



MINNEAPOLIS THE 1934 GENERAL STRIKE

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The 1934 Minneapolis Strike

The Minneapolis strikes of 1934 have always occupied a special place in the historical understanding of the Trotskyist movement, as they were the first clearly documented demonstration of the ability of a small Trotskyist organization to make the breakthrough into the broader labor movement, and to lead one of its sections to victory. Along with the Toledo Auto-Lite struggle and the San Francisco General Strike, they formed part of the revival of the industrial militancy of the working class of the United States from the depths of the slump. They have always been regarded as a model by Trotskyist organizations throughout the world.

We reproduce a series of extracts taken from the American Militant of 2 June 1934 (Vol. VII, no.22 – whole no. 226), and a speech made in 1952 by Carl Skoglund, “The Story of Minneapolis”, which first appeared publicly in the March 1984 issue of *Socialist Action*, the paper of one of the groups supporting the United Secretariat of the Fourth International in the USA.

The implications of these strikes cannot all be pursued here. Farrell Dobbs’ own account is set out in his book, *Teamster Rebellion*, New York, 1972, and in the comments of James P. Cannon in *Notebook of an Agitator*, 2nd edition, New York, 1973, pp.75-94; The Communist League of America 1932-34, New York, 1985, pp.328-340; and the chapter on The Great Minneapolis Strikes in *The History of American Trotskyism*, 2nd edition, New York, 1972, pp.139-168. A cursory treatment is to be found in Constance Ashton Myers, *The Prophet’s Army*, Westport, 1977, pp.77-82. Carl Cowl offers his own reminiscences in Ceri Jones’ “Minneapolis 1934: An Upsurge in Confidence” in *Socialist Worker* (9 October 1982), and Jake Cooper

and Harry DeBoer in “Minneapolis 1934”, in the *American Socialist Action* (July 1984).

The Editors of Revolutionary History

How The Strike Was Organized

Minneapolis, 28 May – The courage and determination so effectively displayed by the striking Minneapolis truck drivers and helpers has proven conclusively that the American working class is very well equipped to fight their exploiters. It only remains for a proper leadership to come to the front in the entire labor movement and guide these dynamic forces to victory.

The striking truck drivers and helpers were suffering from economic adversity but their condition was no different from that of other workers in the United States. These men were simply a representative cross-section of the American working class. The abilities which they brought into play are lying dormant in every group of American workers.

Every effort was made by the leaders to give these natural abilities an opportunity to come to the surface. No stone was left unturned in the attempt to do this. Something more than numbers is required on the picket line. The men must feel that their efforts are well spent, that they are a part of a smoothly functioning machine, that they can successfully hold every position they win. To stimulate and justify this confidence the leaders must perfect a thorough organization and all preparations must be carefully checked to the most minute detail. That was done in Minneapolis.

A large garage about 400 feet wide and a block long was selected to serve as the headquarters for the Minneapolis strike. A large sign was painted across the front of the building announcing that this was the strike headquarters. Supplementary field headquarters were set up at points where it would prove necessary to concentrate a sizeable force for mass picketing. At the main headquarters a stage was erected and a

loud-speaker system installed to be used in the dispatching of pickets and in addressing meetings.

A commissary department requiring a personnel of 35 was set up and maintained throughout the strike. A special service and repair department was provided and a crew of 12 mechanics well equipped with tools were busily engaged in keeping the cars and trucks of the pickets in good running order. Special arrangements were made to secure gasoline and to obtain a tire repair service.

A first-aid station was established at the headquarters through the volunteer service of two doctors and two trained nurses. This department rendered an invaluable service because of the speed and efficiency with which injuries were treated and it is notable to record that in no case did an infection develop.

Within the headquarters offices, a crew of men with special instructions remained constantly at the five telephones which were the nerve center of the strike. A corps of women assistants under the direction of the financial officer received applications for membership which poured in by the hundreds and issued permits for the pickets to obtain gasoline and mechanical service. A special committee was set up to hear complaints and requests for special permits to operate trucks. The instructions to this committee were very strict. These special groups served excellently as a buffer to take the burden of routine matters off the shoulders of the leaders and to leave them free to direct the principal strategy of the strike.

