

Omaha's Labor Strike Force As a Strike Weapon

AGGRESSIVE DEMANDS by various Omaha labor unions this spring were followed by **AGGRESSIVE ACTION.**

To enforce the demands for recognition of the union, the "closed shop," the right of sympathetic strike, restriction of output and onerous working rules, the unions struck. Some struck for their own demands. Others struck sympathetically.

The strikers then undertook, **BY FORCE**, to compel the employers to accede to their demands. Refusing to work themselves, they further undertook, **BY FORCE**, to compel others who were willing to work to quit the job. Intimidation, violence and the destruction of property were the weapons used.

Violence, Intimidation, Destruction

The Electrical Workers' Union was one of the first to strike. To manage the strike, the union imported from Chicago one Raymond Cleary, a national organizer of the Electrical Workers' Union and a professional at the game, who took up his temporary abode in Omaha at the Fontenelle.

The use of force developed early in this strike. The new residence of Frank T. Ransom was entered at night, lath was carefully removed, every electric switch wire was cut and the lath then carefully replaced, with the apparent hope that the walls would be plastered and the home finished before the damage would be discovered. This was an electrical wiring job being done by a contractor who had refused to concede the union demands.

At the Blackstone hotel, where another contractor not under union control was at work, conduit pipes were uncoupled, brick and wooden plugs were driven in and the pipes then coupled up again so as to prevent the running of electrical wires through the conduits, compelling the uncoupling of many pipes in the search for the plugs.

A building at 1415 Farnam street was broken into at night and practically all of the electrical wiring, placed by a contractor who had refused to obey union commands, was torn out and destroyed.

Men Forced to Leave Jobs.

During this same period, electricians who desired to continue at work in disregard of the command of the union were interrupted at work or stopped on their way to and from home to be forced to listen to threats of bodily harm. Against their own desire to remain at work to earn their living, they were forced, in many instances, to quit.

Affidavits of a number of such instances of intimidation are on file in the district court.

One non-union workman was pursued from his work at night by a gang of pickets who got on the street car with him and whom he evaded only after he had jumped from the moving car and sought police protection. Another workman, similarly followed, was forced to run into a restaurant and dodge out the back door to escape.

Threats in Union Hall

A workman on a residence job, persisting at work in spite of the union order, was "pulled off" under threats, forced to go with the threatening pickets to the union hall and there menaced by many union members, who warned him that he would be "fixed so you can't work" if he did not leave his job.

Threats were made to men who were at work to "get out while your health is good," and that if

the man kept on working he was "liable to find himself in the river, like they did in Chicago." Threats of bodily injury were made good in the case of a man at work, who was hit on the head by a brick thrown at him.

Tools of workmen who stayed by the job-tools of electrical workmen being valuable-were stolen in the night.

Court Enjoins Lawlessness

So serious was the situation that electrical contractors were compelled to ask for an injunction from the district court to prevent the further destruction of property and to stop the campaign to FORCE men from the jobs at which they wished to continue by acts of violence and intimidation.

Immediately upon the issuance of the injunction the violence ceased.

Teamsters Beaten Up.

When the teamsters of the C. W. Hull Co. struck on May 15th there ensued another period of violence and intimidation, designed apparently to force men to join the union and to prevent deliveries of lumber, coal and building material.

The day after the strike began, the company tried to make some deliveries. One of its teamsters, who had refused to quit work at the union order, was assaulted and beaten about the head by one of a group of pickets, just as he was about to leave the company's yard.

Two other drivers, who had stopped their teams to get lunch at noon at Sixteenth and Cass streets, were met by a gang of union drivers as they came out of the restaurant. One was beaten and kicked about the head; the other's face was beaten, cut and bruised.

Deliveries Forced to Stop

These assaults had the desired effect of so frightening drivers who wished to continue their work that the Hull company had to suspend business completely.

This done, the picketing turned to other companies, on which no strike had yet been declared, in an effort to force all team drivers into the union and to stop deliveries. There followed a long list of acts of intimidation, of which the following are typical instances:

Six drivers unloading a car at Fifteenth and Pierce streets were told to "join the union tonight or get off the streets tomorrow."

Police Protection Needed

The Plattner Lumber Co. started a wagon out of

its yard at Twenty-fourth and Boyd streets. The driver, an old employee, was stopped by a crowd of union teamsters and told not to try to make the trip. He was forced to turn back. A police officer saw him through the crowd, but then left. The gang of pickets followed him, shouting threats of physical violence, until police protection was secured and the mob dispersed, it being necessary for a police officer to accompany the team the rest of the trip.

Two other drivers of this company, attempting to make a delivery at 10 o'clock at night, were pelted with bricks, which hit both the men and the horses.

Coal Deliveries Stopped

Deliveries of coal were interrupted by union teamsters at the same time. Drivers for A. L. Havens, coal dealer, were so frightened by threats of violence that Mr. Havens had to mount a truck himself to make necessary deliveries.

When wagons of the Central Coal & Coke Co. started to leave the yard fifteen men climbed on the first outfit and told the driver that he was being warned for the last time; that he could make this one delivery, but no more unless he join the union.

The Coal Hill Coal Co. and other companies found it necessary to call police protection to deliver coal absolutely necessary to the continued operation of downtown buildings, such as the Fontenelle hotel, the Omaha National Bank building and The Bee building. To protect the drivers on these wagons from violence policemen had to ride alongside the load.

The drivers thus threatened were not imported strikebreakers, but regular employees, whose only sin was that they desired to remain at work.

Men Assaulted

Wagons crossing the Missouri river bridge from Council Bluffs, bringing building material to Omaha, were met by gangs of pickets and the drivers were unable to proceed until police protection had been secured to make it safe for them to drive up Douglas street to Sixteenth street.

Meanwhile, a boiler-maker, who was at work in a shop whose owner would not give in to union demands, was mysteriously beaten up at night. Two other boiler-makers were assaulted by striking union boiler-makers just as they were boarding a street car to go home.

A system of picketing boiler shops, material and coal yards and planing mills was and is maintained with groups of strikers shouting threats and slurs at men who keep on at work.

The Union Says:

"YOU MUST NOT WORK"

These are but samples of many instances of violence, intimidation and destruction of property accompanying a campaign to make men quit work and to force employers to shut down. As a result, numbers of men, many with families to support, have been forced to QUIT WORK AGAINST THEIR OWN DESIRE. This campaign still continues. Police protection is still necessary to safeguard men whose only sin is a desire to work. Is this method of winning a strike the right way?

Business Men's Association of Omaha