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A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TRANE COMPANY MAINTENANCE AND PRODUCTION WORKERS UNION

A Seminar Paper

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate School

Wisconsin State University at La Crosse

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Master of Science in Education

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by

Raymond W. Knutson

June, 1967

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the officers and members of I. A. M. Lodge 21, La Crosse, Wisconsin. This paper would not have been possible without their cooperation.

Introduction

The Trane Company, a leading manufacturer of heating and air conditioning equipment, is located in La Crosse, Wisconsin. The company has plants in Scranton, Pennsylvania, Salt Lake City, Utah, Lexington, Kentucky, and Clarksville, Tennessee as well as in Canada, Scotland, and France.

There are three labor unions involved in the Trane Company operations in La Crosse. One union, Local 1115, represents the tool and die makers employed by the company. A segment of the office employees belong to the Office Workers' Local 44. The largest group of employees belong to the International Association of Machinists, Lodge 21. I. A. M. Lodge 21 represents almost 2,000 production and maintenance workers. This paper is concerned only with the last group.

The author, having been employed by the Trane Company and a member of Lodge 21 for ten years, has chosen to write on this subject. The purpose of the paper is to explore the thoughts and ideas of the men who started this union movement. It is also written to show the improvements in working conditions and financial gains attained by the union for its members.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TRANE COMPANY PRODUCTION AND MAINTENANCE WORKERS' UNION

ABSTRACT

A small group of the Trane Company employees of La Crosse, Wisconsin, began a labor movement in 1933. The original group became affiliated with the American Federation of Labor and was known as the Cliffwood Federal Labor Union, Local 18558. Although "Cliffwood" was dropped from the title, the organization continued to be known as F. L. U. 18558. Major accomplishments under the local organization included the right to act as the bargaining agent for the production and maintenance workers, a union shop, wage increases, fringe benefits, and a pension program.

In 1958 the local body voted to join the International Association of Machinists. It became Lodge 21, of the I. A. M.

The sources used for this paper include official union records, letters from the union files, questionnaires to early union members and local newspapers. The paper is not meant to be an exhaustive study, but rather to record the major achievements of the union.

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CHAPTER I

EARLY ORGANIZATION

In 1933 a number of Trane Company employees joined together to form a labor union. Under the leadership of Jacob Buchel, at present the owner of the La Crosse Awning and Tent Company, the group affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. The A. F. of L. issued a charter on August 28, 1933 to the Cliffwood Federal Labor Union 18558 of La Crosse, Wisconsin.[1] Dropping "Cliffwood" from the title, the union took the name Trane Company Employees' Federal Labor Union 18558.[2] This title remained in effect until 1958, at which time the members voted to join an international organization.

General reasons for this movement are found in answers to questions submitted to union members of 1933. The lack of a method of bargaining with the company, low wages (thirty-four cents an hour at that time), and the need for a system of seniority to provide job security prompted them to take action.[3]

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[1]Charter in office of I. A. M. Lodge 21.

[2]Letter from the Wisconsin State A. F. of L. office to Jacob Buchel, August 1, 1935. Letter on file in the office of the I. A. M. Lodge 21.

[3]Questionnaire sent to early union members. See Appendix D.

Although the group did organize a union and receive a charter from the American Federation of Labor, gaining recognition from the Trane Company proved a much more difficult matter. In an attempt to gain recognition for the union, John Farrell, the union secretary, sent letters requesting that pressure be applied on the Trane Company. These requests went to local chapters of the United Association of Journeymen Plumbers and Steamfitters and to local units of the Sheetmetal Workers International Association throughout the United States and Canada. Fifty-four of the locals responded with replies to the Trane Company.[4] These letters implied that the company should recognize the union because union men were installing the company's products. Many of the answers contained a veiled threat of union refusal to install non-union products. The letter below is representative of those received by the Trane Company.[5]

February 24, 1933

Trane Company
La Crosse, Wisconsin
Dear Sirs:

We regret to say that we have been informed by the Cliffwood Federal Labor Union No. 18558, that your company officials have refused to come to any kind of agreement with the employees of your factories, as an organized body.