Before the start of the strike a complete analysis of the picketing requirements had been made and, with a corps of stenographers and mimeograph operators, the leaders had prepared a complete set of written orders and instructions to the pickets. As a result of this careful preparation, the entire picket line was established and functioning effectively within an hour after the beginning of the strike.

The principal strategy of the picketing was to establish stationary picket posts at the city limits on all highways, at all gasoline bulk plants and direct service filling stations, at the wholesale market, in the loop retail district, and at the truck freight terminals.

These stationary pickets were supplemented by 'cruising squads' which were assigned to definite districts throughout the town and by other cruising squads which were assigned to cover certain areas where trucking activities would most likely be attempted.

The pickets were transported to and from the stationary posts by truck and the cruising squads were provided with fast automobiles. A reserve force with adequate transportation facilities was kept in the headquarters at all times. Each group of pickets and each cruising squad was commanded by a picket captain, who had been given written instructions as to responsibilities. Each truck driver was also given special written instructions to be followed.

Wherever mass picketing was required a field commander was appointed and given special credentials with instructions to establish a field headquarters to maintain contact with General Headquarters. This was accomplished by stationing a contact officer at a suitable telephone location and providing him with assistants. In this manner GHQ could phone orders to the contact officer who would in turn send them to the field commander by one of the assistants. Reports from the field commander to GHQ were also sent by this medium. To supplement this a special squad of motorcycle riders were kept at GHQ to perform special liaison duties.

A number of special cruising squads manned by hand-picked men and captained by qualified leaders were kept under the constant control of GHQ. The captains of these squads were given credentials which superseded all other authority in the field. These squads were used to be sent into a tense situation for the purpose of reorganizing the forces and leading the fight. They did their work well and more than justified the continuation of this system.

It is well to note that in spite of the large number of cars, trucks, and motorcycles required for this method of picketing, there was an excess of vehicles volunteered for service by the strikers.

It was naturally necessary to maintain a guard at the doors of the headquarters. But in spite of all precautions, stoolpigeons will slip through. Once within the building these miserable wretches can do

much damage if left unhindered. They operate principally by attempting to disrupt the ranks through the encouragement of drinking and through attempts to create disorder and discussion.

Special squads of reliable men were kept on duty constantly watching for these people and they did their work very effectively. There is another and more dangerous type of stool-pigeon, who comes well armed with credentials and attempts to insinuate himself into a position entailing some responsibility. It was found that by carefully selecting key men who are absolutely trustworthy and by using great secrecy in issuing orders that it is comparatively easy to discover these people through their great ambition to disrupt.

To summarize the general results of this organizational method, we find that we have a group of strikers who are given food regularly, and medical care for their physical comfort. We find that they have reliable mechanical equipment to do their job. And we find that they soon come to realize that their leaders know at all times where they are and what they are up against. They wade in fearlessly because they know that if they need help it will come, if they need new captains, they will come, and they feel confident that if they win any advantage their leaders will be able to hold it for them.

These Minneapolis workers then are merely representative American workers, who have risen to a new height because of the careful efforts made to uncover and develop their every resource. The Minneapolis workers call upon the workers of America to demand such cooperation and guidance from all labor leaders.

A Striker

At the Minneapolis City Market 'The Battle of Deputy Run'

From the inception of the organization work in connection with the General Drivers' strike, it was correctly estimated that our strategic position was the so-called central market place. This takes in an area of approximately six square blocks. It is bounded on the one whole side

by the railroad tracks, which are the team tracks where practically all of the market produce is unloaded.

In concentrating on the market, we were guided by the fact that the food situation, especially at this time of the year, was the real point to attack. At the start of the strike this strategy was not so apparent. But on the second and third days, it became plainly visible that the perishable food supply was running low and that the market bosses were going to attempt some drastic action to move their perishable foods.

Through our connections in the market houses it was learned that on Saturday morning there was to be a concerted effort to make deliveries. The strike committee held a conference and it was decided that we would relieve some of our forces from positions where there was not so much activity and hold them in reserve. It developed that although we had a little skirmish on that day, a serious threat was not made for any wholesale delivery.

