

VOICES OF THE
1934 TEAMSTERS STRIKES

EYE-WITNESS ACCOUNTS
BY PARTICIPANTS

**VOICES OF THE 1934 TEAMSTERS STRIKES:
THE FEBRUARY COAL STRIKE**

HARRY PFAFF, Driver

We were getting 90 cents a ton for hauling coal, and we wanted a dollar. We didn't work by the hour. We worked by the ton. We owned our own trucks. If we made twelve dollars a day, we had a big day's work. The fact of the matter was we were working hard and starving to death.

CHRIS MOE, Striker

I got the job in the coal yard in '33. I had a car, and I traded that in and bought the truck. It was an old beat-up one. I worked the whole summer and rebuilt it--a little '28 Chevrolet. The work was all by hand. Shovel it on and shovel it off.

FARRELL DOBBS, Striker

In September 1933, I got the Pittsburgh Coal job through my father, who was mechanical superintendent for the company. At the start, I worked sixty hours a week, bringing home about eighteen dollars. We were just squeaking by when suddenly I was cut to forty-eight hours. It was a welcome physical relief since coal heavers had to work like mules, but there was also a two dollar cut in pay. The thin flesh of mere subsistence was being scraped down to the bare bones of outright poverty! On top of all that, I could expect to be laid off in the spring.

And I could be fired at any time without recourse at the employer's whim.

Something had to be done to improve the situation, and that's why I told Grant Dunne I would join the union.

NARRATOR

Workers like Farrell Dobbs had to convince 574's leadership to organize them. Business Agent Cliff Hall, who was an aspiring bureaucrat, was content with only one coal yard, which the workers were encouraged to patronize. Bill Brown and George Frosig, the President and Vice President of the local were for organizing the entire coal industry so the foot draggers on the Executive Board were pushed along and the drive was launched, targeting sixty-seven companies.

HARRY DEBOER, Picket Captain

In '32 Roosevelt was elected, and one of the new deals was that workers would have a right to organize. Section 7a of the National Industrial Recovery Act was used in order to get them organized.

NARRATOR

Along with his two brothers Miles and Grant, Ray Dunne assumed the leadership of the organizing drive under the guidance of Swedish-born socialist Carl Skoglund.

RAY DUNNE, Strike Leader

I'd been in the coal yard about six years, and I knew the business very well. I was well known to practically every person who delivered coal in this town, as a radical, a Wobbly, a Communist and later on as a Trotskyist. And that was why I was the only worker in the entire coal industry who was taken in as a weigh master. They were usually "company men," and they knew that I was very definitely not.

ED RYAN, Policeman

The employers were determined to keep Minneapolis an open city. They didn't want anybody unionized around here at all. The Dunne brothers had a different idea. I knew them well. As a matter of fact, a few years before the strike we had to escort one of them home because his life was threatened. They were soft-spoken, gentlemanly little fellows, but tougher than hell! Boy!

NARRATOR

The strike vote was held on February second and included the yard workers as well as drivers.

HARRY DEBOER, Picket Captain

My God, we were practically starving to death anyway. What did we have to lose? That night, we left all the trucks in the coal yard, which was fenced in. Skogie and I went home to clean up and have supper then went to a meeting where we voted to strike.

CHRIS MOE, Striker

We took a vote and said, "By God, we'll go out on strike!" We went out and tied up the town. I just got like a fanatic, like a religion. I didn't care what happened.

NARRATOR

The confrontation was about power.

CHRIS MOE, Striker

The bosses had it, and we didn't. The strike is the only weapon the worker has.

FARRELL DOBBS, Striker

The first morning of the strike, I went to the yard, told the foreman we were walking out and got the other yard men to go with me to the company garage. There we found the Pittsburgh drivers gathered. They were wondering what to do, and a short discussion brought a decision to support the union. We marched in a body to the strike headquarters, which was nearby, and everybody signed up for picket duty. I'll never forget the happy welcome we got from the other strikers.

ED RYAN, Policeman

I didn't blame those men for striking. For many years a common laborer in this city was nothing better than a serf. Those who had a trade, like carpenters or plumbers, had a chance because they could organize, but the common laborer had no chance at all.

IVER SWANSON, Policeman

Business had always had the upper hand until then. There was no question that if you wanted a job you took what they offered, and there was no ifs, ands or buts about it. They had what they called the Citizens Alliance at that time and most of the big businesses belonged to it. They did everything in their power to squash the union, but they were unsuccessful. I can remember that even Dayton's belonged to this group and donated a considerable amount of money to break the strike.