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[4]Copy of the letters from John Farrell to various union locals January 4, 1933 is on file in the office of I. A. M. Lodge 21.

[5]Letter from Local #313 Jackson, Michigan to Trane Company. On file in the office of I. A. M. Lodge 21.

> The attitude of our body is, there is no excuse for any manufacturer to refuse to comply with Section 17 of the National Recovery Act and to display and label 100% N. R. A. and Union Made product.
>
> We have used Trane Company products in this section of Michigan for some years and hope to hear in the very near future that the Trane Company is willing to go along with our National Administration to the extent of paying their employees a FAIR or at least a living wage.
>
> With very best regards for a better trade, we are
> Yours very truly,
> L. U. #313
> R. W. Reed, President
> A. Norman Fin, Secretary

The many letters received by the Trane Company had little effect on its reluctance to recognize the union. Still during the next few years, the union slowly gained in membership. In spite of this increase of membership, the union did not receive recognition until passage of federal legislation in the form of the National Labor Relations Act.

This act, also known as the Wagner Act, became law in 1935. Provisions of the bill gave workmen the right to organize, and to bargain collectively. The bill forbade employers to interfere with or discharge employees for union activities.[6]

The Wagner Act aided a number of Trane Company employees to retain their jobs in 1936. A problem developed when the company decided to change the work week from forty to

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[6] J. G. Rayback, History of American Labor, New York: Macmillan, 1959, pp. 341-342.

forty-four hours. The union had previously voted to work a forty-hour week and its members were bound to this decision. Twenty-seven union members were called into the office of Superintendent Smevog and questioned by Vice-President Erickson on March 31, 1936. The question put to these men as to whether or not they would work a forty-four hour week could only be answered "yes" or "no". "No" or an indecisive answer resulted in immediate discharge. The discharged men were not allowed to return to their departments for their personal belongings.[7] The discharge of these men for union activity proved to be grounds for an unfair labor practice suit against the Trane Company. The company reinstated the men before the case could reach the courts.[8]

With Federal legislation backing them, union officials called for an election to determine the sole collective bargaining rights for the production and maintenance workers of the Trane Company. The election was held on June 5, 1937, under the direction of the Wisconsin Labor Relations Board. The vote favored the Federal Labor Union Number 18558 by a large margin. At the time of the election there were 478 eligible votes cast of which 390 favored the union as a

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[7]See Appendix C for an example of affidavits sworn to before attorney Frank Schneider.

[8]From Questionnaires sent to early union members. See Appendix.

bargaining agent and only 88 voters opposed it.[9]

Trane Company officials presiding over the elections were Fred Frey and L. H. Eckhardt. Others were Walter Ender and George R. Wisenhuegel for the union. Sig Wateski and Norman E. Schultz from the Wisconsin Employment Agency, and F. L. Kramer, city clerk of La Crosse, an impartial official.[10]

The winning of the election gave the union its first legal authority and recognition by the Trane Company of La Crosse.

[9]Copy of election results from files of I. A. M. Lodge 21.

[10]Ibid.

CHAPTER II

UNION GAINS

The union's newly-gained recognition and bargaining rights were soon put to use. A one-year contract went into effect in 1938. This contract established a forty-hour work week, time and a half for overtime, and double time for Sundays and holidays. It provided for seniority, a minimum wage of fifty cents an hour with a five-cent shift premium,[1] and paid vacations. Company rules concerning discharge, theft, tardiness, safety, and accidents were included in the contract. The company also agreed to recommend that new employees join the union.[2]

Only minor changes took place in the next three contracts and the wage rate remained at the fifty cent an hour minimum. The 1939 agreement provided for a simple grievance procedure. The union and the company agreed on a system of job transfers within the plant in the 1940 and 1941 contracts.[3]

By 1942 the seniority list increased to 609 men. Major changes in the 1942 and 1943 agreements included a raise to a sixty-five cent an hour minimum, inclusion of com-

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[1]Wage premium for workers on second and third shifts.

