's at Pier 37; I want him out of there." So, I said to the guard, "I'll go up with him and see what we can do."

We went upstairs to our hall and talked to the officers who were there. They suggested that I go along with this man and see to it that he was able to get into Pier 37 to get his son out.

Of course, I couldn't go into Pier 37, but I went with him. We took a cab and I stayed on the picketline side. He went in and a short time later he came out with his son. We got back in the cab and he had it driven back to the union hall.

- Bulcke: And then he took his son by the ear and took him up the steps and made him apologize to those of the officers and members who were in the hall. And he made a donation to our soup kitchen - I don't remember the amount - and assured us that he had not sent his son to the university to become a strikebreaker. So father and son left, and we got quite a bang out of that.
- Ward: Well, Jerry, what did the son do, disappear or go back on the waterfront?
- Bulcke: Well, I guess his son went back to school; at that time it was summertime and there were no classes.
- Ward: He wasn't the only football player that - - -?
- Bulcke: No, most of the football team were working as strike breakers; the man in charge said this would be a good chance for them to develop their muscles. Naturally, we didn't agree with that.
- Ward: I see. Again, could you make some comparisons between what you just told us and the '36 strike on the question of violence?
- Bulcke: Well, in the '34 strike, as I have been describing, there was quite a bit of it, but in the '36, '37 strike there was none at all because the employers did not hire any strikebreakers. We had our picket lines up but it was pretty quiet; we never had any difficulties the whole time that we were on the picket lines.
- Ward: Cop trouble?
- Bulcke: No cop trouble; yes, we were told to stay on the opposite side of the Embarcadero from the docks, which we had done in the '34 strike, but there was no trouble with the police at all. We stayed away from the dock side and did our picket duty. No shipping was attempted,

Bulcke: so really there was no occasion to have any confrontation of any kind.

Ward: The initiative for violence lay with the employers?

Bulcke: That's right.

Ward: That is usually the case when there is a dispute between the employers and unions which comes to a strike. If the employer does not start something, nothing happens.

Bulcke: That's correct. If they don't attempt to break the strike by the use of scabs, there is no reason why there should be any difficulties.

Whenever they do use strike breakers, invariably violence breaks out. Naturally the men out on strike want to protect their jobs and they want the people who do the strike-breaking to get out of there. If they have any contact at all it evolves into a mess and people get hurt.

#### Other Kinds of Trouble

Ward: I wonder, in the workaday world of the waterfront, aside from strike situations, is occasional violence a matter of course or is it very rare?

Bulcke: Oh, it's very rare; once in a while there can be disagreements among the men.

Ward: Personal stuff?

Bulcke: Personal, mostly. Occasionally they might have a bit of fisticuffs. It was not something that was very common, I mean, it happened now and then. They were personal things, not anything serious.

- Ward: Well, that happens no more than in any other occupation.
- Bulcke: Exactly. Working together, the men get acquainted pretty well. Naturally, working in gangs you have to be cooperative, so sometimes, if a guy doesn't do his share there might be some arguments and a little pushing around or something. Really, it was not anything very disturbing.
- Ward: In other words, you seem to be saying that to pin the badge of violence on longshoremen is not justified?
- Bulcke: No, not at all. As I say, sure they will defend their jobs. They are not people who go out just to cause difficulties or make trouble.
- Ward: No more than a teamster or - - - -?
- Bulcke: No difference from any worker who works in a plant.
- Ward: All right. Now another thing that is talked about a lot and which is the subject of many good stories, some of which you have told us, is the speculation, thievery, whatever you call it, just lifting things off the dock; the story of the grand pianos. We laugh, but is that sort of thing justified -- thievery?
- Bulcke: Well, prior to the strike, conditions on the waterfront had gotten very bad; speed-up, employers cutting wages. Many times they did not have as many men as they should have on the job, which made it very difficult for the fellows who were on the job. The work had slowed down so much because the depression had set in.

So, it became more prevalent for the longshoremen to help themselves to whatever they could get off the docks in the form of canned goods, butter - things that they could get at. I remember one incident where the gang was

- Bulcke: discharging shoes; most of them had a new pair of shoes on when they went off the job; things like that. More and more of that was developing because of the conditions and the anger.
- Ward: And also poverty?
- Bulcke: That's right; many of them worked only a few days; many of them were married and had families and they found that they needed to do this in order to get by. So, there was this amount of pilfering going on. Naturally the employers took whatever steps they deemed necessary, but it was pretty difficult to catch every guy that maybe got away with a few cans of canned goods or whatever he could hide and get off the dock with.
- Ward: That was before the strike, you say?
- Bulcke: That was before the strike. I'm not saying that all of this was eliminated, but it was eliminated quite a bit. We were getting better wages, we had better conditions, and there was not the feeling that we had to steal things in order to make out. The pilfering that occurred prior to the strike pretty much disappeared after we went back to work and the settlement was made.
- Ward: It became more of a joke than - - - -?
- Bulcke: It did, because we had won what we went out for and the need for stealing pretty much disappeared. We were more interested in making the work safe, to see to it that safety rules were enforced.
- ##
- Ward: Jerry, you were counting up the gains that had been made and the important things that were in longshoremen's minds at the time of victory and after.
- Bulcke: Safety rules were being enforced by the union members.

Ward: Speed-up was eliminated?

Bulcke: Speed-up was eliminated, the oversize loads were cut down. In other words, the work was safe and more enjoyable and the favoritism was done away with. Some time later the union decided that there be no more preferred gangs.

Prior to the strike, every company had preferred gangs; they were pretty steady. They worked for a certain company whenever that company had a ship in, and being a preferred gang they generally got the best jobs; that is not necessarily the easiest, but more hours than any of the extra gangs that were hired.

That went on for some time after the strike, but the men eventually decided that this preference was not a good thing for the union. So, the membership voted to do away with the preferred gangs.

In other words, the company could no longer say which gang works where. Instead of that they had to call the hiring hall and take whatever gangs were available. Of course, the dispatchers were aware of the kind of work that had to be done and they would send out the gangs that were acquainted with that type of work.

They never would send out to a steel shipment a gang, for example, that had never handled steel. They would not send just any gang to that particular job because it was dangerous and you had to know how. So, gangs with the knowledge of that particular work, although no longer preferred, would be sent out; the same way as the men who handled sugar up in Crockett, or shoveled bones, or whatever the commodity was.

There were gangs that worked that before as steady gangs, they would be dispatched but the company no longer could pick out the gangs. The men took their turn and men with knowledge

- Bulcke: were sent to the jobs. Of course, we were well aware that it was dangerous to send men or gangs to jobs of which they had no knowledge and would result in many of our members getting hurt. We were very careful to see to it that trained men were dispatched to the proper jobs.
- Ward: I'll never forget the first time I went down the ladder into the hold of a ship with a bunch of papers in one hand. I had only one hand to hold on. Oh, boy!
- Bulcke: We used to discharge a lot of newsprint, big rolls. Nowadays they do it mechanically with an arrangement whereby they pick up four rolls at one time, but in those days you had to handle each roll separately. You had to knock it over and be careful you didn't damage it and then put it in a sling. Then, one at a time, the rolls would be taken out of the hold. It was very dangerous work. As I say, they don't work that way any more.
- Ward: Then things smoothed out, but again during wartime came a situation which you discussed slightly the other day; how the guys felt that the shipowners and stevedoring companies were taking advantage of the situation to employ men who were not needed. On the cost-plus basis, they were just raking in the money and to hell with efficiency?
- Bulcke: Right. During the war years there was established a Maritime Industry Board which Henry Schmidt and Cole Jackman were on. Later on, I was added to that board.
- Ward: Will you talk a little bit about that? How did you get into that end of it?
- Bulcke: The purpose of that was to see that production was maintained and that there would be no waste of manpower.
- Ward: The thing is, what went on in the attitude of the men? They saw the employers almost literally stealing government money.



Bulcke: Many of the men were upset about this because, while they realized they were being paid, they also recognized that there was a lot of labor lost in supplying the armed forces with the things they needed. If 50 men could do the job, there was no point in having 100. The unnecessary men could have been working on another ship that was loading military cargo, and this would have speeded up the movement of the vessels.

The employers didn't care. I think I have already mentioned some instances where many men stood by for a day at a time, so the work of the Industry Board was to see to it that the men were utilized properly.

Ward: Did any of the workers come and tip you off?

Bulcke: Yes, quite often gang stewards, or even a gang foreman, would call in and advise us that they were standing by with no work. They knew that there were other ships that needed men and they were not being loaded as efficiently as they should have been.

We would check it out and either switch the gangs over to where they were needed or see to it that the cargo was made available. Many times it was bookkeeping, or lack of proper bookkeeping, that kept cargo tied up on the docks although the ship was there and should have been loaded.

Ward: Did this greedy, irresponsible attitude on the part of the employers express itself in the workers' attitude to any extent?

Bulcke: To this degree, that the men realized that the employers were making a lot of money. The men objected strongly to having to stand by although knowing that other cargo or other ships were being delayed for the lack of manpower.

Ward: Well, I got the impression that things changed during the war because of this employer irresponsibility.

Bulcke: Right.

Ward: And I got the impression that if a bottle of whiskey or a grand piano asked for it, they took it.

### The Glamour Went Away

Ward: Now, let's discuss the glamour of the longshore industry, of being a longshoreman, that used to exist. What was it like and where did it go?

Bulcke: Well, at the present time I can say that the glamour that used to be there is no longer prevalent.

Ward: But first let's get what it used to be.

Bulcke: It used to be that men were quite proud of working as a longshoreman. It had certain advantages; that is, they worked very hard, but there were times when they didn't have to work. In other words, if they did not feel like working they would stay home or do something else.

Ward: A guy wanted to go to the horse races - - -?

Bulcke: He went to the horse races or whatever. He just took the day off; of course he would inform his gang foreman that he wasn't available, and there were always other men to take his place.

There was the feeling of not being in danger of losing your job. There was a freedom of movement, and that was part of the glamour of being able to work when you wanted to and not work if you didn't feel like it, without endangering your position as a longshoreman.

Ward: Was that freedom available to longshoremen only on the Pacific Coast, or was it nationwide? Or worldwide?

Bulcke: Well, I only know the Pacific Coast well enough to say that it existed here. Whether or not it existed on the Gulf or in the East I have no personal knowledge. I doubt it was that way in those ports.

Ward: Quite aside from this freedom, what about this business of meeting strangers from all parts of the world? Did that cut any ice?

Bulcke: Not too much. Prior to the 1934 strike there was not the feeling that we had control. There was a great deal of favoritism in those days. Certain people had arrangements with their gang foremen or their walking bosses or the company, and they worked pretty regular, while others didn't.

They were known as star gangs, and unless you happened to be fortunate enough to be in a star gang your chances of steady work weren't very good. You might work a week and then not be able to get another job for a week.

One longshoreman, I remember, used to express himself when he had a good week, by saying, "Well, the fellows were fartin' in silk this week," meaning he had done a good job. Then the following week he would say, "Well, we're back on beans again." As I say, this was part of the things that we did away with during the strike.

#### International Chit-chat

Ward: Well, on the question of international intermingling; suppose a ship comes in say from some port in France and you have a guy in the gang who knows a little French. Does he hobnob with --- ?

Bulcke: Oh, yeah, that happened constantly. We had people that could speak languages and were from those countries. I myself spoke French

Bulcke: and German and always made contact with the crew of ships from those countries. We discussed the conditions that they worked under and those we worked under, and quite often we managed, after work, to take them to a bar and have a few beers. We always tried to get friendly and the crews would reach out to us, too. They would try to get acquainted, particularly when we were loading dried fruit. For instance, we knew that on the British ships the conditions were not too good for the crew.

We generally were able to see to it that a few cases of dried fruit, or whatever, would end up in the crew's quarters, which they would take home. Many ships made regular trips again and again. Quite often, after we got acquainted with the crew, they would come over to the hatches to see what we were loading; if it was something they were interested in, they generally managed to get a little bit of it.

Ward: That way you got some feel of waterfront conditions pretty much around the world, didn't you?

Bulcke: That's right. We discussed, or they would tell us, the conditions of their home town or the ports they stopped in. We became well aware of what went on.

Ward: Part of this glamour was the international contacts you had; also, I think, even under the company union there was a willingness to rise to militance - - -

Bulcke: That's right. Even before the '34 strike we had that type of contact and tried to find out what went on. They in turn would find out how we handled things. There was always a good feeling between the working longshoremen and the crew members.

Ward: What percentage of the guys in Local 10, would you say, were born in other countries?

- Bulcke: Well, I don't have an exact percentage, but I wouldn't be surprised if it ran around 80 per cent.
- Ward: That tells a lot.
- Bulcke: Many had been seamen and got off ship and stayed ashore. I remember in a gang I was in we got to talking about where you were from; there were 16 men in the gang and only one man was born in the United States, and he was of Norwegian descent. All the rest of the gang came from different countries.
- Ward: The language mixture must have been fascinating.
- Bulcke: One thing that happened, which I would say was rather thoughtful - never did you hear two longshoremen who were, let us say, Swedish or whatever, talk to one another in that language, because the feeling would be that when they were talking in their own language, they would be saying something that they didn't want the others to know. There was no rule on it, but it was established practice that you never talk anything but English; even those that could not speak much English.
- Ward: Even if, when they got home, they talked to their wives in the native language?
- Bulcke: Yes, they would never talk in their own language.
- Ward: It was part of the camaraderie on the job?
- Bulcke: Sure. All of us picked up certain words of other languages, but they were used generally for fun. They would do the best they could to speak to one another in English; that was well understood without being said so.
- Ward: That's interesting. All right, so there was a glamour to the longshore industry for a long time back, but what about now?

Bulcke: Well, of course it has been years since I worked as a longshoreman, but I understand it isn't quite that way today, although the men are well organized and recognize that the union . . . .

Ward: They have a feeling of power?

Bulcke: They definitely do, but the glamorous part of it that used to exist somehow or other has disappeared.

Ward: They can't take a day off whenever they want.

## VII THE PAY GUARANTEE PLAN

A Peculiar Wrinkle

Bulcke: No; well, that's one thing. They can but when they do they lose wages. Of course, in the last few years work has been not too good. Fortunately, in our contract we have what they call a "pay guarantee."

Ward: Is that a good thing or a bad thing?

Bulcke: It is a good thing because it became part of the agreement to allow the employers to introduce labor saving devices. In return for that, we demanded and the employers agreed to a guarantee of a certain amount of wages. The men have to be available, of course; they have to sign in at the hiring hall.

Ward: They have to be there so many days a week?

Bulcke: Well, in order to be covered by the pay guarantee a man has to sign in and show that he is available. If he doesn't get a job he gets the pay guarantee.

At the present time we are having quite a problem with that. It's being taken to court. What happened was this - when the pay guarantee was agreed to by the union and the employers, the employers made a deal with Internal Revenue that those pay guarantee monies would not be counted as earnings.

Bulcke: The result is that a man who, in the particular line of longshoring he does, fails to get much work and is on PGP quite a bit, finds at his retirement age that his earnings do not include the PGP, so his Social Security check is way down.

Ward: Now, the PGP pay guarantee is what?

Bulcke: Well, the guarantee is 36 hours.

Ward: No, no - what does PGP mean? What does it stand for?

Bulcke: Pay Guarantee - I know it but I can't think of it.

Helen B: Pay Guarantee Plan?

Ward: All right; and so it cut into their Social Security payments?

Bulcke: Right. In other words, what happens is very simple. As I say, a man, because not much of the type of work he does is available, is idle more than he works. He is drawing his PGP, but when it comes to the time he retires, his earnings in the Social Security set-up are way down.