FARRELL DOBBS, Striker

The Citizens Alliance was an employer organization that took its inspiration from the crushing of a 1918 streetcar strike through the use of wartime home guards. It was dominated by the wealthiest and most powerful local capitalists. In matters of labor relations, they rode herd over the smaller-fry employers of whom there were some 800 in the organization. They tolerated no defections, and reprisals were taken against employers who violated their labor code. The Citizens Alliance maintained a full-time staff, had stool pigeons planted in the trade unions, got full cooperation from city hall and had the police at its service. The enemy class was well organized for strikebreaking, and it was extremely cocky.

NARRATOR

Before noon of the first day, the picket detachments of 600 strikers had swept the scab drivers off the streets, and all but a couple of the sixty-seven yards had been closed. How did they do it?

HARRY DEBOER, Picket Captain

It was impossible to have a picket line big enough to stop trucks from moving. So a lot of times we just organized a "roving picket" with squads out looking around. We'd have one man in the yard, and he'd call us if they were going to send a truck out and we'd send a squad. If they got out on the street, we'd dump their coal and send them back and tell them, now look, we're fighting for these conditions, and you're a worker and you should be helping us rather than trying to defeat us. In most cases, they went back. Of course, if they'd done otherwise, they'd have been dealt accordingly. We give them a chance, and it worked out.

NARRATOR

Picket Captain Harry DeBoer and his cruising picket squads became known as "Hell on Wheels!"

FARRELL DOBBS, Striker

It didn't take long for us to run into trouble with the police. They mobilized to eject the pickets from a big yard that had been closed down, and we were harassed by arrests. The strikers refused to be intimidated. In defiance of the cops, two truckloads of coal were dumped in front of one yard. Other picket detachments fought a three-hour battle to prevent the cops from convoying a scab delivery of coal to a greenhouse owned by the county sheriff.

NARRATOR

With the subzero weather, people were clamoring for coal, but the bosses and their minions in government could find no way to break the strike. By the third day, they agreed to negotiate. The coal drivers and helpers returned to work, and an order on recognition came from the Regional Labor Board. Elections in the coal yards were held four days later, and 574 won a sweeping victory. Why did the employers give in so quickly?

HARRY DEBOER, Picket Captain

One of the reasons they finally agreed to settle the coal strike with a substantial raise and a contract is the coal industry was seasonal. This was already in February.

By March, the season is over, and the workers go somewhere else. The bosses felt, they weren't going to have to lose that much. Maybe they'd have to pay those wages for March and part of April, but next fall they wouldn't hire any of the union men. They failed to see that the rest of the drivers started to organize. We had a union. We went back to work, and news spread like wildfire. Other workers, truck drivers mainly, went down to the coal yards. They wanted our leadership to organize them, nobody else. They'd walk up to the Central Labor Union, and the first thing they said was "Where's that union that organized the coal drivers?" That proved we had a leadership who knew what to do and wouldn't sell them out. Up to that point, there was a lot of unions that went on strike and got sold out and let down by the leaders.

VOICES OF THE 1934 TEAMSTERS STRIKES:
THE MAY STRIKE

NARRATOR

With the victory in the coal yards, other workers in the transport industry wanted union representation.

ORRIE W. NORTON, Driver

The union looked like a better way, I'd never encountered it before. You see, we're not born radicals, but when you see things like the Depression, it pretty near makes you one. Everybody was an organizer--everybody!

NARRATOR

Teams went to garages, docks, warehouses, market districts, everywhere in the trucking industry, to talk union. They got the Labor Review to publicize the campaign. Local 574 held a "Monster Mass Meeting" at the Schubert Theatre. Governor Floyd B. Olson of the Farmer-Labor Party was invited to speak, but he sent his secretary, Vince Day, with a letter instead. This is what it said:

FLOYD B. OLSON, Governor

Out of assemblies such as yours come whatever benefits the working class is enjoying today. Vested interests have gone the limit in their attempt to defeat the union idea because they knew that complete unionism meant the end of their reign of exploitation of accept working man and woman. It is my counsel, if you wish to accept it, that you should follow the sensible course and band together for your own protection and welfare.

NARRATOR

The workers took those words to heart. By the end of April, 2000 drivers and helpers were sporting union buttons. Despite bureaucratic opposition from Teamster President Daniel Tobin, 574's leadership moved forward. Knowing they would have a big battle ahead, the ranks elected a strike committee which set up a well-organized headquarters.

CLARA DUNNE, Co-Organizer of the Women's Auxiliary

It was on Nineteenth and Chicago in a great big storage building. There was a small office where they transacted business. It was very active, like a beehive. People were coming and going all the time, all night, even.