The market situation was watched closely and, after waiting for Sunday and Monday to pass, we learned through unquestionable sources, that the big offensive was to be made Tuesday about eleven o'clock. This information was received about midnight Monday. Immediate action became compulsory. 'Concentrate the Pickets', was the slogan. 'Cruising squads' of pickets were dispatched, motorcycle riders roared out, street car motormen and conductors on the owl cars carried the word to our pickets at outlying points, telephones and other messengers were utilized for the mobilization of every available picket.

Soon the outlying positions were deserted except for a skeleton picket line. The pickets came pouring in to strike headquarters, thousands of the tired but eager fighters, anxious to defend their rights with their lives if necessary. Tons of food had been prepared and was waiting for these fighters; but it seemed that it was hardly touched, so anxious were these workers for the job to be done.

No raised voices; no milling; quietly questioning each other: 'Where do we go? When do we start?' The word goes from the dispatcher to the microphone announcer in the big strike headquarters:

‘Start moving!’ Then trucks lined up. Noiselessly they were pushed into place. Next order: ‘Fill the trucks!’ Like one man these eager fighters filled the trucks to capacity.

In code the drivers only were given the destination. ‘Move out!’ Motors roared and in an instant three hundred pickets were on their way to a destination, unknown then, that was to make new history for the American workers.

Adjacent to the market and on one of the border streets, Labor Headquarters is located. Into this hall holding about two thousand men our pickets were concentrated. A skeleton patrol was sent to patrol the market streets and to report any move to start delivery. Word quickly comes back: hundreds of special deputies, special police and harness bulls armed with clubs and guns, squad cars of police with sawn-off shot guns and vomiting gas. Quietly the pickets patrolled the streets, curiosity seekers hurling curses at the hired strikebreakers. A truck starts to move, our pickets jump to the running boards and demand that the scab driver stop. A hired slugger raises his club and slashes at a picket. Down the picket drops as if dead. The fight is on. Phone rings at the concentration hall: ‘Send the reserves!’ Orderly, but almost as if by magic, the hall is emptied. The pickets are deployed by their leaders to surround the police and sluggers. The police raise their riot guns but the workers ignore and rush through them. ‘Chase out the hired sluggers’, is their battle cry. The cowardly sluggers take to their heels and run. The police and strikers use their clubs freely. Many casualties on both sides. The workers have captured the market!

A Striker

A Lesson in ‘Law and Order’

Minneapolis, 28 May – The magnificent struggles of the truck drivers, particularly the battle in the market Tuesday morning, 22 May, the ‘Battle of Deputies Run’, will be permanently engraved in the minds of the Minneapolis working class.

This fight in which the strikers routed over 1500 police and special deputies is full of meaning for the future. Coming as it did after a week of lesser fights, it shows the capacity of the workers, once aroused, for determined struggle. It reveals their resourcefulness, courage and intelligence.

Step by step in this 10-day strike the workers learnt that 'law and order', 'constitutional rights', 'liberty and justice', 'right to organize' were hollow phrases used by the bosses to keep them in ignorance and subjection. No sooner did they learn than they swiftly translated these lessons into militant action, not individual action but organized action. The whole record of the strike is a record of the transformation of workers to whom the idea of unionism was new, into resolute experienced fighters, who have successfully fought their class enemy, the bosses, and know the value of organization and militant leadership.

In the first days of the strike a holiday spirit prevailed. There were no serious clashes with police nor any determined effort on the part of the bosses to move trucks. The sentiment of the men was for peaceful picketing and Law and Order. Many had illusions about the impartiality of the cops and the press.

But on Friday the bosses began their offensive. Cops began to arrest pickets by the dozens. A few trucks under heavy police guard pierced the picket lines. The yellow press began to denounce the strikers, who were trying to get decent living conditions for themselves and their families, as lawless elements. Abuse was heaped upon them by all the agencies of the Citizens' Alliance. The workers began to realize the seriousness of the struggle and settled down in real earnestness to the task confronting them.

Meanwhile the police chief, at the behest of the bosses, began to round up the ex-crooks, murderers, and all the scum of the city, including gentlemen from the social register, and made them special deputies, to preserve 'Law and Order'.