[2]Labor Agreement 1938 is on file in the office of I. A. M. Lodge 21.

[3]<u>Ibid.</u> 1939, 1940, 1941.

pany safety rules, and the privilege of wash-up time before lunch periods and quitting time. Only jobs such as painting, core making, grinding, and plating were granted wash-up time.[4]

No changes took place in the 1944 and 1945 contracts. The 1946 contract increased the minimum wage rate to eighty-four cents with the possibility of ninety-four cents after the worker gained experience on the job. An increase of ten cents an hour and a two and one-half cent improvement in the third shift premium went into effect in the 1947 and 1948 agreements.[5]

After months of negotiations in 1948, a contract acceptable to both the union and the company had not been attained. The parties involved were at odds on almost all points. The union wanted a thirteen cent an hour raise in pay but the company offered ten cents. The problem of a union shop offered the other major point of dispute. With a thousand workers eligible to vote, a strike vote took place on June 22, 1948. The union favored a strike by 837 votes to 32 votes and Union President Earl Mahnke called for such action the next day.[6]

Negotiations continued for the next five weeks. The

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[4] Ibid. 1942, 1943.

[5] Ibid. 1944 through 1948.

[6] The La Crosse Tribune, June 23, 1948.

union members finally accepted a two-year contract on July 25, 1948. Important financial gains included a twelve cent an hour wage increase and six paid holidays. From labor's viewpoint, the most important part of the contract was the recognition of the union shop. This fact meant that all Trane Company production and maintenance employees would have to join the union.[7] The company retained the right to hire new employees on a probationary basis. Once the new worker had been accepted by the company, it became mandatory for him to join the union if he continued to work for the company. The union shop gave the union greater bargaining power. The added membership improved the financial position of the union, enabling it to better carry on its work.

The company and the union agreed upon a five-year contract for the period of 1950 to 1955. Acceptance of this long term contract by the union came about because of a cost-of-living clause. One cent an hour would be added to wages for each 1.25 point increase in the Bureau of Labor's Consumer Price Index. The statistics of 1935-1939 equaled 100. When the index reached 171.45, the first one-cent raise would go into effect. There would be no reduction in wages if the index fell below 171.44. Adjustments were to be made every three months. Other financial gains included a ten-cent an

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[7] Ibid., July 26, 1948.

hour across the board raise with a four-cent increase on the contract anniversary. Paid vacations were extended to three weeks, the additional week applied only to men with fifteen years of seniority.[8]

Negotations between the company and the union again posed a strike threat in 1955. President Darrell Ferris obtained strike sanction from the union body on July 9, 1955. The membership rejected a company proposal on July 24, by a vote of 1468 votes to 33 votes. The union members also refused to accept a last minute offer by the company on August 1. After this rejection, the president called a strike and picketing began.[9]

The main differences between the company and the union were over the length of the contract, grievance procedure, and the wage package. The union aimed for a one-year contract against the company's insistence for a longer pact. The union fought for improved grievance procedure, for better handling of complaints as they arose and on company time if necessary. Wage increases by labor grade,[10] the insurance package, and vacation time added to the dispute.[11]

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[8]1950-1955 Labor Agreement on file in the I. A. M. Lodge office.

[9]Official mimutes of I. A. M. Lodge 21, August 1, 1955.

[10]Wage rates based on skill and responsibility.

[11]La Crosse Tribune, August 5, 1955.