CHRIS MOE, Striker

We had a commissary and fed them by the hundreds.

AUGUST BARTHOLOMEW, Striker

During the strike I ate better than I'm doing right now to tell you the truth.

MARVEL SCHOLL, Co-Organizer of the Women's Auxiliary

Clara and I launched the Women's Auxiliary. We began by speaking at union meetings. At first we were received with an air of courteous toleration. Then some men began to ask questions, wanting to know what the women could do in a strike.

CLARA DUNNE, Co-Organizer of the Women's Auxiliary

We explained that staffing a commissary, handling telephones, helping in a first-aid station, were only a few of the many things women could do.

MARVEL SCHOLL, Co-Organizer of the Women's Auxiliary

The men began to talk to their wives, and to the surprise of some, they found the women were interested. Before long, a number telephoned us asking for more details. They also volunteered information about special skills they had as cooks, waitresses, nurses or office workers.

NARRATOR

To prevent the vast army of unemployed from scabbing on the strike, they were organized.

HARRY DEBOER, Picket Captain

We took the unemployed right into the union. We told them we were fighting to get down to a forty-eight hour week and by doing that there'd be more work and more workers put on the payroll under union contract. There was a lot of unemployed that fought on the picket line to the extent that we formed the Federal Workers Section to help them get relief. At that time, you had pride. You hated to ask for help. We pointed out that they were entitled to help. We even stopped evictions from their homes.

NARRATOR

Farmers needed to truck their produce to the markets in town, which could cause problems in a strike.

HARRY DEBOER, Picket Captain

We were able to reach the Farmers Holiday Association and got the farmers to understand that they were being used by the bosses. Any legitimate farmer that had any vegetables could come in, unload and sell their product. Of course, if it was some company using their farm as a front, that was a different story. It showed that we didn't want any fight with the farmer. Our fight was with these big truck owners.

NARRATOR

On May 14th, the members of 574 voted again to go on strike. The next day, they resumed their cruising picket squads.

AUGUST BARTHOLOMEW, Striker

We had scouts out night and day. They'd see a truck and call into headquarters then we'd jump in, go out and stop it.

NARRATOR

Police Chief Michael J. Johannes ordered the arrest of anyone who laid a hand on private cars and trucks. Mayor A.G. "Buzz" Bainbridge beefed up the police by 500 additional cops. The bosses held a council of war at the West Hotel, and formed the Employers Advisory Committee with C.C. Weber, the grandson of John Deere, as their chairman.

MRS. GEORGE FAHR, Society Lady

I'm a great girl to root for the home team. I'd done a good deal in civic things, and Mr. Weber felt that I could be of service on the Employers Advisory Committee so I went. It was my first experience with trying to cope with a force that seemed almost impossible to master. I couldn't see what they could do to stop this appalling strike. The committee was the business community-the presidents of companies, the leaders of civic affairs, with whom I had social contact. Arthur Rogers was a former mayor and with Northwestern Bank. Joseph Chapman was also a banker. You see, he was again in the upper echelon. Al Lindsey whose father owned tremendous amount of real estate was a gentleman about town. Al never did much of anything but row on the crew at Yale. He wasn't interested in a business career, but he was interested in this, I think, for the adventure of it, more than anything. Judge Larson and Barney Clifford were on the committee too. You've heard of Cream-of-Wheat. That was Barney's connection. The men in the banks had worked their way up, but all of them had influence before they'd started. A great many of them inherited their positions. Charlie Veelie and his son were cousins of Mr. Webber's. You see, they were all more or less tied together. It was a small committee, about twenty-four, and I was the Maverick, the only woman and the youngest.

TOTTON P. HEFFELFINGER, (Vigilante, Young Republican & Organizer of the Committee of 25, descended from Peavey milling family) I was asked by Sheriff John Wall to organize a group of special deputies. They were young men I knew. Some of them had been in the service and were friends of mine. We called ourselves the Committee of 25. The police didn't call this thing. It was the Citizens Alliance.

CHRIS MOE, Striker

They deputized some men and sent them down there to protect property. It was their way of putting us down.

NARRATOR

When the workers of other industries in the city saw what a bang-up job the truckers' union was doing for its members, they wanted to join 574 too. Even the chicken pickers and the brewery workers wanted in.

HARRY DEBOER, Picket Captain

We explained to them that we were sympathetic. They should go back to their union, put up some demands and if they went out on strike, we'd support them. By this time the bureaucrats were scared so they loosened up. We had the whole town tied up with the Teamsters union and warehouse workers. It was better to leave the workers of other industries to support us financially and morally than to pull them out in a general strike. We sent pickets out with cans, and a lot of people donated dimes and quarters. The bars had cans too. We got good support. That's the only reason we won.