The first real fight occurred Saturday morning in the market, when 500 pickets battled with their bare fists, trying to prevent 600 cops and deputies armed with clubs and blackjacks from moving two trucks.

The cops succeeded in getting the trucks through, but only after bitter fighting in which the unarmed strikers gave a good account of themselves, sending many cops to the hospital.

Sunday was comparatively quiet. The men were thinking hard and learning fast.

Early Monday morning hundreds of pickets assembled at the market armed with clubs, rubber hose, and other improvised weapons. They were no longer a mass of strikers, they were soldiers obeying orders from their captains. Police attempted to disperse the pickets and the fight was on. The strikers rushed the cops, who went down like nine-pins. After considerable fighting the cops drew their guns and threatened to fire. The workers showed their defiance. But the cops had had enough and asked the pickets to drop their clubs, saying that they would drop theirs. The strikers were not fooled by this and stood their ground. No trucks moved that day.

At dawn Tuesday, hundreds of cops and special deputies began to pour into the market until there were over a thousand. They were concentrated at strategic points. Later the strikers began to arrive by truckfuls. Thousands of sympathetic onlookers lined the streets. The strikers moved with military precision, maneuvering skillfully for vantage points. Their plan was to catch the cops from the rear and divide their forces. Many reserves were stationed in the Central Labor Headquarters nearby.

As the morning wore on, there were numerous skirmishes that heralded the battle to come. Just about noon the fight started, when a deputized female attempted to club a woman picket. The plucky woman seized a club from a picket at her side and stretched her flat. With a roar that was heard for blocks, the strikers swept away the specials and cops. The specials made no effort to stem the tide but turned and fled, tossing away their clubs and badges as they ran. Many were cornered in stalls and blind alleys and laid out three deep. Clubs swung everywhere as the fighting pickets surged irresistibly through the rows of stalls smashing down all opposition. Several truckloads of deputies attempting to escape were surrounded and transferred to the

mounting casualty list. In desperation the regular cops drove their cars into the ranks of the strikers in a vain effort to stop them. Ambulances worked overtime taking away the specials.

Within half an hour the strikers had complete control of the market. The cops and deputies were completely licked. More than 50 special cops were injured, two of whom died subsequently. A few pickets were hurt. No further efforts were made to move the trucks. The bosses agreed to recognize the union.

William Kitt

Women Active on the Firing Line

When the General Drivers' Union made a strong appeal to the wives of their members to aid in every way possible, they met with a response they had not dreamed of. Women came to Strike Headquarters, ready and willing to do any kind of work assigned them. Girls trained in office work took over the routine work. Others gave their heart and soul to the feeding of hungry droves of men.

Women pickets took up the cause on the line of battle. Three of our women were seriously injured in riots with police. One's life was despaired of for several days. Another was taken to the hospital with a very seriously fractured ankle. She is at present confined to her bed, and will be there for some time to come.

Still another was so badly beaten in the Tribune riot that an old operation lesion opened up, and there is danger of internal hemorrhages. Still another was beaten across the arm with a billy. She is still carrying her arm in a sling.

Another interesting angle to this situation was brought out when sympathizers began to offer their services. One young woman, a graduate of the University who had specialized in sociology came down to offer her services. She felt that the power of the women had not even been felt in this class struggle. A young couple, friends of the other girl, offered their services. Using these three as an advisory council, the officers of the auxiliary started to raise money.

A committee, composed of Mrs. Grant Dunne as president of the auxiliary and Mrs. Farrell Dobbs, as secretary, these three friends, and two other women not connected with the union, met at four o'clock one afternoon. The next night at midnight the auxiliary had in its Commissary Relief Fund, \$416.70. The necessity of feeding the families of the men on strike until they would again be able to draw wages was brought home to us very forcibly during the last few days.

The newspapers of Minneapolis, being the instrument of the Citizens' Alliance, were muzzled to such an extent that no news in favor of the strikers was ever published. To attempt to counteract this state of affairs, the women organized a mass demonstration. We marched from the Auditorium on Grant and 14th Streets straight down Nicollet Avenue. Led first by four women carrying our banner, followed by about 500 women, many of them sympathizers, we broke every traffic rule in Minneapolis. Crowds gathered along the sidewalk and followed the procession to the court house.

