



UNION HISTORY

(October 19th at 6pm at the Guy Alexander Conference Room, 312 Central Ave SE, Second Floor)

The Minneapolis Truck Drivers Strike is one of the most important strikes in labor history, On July 20, 1934, police opened fire, shooting 60 strikers in the back and killing two of them. In August, the strike was won by Teamsters Local 574, a huge victory, spurring labor organizing throughout the region.



- ✓ Food and beverages will be provided. Bring your family and friends to learn about 292's labor history.
- ✓ Our history display in the Business Office has many 292 items, to include monthly meeting pins, previous contracts and electrical books.
- ✓ For more information contact John Kripotos at jk@ibew292.org, 612-617-4244 or Steve Yurista at 763-574-1821.

www.ibew292.org/History



A thumbnail sketch of the 1934 strike

Conditions were abominable During the early years of the Depression in the 1930s, Minneapolis was an “open shop” town with few unions to defend workers’ interests and miserable working conditions. Virtually every effort to form a union had been broken by the bosses, led by the employers’ organization, the Citizens Alliance.

A major labor victory The Teamsters Union was a small union locally and nationally. But a core of committed union organizers in Teamsters Local 574 decided the time was ripe, organizing a strike of coal yard workers in February 1934. They won a quick victory, but the companies backed out of the deal. The union spread its organizing to the freight barns, involving drivers and dock workers, and a massive strike was called in May 1934. The union won recognition. But the bosses reneged on that agreement, leading to a third mass strike in July. On July 20, “Bloody Friday,” police opened fire on unarmed strikers, shooting 60 in the back and killing two. Martial law was declared. In August, the companies capitulated, agreeing to recognize the union and institute improved wages and conditions.

The strike had a lasting impact It spurred mass organizing and unionization of workers in Minneapolis and St. Paul, and throughout the region which led to a better life for workers and their families. The Teamsters Union became a major international union.

The strike used innovative strategies and tactics It was the first strike that had a daily strike newspaper, “The Organizer,” which kept workers informed and told their story. The union employed the tactic of “cruising pickets” in which strikers followed scab trucks, and stopped them from operating. The union organized rallies and mass actions with thousands of workers and supporters mobilized in the streets to stop truck traffic. Marches by strikers and their supporters drew upwards of 100,000 people. Employers tried to use the courts to shut down the strike, but the union, “papered the wall with injunctions,” recalled Harry DeBoer, a strike leader. The union was democratically run and had a Committee of 100, a group of union stewards and activists who were a sounding board for strike leaders. It played an important role in keeping the strike on track.

An historic strike The 1934 Minneapolis truckers strike was one of the biggest, most important strikes in the history of the United States and is internationally admired. Along with major strikes in 1934 in Toledo, Ohio, and San Francisco, Calif., it played a pivotal role in the rise of the labor movement in the 1930s.

Key lessons for today’s workers With unions on the defensive these days and increasingly unorganized, workers need to learn how to fight back. The 1934 Minneapolis strike should be celebrated, not only for the heroism of the workers, but as a valuable example of how to organize and win.