MRS. GEORGE FAHR, Society Lady

Public opinion was Very divided. The university faculty, for instance, was very strongly pro-striker. Believe me, the faculty took sides. Not in the graduate school, of course. Those were mostly the people I saw because of my husband being professor of medicine.

ERIC SEVAREID, Journalism Student, University of Minnesota

Some of the boys from the Greek fraternities on the campus joined the police and Citizens Alliance forces with baseball bats on their shoulders, in defense of what they regarded as law and order. Some of my little crowd joined the strikers in non-combative functions. Most of us, be it confessed, were not of the type that is willing to fight for its beliefs with brickbat or club.

MRS. GEORGE FAHR, Society Lady

The Communists were supposed to be in it up to their necks. That was the great rallying cry for the employers. You'd mention the name Communist, and they'd go off like skyrocket!

NARRATOR

The red-baiting didn't stop there. It went all the way to the White House where FDR was informed of "the facts" by State Department assistant Keith Merrill.

KEITH MERRILL, Executive Assistant to Assistant Secretary, Department of State
The Communists have imported some fifteen hundred people from Chicago who are hopped up with cocaine and are really professional strikers.

AUGUST BARTHOLOMEW, Striker

I think they called the Dunne brothers Communists because they went out and fought for the men. They were right out there with you. They weren't hiding no place.

FARRELL DOBBS, Picket Dispatcher

Scabs were used Saturday morning, May 19th, to load two trucks at the Bearman Fruit Company in the market under the protection of a big gang of cops and hired thugs wielding clubs and blackjacks. Union cruising squads were sent to reinforce the picket line, and in the ensuing battle the barehanded strikers used whatever they could find to defend themselves.

JACK MALONEY, Picket Captain

We had quite a beef. Several of us were clubbed by the police. I was dragged into Bearman's unconscious and taken to General Hospital. After the doctors had patched up my head, I was arrested, but someone helped me to escape.

OSCAR WINGER, Striker

They'd take them to the first aid station at strike headquarters where the doctors would examine them. Then, if it was serious enough, they'd send them to the hospital because you didn't know whether you'd be put under arrest.

NARRATOR

All day Sunday, the strikers equipped themselves for battle. Clubs were made of two-by-twos and banister posts, and hats were reinforced with layers of cardboard and newspaper.

AUGUST BARTHOLOMEW, Striker

I carried a rubber hose about that long with lead in each end about so big and filled with sand.

MRS. GEORGE FAHR, Society Lady

The men on the committee were quite unrealistic. For instance, Al Ringley appeared in a polo helmet as a method of protection. I suggested that if the strikers saw anybody on the other side with a polo helmet they'd consider him a class enemy and it would do nothing but add fuel to the flame.

NARRATOR

Monday morning, May 21st, small picket lines appeared in front of the produce houses while larger groups fanned out in the market district.

FARRELL DOBBS, Picket Dispatcher

About 9:00 AM, scab drivers backed six trucks up to the loading dock at Gamble Robinson on Fifth Street. Pickets quickly gathered there and as a loaded truck started to move out, a cop slugged a striker. The union men charged in and the fight was on. The 600 pickets waiting at the AFL hall were ordered into battle, and they moved out in military formation. Fighting soon spread to three or four other market houses. Cops and deputies alike were falling. With the workers challenging them, club against club, most of the deputies took to their heels, leaving the uniformed cops on their own. More police were rushed in from posts in the main business district. The union countered this move by summoning the reserves from strike headquarters. In an act of desperation, the cops drew their guns, threatening to shoot, but they seemed hesitant. That gave us time to do something. The rest of the men were loaded into trucks at the HQ by Bob Bell, a huge man and utterly fearless. He was told to rush to the market ignoring all traffic rules and drive right into the midst of the cops. Bob did just that. The pickets jumped out of the truck onto the police, who being unable to shoot without hitting one another, had to continue fighting with clubs. After that, Chief Johannes called it a day.

MARVEL SCHOLL, Co-Organizer of the Women's Auxiliary

Outraged, the Women's Auxiliary mobilized. Seven hundred of us marched on city hall to protest the police attacks.

CLARA DUNNE, Co-Organizer of the Women's Auxiliary

As things heated up in the streets, we took over most of the headquarters duties and picketed the newspapers denouncing the lies in the press, which said the picketers had rioted.