We marched straight to the mayor's office. A committee entered to present our demands upon the mayor or his emissary – Mr. Guise. The gentlemen were not in. In fact Mayor Bainbridge was in his usual position – home in bed ill. Mr. Guise would be in by 2 p.m. It was then about 12:30. The committee decided to wait.

The women, quiet and orderly during the whole proceedings, suddenly were infuriated by something. Inquiry disclosed that the chief of police had thought it smart to parade a batch of his special deputies down the same corridor the women were waiting in. Only quick thinking on the part of the committee saved those deputies from being very badly hurt.

The mayor's secretary arrived in surprisingly short time. The committee waited upon him. They got just what they expected – nothing. The demands were the immediate removal of Chief Johannes, the removal of all special deputies, and no further interference with pickets. The committee then left. The crowd was addressed by Frieda Charles, and dispersed in an orderly fashion.

In closing let me emphasize again: Let your women work in this class struggle. Their place is right along side of the men, shoulder to the wheel, fighting for their birthright. The Women's Auxiliary of General Drivers' Union No. 574 has set an example which we hope will be followed by the working class women throughout the nation.

Auxiliary Member

Role of the League in Strike

Minneapolis – Serious and militant workers confronted with the necessity of advancing their demands for a better standard of living have the problems of organization, program and leadership before them from the very first. In the Minneapolis drivers' strike thousands of workers came to the union for very definite reasons. First: the union is a mass organization. Second: it had to its credit the achievement of the Coal Yard Workers' strike. Third: its leadership had been tested.

The Communist League has always followed the policy in the trade unions of working with all progressive forces to be found in the organizations. Its trade union policy has been proved in action. Today there stands, confronting the bosses, a mighty union which organized the picket line that fought off and routed the police and the armed bands of the Citizens' Alliance.

The entire labor movement has been aroused. Every union in the city has been strengthened. The recruiting of workers into the organizations is going forward all along the line. The forces of reaction have been dealt a powerful blow. Tens of thousands of workers stand up today, proud to have been a part of the smashing drive.

The Minneapolis Branch of the Communist League bears considerable responsibility for this achievement. It is well known that its members have been active in the trade unions for a long period of years. It has not pressed forward for place or prestige alone. The League members have at all times acted in accord with the real interests of the union. The program adopted has been submitted to the rank and file from time to time. Proposals, suggestions, criticisms have been

welcomed. The League has given its best to the union and to the strike. It is willing to accept its part of the blame for any mistakes that may have been made. We think they were very few. Such errors can and will be made good.

Just as the League accepts responsibility for mistakes that it may make, it insists upon a calm and careful appraisal of its work in the union and the strike. In short we ask the workers to judge us for the work done and for policies and programs proposed.

The real work of Communist militants in the trade unions consists in putting forward correct proposals, fighting for their acceptance; then, by diligent and patient effort, rallying the advanced workers to carry these proposals into action.

That the League membership played an active part in the strike is shown not only by the fact that our comrades were in leading positions in the strike committee. It is also shown in the part played on the picket line where every man and woman available from our ranks was placed. In the work of organizing for the strike our comrades took a leading part. This alone was the work of months. At the headquarters, both before and during the strike, our members found their places in the kitchen, in the office, in the picket line, at various tasks too numerous to mention.

That the unions and other workers' organizations came forward with material and moral support was due, in no small measure, to the efforts of our comrades. Handicapped by the stigma attached to Communism by the false and reactionary policy of the 'Official' Communist Party (the Stalinists), we have relied upon the judgment of the thinking militants in the trade unions to learn to know and to support a true Communist trade union policy. The Communist League has never asked that the advanced workers in the unions accept our political opinions in order that we may find a place in the work of the movement. We have never demanded any special privilege. We have taken our places there in order to render whatever services we had the ability to render.

A new period has opened up in the class struggle in America. The workers' organizations must be prepared for new and greater tasks. The capitalists are more ruthless and stubborn than ever. They are better organized and financed, they have centralized their already powerful chambers of commerce. The unions must also find better forms of organization, change completely the old outlook, and put forward a new and militant leadership. This is becoming more and more apparent to the workers.