One man I know, president of the pensioners club, is only getting \$110 a month in Social Security where he should be getting over \$300. There are a number of us like that. Anyway, one of the longshoremen is taking his case to court and it is quite involved. I don't know all the legal details, but it appears that the case will be coming up in the Fall and we'll get a judicial ruling on it. Naturally, the position of the longshoremen is very plain. When they made the agreement with us the employers also quietly had reached an agreement with the IRS without telling the union.

Ward: No?



- Bulcke: No. So it took quite some time before the Longshoremen became aware of that.
- Ward: Why should the employers give a damn about that?
- Bulcke: I don't know why, but anyway it naturally adversely affected the income of a retired member.
- Ward: It adversely affects the income of the working member too.

#### It Hurts The Retired Man

- Bulcke: That's what I mean. The men, when they reached retirement age, figured on getting their Social Security and their pension and here they find out that instead of getting say, \$350 or whatever it may be, they are getting only \$110 - \$120 Social Security. So, this is being litigated, and we hope that it will be corrected.
- Ward: Well, the freedom to take a day off whenever you feel like it has diminished.
- Bulcke: Well, it has, because of the PGP. If a man is not available he can't claim PGP. At the present time work is such that very few people take a day off; they don't get enough income and have to depend on PGP to get back what they lose in working hours.
- Ward: Isn't it true that you have to be available three days a week to get PGP?
- Bulcke: No, no; you have to be available every day.
- Ward: Where does the three days a week come in?
- Bulcke: I don't know; my understanding is that it's on a weekly basis, and you have to be available

- Bulcke: every day of that week - otherwise you don't qualify. If you don't qualify, you don't get PGP.
- Ward: All right, here's a guy who wants to stay on PGP and reports to the hall every morning and he qualifies for PGP. At what time of day does he know that he is not going to be sent out?
- Bulcke: I believe that by 10:00 o'clock in the morning, he's free. Most of the jobs start at 7:00 - 8:00 o'clock. When the hiring hall has filled all the orders, then a man is free to go home. Of course, he has to sign in the next day again. The record has to show that he was physically present.
- Ward: I have heard it said that PGP makes longshoremen's work in some ways worse than warehouse work, because there are five days you have to be there.
- Bulcke: That's true, because with the set-up of the PGP a man has to be there in order to make enough to get by.

## VIII ADVENTURES IN ALASKA

Longshoremen vs. Sailors

- Ward: Okay, Jerry. Now it seems that among your other adventures you spent some time in Alaska. How did that start off?
- Bulcke: Well, I was elected International Vice-President in 1947 and I was in office probably a week when President Bridges said to me, "You are aware of the fact that the longshoremen in Alaska are out on strike?"
- Ward: Was that the Juneau Spruce strike?
- Bulcke: No. I knew they were on strike in Alaska but I didn't have too much detail.
- Ward: It was new then?
- Bulcke: Well, it had been on for about a month. I was president of Local 10 when the strike began and I had my hands full.
- Harry says to me, "Go up to Alaska and solve the problem. Settle the strike if you can." I had never been to Alaska, so I found out how to get there and I arrived first in Ketchikan. I talked with the members of the union and found out that the problem was that the Sailors' Union of the Pacific members had for years worked one hatch on the ships that went to Alaska - - -
- Ward: Oh, they were small ships?

Bulcke: Well, no, they were big ships.

Ward: I thought they had schooners - - -

Bulcke: No - no; Alaska steamship companies had regular, normal size vessels like anywhere else.

Ward: I see.

Bulcke: What happened was that in the past the sailors would work one hatch; they had the choice of the hatch.

Ward: They had a choice!

Bulcke: Well, yes, the sailors could pick one hatch that they worked. They were allowed to work in places where no longshoremen were available, small ports where of necessity the crew had to work the cargo. This was well established - no argument about that.

Well, by that time the SUP and the ILWU weren't seeing eye to eye and the employers started to work the sailors on one hatch; when the sailors got through with that hatch they would discharge the longshoremen who were working another hatch and they would continue working with sailors. This resulted, of course, in longshoremen losing out on work, and that eventually became a strike issue.

The longshoremen in all the ports in Alaska went out on strike and they had been on strike for about a month when I got there. I started in Ketchikan, flew from there to Juneau, discussed the matter there with the longshoremen; then I flew to Seward to discuss the matter there with the union.

While I was in Seward, I got a call from the president of the Ketchikan local stating that the businessmen in Ketchikan had decided to see to it that ships got discharged. They would get men to work the ships and would not pay any attention to the picket lines that the longshoremen had established.

Bulcke: The mayor of the city of Ketchikan was not too happy about that development and he had arranged for what they called "a town hall meeting." The president of our local said, "Look, I'm not able to handle that kind of thing; can you get back here?" So, I took the next plane back and arrived in Ketchikan and listened to the situation.

I told our men I would attend this town hall meeting, which was being held in the city hall; I would take care of the matter, but not to announce beforehand who was to speak for the Longshore Union. I wanted it not to be known publicly that I was there.

Ward: Beforehand?

Bulcke: Beforehand, right, so the meeting started out and there were about eight or ten employer representatives. Their line was that the difficulty between the two unions was the fault of the ILWU because they were being fed Moscow gold. The red-baiting went on right through the piece.

The mayor of the town was the chairman of the meeting and called upon the ILWU to say its say. At that point the president of the local spoke up, saying they just happened to have the Vice-President of the International here and told them my name; I was called upon to speak.

I explained the situation and pointed out that the old red-baiting was something we had forgotten about. I didn't think it belonged in negotiations between the employers and the unions.

I pointed out that during the war, particularly in Local 10, we had sent \$5 a month to each of our members who were in the service. I wouldn't be surprised if the employers didn't care that much for their employees who were in the service. One of the employers' representatives at this meeting was particularly

Bulcke: disturbed because he was publishing a magazine, "The Alaska Sportsman" and the strike meant the paper for his printing was not available.

He was particularly vicious and he said, in a kind of falsetto voice, "Mr. Bulcke, you're smart." And I said, "Thank you, Mr. Thompson; I wish I could return the compliment." It brought the house down. The upshot of it was that nothing was really accomplished that night.

At two o'clock in the morning the phone rang in my hotel room and it's a business man.

Ward: The same business man?

Bulcke: No, not the same one, but one of the other business men. He said that their committee had discussed the strike and realized that the only way to resolve it was through proper negotiations. Would I be available?

At least part of the businessmen did not agree with the attempt to open the port and they wanted to have negotiations started to resolve the problem. And so I met with them the next morning. The ships were tied up - nobody was working them.

It took two days to get the negotiations under way because there were three steamship companies involved and their main spokesman was an attorney from Seattle.

Ward: And they had to get him up?

Bulcke: So, it took two days after this public meeting before we started the negotiations. I had met with the committee of the union, of course, and we had drawn up seven demands. It was on the second floor of the city hall that the meeting was held, and two representatives from the Department of Labor sat in.

(Interview 6: 2 August, 1983) ##

Meeting the Governor

- Bulcke: The meeting got under way, and it was open to the public upon request of the mayor, which I didn't object to. As a matter of fact, I was pleased that we could hold negotiations where the public could hear and see what went on.
- Ward: Fishbowl?
- Bulcke: Yes, in a fishbowl.
- Ward: And you were used to that type of thing?
- Bulcke: Very much so. I presented to the employers our demands to resolve the strike. I had maybe read a couple of sentences when the attorney who represented the employers grabbed his papers and started folding them together. He said, "Well, if that's what you're going to present us with I might as well go back to Seattle."

I called for a recess, discussed it with our representatives from the local. We went back in session and the same thing happened again, where he would gather his papers together and start putting them into his briefcase saying, "I might as well go back to Seattle."

He did this three or four times and I was getting pretty tired of that so at another recess I talked to the two representatives from the Department of Labor who were sitting in and told them not to get excited if I did anything out of the ordinary. I was going to try to stop this attorney from folding up his papers and threatening to walk out.

So the next time he did that I reached across the table - he was sitting right in front of me on the other side. I grabbed him by the necktie and pulled him halfway across the table and I said, "Yes, you want to go back

Bulcke: to Seattle? I'll start you on your way from the second floor right through the window." And of course one of the Department of Labor representatives jumped up and grabbed me and I shoved him off and said, "Look, you're not doing any good here anyway, so don't interfere in my business," and I sort of pushed him down into the chair.

Of course, this caused a little excitement; I sat back and after a moment or so, one of the employers - not the attorney - said, "Let's get under way," or something to that effect.

I started reading our demands again and sure enough, the attorney grabbed his papers and started to shove them into his brief case.

A person got up in the crowd. There were probably fifty or sixty people there. A person got up and said to the attorney, "Well, I don't understand your actions. The least you can do is to listen, or read, what is offered to you."

The attorney said, "It's come to a pretty pass when the Governor of the Territory of Alaska would interfere in labor negotiations."

I hadn't realized that the person who stood up was the Governor. And I said, "Mr. Governor, I appreciate your efforts, but I represent the ILWU; will you please sit down." And he did.

After that we negotiated quite nicely and the attorney didn't renew this business of "I'm going back to Seattle." The upshot of it was that we were able to resolve the problems and got a signed agreement later that day. The statement by the Governor was very much in my mind, and when the meeting was over with, I went up to the Governor and thanked him. I didn't have to introduce myself - he knew who I was.



Bulcke: From then on whenever I was in Alaska, particularly in Juneau where the Governor's office was, I would always stop by and have a chat with him. He was very much interested in labor affairs and wanted things to be worked out properly.

Some years later I happened to be in Seward - I had been there many times. This was after the Governor was out of office; he was working very hard trying to get statehood for Alaska. I always stay at the same hotel in Seward and this particular evening the hotel owner said to me, "Would you care to go along with me tonight? We're having a special dinner at the Elks Club for the Governor," (they still called him Governor) where he was to report on his progress in trying to get statehood for Alaska.

"I'll be happy to," I said. I didn't mention that I knew the Governor personally, so when we walked into the place, standing at the bar with a drink in his hand was Governor Ernest Greuning.

Ward: Was this Governor Greuning?

Bulcke: Yes - that was his name. The hotel man said, "Come along with me, I'll introduce you to the Governor." I walked up with him and the Governor said, "Hello, Jerry - it's nice to see you; what are you doing here?" I explained to him that I was on one of my routine visits where I would check out things with our people, resolve any problems, and so forth.

So he said, "Okay, have a drink on me." Then we went in to the dinner, and after we were all seated the Governor got up and spoke to the gathering: "Before I make my report I want to tell you something that has amused me for many years. I'm happy to see Jerry Bulcke here from the ILWU and I have to tell you a little story that happened in Ketchikan." He repeated the story of those negotiations in Ketchikan,

Bulcke: saying of me, "He's the only man who ever told me to shut up and sit down, and I did." That brought the house down.

And I saw Governor Gruening later on when he was the senator representing Alaska.

Ward: He was in the U. S. Senate, wasn't he?

Bulcke: Yeah, he was a senator. Many years later I met him in San Rafael where he was present to help in the reelection of someone; I can't think of his name now. Shortly afterwards, Gruening passed away. That was the last time I saw him.

### Fog

Bulcke: I had some other experiences in Alaska that were a little different. By the way, I went to Alaska, depending on the circumstances, four or five times a year. There were problems, generally because I had negotiated the contracts and knew what it was all about; when things got too tough I was the person who took care of them. So for 13 years I went four or five times a year to Alaska.

Well, one time I was in southeastern Alaska, in Ketchikan. We also had other locals in the area - Sitka, Petersburg, a number of smaller locals. I had gone from Ketchikan to Petersburg to negotiate a contract for the local there. The men were longshoremen, and also worked in the fish processing plant. We were able to negotiate the contract satisfactorily.

There was only one hotel in that town, small, which I stayed at. The plane on which I had to travel was equipped with wheels and floats. It floats because it's all water around there; no place to land, although they do use wheels wherever there is a landing field. I checked

Bulcke: out of the hotel and went down to the float, tied to a big barge, and the man there said, "I'm sorry, Mr. Bulcke, but the fog has got the best of us. Ketchikan is closed in, Juneau is closed in. There are no commercial planes able to fly."

I said, "Well, I guess the only thing I can do is go back to the hotel and wait until tomorrow." The next morning I showed up again and it's the same story - closed up.

But this aviator operated a small private airline; he had two planes that he used to take out visitors, fishermen, whatever, and he could fly any time he felt like it. He was not restricted because he was not a commercial airline, in the strict sense. He says, "I know you want to go to Sitka and one of my men is flying there to pick up someone. He's leaving in about ten minutes and if you want to go with him, you can. I'll just take that part of your ticket; I'll get paid, so no problem." It was a small plane that seated three people - one next to the pilot and two in the back. So I was the only passenger. He put my suitcase in the back of the plane in the trunk compartment. And it was a very heavy fog; he took off and we broke through it, I think at about 250 feet.

We hadn't been gone very long when all of a sudden it looked like somebody had thrown a bucket of oil on the windshield. He immediately shut the motor off and said to me, "Is your seat belt tight?" "If I tighten it any more the buckle will come out in my back," I said.

It was an eerie sound - no motor, but you could hear the wind whistle underneath the wings. He said, "Well, we're fortunate; there are two lakes down here." I looked down and saw a hole in the fog about the size of a doughnut; I could see water.

Bulcke: He circled around and wound up his aerial which was like on a fishing reel suspended beneath the plane. He called out, "May Day, May Day," and gave his approximate position. Down we went, circling, circling, and we hit the water, kind of on an angle so that our floats went back and forth. We went up to the end of the lake, which was not very big, and hit the gravel; as soon as we got on the ground, he jumped out and I jumped out.

He went to the back of the plane where my suitcase was; he reached in and handed me a 30-30 rifle and said, "Can you shoot?" And I said, "Yes, I can shoot." I thought he was trying to calm me down or something and I said, "What's the big idea?"

He said, "Just a minute." And across the lake, probably about sixty yards away, was a big tree; there were big trees there, Juneau Spruce, about the size of our redwoods. And a limb had broken off and there was a bright spot on the trunk. He said, "See if you can hit that." So, I levelled off the rifle, aimed and hit it. "Fine," he said.

"Now, what's the idea, may I ask?" I said. He said, "At this time of the year the grizzlies have their cubs and they are very dangerous. If you see one, don't hesitate, shoot."

So, he went and worked on the plane, opened the hood and said, "Now, here's the problem - the oil line had become disconnected."

He went up to a tree and cut a wide shaped piece of wood which he jammed into the opening; then with a wire he tied it across so that the oil couldn't leak out. He had a gallon of oil in the back of the plane; he poured that in. He said, "Okay, we're all set," and we shoved the plane off into the water in order to turn it around, then pulled it back until the tail was actually between two trees.

Ward: You're facing the front of the lake?

Bulcke: Yeah, right. We pulled it as far back as we could go onto the gravel and after we got in he said to me, "Unfortunately, we're on the smaller lake, not the bigger one, but we'll make it all right." So, he let the motor run for a bit and then he really opened it up. We ran through the gravel into the water and took off. The bottom of the floats touched the tops of the trees as we went up and cleared the lake. Then he let go of his aerial and said it was okay and we were going back.

We went back to Petersburg and landed okay. He went into the workshop, found the proper part, connected the oil line, put some oil in and said, "Well, are you ready to go to Sitka?" I said, "With you, I'll fly any place."

So, I got back in and although it was still foggy we took off and landed okay in Sitka.

That was an experience that I certainly will never forget; I was glad that it came out all right. But another time when I was in Seward, I wanted to stop off in Cordova, another place where we had one of our locals.

Ward: Cordova?

Bulcke: Yeah, Cordova. The plane that stopped in Cordova started from Anchorage, so I went to Anchorage and made arrangements with the airline for me to stop off at Cordova.

They generally left at 6:00 a.m. from the airport in Anchorage. That morning at quarter to five they called at my hotel stating that Cordova was socked in - could not land there - which was nothing new.