HARRY DEBOER, Picket Captain

The first run-in we had with the police, they were outnumbered four to one. At the time, they had some relatives that were workers. So you see, it was a little bit more personal. The cops weren't getting very much wages either. Some of them were sympathetic. We heard stories where some quit their jobs.

JACK MALONEY, Picket Captain

The employers were ready and determined to kill to maintain their control. I was determined to make them prove it, and so it was with many of the men. They knew what to expect on Monday, and they were ready "to go for broke". At Bearman's, the cops won, but on Monday, the pickets gave their receipt for Saturday.

MRS. GEORGE FAHR, Society Lady

I made up my mind that if I was going to be on the Employers Advisory Committee, I was going to know something of what was going on down in the market. So I went. We stood there, and then I saw Arthur Lyman being pushed forward by the crowd and trying to push the strikers back. The floor of the market was cobblestone, and Arthur had worn mountaineering boots with metal cleats in them. It was just as though he was skating on ice. He slipped and went down, and the strikers were on him like a pack of wolves. No sooner had he gone down than an ambulance came. They loaded him in with great difficulty because the strikers tried to get in with him. They chased it almost to General Hospital!

AUGUST BARTHOLOMEW, Striker

We chased them strikebreakers, and they scattered like rats!

HARRY DEBOER, Picket Captain

That day was called "the deputy run". That's the one day that stays fresh in my memory, seeing them running and laying under cars. It wasn't very healthy to have them badges on. There was badges all over the place. They wanted to get away from being identified as special deputy 'cause they were recognized as the enemy.

ED RYAN, Policeman

I didn't buy the fact that the police couldn't draw their weapons and they were taking all this beating. I'll use a gun any time anyone attacks me with a weapon with intent to do me great bodily harm. I'll kill him, just like that (Snaps fingers) 'cause he'd kill me. Self-preservation is the first law of humanity.

MRS. GEORGE FAHR, Society Lady

I think the police had a rugged time of it. They showed remarkable self-control. I've always had great respect for them since my experience in that strike. They were much criticized because people felt they should have just opened fire and mowed the strikers down and protected property, but they held their fire.

HARRY DEBOER, Picket Captain

I've got to give credit to the revolutionists, the Dunnes, warning the workers what to expect, that the police weren't our friends. They'll hit you over the head if you turn your back. After all, the police represented the bosses.

NARRATOR

Injuries were heavy on both sides, and two special deputies, Peter Erath and C. Arthur Lyman, were killed. Alarmed by the violence, the society women of Minneapolis telegraphed Democratic Committee National Headquarters pleading for intervention by the White House.

MRS. GEORGE FAHR, Society Lady

“Terrible strike here utterly mismanaged. One of our finest young men just killed. His brother seriously injured. Many others in jeopardy sacrificing themselves as deputy sheriffs in supporting police against rioters. Women of Minneapolis finding no security afforded here. Beg you to use your influence to secure some immediate form intervention by national administration.” Signed, Mrs. Charles Pillsbury and Mrs. Elbert Carpenter.

NARRATOR

Governor Olson mobilized the National Guard. Local 574 refused to be intimidated. The day after the Battle of Deputy Run, the union held a rally of five thousand on the Parade Grounds where President Bill Brown pledged to continue the strike until they won. As a result of the street fights, the governor mediated, shuffling between the employers and union negotiating committees at the Nicollet Hotel. After three days of hard bargaining, “the 166 Tyrants” of the general trucking industry agreed to recognize the union, reinstate all strikers and grant seniority. The workers voted to accept the agreement on May 25th, but they didn’t hold their breaths to see if the bosses would honor it.

VOICES OF THE 1934 TEAMSTERS STRIKES:
THE JULY STRIKE

HARRY DEBOER, Picket Captain

After we settled the May strike, they refused to recognize the inside workers. We were forced out again because the employers reneged on the contract they signed. They said we will only recognize the drivers and the helpers. Half of the membership were inside workers. The bosses thought they could strip the union. There were hundreds of workers in the market area hauling fruit and unloading cars in the warehouses and iceboxes, which is a dirty, tough job. They were only getting twelve to fifteen dollars a week. A carload of strawberries would come in by railroad 6:00 at night. Well, these workers would have to stay and wait for that load with no extra pay. They'd give them 20 cents to buy supper so they wouldn't have to go home. That was the compensation they got for maybe three or four hours work unloading cars.

NARRATOR

To prepare for the next struggle, Local 574 launched its own weekly strike paper, The Organizer. The day the strike began, it went to a two-page daily. It was the first of its kind in America.

