

threaten their position, they did not wish to break openly with the association.

As in many other strikes of the era, companies employed private detective agencies to hire sympathetic workers or plant operatives to inform on their workforce. One such operative within the Lake Carriers' affiliated Ohio & Western Pennsylvania Dock Company's Cleveland division reported a fellow worker's view:

McNeff said, "other years except last year this dock would be half clean by this time, now they have enough ore here packed up to last for two years and for only one thing...both sides are so stubborn neither will give in and it is a well known fact if the engineers put up a fight all the other Marine unions would stand by them...that is why enough ore for two years use lays on these docks...I hope the unions get the best of the deal...it is not the unions, to hell with the unions, but it is the damn fools signing contracts."<sup>53</sup>

The operative also delivered the view of King Patton, a bar owner and former longshoreman on the strike and union interactions: "the lake unions are so jealous of one another that instead of helping each other they do nothing but buck each other and nothing will be accomplished by this, as it will only amount to a fight themselves."<sup>54</sup> Absent a pan-union council, sailors and their allies lacked the collective leadership to direct a strike. The conflict-averse American Federation of Labor also provided little guidance, and O'Connor had to contend with the federation's oversight as they remained wary of the longshoremen's prior actions. Despite this a number of union locals pressed the leadership whether they should join with the striking sailors. O'Connor took a passive public stance and gave permission to a number of local branches to hold such a vote.<sup>55</sup>

Even with the rhetorical heat of the pro-strike faction, it masked the deep ambivalence held by the longshoremen as a whole. Fifty-two locals voted for a strike action, but another thirty-three voted against. For the former, some had little connection to the issues causing the strike, while many in the latter group already had contractual agreements with owners. According to the dock company operative, many workers feared to speak of organizing, were anti-union, or in the economic climate simply needed a job.<sup>56</sup> Some locals had fewer than ten members and had little leverage. A different operative, #21, at Ashtabula reported workers as saying: "to hell with them [unions]," and that they had recently secured a contract for work all summer.<sup>57</sup> Other locals having unwittingly helped in the strength of the vessel owners' position, stalled the vote in order to avoid a fight they felt sure to lose. Operative #21 also showed O'Connor's more direct role. At a longshoreman

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53 Operative Report, 6 March 1909, Ohio & Western Pennsylvania Dock Company, GLMS-22, Box 4, OWPDC- BGSU.

54 Operative Report, 12 March 1909, Box 4, OWPDC-BGSU.

55 Russell, 75-79.

56 Operative Report, 6 May 1909, Box 4, OWPDC-BGSU.

57 Operative Report, 3 April 1909, Box 4, OWPDC-BGSU.