The company presented another offer to the union body on August 13, containing a one-cent-an-hour increase for the lower labor grades. The union rejected the offer by a vote of 1,081 to 66.[12]

The greatest problem still remained, the wage package. The company and union officials felt that an increase in wages by labor grades should be used and not an across-the-board raise. This method would grant a nine-cent an hour raise to the top labor grades, and reduce to a cent and a half the increase for the lowest labor grade. With the majority of the workers pegged in the lower grades, it proved difficult to get them to accept this type of contract. The three year contract, as accepted by a 900 to 128 vote on September 10, 1955, was the same as the rejected offer of August 13.[13]

The pact as accepted contained a wage rate of $2.06 an hour for labor grade one with a three-cent reduction for each lower grade to grade nine. Shift premiums remained at six and ten cents. The agreement also included a four hour paid holiday for December 24 and December 31. The insurance package gave hospital, health and accident, and life insurance protection to union members. The hospital insurance covered

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[12] Ibid., August 14, 1955.

[13] Ibid., September 11, 1955.

members' families also.[14]

A five-year agreement, reached during the 1955 negotiations, put a pension program into effect. A retired individual would receive $1.50 per month for each year of continuous service with the company. Only the period of employment from age thirty would be used, with a maximum of thirty-five years of service. Vesting in the program went into effect after ten years of participation. Later improvements made included all years of service with the company and an increase to $2.25 per month for each year of service.[15]

Gains made by the Federal Labor Union 18558, over a period dating from 1933 to 1958, were many and varied. The contract negotiated in 1955 proved to be the last under the old union. Though the personnel remained, twenty-five years of negotiating under F. L. U. 18558 came to an end in 1958.

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[14] 1955-1958 Labor Agreement on file in I. A. M. Lodge 21 office.

[15] Office of E. Oenes, from records of the Pension Department of Trane Company.

CHAPTER III

I. A. M. LODGE 21

INTERNATIONAL AFFILIATION

Following the merger of the Congress of Industrial Organizations and the American Federation of Labor in 1955 a movement began to bring local unions into affiliation with international organizations. The Trane Company union, affiliated with the American Federation of Labor but not with an international association, became a target of several groups.

A special meeting held on May 17, 1958 allowed representatives of the internationals to present the advantages each had to offer. Men from the United Auto Workers, the Plumber and Steamfitters, and the Machinist International were alloted time to present their cases to the local union members. Each international also mailed and distributed literature to further its cause.[1]

To permit the local to select an international with which to affiliate, Trane Company allowed an election to be held on its premises. Under union supervision this election took place during working hours. The union chose the International Association of Machinists principally because of the thirty dollar a week strike benefit which was greater than

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[1]Official minutes of I. A. M. Lodge 21, May 24, 1958.

the fifteen dollars offered by the others.[2]

Joining the I. A. M. had little effect on settling contract problems. The first contract negotiated by Lodge 21, I. A. M. required almost ten months of bargaining. With negotiations lagging, Union President Harry Olson called for a strike sanction. Balloting held at the union offices on July 24, 1958 resulted in an overwhelming majority of 1,036 votes to 38 votes favoring the sanction.[3] After months of further negotiations by the bargaining committee, a three-year contract was finally accepted April 2, 1959 on a very close vote, 795 to 687.[4]

This contract set wages in the top two labor grades at $2.41 an hour with a six-cent increase for the next two years. Labor grades three, four and five gained four cents an hour while grades six through nine received only three-cent raises on the anniversary dates. Improved hospital insurance went into effect with employees contributing $2.60 toward monthly premiums. Any rebates from the insurance carrier would be used to reduce employee's insurance premiums.[5]

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[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., July 24, 1958.

[4]Ibid., April 2, 1959.

[5]1959-1961 Labor Agreement on file in the office of I. A. M. Lodge 21.

Six years of comparative harmony in company and union relations ended with the longest strike in the union's history, that of 1961. Because of a stalemate at the bargaining table, the union members granted strike sanction on July 8, 1961. Two company proposals were rejected by the membership, one on August 3, the other on August 19. Following a special meeting on August 21, the long and bitterly contested strike began.[6]

The union sought a ten-cent across the board wage increase, company payment of insurance premiums, a share in choosing the insurance carrier, check-off of union dues, job evaluation revision, and changes in severance, vacation, holiday and bereavement pay, and sick benefits. The union also sought to retain a very important point in the contract, a cost-of-living clause. The Trane Company offered pay raises based on labor grades, omission of the cost-of-living bonus clause, and control of insurance rebates. The thirteen cent an hour cost-of-living bonus, in effect, would be incorporated into the base rate of pay.[7]

During a special meeting, held on September 2, a secret ballot rejected a company offer by a margin of 228 votes. The same proposal had been previously rejected by a voice vote.