HARRY DEBOER, Picket Captain

The strike bulletin was one of the most efficient vehicles we had to win the strike. The workers understood that what was in that Organizer was true. The newspapers were carrying all of the employers' arguments. They'd come down to union headquarters, pick up The Organizer and take it home to get our side of the story.

MOE HORK Member, Strike Committee of 100

We had a membership meeting. It was just packed.

We elected a strike committee of one hundred. It was an advisory board of the rank and file. To conduct the strike, everything had to go through this committee. When there were any negotiations or anything new popped up, the first thing they had to do was bring it to the Committee of 100 before it was reported to the ranks: or publicized.

NARRATOR

The committee discussed "picketing equipment". Since they didn't want to give the police a justification for violence, it was decided that the pickets would not be armed with clubs. To consolidate public support for the strike, there were many mass actions.

HOWARD CARLSON, Streetcar Motorman

They had big meetings down at the parade grounds just west of Hennepin. Whenever I got the opportunity, I went down. Whole families went down there. It was a perpetual picnic.

NARRATOR

At the July 6th Rally to "Make Minneapolis A Union Town", Miles Dunne answered the employers' smears against the union.

MILES DUNNE, Strike Leader

They have now raised the red issue and accused us of being reds and radicals, of wanting to substitute a new form of government. I say to you here frankly when a system of society exists that allows employers in Minneapolis to wax fat on the misery, starvation and degradation of the many, it is time that system is changed. It is high time that the workers take the wealth from their hands and take for themselves at least a fair share of all they produce.

MOE HORK, Member, Strike Committee of 100

I was interested in the labor movement, but it didn't never bother me at all that they were in the Socialist Workers Party. Socially, they were very nice people, but their political belief was different than mine. I always felt that your nationality, religion, political belief was your personal thing that didn't concern me. I had to accept you for what you were.

NARRATOR

The bosses geared up. At a police review, three days after the strike began, Chief Michael J. Johannes issued special orders.

MICHAEL J. JOHANNES, Chief of Police

We are going to start moving goods. Don't take a beating. You have shotguns, and you know how to use them. When we are finished with this convoy, there will be other goods to move. Now get going and do your duty.

HARRY DEBOER, Picket Captain

Ray Rainbolt was in charge of issuing permits. If anybody felt justified in moving their product like food or medicine for the poor, they could get a permit from him. If he gave one, the pickets would go right along with the permit to see to it that nothing happened.

FARRELL DOBBS, Picket Dispatcher

Johannes' convoy was a carefully laid plot against the workers. About 150 cops armed with riot guns were sent in squad cars to Jordon-Stevens Company, a wholesale grocer. There a five-ton truck was loaded with a half dozen boxes. Banners marked "Hospital Supplies" were displayed on the truck so that reporters and photographers could depict the operation as an errand of "mercy". Special newspaper editions announcing the convoy's "success" were on the streets even before the delivery to Eitel Hospital had been completed. This camouflage was totally uncalled for because the union freely issued permits for hospital deliveries. It was an attempt to discredit the strike and demoralize the ranks, and The Organizer, said so. This really irritated the powers-that-be who began interfering with our paper's salespeople.

NARRATOR

The bosses also pressured two of the printers into refusing to handle further editions. Finally, Argus Press took the job, and it printed the paper from then on.

ACE JOHNSTON, Linotype Operator, Argus

We never knew what would happen next. We knew we stood a good chance of having our presses smashed, the building wrecked. We knew what kind of a fight it was. But we were working with a cool-headed bunch of strike leaders, who knew their business, and we went along. I remember one incident that almost robbed us of a whole night's work. That was the time a bunch of thugs hid at our shipping entrance and jumped the truck that was pulling out with an edition of *The Organizer*. There was a hell of a fight, but when the smoke cleared, the 574 driver and a couple of helpers had cleaned house on the finks. After that, they kept away from the Argus.

NARRATOR

Then came the day known as Bloody Friday.

FARRELL DOBBS, Picket Dispatcher

Around 2:00 PM, a scab truck pulled up to the Slocum-Bergen loading dock. It was escorted by about 100 cops in squad cars, riot guns sticking out of the car windows like quills on a porcupine. The truck had wire mesh around the cab and the license plates had been removed. A few small cartons of groceries were loaded onto it, the pickets jeering the scabs doing the rotten job. Then the fink rig pulled away from the dock and started up the street. It was followed by a picket truck, an open-bodied one used for dirt hauling, in which nine or ten unarmed pickets were standing. Suddenly, without warning, the cops opened fire on them and shot to kill. In a matter of seconds, two of the pickets lay motionless on the floor of the bullet-riddled truck. Other wounded either fell to the street or tried to crawl out of the death trap as the shooting continued. From all quarters, strikers rushed toward the truck to help them, advancing into the gunfire with the courage of lions. Many were felled by police as they stopped to pick up their injured brothers. By this time, the cops had gone berserk. They were shooting in all directions, hitting most of their victims in the back as they tried to escape, and often clubbing the wounded after they fell. So wild had the firing become that a sergeant was shot by one of his own men.

