

Telegraphers on Strike

State Historical Library

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One year ago and even less the telegraphers' union could not have undertaken such a move as the union is but a recently developed organization.

This accounts for the success of the general strike, unlike the older organizations they are not bound up with local agreement or have agreements expiring every month all over the country. When they settle this strike the agreement will cover the entire country and the agreement for all telegraph operators the entire country over will expire at the same time.

From the standpoint of industrial unionism this is a splendid advance for organized labor.

The strike itself if won means a new development in the struggle of labor and the strike shows that regardless of the reactionary leaders the rank and file of organized labor is forging ahead towards industrial unity and solidarity.

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So far as organized labor is concerned the company is making a good move, it is only forcing the unions into action and making the boycott effective. Courts may grant injunctions against boycotting but no power on earth can compel the union men of Montana to patronize the scab phone or patronize anyone who uses a scab phone.

In order that the injunction be made effective it will be necessary to build large extensions to the jails in this state for there are twenty-five thousand union men in Montana who will not patronize the scab phone.

The fight now is, shall government by injunction win in Montana, that is the issue.

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The phone company may apply for and secure injunctions, but to make such injunctions effective against the entire body of union men in Montana will be rather difficult.

The corporation is bent and is using the courts as a last resort.

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The linemen went on strike last May for the eight-hour day and four dollars a day. The company refused to grant this, but was willing to make an agreement with the men on the long distance wires but not with those working in and around cities. Numerous conferences have been held between the officials of the company and the union. The company made an offer to settle the strike on the nine-hour day basis—which was the work day before the strike—with an increase in wages of twenty-five cents for the linemen in Idaho, Utah and Wyoming and fifty cents a day increase for the linemen in Montana.

This proposition was submitted to the members of the union for a referendum vote and the ballot resulted in one hundred and ninety-two voting against accepting and nine in favor of accepting the company's offer.

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The linemen and the operators have combined and before an agreement is signed it must include a settlement for the unions in all four states in which the strike is on.

The struggle has involved the unions in different cities of the state and now threatens to extend and involve others and where the end is, no one knows. The company is seeking court protection and other unions are hastening to the aid of the unions already involved. In fact, the situation now looks as if it is going to be a show down of the industrial strength of unionism in this state.

The State Federation of Labor will meet in convention next week and the indications are that the delegates will endorse the strike and take means to carry it on to a successful conclusion.

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The unions of Livingston considered the injunction issued by the Federal Courts and resolved not to declare the scab phones fair but to stand by their previous action and would not patronize the scab phones or patronize anyone who patronized the Bell phone.

This means that the corporation will have to concede to the unions' demands or continue to remain out of business in Livingston.

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The merchants who were boycotted, threatened to garnish any union man who owed them a bill if he obeyed the mandates of the union. As a number of workers ran monthly bills at the stores this was a ten strike for the merchants, but the machinists' union of Livingston which is famed all over North America came to the front and voted to pay their members' debts at the unfair stores so that the unfortunate who owed a debt would be at liberty to go and buy where he pleased. Not only that, but the machinists' union voted to give a voucher to the

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longs the strike is that they are concentrating the strength of the machinists' union on that road and insuring against strikes on their other system. This is one way the railroads have of dealing with the labor problem, keep up a prolonged strike on one road and the men on the other roads bleed themselves to death financing the men on strike on the Santa Fe. The best way to do would be to act like the telegraphers, tie up the entire Harriman roads or strike on all the roads in the west and the Santa Fe strike would soon be won.

Men working in the train service on the Santa Fe are being killed right and left owing to the defective engines. Yet the train crews are quite content to use engines fixed by scabs and go to their graves in consequence or at least bury part of their body and go around minus a limb.

Such is the constancy of union men in the railroad service in America.

The machinists employed on the Great Northern and Northern Pacific are now on the verge of striking.

The men demand the nine-hour day, instead of the ten-hour day as at present with the same wages as they are now getting.

In May 1902 the Northern Pacific railway promised to concede the nine-hour day one year hence, or May 1903. When the union representatives went before the company management to make a new agreement in May 1903, the management of the company stated that they could not see their way clear to inaugurate the nine-hour day at that time, but would work with the view of running their shops on the nine-hour basis commencing June first 1904. August 1907 is now here and the Northern Pacific railway has not established the nine-hour work day. Hence the men say that five years is long enough time for the company to prepare to put the shorter work day in operation and if they are not ready now they never will be ready. Unless the company concedes to the demands of the union a strike will take place.

fair stores for every cent of credit that any of their members might contract. The stores accepted the union's voucher. While the union is not incorporated, yet the word of the machinists' union of Livingston is good to any business man in that town.

In a few days the entire business element of Livingston ordered their phones. The telephone company would not settle and the union men were determined to stand by the striking girls. The men of Livingston declared they would win the strike or put the company out of business and they made good as far as Livingston is concerned. The company went into the court and got the injunction that we printed last week. What good the injunction will do them, is a problem. The union men of Livingston have decided that they will stand by their declaration to win the strike or put the company out of business. That they will patronize no business house that uses a scab phone. The merchants of Livingston desire the trade of the union men more than they desire the scab phone. The unions made no threat against any one but merely exercised their unalienable right to buy where they pleased and they bought where the scab phone did not exist. Had all the stores refused to take out the phone and the union men been compelled to buy at stores where the scab phone was, the unions would have established a commissary and distributed the necessities of life from their own union store.

This was the spirit that actuated the union men of Livingston, even if they split up in craft unions. Only a few girls were on strike. Only a few girls were defeated, but a principle was at stake. An injury to one, was the concern of all. The union girls were injured. The union men felt the pain and resisted the attack. Let the union men of Montana meet like men of Livingston and the Rocky Mountain Bell Telephone company can have injunctions ground out till the crack of doom but they will have to treat their employees fair or go out of business in Montana along with their injunction methods.