In those days they didn't have the equipment they have nowadays to land in any kind of weather. "All right," I said, "there's nothing I can do about it." The next day they called

Bulcke: me again and said they would be able to land in Cordova. There was another passenger aboard who also wanted to get off in Cordova. When we got over Cordova, it was socked in, and so we flew around; Yakatat was socked in, Ketchikan was socked in, Juneau was socked in, and we finally landed in Whitehorse in British territory.

Ward: In Canada?

Bulcke: Yes, in Canada. They put us up in a hotel and the captain said, "Don't be in a hurry in the morning, because we are not leaving until 10:00 o'clock." That was fine with me. We got to Juneau - it was beautiful weather, the plane landed. People got off, got on and we went down to Ketchikan; the same thing, nice, clear weather.

We took off from Ketchikan towards Anchorage and we get over Cordova and it's socked in again, so we landed back in Anchorage. Of course, once you are on the plane you are the guest of the airlines, and they had to put me up in a hotel. So, I waited another day - Cordova was still socked in.

So, the day after that I decided this will not do. I got on the phone to our people in Cordova and helped them out as best I could on the problems they had, explaining that I could just not get there. I got back on the plane and flew to Ketchikan, transferred to the plane for Seattle, and from there back to San Francisco. It had been one of the experiences I did not particularly enjoy. I don't mind flying across Alaska, but three times is just too much.

Meeting A Moose

Bulcke: A rather amusing incident; at one time I took one of our staff, a woman who handled our welfare programs in our office, to Alaska.

Ward: Who was that?

Bulcke: It was Ann Waybur. I had Ann come along with me because she had more experience and knowledge of the details in the welfare programs, the dental program and all other medical programs.

She could explain in detail just what it meant, and this was necessary because we had just been able to get the members in Alaska covered with a welfare program similar to ours elsewhere. While I knew it I did not have the knowledge she had of the details, so she came along with me.

We were in Seward, and one of the Seward members mentioned that we have moose in that part of Alaska. As a matter of fact they are hunted every year during the hunting season.

So, while we had a break he offered to drive us around and try to show Ann Waybur a moose out in the wilds. As we were driving out of Seward we saw a car stopped at the side of the road and people standing with cameras, so sure, it must be a moose there. We drove up to the other part of the road and, sure enough, about 75 feet from the highway there was standing a beautiful bull moose.

Ann, of course, wanted to take a picture of that moose and the man said, "Be careful - they are unpredictable." He went back to the car and got out his rifle, which he carried all the time.

In the meantime Ann had walked up facing the moose and the moose started moving, but slowly. He came right across the highway and

Bulcke: went down the other side. Didn't bother her at all, but she got some good shots. The man was kidding her, "What were you trying to do - goose the moose?"

After we got back to the office I told this story, and of course everybody was teasing her about trying to goose a moose. We often laughed about it.

One time when I was in Seward, right next to our dispatch hall there was a hotel where the workers stayed generally. It also had a bar, so I was in the bar having a beer when - prior to going in the dispatch hall - one of the guys said, "We have a visitor from your local - Local 10."

Some of our members used to go to Alaska to fish; they would work the fishing and generally came back, but sometimes they would stay around and work a while as a longshoreman. This fellow did. The secretary of Local 10 knew I was going to Alaska and had mentioned the fact that this man was in Seward and was behind in his dues to our local. (I don't remember the amount). It occurred to me when he saw me. He was glad to see me, and we shook hands. He wasn't aware of the fact that I was there for discussion with the local officials and stuff.

Ward: He thought you had chased him up - - - ?

Bulcke: And he said, "What are you doing here?" I said, "Well, you know, you owe dues to the local." And he said, "You mean you came all the way to Seward to collect these dues?" I said, "Yes, things are kinda tough - you better pay up." More in teasing than anything else; I didn't mean it seriously.

So, he said to the bartender, "How much money have I got here?" There was the habit of having the workers who lived in the hotel leave their money with the bartender. And the bartender



Bulcke: told him how much he had. I don't recall the amount but he insisted that the bartender pay me the money he owed.

I accepted it and wrote out a temporary receipt, and of course when I came back to San Francisco I turned it over to the secretary of the local here. Some years later when I saw him here, he had found out that I wasn't in Alaska for that purpose, but he got a big kick out of it, bragging to everybody that the vice-president of the International came all the way to Seward, Alaska, to collect his dues. We all got a big bang out of it.

Ward: Well, the plane fare to Seward from San Francisco would have been more than - - - -

Bulcke: It probably was - he owed about six months dues; it wasn't that tremendous an amount.

Ward: Well, aside from amusing things, do you have any comment on more serious problems in Alaska? I understand that they have a lot of problems, some of which were obvious even then.

#### A Big Step Forward

Bulcke: Yes. You see, one of the biggest problems in Alaska is the distances between the locals. I did recommend that they should attempt to build an organization so that they would have closer relationships with one another. They eventually set up what they called an Alaska Council where they would have delegates from the various locals meet whenever required to discuss their problems.

Fortunately, just recently they have amalgamated all the locals in Alaska into one local. In other words, the locals still exist, but they are now branches of the overall local. That's

Bulcke: a big step forward and will help the members in Alaska to maintain their conditions much better than when they were all scattered around.

Ward: All told, about how many members would you say you have in Alaska, or had at that time?

Bulcke: I can't remember exactly.

Ward: No, not exactly - 2,000, 5,000?

Bulcke: There are around 5,000, I think, all told. It fluctuates because it is seasonal a lot.

Ward: When it's ice-bound there's no shipping.

Bulcke: Well, in Alaska in a lot of the locals they work part time as longshoremen and part time in the fishing industry, the canneries and processing plants. They do both things and the locals in that way are able to maintain pretty steady employment for the members.

Ward: Were any of these guys Eskimos?

Bulcke: Oh, yes, some of them were. We had quite a few in Seward and we had some in Ketchikan; I guess in most of the locals there were some.

That reminds me of an incident when I was in Ketchikan. I was approached by a woman, a native; she was the elevator operator in the State Building in Ketchikan. She came to me and said that her family was on a little island called Metlakatla -

Ward: How do you spell that?

Bulcke: M-e-t-l-a-k-a-t-l-a.

Ward: Two words?

Bulcke: No, one word. They were working in a fish processing plant there.

Ward: On this island?

Bulcke: On this island, yes. They were very much interested in getting a union in place, and would I be willing to go to Metlakatla and explain the situation to them? And would they be able to get a charter from the ILWU? They were not longshore, but strictly fish processing plant employees.

Ward: But you had fishermen in the ILWU?

Bulcke: Oh, yes we do. I said that I certainly would be happy to help them, and we made a date for me to go there. I had to go to Juneau and also to Seward and on my way back I would go to Metlakatla. It so happened that one of our longshore members in Ketchikan was a pilot. He had learned to fly during the war in the Navy and he was operating one small plane that he would take people out in for fishing or sight-seeing and so forth. He agreed to take me to Metlakatla to take care of this matter.

So I made arrangements and we flew to Metlakatla; it's not very far from Ketchikan.

We got there and went into the town hall where the local was meeting; they had everything all set up. They had elected their officers and they had copied their constitution from another ILWU local that worked in the same kind of field. All I had to do was to explain to them that I would see that they got the charter, and they thanked me very much for coming over.

Really I didn't have to do anything; they had studied the thing and were well-organized. Their main problem was that they had very little to say as to what price the fish was sold for. They had some government agency supervising them, and they were not getting the price they wanted or felt they should get. By organizing they were able to correct the situation.

Ward: Were they all women?

Bulcke: No - no, but this woman who first asked me was a native, and she was high in the hierarchy of the natives. Their particular tribe is Tlingit. Although she worked in Ketchikan as an elevator operator, she kept close contact with her island; it wasn't very far, of course.

Anyway, when we were through we came outside and a fog had set in; you couldn't see across the street. I said to my friend, the pilot, "We'll have to stay for the night?" He said, "Oh, no; I have to go to work in the morning." I said, "You're not going to fly in this kind of weather?"

"Oh," he said, "I can fly in this weather - done it many times; don't worry." Well, I was worried but I thought, he's going to fly and he's not going to break his neck. He wouldn't take chances, I'm sure.

So I went along with him and we took off in the fog, and after we levelled off I started to say something to him. He motioned for me to keep quiet; you know, he had his finger like this (motioning) in front of his mouth and I could tell he was listening. I didn't say anything any more and pretty soon we broke out of the fog and there was Ketchikan.

We landed on the water, of course, and I said to him, "I don't understand how in the world you were able to find your way. On both sides of this water are high mountains, you know."

And he said, "Oh, you get used to it," or something to that effect. But it bothered me some more and he said, "I'll tell you what I'm going to do. Are you going to be here tomorrow?" I said, "Yes." "I'll take you to Metlakatla and back and I'll blindfold myself on the way back."

And of course it was bright sunshine next day. And he said, "If in your view I stray more than ten feet from the center of the river

Bulcke: we were flying over," he says, "I'll buy you a drink." So, sure enough, we went. He blindfolded himself and he did not vary more than three or four feet from what I judged to be the center.

After we landed I asked him, "How do you do this?" He said, "That's why I told you to keep quiet. We do it by listening; you can tell by the sound of the motor whether we are too close to the cliffs;" and, sure enough, he proved it to me.

### The Alaskan Natives

Ward: Now, about the Eskimos, this Metlakatla local was mostly Eskimos, I gather?

Bulcke: They were practically all them, as far as I know.

Ward: Natives?

Bulcke: No - no. Up around way North there are five tribes in Alaska which are Eskimo. Six tribes in all, including the Eskimos - all natives.

Ward: They are all natives, but the Eskimos are a special tribe; is that it?

Bulcke: Yes, the Eskimos are a tribe the same as the Tlingit are a tribe; there are five other tribes. They're all Indian natives, and generally the other tribes are called natives, but the Eskimos are identified as Eskimo.

Ward: They are the northernmost tribes?

Bulcke: Yes; they are around Dutch Harbor and Nome, in that area.

Ward: I've read quite a bit about the sad plight of the Eskimos. Did you run into that at all?

- Bulcke: Well, no - not where our locals were. They had members who were either Eskimos or other natives; they all were members of the union and worked as longshoremen or in fishing processing plants.
- Ward: I've read that Eskimos particularly have a problem - an educational problem and a drinking problem.
- Bulcke: Well, yes, I heard that they had these problems, but those that I had contact with were steadily employed and no different than our other members.
- Ward: And foreigners, natives, Eskimos all worked pretty well together?
- Bulcke: Oh, yes - no problem in the locals at all.
- Ward: No racial problems?
- Bulcke: No racial problems that I ever heard of or saw. They were accepted - they were good workers. As a matter of fact, some of them were officers of the local.
- Ward: Well, that gives a better picture than you often get about the aborigine. The aborgines of Alaska.
- Bulcke: Right - right.

#### A Chilly Minute

- Bulcke: One time I was in Seward, in January. There were some problems there which required me to go, and it was 45 below zero. I had been there at different times when the weather was cold but this was the coldest that I ever experienced. And the hotel where I was staying did not have a restaurant.

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- Ward: Jerry, we had you a half block away from the restaurant in Seward.
- Bulcke: I was properly dressed for that kind of weather. I had been told how cold it would get. I had on thermal underwear and I had a wool shawl around my neck. And a hat and a lined overcoat.
- As I stepped out of the hotel, the wind was quite strong and the wind hit my face; believe it or not, my eyes watered and froze shut. I had to stand there for some minutes with my gloved hands over my eyes to thaw them out so I could find my way to the restaurant. After that I generally backed out of the hotel lobby and made sure that my eyes were covered for the time I needed protection. It was really the coldest I ever experienced in my life, and as the natives told me afterward, one of the coldest they had ever felt.
- Ward: I've heard of people walking around in weather 70 degrees below, but it's hard to figure.
- Bulcke: Yes, but this was only 45 below zero.
- Ward: Well, that's a good chilly scene to leave in Alaska.
- Bulcke: Yes, I think so. I haven't had the pleasure since. I still want to make another trip and do it at my leisure, look around at places where I haven't been.
- Ward: You took Rusty to East Germany, but you didn't take her to Alaska?
- Bulcke: Yes, I did - I did take my wife, Rusty, one time. We went to Seward and also to Juneau, Ketchikan; many places where we had locals.
- Ward: But most of the time, even when you were by yourself, you went to the more civilized places?

- Bulcke: Well, yes. There are a lot of small locals in southeastern Alaska on the little islands, but they are all civilized and modern. They have the same things we have as far as conveniences are concerned.
- Ward: Prices are high?
- Bulcke: Prices are very high. As a matter of fact, our longshore contract in Alaska provides for 25 percent more than the wages are on the Pacific Coast, and that is based on the fact that the government pays wages about 25 percent more in Alaska than on what they call the mainland.
- Ward: It's interesting; the ILWU had a hell of a time getting parity in Hawaii.
- Bulcke: That's right, but we didn't have that difficulty in Alaska because the employers agreed in the beginning when we made our first contracts that the 25 percent differential would apply to our members because of the fact that it applied to the government employees.
- Ward: Well, the Alaska experience, then, wasn't too bad.
- Bulcke: No, that's right, except that in those days you didn't have the modern planes and the travel was slow and you had to fly many hours, particularly from Ketchikan to Anchorage. It was a long flight - I don't remember how long, but they didn't have the fast planes they have nowadays; it was a tiresome trip every time.
- Ward: And also from what you have just told us - if you made a date in another city where you had to fly, you were never absolutely sure you could be there on time.
- Bulcke: That's correct. Generally, as I related, sometimes you couldn't get there because of the problems - you couldn't leave when you wanted to and you had to stay.



## IX THE TRAITORS

Experiences With Yorty and Tenney

- Ward: Let's go back a little bit in the Forties and talk about our legislative friends turned traitor - Sam Yorty and Jack Tenney. You had some problems with them?
- Bulcke: Yes, I did. The Yorty committee was established in Sacramento when Yorty was an Assemblyman. He was later elected to Congress and his partner, Tenney, took over as chairman of that committee.
- Ward: Both "progressives" turned Red-baiters?
- Bulcke: They were a small Dies Committee. One day there were big headlines in the local papers: "Schneiderman and Bulcke subpoenaed for the Tenney Committee." At that time I was not in office. I had been president of Local 10 twice and whenever I was out of office, I would go back to work as a longshoreman.
- Ward: What year would that be?
- Bulcke: If my memory serves me right, it was around '43, probably; I'm not exactly sure. Anyway it was in the early Forties that I appeared before the committee here in San Francisco. They called first on Schneiderman who read a prepared statement.

Then I was called before Jack Tenney who, by the way, I knew personally. He had served with me on the executive board of Labor's Non-Partisan

Bulcke: League some years before that. Of course, he had changed somewhat in his political outlook.

Ward: About 180 degrees!

Bulcke: Anyway, he pointed to Schneiderman and said, "Do you know that man?" And I said, "Yes." He asked me how long - how did I get to know him. He said, "Do you know what he does?" "I understand that he's an officer of the Communist Party." And he said, "How did you get to know him?" I said, "You should know, Jack."

Ward: Did he call you Jerry?

Bulcke: No, he didn't call me Jerry.

Ward: Did he call you Mr. Bulcke?

Bulcke: Yes.

Ward: And you called him "Jack"?

Bulcke: And he said, "Don't call me Jack - call me Assemblyman or Chairman." "I'll keep that in mind." So, he said, "Answer the question." I said, "I answered the question." The question was how did I get to know Schneiderman. And the question came again: how did I get to know Schneiderman? Again I said, "Well, I answered the question." Tenney said to the reporter, "Read it again." So, he did. Tenney said, again, "Now answer the question."