BERNARD M. KOSKI, Striker

I crawled under a car so I wouldn't get hit anymore and stayed there until after the shooting subsided. I got hit five times. Two went through me, and three are still in me. Buckshot. The one in my leg was from the side. That was after I fell down. The others were in the back.

HARRY PFAFF, Striker

A cop gave me a shove, and I backed up. I said, "Let me have it. I'm going to see who's shooting me." He didn't have guts enough to shoot and walked away, so I was lucky. I didn't get it.

HARRY DEBOER, Picket Captain

They just fired point blank. They went wild. I almost lost a leg. I had to fight with the doctor to keep him from operating. They were scared of lead poisoning and gangrene. I insisted that they do something rather than cut it off. The intern that was active around strike headquarters, seen the x-ray of how the bullet was lodged. He took a needle, went to a blacksmith and had it bent just right. They hooked the slug out on the second operation. Then my fever went down. It had smashed the whole bone. I had forty-five pounds hanging on there so that the leg wouldn't shrink, and it would grow into the steel and wires.

OSCAR WINGER, Striker

This city maintenance truck came by with a load of tar blocks and stopped behind our picket line. When the scab delivery truck started to move away, about twenty guys got on this maintenance truck and started throwing tar blocks. Two other fellows, one by the name of Ness got on, and the police opened fire and killed them both then they turned on us. I think maybe I got one or two pellets, which was very little.

MARVEL SCHOLL, Co-Organizer of the Women's Auxiliary

Bloody Friday, as those of us who lived through that awful day when death rode into the strike headquarters know it, began as a murky, cloudy day. The very air seemed charged with foreboding. The usual rush of business for the auxiliary came with daylight. The kitchen opened as usual. There was the regular amount of relief work. The Organizer went to press. Pickets came and went on their assignments. Yet everything was different. Perhaps the fact that the men were gradually being weeded out of headquarters and set down to the market helped create this atmosphere. When the doors of the commissary were opened for the noon meal, only a few men appeared. We were beginning to wonder. After lunch, headquarters was strangely empty. It was so quiet that it was almost eerie. Even the ringing of the telephone was a welcome diversion. And then, all too suddenly, the emptiness gave way to overcrowding, the stillness, to the awful siren of the ambulance and the spotless white of the hospital quarters to appalling blood red. When the first man was carried in foaming at the mouth, gray as cement, unconscious, someone screamed. In less time than it can be told, 47 men lay on improvised cots, their bodies riddled with bullet wounds. Action! Water, alcohol, cotton, men and women bathing horrid blue welts from which blood oozed. Cutting away clothing. Lighting cigarettes for the men who lay there, gripping their hands, biting their lips, to keep from screaming. One of them was a red-haired boy, a messenger, who had been a bystander. His hand shook as he accepted his cigarette. He smiled, whispered a weak 'thanks lady,' as he fainted. Another was Henry Ness. His shirt had been cut away, exposing his back, completely covered with blue welts. He raised himself in his delirium, fighting away the doctor who was trying to help him. He collapsed. And then the scream of the ambulances. Clear the way! Stand back! Let the cars into the garage! Nothing else enters! One by one they backed in, and when they came out, they were loaded with their cargo of suffering humanity. Ness and Belor in the first one. Shugren, unconscious, was lifted up swiftly as he was carried to the ambulance. Harry DeBoer lying on a cot. Angrily, he ordered the attendants to "Take care of some of those other guys first." Now the ambulances were being filled to their doors

with all the men who were able to stand. Full to the brim, they backed out, one by one, until 47 men were on their way to beds of pain and some to oblivion.

NARRATOR

Twenty-five strikers were shot in the back trying to flee and four aiding the fallen. People of the city were horrified, and Governor Olson appointed an investigation commission. Its finding stated:

FLOYD B. OLSON, Governor

"Police took direct aim at the pickets and fired to kill. Physical safety of police was at no time endangered. No weapons were in the possession of the pickets in the truck. At no time did pickets attack the police, and it was obvious that pickets came unprepared for such an attack. The truck movement in question was not a serious attempt to move merchandise, but a 'plant' arranged by the police."