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[6] La Crosse Tribune August 21, 1961.

[7] Ibid.

By a slight majority of 87 votes, another contract was refused on October 24.[8]

In a letter to the union membership Thomas A. Rodman, Trane Company labor relations man, announced that the insurance program would stop during the strike as of August 21, 1961.[9] Letters were mailed to the homes of union members stating the company's position concerning the strike. A full-page statement also appeared in the La Crosse Tribune on October 26, 1961. The advertisement again stated the position of the company and urged workers to return to their jobs.[10] D. C. Minard, Trane Company president, sent letters to the union inviting them back to work to prevent what he called "a disaster to La Crosse operations". The letter stated that men who failed to report for work would be subject to replacement.[11] Lodge 21 replied saying that any action by an employer to interfere with or discourage a strike is an "unfair labor practice", adding that the right to strike is guaranteed by the National Labor Relations Act. The same act protects the union members as employees, the union said.[12]

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[8]Official minutes of I. A. M. Lodge 21, October 12, 1961.

[9]Letter from T. A. Rodman to I. A. M. Lodge 21, August 21, 1961; copy of letter on file in union office.

[10]La Crosse Tribune, October 26, 1961.

[11]Ibid., October 31, 1961.

[12]Ibid.

During the strike production continued at about one-third capacity. Some 640 men from the office workers, foremen, and other company personnel were put to work on factory production. This move enabled the company to ship completed orders and to meet deadlines on some rush orders. None of the personnel involved were union members.[13]

Actions by both parties caused unfair labor charges to be filed by the company as well as the union. The union filed a grievance against Trane Company concerning vacation pay and insurance. The company in a letter to the union stated that fines and reprisals must not be levied against union members who might return to work on company invitation.[14] The return to work invitation of the Trane Company remained untested. Before the deadline was reached, the union accepted a contract on October 31, 1961 by a vote of 954 to 584.[15] The contract offered only a slight change in the insurance plan when compared to the pact that had been rejected one week before.[16]

In settling the strike both the company and the union dropped the charges filed against each other. The settlement

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[13] Ibid.

[14] Ibid., October 29, 1961.

[15] Official minutes of I. A. M. Lodge 21, October 31, 1961.

[16] La Crosse Tribune, November 2, 1961.

provided that wage increases would be based on labor grades ranging from a three-cent increase in labor grade nine to a nine-cent increase in the top grade. With the elimination of the cost-of-living clause, the thirteen-cent an hour bonus became part of the base pay. The change in insurance amounted to one-tenth of a cent an hour and allowed the company to retain a $64,000 rebate and all future rebates as well.[17]

The Trane Company strike of 1961 caused a great deal of concern among the business, political, and religious leaders of La Crosse. The Catholic clergy was called together by Bishop John P. Treacy to pray for and to attempt to find a means of reaching a settlement of the strike. Members of the La Crosse Ministerial Association offered their services in whatever capacity they could be used. Members of the clergy supervised the voting by secret ballot on a number of company offers to the union. The La Crosse Businessmen's Association urged that the offers of the Trane Company be made public and that the secret ballot be used by the union on these proposals.[18]

Mayor Milo Knutson expressed his views concerning the strike. During a television appearance, the mayor gave warnings of "it can't happen here" by reminding union members of the loss of the Auto-Lite plant and the closing down of oper-

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., October 19, 1961

ations by the Northern Engraving Company. He urged the union to play it safe by accepting less because La Crosse needed industrial peace more than union members needed a ten-cent an hour raise.[19]