I said, "All right, Jack; when you were running for reelection a few years ago, I happened to be in Southern California in Los Angeles. You met me and asked me to take you to our Warehouse local meeting to get their support for reelection."

Ward: That would be Local 26, wasn't it?

Bulcke: That was Local 26. I did take him and introduced him and made a little speech in his

Bulcke: support. He made his presentation, and when he left there were two other people with us - I don't recall who they were at the moment, although I did know them.

On the way back to downtown Los Angeles, Tenney says to the driver, "Pull over there to the Communist headquarters; I want to go in there and talk - they control a lot of votes." So, we all went in and among other people, Schneiderman was there, so Tenney introduced me to Schneiderman.

And I now told Tenney this: "You introduced me to Schneiderman, and that's how I got to know him." So, he said, "Well, we'll have a five minute recess." I walked out in the hallway to have a smoke and Tenney came out after me and stuck out his hand, saying, "Look, I'm not trying to be personal. I'm just trying to do my job; I'm the chairman of this committee and I have to go through this."

I told him what I thought of him in longshore language and turned and walked away from him. So, when the session started again I went back to the witness chair and Tenney said, "No further questions." That was the end of the Tenney hearings as far as I was concerned.

### The "Dirty Dozen"

Bulcke: When the ILWU voted to leave the ILA and become independent a group of longshoremen in San Pedro - - -

Ward: Petro Pete and the Dirty Dozen?

Bulcke: Yeah. They decided they didn't want to go along with this and declared they would maintain the hiring hall and stay with the ILA. So, when this got going I was president of Local 10. When we were made aware of the fact that this was happening in San Pedro,

Bulcke: the ILWU started a court procedure in Los Angeles in order to take over the local, the hiring hall, and so forth.

They had one hearing before the judge - Reuben Schmidt was his name - and another hearing was to be set for later. Well, at that time I decided it would be worthwhile to inform the judge that there would be a lot of labor difficulties if he went ahead and supported the position of the few guys who wanted to maintain the ILA.

Ward: What was the name of the ringleader? Something Peterson, wasn't it?

Bulcke: There was Pedro Pete - - -

Ward: A. H. Peterson?

Bulcke: Something like that, yes; there were only a few of them. I sent this wire stating to the judge that this could result in a coastwise strike. Some time later a young man appeared in my office. I didn't know who he was and he said, "I just came from Los Angeles, and that was quite a wire you sent to Judge Reuben Schmidt." And I said, "Yes, I did, and I hope it has some effect." He said, "I hope so too."

He walked out - didn't introduce himself or anything, so I paid no attention. The next thing I know, I'm subpoenaed to appear before Judge Reuben Schmidt; according to their contention I was trying to influence the judge in his decision.

Ward: You needed a lawyer, right away!

Bulcke: Right. So when I went into the courtroom with my attorney there wasn't any room left where the spectators sat. I sat with my attorney at his table, right in front of the judge, practically. Once they got going, this young man who had questioned me at my office in San Francisco was asked if I had sent the wire to the judge. The young man got up and testified

Bulcke: about his discussion with me, proving that I had sent the wire.

Ward: The wire had actually been sent by you?

Bulcke: Right. So my attorney got up and said, "Would you recognize Mr. Bulcke?" He said, "Yes." Would you point him out?"

Ward: To the young man?

Bulcke: To the young man who testified. So he looked over the crowd, looked, looked and looked and finally said, "Mr. Bulcke is not here."

So my attorney said, "Oh yes he is; please stand up." I stood up, and the judge said, "You don't belong there; that's for attorneys only, get back of the rail."

Of course, the crowd there and the attorneys awaiting assignments kinda snickered because here he had testified that he had known me and I was sitting within 15 feet of him and he didn't recognize me. There was another person that also had been charged for the same thing; he was the head of the Marine Engineers Union here in San Francisco.

Ward: Randolph Meriwether?

Bulcke: Meriwether, yes. His attorney did not question the fact that he had admitted sending the wire. He was fined \$50, I think it was, and that was the end of his case.

Then that's where my case started and the young man got up and testified. So, we went on through my case and my attorney finally questioned the judge - Schmidt - and said, "How do we know you got this wire?" My attorney got the judge off the bench and onto the witness stand.

Ward: Witness stand?

Bulcke: Yes, the witness stand. Then my attorney raised the question that there was no judge on the bench, so they had quite a little rigmarole about that. Judge Reuben Schmidt said he could act as a judge and as a witness at the same time, by some kind of formula. Eventually he got back on the bench and he fined me \$500.

There was not much we could do except appeal it to the State Supreme Court. There my case was thrown out and I paid no fine.

Ward: What was the difference between your wire and Meriwether's wire?

Bulcke: There was no difference except that Meriwether didn't argue about it. The ruling of the judge meant that this was the wrong thing to do. My position was that we had the right to inform the judge as to the problems that would result if he ruled in favor of the - - -

Ward: The Dirty Dozen?

Bulcke: The Dirty Dozen. They never were able to take over; they were defeated.

Ward: I know; Pedro Pete became an organizer for the American Federation of Labor.

Bulcke: Right.

Ward: Now, Jerry, I understand that while this young man was looking around the courtroom trying to find Germain Bulcke, Germain Bulcke was doing a little play-acting. What was that about?

Bulcke: Everybody was looking around at the crowd and I was sitting next to my attorney, so I stood up too and looked around at the crowd looking for me, hoping all the time the young man wouldn't recognize me. Apparently he didn't because he didn't expect me to be there. He assumed, I guess, that I was another attorney. While I was in plain view, obviously he had not had a very good look at me at the time he talked to me in San Francisco.

Ward: He probably wasn't looking in the right section.

Bulcke: He didn't. He was looking at the crowd behind the railing.

## X THE HOUSE THE UNION BUILT

Four-Bits Per Week

- Ward: Now, we're going to talk about how the ILWU Longshore building came to pass on the waterfront. Your headquarters had been on Pier 18 for a long time, hadn't they?
- Bulcke: We were able to rent space on Pier 18. Prior to that we had almost bought some property across from Pier 18, but just as the war started this was taken over by the military, so that deal didn't go through. We were able to stay at Pier 18, but for quite a while we had felt that it would be much better for Local 10 to have its own building, with facilities for offices, dispatching and so forth all in one building.
- Ward: And you had about 6,000 members in the local, didn't you?
- Bulcke: Yes, about that. During the war years we went up to 10,000 members, but when the war was over and work went down we were forced to let go a number of men. We did this as I've already told you.

Anyway, the decision was made to try to buy some property along the waterfront somewhere so we would be able to build our own building and have all the facilities we needed.

I was president of the local at that time; we set up a committee on which Lou Goldblatt,



Bulcke: secretary-treasurer of the ILWU served. We looked at various properties and eventually decided that the property that was available on a square block near Fishermen's Wharf that had been an old lumber yard and was no longer used was the size and kind of a place that would suit us best.

It was on the waterfront and it was near to the Golden Gate bridge and not too far from the Oakland Bay bridge, and we saw that the space would allow us to have a spot for our men to park their cars, and so forth.

That property was owned by the PG&E, and we didn't want them to know that we as a union were interested in it, so we used some intermediaries to do the necessary negotiating.

The PG&E eventually agreed to sell for \$600,000 and through some negotiations we were able to reduce that to \$500,00. They gave us two weeks' notice to conclude the deal; otherwise it would fall through. It was necessary to get our membership to okay the deal. We had already had some preliminary sketches made and feelers put out as to what the building would cost totally. We called a special membership meeting and let it be known that the purpose of the meeting was to decide whether to buy the property. The committee asked me to make the report. The meeting was opened and I said, "We have a proposition for you, and I don't see the need of arguing over it for a long time. You either agree or disagree."

Right away there were all kinds of calls, "How much? How much?" I said, "All right, kids, hang on to your hats. Give or take a hundred thousand dollars, it will cost a million dollars." And the crowd just boomed. It looked to me that the ceiling went up and down about four times.

I let them holler for a little bit and then I said, "O.K. Here is the situation. The

Bulcke: property will cost about \$500,000 and the estimate of those who are going to build the building is that there will be a total outgo of somewhere over a million dollars.

The way we see it, it will cost each one of us \$250. That can be paid off in ten years, so that's \$25 a year and \$25 a year is just about what each of you spend for a drink every week. I think that any member of our union who does not think that the union is worth 50 cents a week should throw in his book and leave."

It was deathly quiet. After a few moments somebody got up and moved we adopt the recommendation, and just like that the building was under way! It was built, of course, and still is there at North Point Street.

This is how we managed to get the building. I must say it actually cost a little more than the estimate. Instead of \$250,000, I believe we paid close to \$300,000 as our share, and later on there were assessments for improvements on the building. But it now is all free and clear.

Ward: You had quite a problem with the acoustics at one time?

Bulcke: Yes, the building was built and we found that the acoustics were not what they should be. That was one of the additional costs that we had to meet in order to re-do the inside; the acoustics are now in good shape.

Ward: Well, what became of the association that technically owns the building called BALMA?

Bulcke: We formed BALMA because in case of any litigation we didn't want the union to be assessed as the owners. Although Local 10 members are members of BALMA too, they have separate Boards of Directors; all things dealing with the building itself are done through BALMA.

- Bulcke: The building is outstanding from an architectural point of view. They put in pre-stressed steel beams, six of them, that formed the round top of the building.
- Ward: A hexigon, wasn't it?
- Bulcke: Yeah. The steel beams are attached to steel plates which are in the ground. In case of an earthquake, the whole building can move without becoming destroyed.
- Ward: Then as the ground shook, the building shook?
- Bulcke: Well, the prediction is that if there is an earthquake the whole building will move with the ground - not collapse.
- Ward: Those beams you speak about are fastened in the ground curve over and join at the top, don't they?
- Bulcke: Right.
- Ward: In a tremendous arch. How far in a straight line from those plates in the ground to where the beams meet at the top?
- Bulcke: I don't remember.
- Ward: Well, it's over a hundred feet, isn't it?
- Bulcke: Oh, yes, easily. When the building was in process many, many, many people in the building industry - engineers - would come and watch this thing being put together. It was quite a sight.
- Ward: Do you know if that architectural or structural idea was copied anywhere else?
- Bulcke: That I don't know.
- Ward: How was the acoustics problem straightened out?
- Bulcke: Well, the inside of the building is sort of like honey-combed along the walls. They formulated some sort of stuff they put on which improved the acoustics of the building.

- Ward: Instead of bouncing off, the sound was absorbed, it cut out echoes?
- Bulcke: Yes. Before, when you sat in the balcony you could hardly hear, even though the loudspeakers were on. It was not good, but now the hall has good acoustics.

The Real Estate Zoom

- Ward: Well, what is that property worth - if you sold it?
- Bulcke: Well, maybe five or six years ago we were offered \$8,000,000 for it.
- Ward: Probably worth a good deal more now.
- Bulcke: Oh, it probably is because that property is located near Fishermen's Wharf. There have been some attempts to have the local sell it.
- Ward: It is right in the middle of everything at that end of the bay.
- Bulcke: Yes, Fishermen's Wharf is there and there's a tremendous amount of building around; hotels and all sorts of businesses.
- Ward: That should make it worth maybe \$15 million?
- Bulcke: I have no idea what the value is, but naturally there have been some discussions at times in Local 10 because of the fact that the membership is down from what it used to be.
- Ward: It's about 2500 now?
- Bulcke: No, it's around 1800, I understand.
- Ward: Really?
- Bulcke: You see, they haven't added anyone, and the retirement of guys means that attrition is

- Bulcke: taking place. It is becoming quite hard for those few members to maintain the building. They are paying around \$50 a month dues, part of which goes to the upkeep of the building, plus certain assessments. This is just my own thinking, but they may be forced to sell the place and build somewhere else.
- Ward: I've heard of some discussions -
- Bulcke: Yeah, in the building association - BALMA - of building a parking garage where the parking lot is now, maybe a five or six story building. The rental of those parking spaces could well support the maintenance of the existing buildings. It's been discussed, but as far as I know, no decision has been made.
- Ward: Then the members would have to take the bus if there's no place to park down there.
- Bulcke: No, they would still be able to park; they could still use the lower floor for the long-shoremen and rent the three or four or five upper stories to commercial parking.
- Ward: That would make sense.
- Bulcke: It seems to me that it does. Of course, I have nothing to do with this, although as a retired Local 10 member I am also a member of BALMA. I have not attended any of the recent meetings where this particular item was discussed.
- Ward: Well, Local 10, from a fighting militant local scrabbling for existence, that charter has really gotten your union into big business.
- Bulcke: Lucky we certainly are. When we built the building, we did it for the simple reason that it was cheaper to own our building than to pay rent, and we got better accommodations for our members.
- Ward: What did you pay? It was fifty cents a month, wasn't it?

- Bulcke: We paid fifty cents.
- Ward: What would it cost now, if you could get a membership?
- Bulcke: I don't know what the fee is now, because they haven't taken in any new members for so many years. I know this much, that the members they did take in some years ago, one of their obligations was to pay their share of the building. As I say, it has been years since they had the need of adding anyone. The building assessments do not apply to the men who are retired, of course.
- Ward: Of course, fifty cents would buy two drinks in the early days.
- Bulcke: Oh, yes, definitely, but now you couldn't even get a half drink for that.

#### Six Months in Hawaii

- Ward: Now, let's go across the ocean to Hawaii.
- Bulcke: Well, in 1952 Jack Hall was our Regional Director in Hawaii, and he was accused of being a Communist and what have you.
- Ward: He was charged under the Smith Act?
- Bulcke: Yes, along with some teachers, too.
- Ward: There were seven defendants, I believe.
- Bulcke: Right. We had in September of 1952 an International board meeting in Honolulu. After the meeting was over with we decided the board members by pairs would visit the other islands where we had locals. Myself and a board member from Southern California went to the Big Island, Hawaii. We went to Hilo, and all the other places where we had locals; and also

Bulcke: to many of the plantations. In those days we didn't have a unified local yet in Hawaii. We had different locals.

When I got back to Honolulu President Bridges says to me, "Jerry, we have a very serious situation here. Jack Hall is trying to do the job as Regional Director. He gets up at 3 o'clock in the morning and goes to his office, works there until 9, and then has to sit in court all day. After the court session he has to meet with the attorneys. The guy is getting about three hours sleep a night. He just can't keep up that pace, and he needs help. I would like you to stay and give Jack a hand."

I could see the seriousness of the situation, and so I agreed. So, I stayed in the Islands and assisted Jack in some of the work that he could not handle himself, including visiting the other islands whenever there was a problem that needed to be resolved. In other words, to take over for him in every way possible. At Christmas and New Year's there were no court sessions, so I flew back to San Francisco and picked up my wife and Bruce, our son, and returned to Honolulu. We rented an apartment and stayed there until the Jack Hall trial was over; that was in April of '53 -

Ward: September to April - a long time.

Bulcke: And as you know, the Jack Hall trial was eventually taken to the Supreme Court and he was declared innocent.

The time I was in Hawaii gave me a good chance to get acquainted with the groups on the different islands; sugar workers, pineapple workers, longshoremen and so on. I got an education as to what life is like in the islands.

Ward: A bit different from Alaska?

Bulcke: Completely, definitely different. I took Rusty and Bruce along with me to some of the other islands and we enjoyed the whole Hawaiian trip.

Ward: Did you have any experiences with employers over there?

Bulcke: One experience stays in my mind. One of the longshoremen in Honolulu was complaining about some working conditions not being correct. He was a steward, working for the Matson Company, which fired him and declared he was never going to work again for Matson.

Naturally, there was a procedure that the contract provides for settling such problems, but the employers were not very fast in making use of it. The steward was told that he could never come on the Matson docks at all.