The League long ago recognized this truth, and with its numerically small forces, has moved deliberately but confidently toward the great task of reconstruction. This work, necessary for the very life of the workers' movement, is not the easy and simple task that many workers imagine it to be. It requires the devotion and sacrifice of all workers who see and understand that fighting unions are the need of the hour.

The Minneapolis Branch of the Communist League asks those workers who believe as we do, or who have the desire to learn more about our views, to join the League. To become part of the International Communist movement. To help in the vast work of building a new revolutionary party in America. A Communist Party worthy of the name, a party of workers that will be also a section of the Fourth International.

A Striker

The Story of Minneapolis

Today I want to talk about the famous Minneapolis strikes of 1934. The drivers and all the workers employed in the truck transportation industry at that time enjoyed miserable conditions which existed throughout the history of Minneapolis prior to 1934. When the economic crash came the misery was intensified.

In the produce market area it was common practice for drivers and helpers to start work at 2 or 3 a.m. and continue work until 6 p.m.

They were low paid and sometimes had to work seven days without any extra pay. If complaints were made they were fired.

The workers in trucking, and most other industries, were not unionized before 1934 and had to accept whatever conditions employers imposed. Many strikes were called between 1922 and 1934, and all suffered defeat. Minneapolis was known all over the country as the worst scab town.

In the early 1920s the bosses started the open-shop drive. They formed the Citizens' Alliance whose only aim was to keep Minneapolis non-union. The bosses were successful in carrying out this program up to 1934. In fact, they were confident that no one could ever lead a drive to unionize the city.

V.R. Dunne, Miles Dunne, Grant Dunne, Harry DeBoer, George Frosig (who was vice-president of Local 574), and myself worked in the same coal yard. We held meetings in the early part of 1933 to discuss and plan a program for organizing the coal industry. If that test case was successful we would proceed with the rest of the trucking industry.

We all recognized that the trucking industry was the most powerful and also the most difficult in dealing with strikebreakers because scabs have to operate on the street. We had great strength in numbers and understood the task of organizing. We therefore picked the coal industry as the starting point. This industry was strategic because of Minnesota's sub-zero winters.

We were convinced the employer would never recognize the union without a bloody battle. Consequently we made all possible preparations and were extra careful to proceed legally – appearing before the Central Labor Union, the executive board of the drivers' union, and the Teamsters' Joint Council. The response from these bodies was to throw a wet blanket over our proposal.

Some made statements like, 'The drivers know where we are, why don't they come and join us?' This attitude was discouraging but we still went on with our plans, confident of victory if we prepared properly.

Workers' committees from various companies drew up a contract of demands. And when we presented this contract to the employers, they, as we had expected, refused to meet with us. We then called an open meeting of all workers to present the results of our efforts. When the leaders of the AFL found out about this meeting and the possibility of a strike – a rumor had been spreading throughout the industry – they ganged up on us in mass, preventing us from taking any action. About 500 to 600 coal drivers present at this meeting tore up their union books and littered the union headquarters with the pieces.

The only action taken was a motion to hold a special meeting Sunday at 2 p.m., predicated on the fact that no business agent then would come out on Sunday and interfere with us. This proved to be strategically correct. Between Friday and Sunday all our forces were in motion to bring out all the coal workers to this meeting. The meeting was packed and a motion passed to strike on Monday morning at 5 am and to set up a strike committee.

Success

After a three-day strike we were victorious. No one could get a pound of coal without a doctor's prescription. The success of this strike caused a sensation among the drivers and workers.

A mass meeting was organized in a big theatre for the purpose of inaugurating a real campaign to unionize other trucking industries. The meeting was well advertised and a capacity crowd filled the place. Organizational preparations were carried out for about two months. The famous committee of one hundred was made up of representatives from all sections who became involved in the strike. This committee had full authority to decide on all questions. Contracts of demands were presented to the employers. There was one answer received – a flat no.