NARRATOR

The Central Labor Union called for Johannes' ouster and Bainbridge's impeachment. Thousands of petitions were signed. In the mayor's own defense, he said:

A.G. "BUZZ" BAINBRIDGE, Mayor, Former circus performer & showman.

Strikers had ample warning that the police were going to convoy trucks and that the police would be armed. What do you think they carry guns for, ornaments?

NARRATOR

Henry Ness died less than 48 hours after he was wounded, leaving a widow and four children. His final words were:

HENRY NESS

Don't fail me now, boys.

MARVEL SCHOLL, Co-Organizer of the Women's Auxiliary

I went with Mrs. Ness and her brother-in-law to buy clothing for her and the children. She got a dress of printed silk. No mourning gowns for her. A practical dress--one that could be worn later for all occasions. "Not a black dress, Mrs. Dobbs", she begged. "That's too much like all our life has been. My heart will be just as heavy under a light dress."

NARRATOR

Forty thousand mourners marched behind Henry's casket--three times the number of strikers. Legal counsel for 574, Albert Goldman delivered the funeral oration.

ALBERT GOLDMAN, Attorney

The life of our murdered brother typifies the lives of all workers. The social system gave him no chance. At an early age, he was forced to work to earn a living. Together with other workers, he was sent to kill and be killed in the world war. What for? For Freedom? No. For the sake of profits and imperialist markets. Mark these words! There is only one struggle in which a worker has a real interest. That is the struggle of Labor against Capital. This struggle against oppression is no easy task. On the

side of the bosses, are the police, the army, the courts. The mayor does not consider the lives of the strikers worth protecting. The only thing of importance to him is the protection of the bosses' property, the bosses' right to keep workers enslaved at low wages and in misery. Brothers, Sisters, as we leave this demonstration of our anger and grief, we must bear in our hearts a fierce resolve to carry on Brother Ness's struggle. We must not fail him! We must avenge his murder. This we shall do if we struggle to win this strike, if we struggle to throw the exploiters from off our backs and to establish a new social order in which the worker may enjoy the fruits of his toil.

NARRATOR

John Belor died of his wounds August 1st.

IVER SWANSON, Policeman

It was after the Slocum-Bergen incident that the National Guard was brought in. The police department was relieved to have martial law because it kind of cooled things off and took them out of the conflict.

MOE HORK, Member, Strike Committee of 100

Well a lot of strikers brought in their shotguns and everything else when they heard about the shooting, but we wouldn't let them go on the picket line with a gun. It really would have started a civil war.

OSCAR WINGER, Striker

The National Guard raided the strike headquarters and arrested our leaders, but subsequent to that they also raided the Citizens Alliance office. One day we got a call that the police were going to march from the courthouse down to strike headquarters and raid it. They had called off-duty policemen and deputies. I never saw so much action in a matter of a few minutes--clubs bats, even firearms on top of the two-story garage. The men got on top of the roof, and they were all ready. Then the police were tipped off that they were gonna' hit into a big battle so they disbanded, and the raid was called off.

OSCAR WINGER, Striker

I'm patrolling out in the street, and all of a sudden I get knocked to the ground. Then the next thing I'm dragged into a police patrol and wind up at the city jail. I was mugged and fingerprinted and thrown in a cell. We'd just got through with our meal when we were released by orders of General Walsh. If we were found on the street, we were going to be sent to the stockade at the fairgrounds. There were several hundred union men out there. Michael Johannes, the chief of police was standing in the doorway of police headquarters. Everybody yelled at him, shouting "Bloody Johannes!" That was the name they gave him 'cause of the shooting.

MOE HORK, Member, Strike Committee of 100

They brought in Father Haas, the federal mediator. Governor Olson worked with him and E.H. Dunnigan. Our negotiating committee met with them at the Nicollet Hotel. They offered us 42½ cents an hour then we took this back to the ranks to accept or reject. The members were really the power of the whole movement, but

they still needed leadership to lead them. I don't care how good the army is, without a general its no good.

NARRATOR

Local 574's membership accepted the offer, and President Roosevelt, who was barnstorming for the November elections, was wired with the news.

JESSE JONES, Head of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation "Glad to report Minneapolis strike settled. Men at work this morning. All reinstated on minimum wage forty and fifty cents an hour. Arbitration for increases. Employers have made substantial concessions in the general interest." --Signed Jesse Jones, RFC

NARRATOR

So the workers of 574 won the most important strike in the history of the city. They defeated the Citizens Alliance, made Minneapolis a union town and helped to launch the great movement for industrial unions in the 1930s.

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