(Interview 7; 4 August, 1983) ##

Bulcke: It occurred to me that the contract provided that a business agent had the right to go on any dock at any time where men were employed. I suggested to the local in Honolulu that they make him a business agent; that way he would be able to go into the Matson dock at any time that he was asked for. They did that and, of course, the men working at the Matson docks immediately had some problems for which they needed a business agent. When he appeared before the docks, he was told he couldn't come in. He said that he was the business agent and he had every right to come in; if they didn't let him in, the only thing he could do was to ask the men to come out to talk to him.

Well, the company didn't agree with this, and sure enough, the men came out. I don't remember exactly how many gangs; I think there were five or six gangs working. They all came out and discussed their problems with the business agent.



Bulcke: Once was enough. The very same day the Matson Company called in and informed the local that it all had been a mistake; forget the whole thing. He was allowed to work again, but his job as a business agent didn't last very long. Of course, the situation he complained about got corrected.

Ward: It worked!

Bulcke: It worked is right.

### A Schoolboy's Feet

Ward: Well, you showed Rusty and Bruce around the Islands. What did they think of the place?

Bulcke: Oh, they enjoyed themselves; it was something different from the mainland, of course. We got acquainted with many of the people that were members of the union. We always had a nice time visiting the other islands.

By the way, we noticed that in the school our son Bruce went to that the kids would either go barefooted or wore shoes; they were not allowed to wear those slippers that flip-flop. He didn't want to be different from anyone else so he decided to go barefooted. After about eight or ten days he came in and said, "Well, now I've got four-ply feet."

In other words, he had toughened his feet and was able to walk barefooted without any difficulty; he continued that for the whole time we were in Honolulu. There were very few white kids in that school; mostly natives.

There was one white kid who tried very hard to make friends with Bruce but, according to Bruce, he was not very nice to the native kids. In that situation Bruce felt he didn't want to become a close friend with him. This haole -

- Bulcke: as they called the whites - one day, in order to impress Bruce he said, "My dad is vice-president of the Hawaiian Electric Company." And Bruce said, "So what? My father is vice-president of the ILWU." That ended all attempts at making friends.
- Ward: You wanted to say something about Andy Salz?
- Bulcke: Yeah; Andy Salz was working for the ILWU in our Research Department in Honolulu.
- Ward: He came from San Francisco where he had worked in the Research Department?
- Bulcke: Yes; he came from San Francisco; he continued the same kind of work in Honolulu.
- Ward: He's a judge now, isn't he?
- Bulcke: Yes, the last time I saw him he was a judge in Honolulu. Anyway, Andy, when I came back after the holidays and brought Bruce and Rusty with me, Andy offered me the use of a Model T Ford he had. He had another car and he said, "Only one thing, the radiator doesn't hold water very long. You have to take water along if you're going to drive any distance." He didn't want to spend the money to fix it because it was an old car and he didn't intend to keep it.
- Anyway, when we'd go down the beach to go swimming we would fill up the radiator before we left, and when we started back home again we had to fill up the radiator again. If I was delayed in traffic I had to drive into some service station and put water in in order to get the car home. So, we used more water than gasoline in order to go back and forth to the beach.
- Ward: Well, you went swimming on the other islands, didn't you?
- Bulcke: Well, we did when we were in Hilo, but most of the times we were just traveling around,

- Bulcke: meeting with members of the locals or on the plantations. That didn't give us much chance to do any swimming.
- Ward: How did you do with the pidgin?
- Bulcke: Well, it doesn't take too long before you realize that the language is somewhat different to what you were used to.
- Ward: Did you speak some pidgin before you went there?
- Bulcke: No, but you pick it up quite easily. When I was in Hilo one time a man came in and he had a problem. I don't recall just what it was now, but I told him I would check it out and for him to come back the next day and I would have the answer. So, he said to me, "All right, I'll see you tomorrow pau hana." I said, "Okay", but I didn't know what he meant. After he had left I asked some of the others there and they told me, "Oh, yeah - pau hana means 'When I'm through with the day's work'." That was one of the first things I picked up, and I used it myself quite often.
- Ward: So, you did use a little pidgin?
- Bulcke: Oh, yes, after a while, you pick up certain words and, in order to show that you really understand what they are saying, you use it yourself.
- Ward: Trying to be brotherly?
- Bulcke: That's right, and it was a lot of fun.
- Ward: Now, you were there in 1952 for six months, and you evidently visited Hawaii later on.
- Bulcke: Well, I've been back to two conventions that were held in Hawaii.
- Ward: You were there in '81 at the convention?

- Bulcke: Yes, our biennial convention was held in '81 in Honolulu. However, prior to that, shortly after I retired as an arbitrator in Southern California and moved back to San Francisco, the International decided that as a retirement present they would make arrangements for myself and Rusty and Henry Schmidt and his wife to make the trip to the Islands. Henry had worked there several years.
- Ward: Particularly during strike situations.
- Bulcke: Yes, during the strikes, helping organizing and assisting Jack Hall.

#### The Life of Royalty

- Bulcke: Anyway the four of us went over to the Islands as guests of the International, and while we were in the Islands we were the guests of the Hawaiian ILWU. Before we left San Francisco on the Lurline, I asked the Matson Company if it would be all right to have a few friends come to see us off.
- Ward: A going away party?
- Bulcke: They said, "Oh, perfectly all right. As a matter of fact we'll take care of things for you as far as refreshments are concerned."

Well, the word must have gotten out, for there must have been fifty or sixty people showed up. The company brought in all kinds of refreshments; liquor, we had whiskey, we had champagne and everything you could think of, and this went on until eventually the ship had to leave.

On the way over to Honolulu, every day the waiter at our table would bring out a bottle of champagne which had been donated by our friends. Also it happened that we knew some

Bulcke: of the stewards because they were members of the Marine Cooks and Stewards, so we had a lot of nice times going over.

We went to the various islands and Local 142 had made arrangements for us to stay in some of the newer and fancier hotels that had been established. So, we were treated royally the whole time we were there and we were not allowed to spend any money, pay for anything. We really had a marvelous time, the four of us together.

Ward: Had Fay (Schmidt) ever been there before?

Bulcke: No, I don't think so.

Ward: All right; what differences did you notice in the Islands as compared to '52?

Bulcke: Quite a remarkable difference. When I was there in '52, the sugar workers, the pineapple workers and the longshoremen were the base of the union. In '81 when I went to the convention, the ILWU had organized most of the hotels - - - and organization is still going on. I recently read in our paper where they had won an election where some of the big hotels were built.

Ward: The changes; would you say the Islands were as strong for the ILWU in '81 as they were in '52? Twenty years before? The ILWU had a tremendous thing going then.

Bulcke: Well, in '52 our membership in the union primarily consisted of the sugar workers and the pineapple workers.

Ward: And the longshoremen.

Bulcke: And longshore, yes.

Ward: And they were about 1,800 guys?

Bulcke: Well, something like that. But the organization spread out into other fields. For

- Bulcke: instance, they have organized automobile repair shops and salesrooms in the ILWU; also other activities.
- Ward: Well, you must have more members, wouldn't you say, than you had in '52?
- Bulcke: I don't know the exact number now, but I know they must have over 20,000 members in the Islands.
- Ward: The ILWU at one time had a lot to say in another line of activity. Did you run into any questions about what the Legislature would or wouldn't do?
- Bulcke: Well, they still have a number of ILWU members in the Hawaiian Legislature. They see to it that actions are adopted that will be beneficial to the union members in the Islands. They also have, I understand, a good relationship with the Governor; although not a member of the ILWU, he is very close to our union.
- Ward: A Japanese - Japanese name?
- Bulcke: Yes, I know his name, but I can't come up with it at the moment. As a matter of fact, he addressed the last convention.
- Ward: He was probably elected with ILWU support.
- Bulcke: Oh, definitely, definitely.
- Ward: You think the membership is in pretty good shape over there?
- Bulcke: As far as I know, it is - yes.
- Ward: Okay, any other adventures of interest over there? Any experiences with poi?
- Bulcke: Oh, yes, that was one of the first things I tried on my first trip to the Islands.
- Ward: I understand it tastes like glue.

Bulcke: Well, the first time I tried it, it didn't seem to have much flavor, but after you have eaten it a few times it becomes a kind of thing that you acquire a taste for.

Oh, one time when my wife and Bruce were with me on the island of Kauai we were invited to have lunch with the local members of the union. Some of them had gone way up in the mountains to catch little fish - very small - about two inches at the most, very tasty, very flavorful.

Ward: How could you dress a fish that small?

Bulcke: Well, you eat it just the way they are; the whole works, yes. They had cooked this fish for us, but they themselves, they ate them raw.

So I objected and said that they were discriminating against us; by golly, if they ate the fish raw, we would too. So, they took away the cooked fish and served us what they were eating, raw and very delicious. They explained that it was very difficult to catch this fish. They were way up in the mountains, in the streams. By using hand nets, they got them. They were not available at lower levels.

Ward: Oh, you really had to hunt for them?

Bulcke: Oh, yes, they said it was quite difficult to get where they were, but those people who were born and raised there knew where they could find those fish.

Going back to that six-month stay in Hawaii, we returned to San Francisco in April of 1953 in time to sit in on the last few days of the 1953 ILWU convention.

Ward: You had to make a report on what you had been doing in Hawaii?

Bulcke: Well, yes, I had an opportunity to explain

- Bulcke: to the delegates what I had been doing in the Islands. We invited the Hawaiian delegation to our house for a party. They did it in the Hawaiian style - told us to sit down and enjoy ourselves and they'd take over. And they made all the arrangements, did all the cooking, got all the liquor. In other words, we were the guests in our own house and we enjoyed it very much.
- Ward: Is that really the Hawaii style?
- Bulcke: That's what they call Hawaii style.
- Ward: That's not bad. You enjoyed Hawaii?
- Bulcke: Very much.



## XI BACK TO BLOODY THURSDAY

Helping The Wounded

- Ward: Jerry, we found out that at one very important point in your talk about the '34 strike you hadn't mentioned what you saw and heard on Bloody Thursday. We talked about the 3rd of July, two days before, but not about Bloody Thursday.
- Bulcke: Well, on the 5th of July, I came down Mission Street in my Model T Ford, a 1924 model.
- Ward: It had a better radiator than Andy's?
- Bulcke: Oh, yes. As I got near Steuart Street where our union hall was located, I noticed that one of the tires was practically flat. So, instead of turning into Steuart Street, I turned into a service station on the corner of Mission and Steuart Street, across from our headquarters. I was in the process of jacking up the wheel in order to change the tire and I noticed a rather large car that had no marks on it, plain looking, stopped at the corner of Steuart Street and Mission. Out of the car jumped two policemen - - -
- Ward: In uniform?
- Bulcke: In uniform and each with a rifle. They started firing at the people that were walking along the sidewalk on Mission Street towards Steuart. They fired a number of times, jumped in the car and away they went - into

Bulcke: Mission Street and gone. The car had no markings indicating that it was a police car. I immediately ran over and there were three men laying down. One was crawling on his elbows and dragging himself along the ground. With the help of two or three other men I put him on my back; others helped by holding his legs and we carried him upstairs into the union hall. There were already five or six men laying there that had been beaten by the police. More of them were being brought in ---

Ward: All wounded?

Bulcke: All wounded - yes. Shortly after that the police shot tear gas shells through the windows. By that time we had over twenty people laying there with various injuries - mostly beaten with nightsticks or whatever, with their heads bloody. We had a doctor who was taking care of the men as they arrived, and he, like all of us, was affected by the tear gas that was shot in the windows.

Ward: Do you remember the doctor's name?

Bulcke: Doctor Lagan.

Ward: You said they shot tear gas right through the windows - the closed windows?

Bulcke: That's right.

Ward: You must have had broken glass all around.

Bulcke: That's right. When they fired those tear gas shells they broke the windows and the gas came into the room.

Ward: So, you had the wounded, and the tear gas and the broken glass?

Bulcke: Right, right.

Ward: It must have been quite a scene.

Bulcke: Some of our members got hold of some flowers after the bodies of the two dead men were removed. They spread the flowers on the sidewalk where the men had been shot, and the police came along and took all the flowers away. We went and got some more flowers, and so did others. The second time the police left the flowers there.

Ward: You said a minute ago that you saw three men flat on the ground there and that you took one of them upstairs. The other two were dead?

Bulcke: The other two were dead, yes.

Ward: Howard Sperry and Nick Bordoise.

Bulcke: Nick Bordoise. By the way, Nick Bordoise was not an ILWU member.

Ward: He was a cook?

Bulcke: He was a cook and he was volunteering his work in our soup kitchen that we had established on the Embarcadero between Mission and Market, second floor. He had just finished a shift and was going to the hall to have his card punched to show that he had been on duty that day when he was killed.

Ward: And that, of course, is the beginning of the annual Bloody Thursday ceremony at that street corner?

Bulcke: Every year since we have held a memorial service for those men at the same place.

Ward: What was the point of shooting these guys just as they were walking around on the sidewalk?

Bulcke: That is something that many people asked, "Why?" There were no ships there, there was no activity there; it was quiet.

Ward: No fights there?

Bulcke: No - no. Nothing, nothing - no reason at all. Some time before, at a mass meeting we held in the Civic Auditorium, Mayor Rossi had addressed our membership and he mentioned that if the strike was continued it would end up by people being killed. He said that blood would be running in the streets. So in a sense he predicted the shooting of the men.

Ward: If the object of the shooting was general intimidation, did it intimidate the strikers?

Bulcke: Not at all. To the contrary, it resulted in all of the unions in the city of San Francisco agreeing to a general strike. While the idea of the strike was not supported by the leadership of the Labor Council, the delegates just the same voted in favor of it.

The strike only lasted three and a half days, but it had an overwhelming effect. Nobody - there were no street cars running, there was no business place open, except a few restaurants that were allowed to serve food.

Most of the businesses just shut down. Many of them had signs "Closed until the strike is won," or "Closed to support the NRA," "Closed in support of the ILA," and stuff like that.

I remember that I had to be on picket duty and I walked all the way from 28th and Church Street, where I lived, to Pier 37.

Ward: That's a good long walk; about three miles, I'd say.

Bulcke: Oh, all of that, but I was enjoying it because everything was quiet. There was no movement of streetcars or busses or the cable cars - everything was shut down. The effect of the general strike was remarkable - people were all out in support. ##

- Ward: At one stage of that general strike there was a rumor that a truck had been seen down a street somewhere in the Mission and that raised a hell of a lot of excitement. Do you know anything about that?
- Bulcke: No, I don't.
- Ward: It turned out that it was delivering some badly needed supplies to a hospital.
- Bulcke: I might have known about it then, but at the moment I don't recall it.
- Ward: Can you tell us more about Bloody Thursday and the general strike?
- Bulcke: No, that about covers what I saw.
- Ward: That doctor who was treating the wounded, Dr. Lagan. How come he was so helpful?
- Bulcke: Well, he was a doctor that the ILWU had hired to take care of its members, and he had quite a few to take care of that day. He passed away quite a number of years ago.

#### A Change Of Pace

- Ward: All right, Jerry, we have covered pretty much of your active career and your work as a long-shoreman, your presidency of Local 10 at various times, your term as International vice-president for 13 years and then, finally, your six years as an arbitrator in Southern California.

This brings us up to 1966, at which time you retired. During all this time you acquired many branches on your family tree. Suppose you tell us something more about them, particularly your one lasting marriage.

Bulcke: Well, when Rusty and I were married we accumulated a sort of crazy, mixed up family, but very nice. I've told you quite a bit, including our honeymoon trip in the High Sierra. There were other Sierra trips later, including one when Ken came to live with us in 1954. His initiation into the family was a trip on which we had also some good friends of ours, Morris and Frances Watson and their family. Morris Watson was the editor of our paper, The Dispatcher.