We appealed to the Teamsters' International Union for a strike sanction and strike benefits. We received the command to continue negotiations. Knowing that the International would never endorse a

strike, we still – for the sake of the ranks – sent another appeal explaining the employer's attitude in refusing to meet with the union committee. The answer again was: proceed to negotiate.

This procedure caused a delay of action for at least a month. But it was well worth the time in order to prepare the workers for the coming strike. It became plain that a big battle was unavoidable. The issue would be recognition of the union. The outcome of this battle could not be predicted.

All the preparations for the strike began to be made. Regular charts were made up of the main highways and streets for picketing. Instructions for the picketing captains were drawn up. Registration of all available vehicles for service on the picket line, installation of a loud-speaking system in the strike headquarters everything was done according to plan.

Early one morning in May 1934 the strike started. The workers responded practically 100 per cent. The employers were caught by surprise at the response of the workers. The methods used by them were nothing new – the use of police and deputizing of every reactionary man equipping them with weapons to beat and arrest the pickets. During the first days dozens of strikers had been arrested and beaten up in a most brutal manner. Sixteen women had been beaten unconscious after being lured into an alley where an attempt was being made to deliver newspapers.

We organized rehearsals, padded our caps with cardboard and proceeded to hit one another on the top of the head. If it hurt the first time some more padding was applied until the blows became painless.

The daily newspapers carried screaming articles warning the public not to appear in the market area on such and such a day as violence was prevalent and some innocent bystander might get hurt.

Two days after the women were beaten up an attempt was made to open the market with scabs. The morning when this happened all radio stations had their speaking equipment on the roof of buildings to broadcast the intended movement of trucks. Instead they had to broadcast the Battle of Deputy Run.

The story of Deputy Run is known all over the country, in fact all over the world. It meant that 1500 deputies and 500 uniformed police, under the pressure of the strikers' superior force, had to run for their lives. One deputy, a prominent open-shop employer, fell dead on the battlefield. Another died a few days later. Many others went hospitals.

Governor Floyd B. Olsen then intervened, demanding a 48-hour truce, and during this time no trucks were to move. Both sides accepted this truce proposal. During these 48 hours we were in continual negotiations; union representatives in one room and employers in another, and the governor as a go-between.

After many hours of negotiations, a contract with recognition of the union and a small increase in wages was presented. The big question at issue at that time was our right to represent truck drivers, helpers, and inside workers working for each employer. This issue was scuttled, and finally a paragraph, very ambiguous in wording, was accepted with the guarantee of the governor that it meant the right of the union to deal for all the mentioned classifications. On this basis the strike ended after eleven days.

The whole working class in the city was jubilant over the great victory. But in the first meeting called to negotiate a definite contract, the employers refused to recognize our union as the bargaining agent for the inside workers. The strike was again set in motion.

Now the employers really set to work. They placed full-page ads in all the city dailies. A vicious red-baiting campaign was carried out by the newspapers, picturing the leaders as 'Trotskyist-Communists' intending to make a revolution in Minneapolis instead of building the union. It became necessary to meet all these slanders by issuing a daily paper to present the position of the union.

Shotguns

The strike hit with solid ranks. All transportation stopped and the city again looked like a Sunday. This time the employers proceeded to arm the police with rifles and sawn-off shotguns loaded with slugs. Many

dummy deliveries were made under very heavy police protection, such as medical supplies to a hospital or groceries to an old peoples' home. The aim was to get the pickets involved in trying to stop them and use this as an excuse for shooting the pickets. But deliveries could be made to these institutions without interference.

The strike went on for weeks without much action. One morning a report came in that an attempted delivery was planned in the wholesale grocery area and that the police, with shotguns, were there to protect the drivers. Pickets were dispatched and when they attempted to stop the delivery the police opened fire and shot down 52 pickets, killing two. This day has become known as Bloody Friday. At the funeral of Henry Ness, one of the pickets killed on Bloody Friday, an estimated 50,000 people marched four abreast and tied up all city traffic for hours.

Two government mediators were attempting to settle the dispute on any terms. They finally gave us a proposal providing for recognition on the 'inside workers'. The union accepted but the employers turned down this agreement. The governor then declared martial law.

