

# Minneapolis Strike Reveals Splendid Organization and Militancy

## Organizing the Strike

(Continued from page 1)

volunteer services 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.

**An Effective Strategy of Picketing**  
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.

**Concentration of Mass Picketing**  
Whenever 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 G.H.Q. 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 G.H.Q. were also sent by this medium. To supplement this a special squad of motorcycle riders were kept at G.H.Q. 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 G.H.Q. 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.

**Handling Stool-Pigeons**  
It was naturally necessary to maintain a guard at the doors of the headquarters. But in spite of all precautions, stool-pigeons 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.

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.

### All Ready for the Big Battle

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 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 on Picket Line!**  
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.

**The Women's Auxiliary**  
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, \$410.70. 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.

**Demonstration at City Hall**  
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 Ave. Led first by four women carrying our banner, followed by about five hundred 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.

### A Brush with Deputies

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.

### Women—Into the Class Struggle!

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 birth-right. 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

## Support From Other Unions

Minneapolis, May 28.—When the General Drivers, Local 574, called their strike for 11:30 P.M., on Tuesday, May 15, very few trade union members realized that within another two weeks one of the greatest labor struggles in the history of the Minneapolis labor movement would be fought.

The members of general drivers and their sympathizers did some fine work. During the first days of the strike they had the truck transportation of a city of four hundred thousand completely tied up with the exception of the deliveries authorized by the strike committee.

By Saturday morning the bosses had decided to defy the strikers and make deliveries of vegetables, fruits and provisions from the city market place. This was stubbornly resisted by the strikers and their sympathizers, but almost entirely with their bare hands, which were not so effective against the bludgeons of the cops.

Many workers who had felt that the cops were more or less friendly were disillusioned by the market fight on Saturday morning. With the announcement that over Sunday some fifteen hundred special deputy sheriffs were to be recruited and armed, the workers set their backs to work and prepared to defend themselves.

The workers on Saturday had suffered more physical damage than the cops. On Monday they were prepared to meet the cops with their own weapons. The fight in the market was about fifty-fifty insofar as injuries were concerned.

By Monday morning the trade union members had begun to real-

ize that an admirable fight was being conducted by the drivers and their sympathizers. At the building trades business agents meeting, due to pressure from the members, they voted to recommend to the building trades unions to strike in sympathy with the drivers. The Central Labor Union executive took like action that evening.

These meetings were followed quickly by the iron workers striking. Then followed many of the smaller organizations, whose membership could be reached quickly. By Wednesday evening the lathers, plasterers, carpenters, asbestos workers, electrical workers and others had voted the sympathetic strike. The electrical workers marched to strike headquarters in a body and placed themselves under the direction of the drivers strike committee.

Other union membership meetings while not officially striking declared a holiday for the duration of the strike and many of their members were active on Monday and Tuesday in the fights in the market. The fight on Tuesday resulted in a complete routing of the fifteen hundred special deputies and American Legionnaires, two of whom have since died as a result of their injuries.

In spite of the armistice agreed to between the strikers and the government forces by which it was agreed to keep trucks off the streets, the unions continued to vote sympathetic strikes. The painters' union marched in on Friday night as the vote to accept the settlement was being completed. Had the strike continued over Saturday and Sunday, no doubt the other driving trades which had not yet been called down, brewery drivers, milk drivers, ice drivers would have been called out and upon the call from Local 574 the garment workers, cooks, waiters, bartenders, city and county employes and the civil service employes would have joined the strike.

One of the big lessons of the strike to be learned by the unionists is the need for a better organizational form, an industrial form, so that the workers can move more quickly and more solidly to protect their interests. —A SYMPATHETIC STRIKER.

## Workers Show Fighting Ability

The Minneapolis General Drivers strike has demonstrated the truth of one fact beyond contradiction. That is, that the American working class, when properly led and organized, will fight. The workers have shown here in Minneapolis the utter falseness of that old adage, the principal excuse that is used by moral cowards everywhere: "The workers will not strike and they will not fight"

We have shown that in spite of all differences, the workers can and will fight for what they consider to be just demands.

The six thousand drivers, helpers and inside workers joined together in one organization, is living proof that they can be organized and that in this manner, and in this manner only, can they make gains against the modern organization of the bosses. Without inspiration and militant leadership they will continue to drift in the same old rut that has led them nowhere. Such leadership consists principally in having the vision to estimate the extent and scope of the movement, a knowledge of what must be done and the energy to do it.

We consider here that the "New Deal" of the Roosevelt administration for the bosses must be counterposed by a New Deal for Labor. Not the New Deal of the compromisers of Labor who end strikes but do not settle them. It must be a New Deal which will be a new method and a new form of organization. It must secure for the workers victories and not defeats. This New Deal must have first a broader form of organization. The unions must be reorganized on an industrial union basis. Second, it must have leadership which, by understanding of the class problems, can show the way. And third, it

must have the courage to swim against the current, and, by so doing, inspire the workers to organize a better and more militant fight against the bosses.

While the organization and strike of the Minneapolis General Drivers may not be the perfect pattern for a newer labor movement, it has, we think, set a new tone for workers' economic struggles in this country. There are several things which we think are unique in the American labor movement. Within the almost empty shell of an old-time craft union, which up until now had taken into its ranks only truck drivers and helpers, we organized workers from the whole industry. We took not only the truck drivers and helpers from the various business houses, but their inside workers as well. And so when strike became necessary, we presented a solid fighting front to the bosses. We prepared for the strike, not during the strike but before it. Nothing was left to chance. Everything possible was done before the fight to insure victory. When the general labor movement so prepares and so organizes for its future struggles, there will be more victories inscribed on the banners of the working class. —STRIKER.

## General Strike Looms in Toledo

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permitted to postpone the general strike any longer. Nothing can be expected from the strike-breaking Labor Board. The blow must be struck while the iron is hot. The workers have fought magnificently. They are learning to rely upon their own strength. It should be utilized to its fullest extent and every resource drawn upon. Labor defense and relief organizations should be set up immediately to take care of the needs of the workers in the struggle.

### Unite in Support of Toledo!

The urgent need for uniting the forces of labor behind the Toledo strikers is emphasized by an announcement that the automotive industry "will back the Auto-Life Company to the limit in its defiance of labor unions." The Stalinists as usual are sabotaging all efforts for a united front. In New York City, a meeting called to protest the reign of terror in Toledo was answered by every organization approached with the expectation of the Stalinists who called a "united front" meeting of their own. The organizations participating in the meeting include the Socialist Party, the Communist League, the Lovestonesites, the Jewish Workers Party, the American Workers Party and the I. W. W. Similar meetings should be called throughout the country.

The strike wave spreading throughout the country opens grandiose perspectives for the development of the class struggle on a new level. The place of the militants in the workers where they now as ever is in the mass organization lead and guide their struggles.

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Waukegan Br.	4
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Los Angeles Br.	4
Friends of the Mil. Club of Chicago	8
Springfield Br.	4
Previously reported	175
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>219</b>

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### IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

With the appearance of the theoretical monthly magazine THE NEW INTERNATIONAL on June 15th the character of The Militant will definitely change to that of an agitation mass paper.

To effect this change, To guarantee the regular appearance of The Militant, To expand organizationally by keeping comrades in the field FUNDS ARE NECESSARY. Watch for further details regarding the ORGANIZATION-PRESS CAMPAIGN Literature explaining this campaign will be in the mails next week.