We hired horses for all of us from one of the packers. There were Rusty and I - - -

Ward: Five of you at least.

Bulcke: Bruce and Ken and Frances and Morris Watson and two of their children. A girl visiting from Hawaii, Gail, also came along.

We went over Kearsage Pass which is over 9,000 feet, on horseback. We found a nice camping spot near what they call the Ray Lakes. The packers took the horses back and returned with some horses at a later date.

We caught a lot of fish. Those lakes are not fished very often and there were plenty fish in there. Morris Watson had never in all his life caught a fish. And every time you cast off you caught a fish.

I learned something at the time I was a member of the Fish and Game Commission from one of our wardens who happened to be Indian - how to keep fish fresh without using ice. The process is to take the fish and clean them like when you are going to cook them, put them on a line under a tree so that the sun doesn't hit them directly. The nights up there are pretty cold. The water froze every night in our water bucket. Every day when we fished we saved the biggest ones and hung them up on the wire. Under the regulations of the Fish and Game Commission (at that time), you could not have more than ten fish in your possession. So, we managed to have many fish hung up.

Bulcke: The day we left I wrapped the fish in plastic table cloths so they wouldn't touch one another. Then I put the whole package inside of a sleeping bag, so that it was well insulated.

We were delayed in Independence because Mrs. Watson had developed an abscessed tooth and we had to stay there for three days while she was getting treatments. In Independence it was hot and I expected that when I got home my fish wouldn't be much worthwhile.

But, sure enough, when I got home and unwrapped the sleeping bag and got to the fish, they were still nice and cold and in good shape. I put them in the refrigerator and we had trout for some time afterwards.

We had hoped to have our friend from Hawaii, Jack Hall, come over and go with us on that high trip, but he was unable to do so. However, a couple of months later when he was able to come to San Francisco we still had the trout left and we were able to at least to give him some of our wonderful catch from up in the High Sierras.

Ward: Fresh?

Bulcke: Oh, of course. We had them frozen in our refrigerator and they were still good.

#### More About The Family

Ward: Ken was your son by your first wife?

Bulcke: Yes. Ken loved the mountains from the beginning and the next year he worked as a wrangler for one of the packers in that area. In recent years, Ken has had his own auto repair business.

Bulcke: Ken has a son, Kevin, from his first marriage to Lynn. Kevin was a football star through high school and into college. He decided, however, that this was not the career for him and at present he is continuing school and repairing cars.

When Kevin was a mid-teenager, Ken began a new family with Beverly and has presented us with three more little grandchildren, Jason, Seth and Aaron.

Ward: What's the middle one's name?

Bulcke: S E T H.

Ward: That's a New England name.

Bulcke: Yeah, I know. Where Ken got it, I don't know. When Kevin was three, he and Ken lived with us for a year so we had the pleasure of enjoying his childhood at close range.

This summer Bruce's daughter, Shannon, is living with us now. She is twenty and a lovely young woman, and she works with autistic adults. She comes home from work with some fascinating stories, and sometimes scary stories. She is doing a fine job and I'm very proud of her.

Last year Bruce and his wife, Rosemary, lived with us for six months. We were all a little unsure at first how this would work out, but it proved to be a beautiful experience for all of us. We talked out small problems as they arose and all four of us found it to be enjoyable; although when it was time for them to leave, we were ready for that, too.

Bruce said, "I've often worried that you might have to live with us when you get old. I thought it would never work, but now I know that it can work very nicely."

Bruce was a civil rights activist during the Fifties.



Ward: Yes, I would like to know about that; he was washed down the stairs, wasn't he?

Bulcke: I'm coming to that. He was a civil rights activist during the Fifties and beyond that. His first wife, Mary Ann, led the march for Caryl Chessman to San Quentin. That night Rusty and I took a huge pot of hot soup to the demonstrators.

Another time Bruce and Mary Ann got washed down the steps of City Hall.

Ward: Weren't they protesting at a hearing of the House un-American Activities Committee?

Bulcke: They were protesting, along with many others, a hearing of the House un-American Activities Committee and the police turned on the fire hoses and washed them down the steps.

Ward: Were you there? Did you see it?

Bulcke: No, I was away at the time. Bruce was arrested and Rusty had to get him out of jail.

Now Bruce got caught in a teachers' job shortage. He had taught psychology at San Francisco State and City College for many years but finally decided to go back to school and get training as a kindergarten teacher. He's good with little kids, and we think it is a good plan.

Rosemary teaches special education and so far there are still jobs available in that field. We don't see Muriel's children and grandchildren as often as we would like, but we do keep in touch.

Muriel's son, Terry and his wife, Eileen, are to be in the city next weekend and will be visiting us. Terry has offered to paint our van camper for us. He has worked in that field and will do an excellent job. I'm sure this will save us a lot of money. Terry and Eileen visited at my daughter's place in

Bulcke: Arizona for my birthday this year. For two years now we have managed to do that - I've gone to visit my daughter Muriel, and Terry and his wife visit at the same time, so we get together. They are warm, outgoing, loving people and very family-oriented. Patty, Muriel's daughter, works long hours and is raising two little ones - our great-grandchildren. We don't see a lot of them; driving is getting more difficult for us.

### Weddings and Births

Ward: What does Patty do?

Bulcke: She works in an office. Patty was adopted at the age of four months. I was in Alaska and got the word by phone that I was a grandfather. Shannon was born while I was on a hunting trip - I phoned home to find out whether the baby had been born yet - whether I was a grandfather or grandmother.

Another interesting arrival was that of our great granddaughter, Kira. Her parents are Wayne and Hilda, granddaughter of my second wife, Hilda. They arranged for a natural home birth. It all went so well that they invited us over for dinner that same night, so we got the whole story of the birth of a beautiful child. Her big brother, Mathias, aged 8, was very involved in the whole process.

Ward: Her brother Mathias - did this happen to him, too?

Bulcke: I don't think so.

Ward: He took his own way of coming into the world.

Bulcke: By the way, the wedding of Wayne and Hilda was very interesting. It was at our house and it was time for the Spring equinox. Wayne had

- Bulcke: made a special incense for the occasion and blessed each of us and the house with the incense. It was not our life style, but it was really quite nice.
- Ward: What was the purpose of the incense and how did he come to make it? The incense - what does it imply, some kind of mysticism?
- Bulcke: Yes, he's quite strong into that and a lot of his friends are, too. He felt that this would be proper for him to do at this wedding.
- Ward: You were talking about Mathias when he was eight. What happened to him after that?
- Bulcke: Wayne had made goblets to drink wine out of during the wedding ceremony, and the small one was for Mathias. They poured the wine and gave the little goblet to Mathias. Everything was quiet and serious; Mathias took one swallow out of the goblet and went "Pooh!" Of course that broke up all the seriousness and everybody in the house laughed out loud. So we had quite a nice ending to the wedding ceremony.
- Talking about weddings, we put up a sign saying "Wedding Chapel." As I think back, Rusty and I were married in our house. Bruce too; both of his marriages were in our house. Ken and Jan had their reception at our house and when Muriel married her present husband, Jim, that was at our house. And finally Wayne and Hilda had their wedding at our house.
- Ward: You had different types of ceremony, I suppose?
- Bulcke: Yes - yes, a different type is right.
- Ward: Some serious and some not so serious?
- Bulcke: Well, they were all kind of serious, I think. Bonnie, Hilda's sister, lives with her husband, Steve, in Oregon. Earlier this year Bonnie gave birth to our fifth great grandchild, Logan, whom we have seen only once.

Ward: Did they call you up to tell you you were a great grandfather?

Bulcke: Not that time. The sixth great grandchild is yet to be born to Kevin and Chrissy.

The only other member of the family, my sister, Gusty-Ann, of whom I have spoken earlier, is 87 and lives in a board and care home in San Francisco. She is still lively, still reads and sings when she goes to the Senior Center. We see her as often as possible and bring her home for family occasions.

Ward: Well, that is a fascinating family tree.

#### Camping Here and There

Ward: When you got to the stage of retirement did you go right out and travel?

Bulcke: After I returned to San Francisco from San Pedro and retired, the first thing after we got settled we bought a camper to make a leisurely trip around the country.

We started out and first we stopped near Lake Tahoe with Angeline, who had been married to my sister's son. He was killed in an automobile accident and she remarried. She and her new husband were living there and we stopped overnight at Tahoe. From there we went on East, taking it slow and easy and visiting where we had friends, particularly in Detroit, where I had lived before. We finally ended up in Portland, Maine, on the Atlantic ocean.

Ward: All the way from San Francisco!

Bulcke: Then we went back to Washington, D. C., left the camper there and took the train to New York; the reason for that was there were no camping facilities available within a decent

Bulcke: distance of New York. We came back from New York, picked up our camper and our next stop was New Orleans. There we stopped and spent a few days, and from there we went to Tulsa, Okla. where we had a cousin of Rusty's - Robert Fearon, known as the "Mad Genius." He invented a number of useful things, I understand.

Ward: What, mad genius?

Bulcke: That was his nickname, anyway.

Ward: And what did he invent that was useful, do you remember?

Bulcke: No. So then we kept on from Tulsa, got to Los Angeles and then home to San Francisco; a very enjoyable trip.

Ward: How long did all this take you? Two or three months?

Bulcke: Yeah, about two months we were gone.

Ward: You also traveled abroad, didn't you?

Bulcke: Oh, yes, we made a trip to Europe, visited some friends in Sweden, also visited my home town in Belgium, spent some time in Paris. We made connections in Europe with a couple of friends from here who had also planned to go to Europe. They left a couple of weeks before we did and we arranged to meet them in Vienna.

We were on a train going to Vienna and we stopped at a well-known place in Germany, Nuremberg. As we were leaving there I was sitting looking out the window and a train pulled up alongside of us; sure enough, sitting in the other train were our friends, having a glass of wine. I knocked on the glass and they saw us, and of course we met that evening in Vienna.

Bulcke: We spent some time together; they went on into Italy from there, but we made arrangements to meet again in Paris later. Sure enough, we met in Paris and did the place together. Then they had to leave because their time was up and they went back to the United States.

Then I went to my home town - - -

Ward: Just you and Rusty?

Bulcke: Yes, just Rusty and I. Of course, we were staying with some very close friends of mine. And of course, the problem was they didn't speak English; well, one of their children did, but all the others didn't.

Rusty had no difficulty understanding when I was speaking with the lady there, using English, but after three or four days the Flemish came back to me quite easily, so then I had to translate the rest to Rusty, so she would know what we were talking about.

The lady we were staying with was quite a good cook and she always insisted on serving large portions, so it was eat, eat, eat.

After about nine days, Rusty said to me, "Honey, I'm sick; please get me out of here." The difficulty of the language was too much, she didn't know what we were talking about and I had to stop and translate things; so it became quite cumbersome. But on the whole we enjoyed the trip.

Ward: Well, you did a lot of traveling. Anything more you want to tell about that?

Bulcke: Well, our son Ken had moved to Connecticut and later on we went back there with the camper again, but just to Connecticut.

Then we left the camper with Ken and flew over to Liverpool, England, where Bruce was teaching at a college. He only stayed there one year - the thing didn't work out.

Bulcke: The college where he was teaching at was expecting to keep him on, but they were depending on a stipend from the government.

Bruce found out that the stipend would not materialize and he would have been out of a job, anyway. Fortunately, things worked out so he came back.

Ward: What did he teach there?

Bulcke: Psychology.

Ward: You've been home quite a while, now.

Bulcke: We expect to do a little more traveling, we hope.

Ward: Where do you want to go next?

Bulcke: Well, we haven't made up our minds yet, but probably this year we're not going to travel very far.

Ward: Depends on the time of year you want to go?

Bulcke: That's true.

Ward: Ever been Down Under?

Bulcke: No.

## XII THE PENSIONERS' CLUBS

Annual Conventions

- Bulcke: Since I retired I've become quite active in an organization that we established for retired members, the Pacific Coast Pensioners Association, ILWU. We have established a procedure whereby retired members join clubs at a local level; then once a year we have a convention which we hold in Anderson, California, near Redding. That's a central point. The reason we picked Anderson is that it is equal distance for the members that come from Seattle and San Diego. There we have the use of a large new State-owned building where we meet.
- Ward: About how many people come to these things?
- Bulcke: Last year we had a little over 300. Some years we've had as high as 500, but we are all getting older.
- Ward: Any newly retired?
- Bulcke: The newly retired aren't yet anxious to go to this convention. The convention is really more of a social affair than anything else, though we do discuss problems affecting the pensioners. We adopt resolutions dealing with things that affect everybody.

We generally start our meetings at 10 o'clock in the morning; we have a coffee break at 11 o'clock and we work until one or two



Bulcke: o'clock. Then we have picnics in the park and later a dinner dance. Of course there's a lot of visiting between the men because we haven't seen each other for a year. It's a jolly get-together and we always enjoy it. I served as secretary of the organization for three years. Then the year I knew I was going to make the trip to Europe and I wouldn't be available, I retired as secretary.

We have an executive board and it meets one day prior to the convention. Then during the year the board meets once more.

Ward: Who is eligible for membership - just long-shoremen?

Bulcke: It's open to any ILWU member that is retired. We have some warehousemen - there is a group of warehousemen in Oakland who belong, and possibly we're going to pick up some more warehousemen in the South.

Ward: I understand Local 6 has a pension club of its own.

Bulcke: The Oakland side of Local 6 is the group that belongs to us, but Local 6 in San Francisco does not belong. For some reason they pulled out and we hope they will reaffiliate. We have retired ship clerks, walking bosses, anyone who is retired ILWU. It's a strictly volunteer thing; no one gets paid, no money is paid out by the organization.

Ward: No compulsion; if they come, they come?

Bulcke: Everyone who shows up and is a retired member has a vote. There are discussions on the many problems we have to deal with - we have long discussions on Social Security, stuff like that. I mean what the present administration should or shouldn't do; healthy discussions on various items. Naturally, the problems deal with the people who are retired.

Ward: Do you discuss politics?

Bulcke: Oh, yes, very much.

Ward: Do you endorse?

Bulcke: We discuss, we endorse people for public office like the Governor and when the time comes, the President.

Ward: More or less Democratic?

Bulcke: No, it's a mixed bag. We don't act on anything that is just Democratic or Republican; that doesn't fit in.

One thing that we also do is, for some years now since I have been retired I've volunteered and sat in during negotiations for the new ILWU contract.

#### Pensioners' Benefits

Ward: I heard there was some question about that.

Bulcke: Yeah, but also the pensioners have an interest because the pension system is part of the contract. So, I generally sat in and no one objected. After all I am an ex-official; at the last contract negotiations I was requested to sit in with the ILWU negotiating committee -

Ward: By whom?

Bulcke: By the president, Jim Herman. I told him that I'd be ready to serve but that he should first contact the president of the PCPA and get his approval; and the president did approve.

Ward: Who is that?

Bulcke: Gordon Giblin, who is a member of Local 13, retired. He okayed that I sit in so I was able to help out during the negotiations.

When our committee - that is, the union side - would meet to discuss strategy or whatever, many of the members would ask me, "Well, Jerry, you have been through this before - how would you handle it?" Of course, in the direct negotiations I never speak.

Generally, it's Jimmy Herman or someone he selects from the committee who does the speaking with the employers. I do most of my work by meeting with our own committee, suggesting methods, approaches that we had used successfully before.

Ward: That brings up an interesting question - does Bridges participate there?

Bulcke: No, he does not, and personally, I don't think he'd want to. But I find it rather enjoyable, and I know that the committee members always felt that it was good to have me there because I could give them information.

Ward: One of the things about representing the pensioners is the question of the amount of participation in the contract negotiations they should have.

Bulcke: Well, of course, pensioners are interested in getting full say in their pension negotiations.