Early one morning the military surrounded the strike headquarters with machine guns and took it over. Bill Brown, Ray Dunne, Miles Dunne were thrown into a stockade. Attempts were made during that day to call in second-ranked leaders and settle the strike. They refused to meet until the headquarters and the leaders were released.

Finally, after eight weeks of hardship and suffering a settlement was agreed on which provided for all the important issues that the union had been battling for.

In brief, these are some of the highlights of events during the strikes of 1934.

Carl Skoglund



Speak Out Now

Revolutionary Workers Group

Where We Stand

The world we live in today has enormous possibilities: the potential to open up the most challenging epoch of humanity's existence. We have the prospect of living in a conscious fashion, using all the advances of human knowledge and engaging the creative potential of each person on the planet. Instead we see the world moving in the opposite direction – increasingly ruled by prejudice and fear, a world of widespread violence and war, where exploitation and oppression are the rule, with the many dominated by the few.

The Force for Change Exists Today

Everywhere, working people's labor makes society run. The exploitation of labor is what generates profits, which are at the heart of capitalism. Working people have the power to bring this system to a halt and bring about the changes needed to transform our lives. Like slavery, feudalism and other systems that enriched the minority at the expense of the majority, capitalism's removal is long overdue. The time for socialism has come.

We Stand for Socialism

A world based on peaceful collaboration and international cooperation of working class people – not the exploiters who rule today.

- The common ownership and sharing of the world's resources and productive capacity under the democratic control of the world's peoples.

- An egalitarian and democratic government, organized and controlled from the bottom up, which facilitates people's active participation in making decisions about how society is run.
- Protection of the world's ecological systems, putting science to work to sustain life, not destroy it.
- A society where human relations are based on respect, equality and dignity of all peoples, not racism, sexism or homophobia.

Our Political Heritage

We base ourselves on the ideas and actions of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the model of the Russian Revolution of 1917 when the working class showed its capacity to take over and exert its power, and on the revolutionary ideas of the Fourth International in its struggles against Stalinism.

We Must Go Beyond Reforms

We support the struggles of those who are fighting against the oppression of capitalism, even if the goals of those struggles are not aimed at replacing the capitalist order. We support the right of people to determine how they will live and to throw off the forces of imperialism – be it the domination of the corporations, the World Bank, the IMF, military forces or other agents of imperialism. We support the fight against racial and sexual discrimination. We fight against attacks on the standard of living of working people — wage and benefit cuts, attacks on health care, education, housing and other basic rights.

Socialism cannot come through a modification of the existing system. It is not replacing corrupt politicians or union officials with those who are more honest or who are willing to see more of society's resources shared with the poor. It is not getting better contracts or laws. These systems based on privilege and exploitation must be removed and replaced by one that can guarantee the reorganization of society for the benefit of all.

What Is Needed to Bring This Change About?

It will take a massive social struggle, a revolution, by the majority, the workers and poor of the world, with the working class at its head, taking power in its name and reorganizing society.

It will take the construction of an international revolutionary leadership actively engaged in these struggles.

It will take the development of a party, based in the working class, in the U.S., the richest country of the world, as part of this international leadership. The fate of the world depends on building such an organization, though today it is represented only by individuals or small groups, scattered and marginalized, who share those goals.

The decisions made by a few individuals today, who are ready to start acting on these ideas and who are willing to collaborate with other groups who agree with this program and who are ready to work to implement it, could play a role in determining the future of the world.

Who We Are

Speak Out Now/Revolutionary Workers Group is a revolutionary group. We believe that a socialist world is possible and can be brought into being by the active struggles of the majority of the people of the world. We believe the international working class is the social force that can transform society and create a new world. But to do so, revolutionary organizations must be built in the working class. For this reason, our group aims its activity primarily at large workplaces. Our newsletters are distributed at several workplaces every two weeks.

We think it is important to both analyze the current world situation as well as to know and understand the history of past struggles. We have forums on current events and political topics and a yearly weekend called the Revolutionary University. We organize Marxist discussions and classes. We have pamphlets on past working class struggles, the revolutionary movements around the world and the current problems we face. We organize with others around many issues – racism, immigrant rights, climate change, police brutality, and more.

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