Again on October 23, Mayor Knutson felt that it was his duty to present his views to the public by television. In this appearance he reminded the people of strike votes taken by the unions of Allis Chalmers and the La Crosse Rubber Mills. If strikes came about at these plants, along with the strike at the Trane Company, the prospects of getting new industries to come to La Crosse would be virtually impossible, he said. The mayor added that the economy of the city would be greatly hampered by strikes against three of the major industrial employers of La Crosse. He also stated that the union should be concerned with the welfare of the city and placed the responsibility for the settlement of the strike on the union.[20]

The concern shown by civic groups did not affect the settlement of the strike. The mayor's address had an adverse effect on the strike settlement because union members felt he favored management. Much of the resentment expressed by the union leaders came from the fact that these outside groups

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Ibid., October 23, 1961.

were concerned with the welfare of the city and not for the union members.[21] Although it is only supposition, the threat by the company to replace those people who did not return to work on invitation, plus eleven weeks without pay checks, were probably the greatest factors influencing the settlement of the strike.

A contract agreed on for 1964-1967, without a work stoppage, contained a check-off system. Under this system, union dues would be deducted from union employee's wages by the company. A change in paid vacations gave workers with three years' seniority a week and a half vacation. Members with five years of service received two weeks, those with ten years of service three weeks of vacation time. A new step added allowed four weeks of vacation time for employees with twenty years of seniority. Both December 24 and December 31 were added as full-paid holidays. A death in the immediate family of a union member called for two days off work with pay. When on jury duty a union employee would receive the difference between jury pay and his regular wages from the company.[22]

Hourly wage rates under this contract gave labor grade one $2.98 in 1964, $3.05 in 1965, and $3.12 in 1966. These rates were scaled down for each labor grade until at grade

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[21] Ibid., October 24, 1961.

[22] 1964-1967 Labor Agreement on file in the office of I. A. M. Lodge 21.

nine workers received $2.44 in 1964, $2.49 in 1965, and $2.56 in 1966. Shift premiums were increased to eight cents for the second shift and to twelve cents for the third shift.[23]

[23] Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

PRICE OF SUCCESS

The thirty-three year existence of the Trane Company Union of La Crosse has produced many improvements for its members. A movement that began with a handful of men in 1933 has grown to an organization with a membership of 2,000 in 1966. Gains have been made in working conditions, bargaining rights, grievance procedures, and in financial areas.

Many of the union's gains were due to federal legislation enacted because of organized labor's influences on legislative bodies. Nationally, the Wagner Act of 1935 and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 gave unions legislative backing. Much of this legislation is only applicable when workers organize to take advantage of it. The pension plan of the Trane Company union also followed a national pattern of pension programs gained by larger and more powerful labor groups.[1]

The gains made by the union were not without cost to the union members. Each person who participated in the three strikes lost about $1,500 in wages. A person who had been a member of the union from its start in 1933 would have paid out approximately $825.00 in union dues and fees.[2] Hardships

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[1]Paul P. Harbrecht, Pension Funds and Economic Power, New York, Twentieth Century Fund, 1959, pp. 38-40

[2]See Appendix B.

suffered by families of many union members during the periods of strikes must also be considered as part of the cost of the gains made by the union.

Increased union membership must be attributed primarily to the growth of the Trane Company's operations in La Crosse. The fact that the union gained a union shop is another prime factor in the union's growth.

Because of its growth and its gains over the years, the history of the union movement of the Trane Company employees would indicate that it has become a successful movement.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

PRESIDENTS OF THE TRANE COMPANY UNION

1933-1935	Walter Heyns
1935	Leonard W. Affeldt
1936-1938	Walter Enders
1939-1941	Carrol E. Nolan
1942-1943	Theodore James
1944-1948	Earl Mahnke
1949-1950	Rinold Raatz
1951	Earl Mahnke
1952	Rinold Raatz
1952-1953 from June 1952	Adolph Vaundrey
1954	Clifford Gates
1955-1956	Darrell Ferris
1957	William Lemke
1958-1959	Harry Olson
1960	Lambert Glubka
1961-1964	Clarence Lokken
1965-1966	Lambert Glubka