At the last negotiations, we asked for a \$75 a month increase in the pensions. We knew that the \$75 would not be granted, we were aware of that. The counter offer was \$25 for all three years. As the negotiations went on we eventually got the employers to agree that if it went on for three years they would increase the pensions in two jumps of \$25.00, one the first year and one the third year; nothing for the second year.

Bulcke: Then, after some more manoeuvring, we reached agreement on the amount of the wage increase for the workers, and it was generally understood that maybe we would get serious consideration to a three year agreement. Eventually, we asked the employers to take 5 cents off the third year wage increase providing they go for a \$25 increase in pensions for each of the three years.

Ward: Did an actuary or you figure that?

Bulcke: On the negotiating committee everybody was in agreement that it was worthwhile for the workers to take 5 cents less. See, wage increases would take place during the three years, but for the third increase, we would drop 5 cents and get in that year a \$25 increase in the pensions. So, over three years it would increase the pensions by \$75.

Ward: And is that what you asked for?

Bulcke: Well, we got it extended over three years. Naturally the pensioners are very much interested, when we have our conventions, in what goes on in the negotiations. At the last ILWU convention in Portland, Oregon, they adopted a resolution that two retired members would sit in on the negotiations.

Ward: Every three years?

Bulcke: Every three years when the contract is open, yes.

## XIII LOOKING BACK ON TUMULT

(Interview 8: 9 August, 1983) ##

Establishing A Democratic Union

Ward: Jerry, we're now up to a few days past your 81st birthday and I'm asking you to look back on your life and accomplishments, particularly in 1925 to 1935, tumultuous years in which you began to stir in a good many things which you accomplished in your American life. What would you say were your goals?

Bulcke: Well, mainly, the right to establish a rank and file union, a union where the rank and file would have control. Having established the union, I went through a rough and tough strike where we eventually were fortunate in getting an agreement from the employers that provided many of the things that we felt were needed in order to have a decent place to work and a decent earning ability.

Primarily, we wanted to do away with the favoritism which had existed for quite a number of years, and also the long hours. Prior to our first agreement there was no limit on hours of work.

Ward: No overtime?

Bulcke: Well, yes, we had overtime but the differential was only 15 cents and we worked many long hours; 24 hours was normal, 36 hours was not out of the picture. I myself worked a 52-hour stretch one time.

Bulcke: Also we were able to establish a shorter work day plus the increase in wages, welfare programs and also of course the enforcement of safety rules. We cut down long shifts, cut down on the speed-up, cut down on the large loads we used to have to take care of. In other words, we were able to make the conditions much more acceptable for the members of our union.

Ward: You speak of rank and file control. How did rank and file control differ from other types of control?

Bulcke: Well, by rank and file control I mean that agreements reached by a committee of the union are subject to a secret ballot vote by the membership before they are accepted. The wishes of the working rank and file are expressed in that way so that when an agreement is reached it is voted on; it is not dictated from the top like it is in many other unions.

Ward: Oh, yes.

### The Voting Process

Bulcke: When a report is made by the negotiating committee each local discusses it. The membership then by secret ballot votes to accept it or reject it.

So far, when the negotiating committee has recommended acceptance it has never been voted down. The negotiating committee consists of members of the working group. Although the officers are there to take care of the negotiations, it is the representatives who are elected by the locals who do the actual negotiations.

When the committee finally reaches agreement with the employers it is then referred back to the membership.

- Bulcke: The same thing goes for a strike vote. If the negotiations break down and it is necessary to have a strike in order to get our demands, that strike vote must carry by at least 85 per cent. If we cannot get 85 per cent - although it never happened - of the working rank and file to approve the strike, no strike is called.
- Ward: Yes. Well, in a legitimate union you have two types of control - control from the top and control by the rank and file. But, what about the company union that you came out of, the Blue Book union?
- Bulcke: Well, that so-called union was controlled by the employers; the rank and file didn't have anything to say. When I started on the waterfront here in 1925, the agreement that was in effect was controlled just by company stooges who led the so-called union. The rank and file had no chance to discuss or change anything. As a matter of fact, the Blue Book bunch had very few if any meetings.
- Ward: Are you saying that the Blue Book union did the bidding of the employers?
- Bulcke: That's correct. Some of the leaders had been officers of the previous union, but had gone over to the employers' side. There was no expression of the rank and file of any kind.
- Ward: Well, all right, you won a lot of things. Was workmen's compensation greatly improved, or was it completely new at that time?
- Bulcke: Prior to our agreement, when you were injured at work a certain amount of workmen's compensation was given, although it was a very small amount.

Oftentimes people went back to work when they were not yet physically well enough to do so. They were caught in a position where if they didn't go back to work they didn't get any more compensation and they didn't get any money.

- Bulcke: Men came back to work when they really should not have been there.
- Ward: They burst a hernia?
- Bulcke: Oh, yeah, hernia or other injuries of that nature.
- Ward: Now, safety conditions have changed a good deal?
- Bulcke: Now safety conditions are written into this agreement and through our system of stewards we see to it that the conditions are observed. The contract provides that when the men in good faith feel that to start to work or continue to work is unsafe they have the right to stand by until corrections are made.
- Ward: Now, Jerry, the ILWU has won all these things and they have been in effect for many years, but my impression is that everywhere employers do their best to whittle away at good union conditions. Does that impression meet with your understanding? What feeling do you have on it?
- Bulcke: Oh, yes, the employers still try to do away with conditions affecting safety wherever they can. Of course, the system operated by the stewards and the members naturally seeks to protect workers on the job, so that many of the complaints that occur and the question of safety on the job bring up the necessity of enforcing the safety rules. We have a system of arbitration, so that when a thing occurs, and the arbitrator cannot get the two parties to reach agreement he makes the final decision as to whether safety rules have been observed or violated.
- Ward: In other words, the guys have to keep their eyes open, right?
- Bulcke: That's right, they have to be constantly on the alert to see that the agreed upon working conditions are not violated by the employers.



- Ward: Would you say that the employers sometimes think that the union doesn't try it the other way?
- Bulcke: Oh, that's true. Whenever they think that the employees are not working in accordance with the agreed-upon procedures and are not putting out, they (the employers) have rights too.
- Ward: But anyway, with an arbitration system most of these disagreements that arise now and then are settled peacefully and quickly.
- Bulcke: That's right. Exactly. That's why the system of arbitration was established. It's a good system and it's done much to avoid any work stoppages, and at the same time to protect the men from injury and speed-up.
- Ward: Well, that means that a peaceful revolution has been achieved in many things affecting the worker's life. What about the political thinking when you began to work on the waterfront in 1925 as compared with now?

### Political Action

- Bulcke: Well, prior to the strike in 1934 there was very little discussion on politics or the effect that political action could have on the conditions of work.

However, after the 1934 strike the union recognized quite quickly that a great deal of our working conditions would be affected by political action. We became aware that we had to keep up with political activities in order to protect our conditions. The union attempted to pioneer in educating the membership to the need of following politics and taking political action such as supporting by alliance or communication Congressmen and Senators and

- Bulcke: other officials in California and Washington, D. C., asking them to support legislation beneficial to the working rank and file or to oppose the kind of legislation that would damage them.
- Ward: You had nothing like that in the years 1925 to '35?
- Bulcke: No, didn't exist in those days; it all came after we won the strike and established the union.
- Ward: Let's take the 1932 election, when FDR was elected. Before that election was there any kind of political thinking or apparatus on the docks? How did you talk to the guys?
- Bulcke: Well, they did attempt it. As I mentioned earlier I remember at the noon hour prior to 1932, occasionally a politician would show up and was allowed to speak to the men, pointing out what he would do, and so forth. The workers took such statements with considerable doubt, because we realized that those people were not union men. In other words, although we were told that the candidates these speakers supported would help the workers if elected, we soon learned that that was not necessarily so. I remember one instance where a politician showed up and pointed out that we should support him because if we didn't he was going to have to support anti-labor legislation. That, I thought, was pretty damn lousy. Naturally, with that kind of a beginning we did not support him.
- Ward: What about the registration drive among the workers? Was there such a thing?
- Bulcke: No - no. As a matter of fact many of them were not registered to vote. That was one of the first things we did - to make sure that our members and their wives and friends would vote on election day. We put out newspapers and bulletins describing the issues and candidates and making recommendations.

- Bulcke: An educational system was established which is still going on to the present day.
- Ward: In those days if a worker evinced the slightest interest in what was going on in the Legislature and the Congress with laws affecting his rights, how did he find out about it? What information could he trust?
- Bulcke: Well, that's exactly the conditions that were in existence prior to the establishment of our union. In other words, the only education (if you could call it that) that the workers got was from the daily newspapers, where generally the people who were supported were not pro-labor. That mis-information was constantly being put out. But after our union was established, the union publications and our literature informed the membership about what the right position was and who to vote for. Prior to the strike but after the union was established, we issued bulletins.
- Ward: And also literature was issued by the Left?
- Bulcke: Yes; naturally we were interested in any literature that supported our union's position.
- Ward: You took all the help you could get?
- Bulcke: Right- right. Those bulletins would many times point out the position of the union, or suggest how the members should vote.
- Ward: You conducted an educational campaign?
- Bulcke: That's right - that's exactly what happened. So there was a real movement to educate our membership in the correct way to work politically.
- Ward: Now, speaking of the union and what was published, wasn't it so that there were more or less two lines of thought; one was the old AFL position, reward your friends and punish your enemies, and the more progressive position

- Ward: saying that political action should be utilized in every possible way, registration of voters, educating them on the voting process, and urging them to vote for pro-union candidates.
- Bulcke: That's right, because all such action is to the benefit of the workers.
- Ward: Well, what was the radical push like?
- Bulcke: In one way, some of the radicals suggested actions that we didn't approve of and that were not accepted by the rank and file.
- Ward: Like what?
- Bulcke: Well, some of their suggestions and recommendations we felt were too radical.
- Ward: And the membership was not convinced?
- Bulcke: Definitely not - they would be discussed in meetings and they would be rejected as impractical.
- Ward: But you and your fellow leaders in the ILWU had to decide in your own minds, when a proposition was put up to you, whether to put it to your rank and file?
- Bulcke: That's correct. We had many discussions among the leadership as to what to put before the rank and file.
- Ward: But you decided sometimes not to push a radical idea feeling that the membership would not be interested anyway, didn't you?
- Bulcke: That's right. Many times radical proposals were made from the floor by individuals and they would be discussed and eventually of course they would be voted on up or down. With few exceptions, the membership would usually vote them down. In other words, they would listen very carefully to the position of the leaders and those who made the proposals

- Bulcke: and in the end what would be most likely to prevail would be the ideas suggested by the leadership.
- Ward: I see. In other words the leadership, whatever they might personally think, their job was to keep in pretty close touch to the opinions of the membership?
- Bulcke: Yes, that was so because of our progressive union status and because of the efforts of the leadership to preserve that democratic status and to avoid provocations by the few members in opposition. We tried to keep the membership advised as to what the problems were and how to resolve them.
- Ward: Can you recall any motion that came up on the floor of the union that did not get by the membership?
- Bulcke: Yes, a motion was made in a membership meeting by one of the members of the local who was known as a member of the Communist party. He made a motion that we go on record in support of the candidacy of Earl Browder for President. It didn't carry. Also at that time Harry Bridges was active in support of Wendell Willkie. In a stop work meeting to discuss the political situation Harry explained why we should support the candidacy of Wendell Willkie. The membership did not accept that; they turned it down and voted in favor of FDR.

#### The Spanish Question

- Ward: Let's talk about Spain, now. How did that issue come up in Local 10?
- Bulcke: Well, when the Spanish civil war broke out we had many discussions on that in our union, whether we should take sides, or go along

- Bulcke: with the American policy of neutrality. And they went on record in support of, what do you call it?
- Ward: The Loyalists?
- Bulcke: Yes, the Loyalists.
- Ward: You supported the Spanish people in their struggle from monarchy to democracy and against dictatorship?
- Bulcke: Our members were interested in that struggle; quite a number of them fought in Spain, probably a half dozen from San Francisco, and also from up and down the coast. Very frequently during the Spanish civil war, it came up for discussion by our membership. What would happen was that the members would go on record in favor of donations to support the Loyalists and that was generally the way it worked. In other words, we passed assessments for that purpose. The union itself had no money. The membership, if they voted an assessment, would be establishing the fact that the money came out of the members' pockets, not out of the union treasury.
- Ward: You mean every time they voted an assessment they paid it monthly through the dues collection process?
- Bulcke: Yes, they did, and also at other times there would be voluntary donations.
- Ward: That's interesting; does it bring up a question of a conflict of ideas? Did the guys vote donations for Loyalist Spain and still not support revolution?
- Bulcke: It was on the basis of what was going on in Spain - - -
- Ward: But there were objections, of course?
- Bulcke: Well, there were some people who objected, but as I say it was always voted on and the majority carried the vote for the Loyalists.

- Ward: I suppose that if the members believed in democracy in the union, what's wrong in having democracy in Spain?
- Bulcke: Well, we were aware of the situation in Spain. The members had been educated and they knew what was going on, and they were ready to support the Loyalists.
- Ward: You also supported organizations which had a considerable influence on the activities in this country.
- Bulcke: Civil rights is one, and the Committee for the Protection of the Foreign Born is another. In other words, at different times in Local 10 we made recommendations and voted for assessments to assist these organizations in their work.
- Ward: You seem to be saying that Local 10 habitually moved on a broad front to support progressive causes.
- Bulcke: Yes, as a matter of fact, we are proud that our members were willing to help such causes at their own expense.

## XIV THE FIFTY-YEAR COMPARISON

Labor-Saving Devices

Ward: I think that gives us an idea why your local - Local 10 - and the International ILWU had a reputation that is admired by many forward looking Americans.

From that point of view you are entitled to look back with what I think is a pretty interesting perception of the advances and changes that have occurred during the last fifty years. For instance, in the work field, what's the industrial worker's position as a whole compared to fifty years ago?

Bulcke: Well, through the introduction of labor-saving devices - - -

Ward: The Mech Plan!

Bulcke: The Mechanization Plan has made a big change in the present working conditions. The union had a special convention where the question was whether to fight or accept the introduction of labor-saving devices. The leadership, the International, had carefully studied this problem, and it was its recommendation that it would be better for the union to accept the introduction of labor-saving devices, provided there would be something in it for our members. It was the opinion of the leadership that if we fought the introduction of labor-saving devices, eventually we would not be able to control the situation and the union would be out.



Bulcke: So the International proposed a plan whereby a share of the savings that would accrue to the employers by the introduction of labor-saving devices would be given to our members.

Ward: That was getting a share of the pie, wasn't it?

Bulcke: Yes, it could be called a share of the pie. It resulted in an agreement that each registered longshoreman would not only get his pension on retirement but also a cash sum of money that started out at \$7800; it was later increased to \$13,000.

This was worked out in three agreements -- no, in two agreements. When the third negotiations took place the employers explained that they had taken the position that they would not continue on in making those payments. In the third negotiations it was agreed to increase the pension benefits instead.

So for a number of years things were all set. The workers got a larger pension than they previously had been enjoying. This caused the ILWU longshoremen to receive the highest benefits paid in the longshore industry. This was money in their pockets.

Ward: Okay; now would you say, overall, that ILWU longshoremen are better off on wages and benefits than the workers in other industries?

Bulcke: Well, yes, as far as it goes for those actually working. But as we know, there are millions of unemployed; there is not the outlet, particularly in production industry.

The waterfront employers have not added men for quite a number of years, and what's happening is that our membership is going down. For example, in my last term as president of Local 10, we had 5800 members. At the present time we are down to 1800.

- Ward: I suppose similar conditions exist in most other industries?
- Bulcke: The jobs, of course, are endangered in the rest of the heavy industries; yes, lumber, all those industries are heavily affected by lay-offs and loss of opportunities for the men.
- Ward: You mentioned lumber. When I was a boy it would take quite a while for a bunch of men to chop down a big tree. Now with chain saws it takes only a few minutes.
- Bulcke: Something like that.
- Ward: Poor devils! What did the unemployed do?
- Bulcke: They were simply out of work.

#### Other Industries

- Ward: Now let's talk of things like electronics and the service industries.
- Bulcke: First, let me say that in heavy industry things are not what they used to be.
- Ward: How about electronics?
- Bulcke: Yes, that's a big improvement as far as employment is concerned. That kind of work was never done before; I hear that in electronics opportunities are much better nowadays for women than they were in general industry years ago. I remember when there was almost no work at all for women in the auto industry.
- Ward: What kind of work did women auto workers perform when you worked in the auto plants?
- Bulcke: In those days I'd say there would be maybe 80 or 90 women compared to 3000 men actually working in assembly. What they were used for,

- Bulcke: sometimes, was in the assembly of dashboards - things of that sort. It was a time of upheaval, when men and women had to fight for their rights.
- Ward: Muscle?
- Bulcke: Muscle, yes; and then, of course, the auto workers showed a lot of guts in their famous sitdown strikes in the Thirties.
- Ward: Those sitdown strikes were really something.
- Bulcke: Yes, they put up some marvelous struggles and they improved their conditions and wages a great deal.
- Ward: The women played an important role?
- Bulcke: Yes, because the women did the picketing at the plant gates while the men sat down inside the plants.
- Ward: Let me put it this way -- suppose instead of coming to Detroit in 1920, when you were 18 years of age, suppose you are now 18 or 20 but with the background of experience you actually have, what would you choose in the work field?
- Bulcke: That's a hard question to answer, because at the present time employment is down in all industries, especially if you want steady employment. In ILWU Longshore we do something called "traveling" by which we try to keep all our active members employed. This affects the men in that they can be transferred from ports that have very little work to ports which have more steady employment. This, however, wouldn't help an outsider, a newcomer, get a longshore job. A member who "travels" usually gets only temporary work in the busier ports, and the men are transferred on the understanding that they will stay only for the time they are actually needed.

Bulcke: Actually, what has gone on is that men are looking around to see where the work is. We don't let people in from the outside, but we try to keep our men employed.

What About Job Chances?

Ward: Well, Jerry, look at it this way -- you have several children, yours and Rusty's, a teacher, an auto repairman and this or that or the other. Do you think they or any of their children have a decent chance of employment nowadays?

Bulcke: Well, the circumstances are completely different today than they were a few years ago.

Ward: What about your grandchildren?

Bulcke: Today, for example, my son Ken had his own repair business, but small business is so difficult nowadays that he got out. He took a job in the fast food field, but very shortly they demanded that he transfer to a location far from home. For family reasons that was impossible, so now he manages a local service station. In any case, we are happy that he is able to continue work and have steady employment.

Ward: When you came to San Francisco, did you consider types of employment other than longshoring?

Bulcke: Well, in the first few years when I worked as a longshoreman, I also looked around for other jobs.

##

Ward: You were a little bit restless, unsure that you wanted to continue longshoring?

- Bulcke: Yes, I often thought about looking for other employment.
- Ward: What other employment did you think about?
- Bulcke: I checked out various approaches.
- Ward: Barber?
- Bulcke: No, I didn't feel that I had enough experience.
- Ward: A sailor?
- Bulcke: No, not that. I thought of trying to find work in chain stores. I had some experience in that, but I wasn't successful in getting a job that paid decent wages. I could make more on the waterfront than I could in other kinds of fields, so I decided to stay on the waterfront. Of course, working conditions were terrible as compared to the working conditions of today, but I stayed with the longshore industry; and I'm glad I did.
- Ward: Comparing longshoring with working in an auto factory, which did you find more taxing, physically and mentally?
- Bulcke: Longshoring, both physically and mentally. The work on the docks has more variety, so many different things to learn. Also you have to have a strong back.
- Ward: In wartime were hiring conditions as strict as in other times?
- Bulcke: In wartime we used to say that anyone who could climb the one flight of stairs to the hiring office was accepted.
- Ward: There must have been quite a change when the war ended.
- Bulcke: Well, they had to cut down on manpower. In Local 10 alone we laid off a thousand men, strictly on the basis of seniority; last hired, first fired.

- Ward: Weren't some women hired during wartime?
- Bulcke: Yes; at a guess I'd say we hired about 45 women in San Francisco, mostly as jitney drivers; and they did a good job.
- Ward: What chance does a young man have nowadays of getting longshore work?
- Bulcke: Practically none.
- Ward: Used to be a longshoreman could get his son a longshore job. Is that still true?
- Bulcke: No, except in a case where a working longshoreman dies. Then his son can be taken into the union if he pledges to support the family as his dad had done.

Things are rough all over. I had an example the other day. There happens to be at the moment a strike in the telephone industry. My granddaughter Eileen works for the telephone company and she asked me, "Grandpa, (she knows my background) what do you think are my chances for success?" And I told her that as long as the workers stick together and stick it out, they would win. She was quite satisfied with that explanation. We went into some explanation as to how the strikers should conduct themselves, and she felt even more satisfied that they were on the right track. She was worried that there was no support for the strike, and I told her that would come. Sure enough, the next day major union support came in, and they were successful.

- Ward: This Eileen; don't you think she has been conditioned a bit by being your granddaughter?
- Bulcke: No, she has not been conditioned by me because she has only been married to my grandson for about a year. Her father is a union man, and

Bulcke: that must have had something to do with her thinking. Also I notice that young people today are much more aware of what's going on than we were at the same age.

The Great Cry, Labor Unity

Ward: Jerry, you have a few good years left in life. Anything you'd like to do besides look after your children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren?

Bulcke: Well, besides what you've just mentioned, I want to continue to be active in the pensioners' group that I've been part of the last many years. It keeps me in touch with what goes on on the waterfront, and also, of course, in the pensioners' group, which is very active to see that benefits are maintained and in many instances increased.

For example, we write many letters to Congressmen, Senators, and so forth, stating our position on the various laws and other attempts that are being made to cut down on our existing benefits. That gives me a chance to participate and attempt to maintain and improve our conditions.

Ward: All the troubles that are going on these days - do they remind you of the Thirties?

Bulcke: In some ways they do remind me of the Thirties. On the other hand what I see is that there must be closer cooperation between the trade unions; that is to say that in regard to their affiliation they should unite and support the unions that are being attacked.

The last few years indicate that employers' attacks against unions are on the constant increase, and in two of them the labor movement did not give full support as they should

Bulcke: when unions are on strike and their members are in need. We found in the Thirties that although the trade union movement was not as strong, there were not as many people organized, there was more understanding and support in those days for those who were out on strike.

Nowadays, the past few years, where union after union has been practically destroyed because of the lack of support from the rest of the trade union movement, it is my hope that from now on, whenever there is a union that has to struggle to maintain itself or improve or maintain its conditions, the full support of the entire trade union movement will be immediately organized and come out in support of the workers who are trying to maintain their organization and their union conditions.

Ward: In other words, are you talking general strike now and then?

Bulcke: I say that, if necessary, a general strike should be called -- naturally after having studied the situation -- because if it comes down to that point where the survival of a union is at stake, certainly a general strike should be used.

Ward: Right at the end of World War One there was a lot of talk about a nation-wide general strike to prevent the execution of Tom Mooney; and it was said at that time that half a million men were willing to leave their jobs for one day for that strike. But it didn't happen. Could such come again?

Bulcke: It certainly could, and under certain conditions I agree that it should, because the workers must show their ability to stick together and let the employers and the rest of the trade unions know that they can and will fight to maintain their rights and conditions.



- Ward: In other words, would you renew the old slogan, "An injury to one is an injury to all?"
- Bulcke: That's right. It still is the slogan for the ILWU. We had it to start with and we still believe in it very strongly.
- Ward: Going back to the ILWU as you just have, is it going to survive?
- Bulcke: As far as I can tell from my experience, I certainly feel that the ILWU will continue to be a strong trade union.
- Ward: You had quite a good education as a boy. Do you feel that your life in the union has given you a further education?
- Bulcke: It certainly has. The school education was one thing, but the education received in the years of hard work, unemployment and so forth, was certainly an education by itself, and was a great help to me.
- Ward: There are some peculiarities about your union of which I think you're pretty proud. Could you mention some of them -- the extent to which democracy goes, the voice of the workers?
- Bulcke: Well, one of the outstanding points of our union is that we do not discriminate against anyone because of color, creed, religion, or what have you. We have a mixture of people, and they have the right to express their opinions, and things are always done by a majority vote, so that actually we set an example for many other unions who in one way or another were discriminatory against other workers because of their background or what have you. That in the ILWU never existed, and I'm sure never will exist.

Ward: Do you think that the example set by the ILWU has had any effect on the lives of working people that know of it? Do you ever hear it?

Bulcke: Well, occasionally we do hear -- or heard -- that the policies of the ILWU were discussed by other organizations -- trade unions -- and in some instances were accepted. Not in every case, but generally speaking the ILWU policies have been accepted by many unions and recognized as being the right kind of organizational activity.

Ward: Particularly the newer unions?

Bulcke: The newer unions, yes; definitely.

Ward: Could you name a couple of the newer unions?

Bulcke: Well, let's say that the newer unions are better organized. The older unions, as far as that's concerned, some of their activities in their earlier days were not in accordance with what we believe in the ILWU. Some of those unions have accepted a change in their attitude and ways of doing business, similar to the rules and regulations that we adopted in the ILWU.

Ward: In my own original union, locally and perhaps internationally, we consulted with the ILWU at every turn when we were getting going in the Newspaper Guild. It was a great help to us.

Bulcke: There's no question that besides your organization, other unions, too, have benefitted from discussing their problems with the ILWU and accepting some of our ways of doing things. The ILWU always reached out and tried to help any trade union organization that needed help, whether on strike or not, in order to make it function much better and do a better job for its members.

- Ward: I have actually seen the ILWU hiring hall emptied to help out on a picket line in a strike situation of another union.
- Bulcke: That's been the policy of the ILWU for years. Whenever a trade union is on strike we try to help out on the picket line, and also of course make donations and help in every way we can.
- Ward: I remember when in Mine-Mill we needed help I went to Ed Reite (former secretary-treasurer of Local 10) with my hat in my hand, asking for a donation -- and frequently got it, too.
- Bulcke: Right.
- Ward: I think of the need for unions to make use of that old slogan, "An injury to one is an injury to all" more frequently in brotherly cooperation than has been evident in the recent past. Do you see any signs that that's coming?
- Bulcke: I think so, at least in observing the strike activities of the unions which have unfortunately gotten to that point.
- I see that there is more recognition of the need of working closer together with the other trade unions; and also they have quite naturally asked the leadership of the ILWU for suggestions and methods whereby they could quickly resolve their problems.
- Ward: Let's talk about the air controllers' strike, and what happened and what didn't happen.
- Bulcke: Well, it is quite clear now that the trade union movement, overall, did not come out and give the support to the air controllers at the time when it was badly needed. That resulted in that union being destroyed.
- Ward: Do you think that the fact that the air controllers were making much more in wages than most union members had anything to do with it?

Bulcke: I don't think so. I don't believe that had any bearing on the lack of support that should have been given those workers at the time. We know now that the movement to destroy that union was supported by the government to the fullest extent. As I said, the rest of the trade union movement did not see the danger that that union might be destroyed.

Since then we have seen the result of the Greyhound strike, where they were not quite getting the support they should have and were forced to accept a contract with loss of working conditions and wages.

This is the danger that exists, and there again I must emphasize that whenever a union is on strike or finds itself forced out on strike, the rest of the trade union movement must immediately organize itself to give all the support it can to those unions. Otherwise, they will all be knocked off one by one.

It is very clear now that unless the entire trade union movement solidifies itself and goes out in support of those who have to go out on strike or are forced out on strike, naturally the results will be bad unless we get that kind of support. It is obvious now that such support must be forthcoming right at the beginning of any strike.

Ward: Would it be safe to say that if that kind of a situation were developed where a striking union found instant support, the likelihood of employer-inspired violence would be much less?

Bulcke: Definitely, because if the employers see that the trade union movement is in full support of those that are out on strike they would understand that violence in an attempt to smear the trade union movement would not work.

Ward: And that danger always exists where the employer tries to break the picketline and run in strikebreakers? Those things are obviously provocations which the union has to meet somehow or other.

Bulcke: Definitely. Any union on strike is bound to take action to see to it that strikebreakers are not used; and wherever they are used, to try to minimize it or stop it. That is inherent in any strike.

The unions have to recognize that when one of the unions is on strike it must receive the support of all the trade unions.

Ward: Can we end with this -- the key word to the whole thing is unity of the workers?

Bulcke: Unity of the workers, recognizing that an injury to one is an injury to all.

Transcriber and final typist: Angela Ward

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Estolv Ethan Ward

Born 1899 in Los Angeles; father a Socialist lawyer out of Rhode Island; mother an ardent feminist, daughter of a San Francisco Quaker merchant, and possessor of a Ph.D. from Swarthmore and an M.D. from Boston Medical School. The infant was removed to San Francisco at age two weeks, and with lacunae has lived in the Bay Region, mostly Berkeley, ever since.

Three and a half years of institutionalized instruction; otherwise his education came through tutors, travel, and daily family discussions.

Became campus reporter at U.C. Berkeley for the Oakland Tribune, proceeding to top rewrite, general assignment, and assistant city editor. Covered the San Francisco general strike in 1934 and in those three days learned things that changed his life. Became a founder of the local chapter of the Newspaper Guild and was fired and blacklisted by his publisher, Joseph R. Knowland. Became bailiff and court reporter for the California Supreme Court, meanwhile being active on his leisure time in the burgeoning CIO labor movement. Resigned his court job to become founding executive secretary of the Alameda County CIO Council.

In the next eleven years, he became successively first vice-president, California State CIO Council; CIO legislative representative, Sacramento, 1939; executive secretary, Harry Bridges Defense Committee, Angel Island trial, 1939; executive vice-president, California Labor's Non-Partisan League, 1940; radio writer, Los Angeles CIO News, 1940-41; organizer, Mine Mill and Smelter Workers' Union, in Los Angeles and Southern Nevada, 1942-44; San Francisco CIO radio writer, 1944; CIO-PAC director, San Francisco CIO Council, 1945-48. Following that, odd jobs and labor journalism.

Author, Harry Bridges On Trial, Modern Age, 1940; a labor novel published only in Polish translation, Renegat, 1953; The Gentle Dynamiter: A Biography of Tom Mooney, Ramparts Press, 1983; numerous labor and travel articles.

Interviewer-editor, Louis Goldblatt, "Working Class Leader In the ILWU, 1935-1977," two volumes, Regional Oral History Office, 1980; Henry Schmidt, "Secondary Leadership in the ILWU, 1933-1966," Regional Oral History Office, 1983.

Angela Gizzi Ward

Born 1910 in San Francisco; eldest child of immigrants from Italy who became prominent citizens in the North Beach district. Graduate of the University of California at Berkeley.

Worked at Bank of America until fired for attempting to organize a union among bank and insurance employees throughout the Bay Region. President and organizer of United Office and Professional Workers Local 34, San Francisco.

Later became secretary-treasurer of Local 700, Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers, in Los Angeles; joined her husband in a dramatic but unsuccessful effort to organize workers for Mine Mill in war plants in Southern Nevada, 1943.

Returning to San Francisco, she became an organizer of clerical workers at the Pacific Gas and Electric Company, achieving a first major victory in the local office-worker field, with equal pay for equal work for women.

On retirement she has assisted her husband in the preparation of oral history and other manuscripts.