APPENDIX B

UNION DUES AND FEES

FEDERAL LABOR UNION LOCAL 18558 TRANE EMPLOYEES

Dues 1933-------$1.10 per month---------Initiation fee $2.00

Dues 1938-------$1.10 per month---------Initiation fee $2.00

Dues 1952-------$1.50 per month--------Initiation fee $15.00
.25 for welfare fund

Dues 1958-------$4.00 per month----------I. A. M. Initiation
.50 welfare fund fee $15.00
.50 building fund

Dues 1959-------$4.50 per month----------I. A. M. Initiation
.50 welfare fund fee $15.00
.15 building fund

APPENDIX C

La Crosse, Wisconsin
March 31, 1936

Complaint of Walter Heyn against the
Trane Company of La Crosse, Wisconsin

I have been employed by the Trane Company for the past ten and one-half years. My recent employment was in the capacity of solderer. There has never been any complaint made to me about my work. I am President of Local Union No. 18558 with jurisdiction over the employees of the Trane Company. I am Chairman of the bargaining committee. I have, from time to time, been in conference with the Trane Company in an effort to secure improvements in our working agreement. These negotiations, while not entirely successful, have been reasonably harmonious until March 31, 1936. In fact, I was under the impression that we were making progress towards a satisfactory solution of our problems. On March 28, 1936, in violation of our agreement, a notice was posted on the clock that beginning Monday, March 23rd, the plant would operate 44 hours per week instead of the usual 40 hours. To this notice the bargaining committee objected, contending there should be no change in working hours until it was mutually agreed to. However, the company arbitrarily undertook to change these working hours to which we objected, and as President of the local union I advised our membership to work the usual 40 hours as provided in our agreement, and no more. At a meeting on March 28, the local union voted to continue working 40 hours per week until negotiations were terminated or a change mutually satisfactory was made. On Monday, March 30, along with others of the committee we were in conference with the officials of the company for two and one-quarter hours in an effort to arrive at an agreement. Our conference failed to arrive at a conclusion and without any notice that further negotiations were broken off, the company arbitrarily posted a notice that the plant would operate 44 hours per week instead of 40 hours, and everyone reporting for work would thereby agree to abide by the company's order.

On Monday, March 30th, Mr. Trane, President of the company, Mr. Erickson, Vice-president, and Mr. Smevog, Superintendent, called the men together and by a show of hands forced them to vote "yes" or "no" on the proposition of working 44 hours per week, under duress and intimidation by the reason of the presence of these employers, by connecting the proposition of working 44 hours per week with a 2½% increase in wages which had been granted on March 16, 1936. By these

methods they induced a large number of employees to vote to work 44 hours per week according to the company's tabulation, a majority so voted. I, among several others, refused to vote. On Tuesday morning, March 31, 1936, I was called into the office of Superintendent Smevog and questioned by Mr. Erickson, the Vice-president of the company who said, "Are you willing to work 44 hours according to the company rules, "yes" or "no". I said, "I reported to work this morning." He said, "I want you to answer my question. It means your job." I answered that he should give me a little time to think it over. When Mr. Erickson said, "No, you can't go back in there and consult anyone." They had the door locked behind me to prevent me from returning into the factory. He then stated, "You have had two years to think it over. We have monkeyed with you fellows for two years, and it has to be stopped now, meaning the union." "We are running this place our way. You answer "yes" or "no". I said, "Not under these circumstances." He instructed the stenographer, "That means no." He told me to quit right now. I said, "I did not quit. You mean you fired me." He said, "You are through."[1]

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[1]Affidavit sworn to by W. Heyn before Attorney F. Schneider---from union files of I. A. M. Lodge 21. There are twenty-seven such affidavits on file in the union office.

APPENDIX D

As a means of obtaining information concerning early union activities, letters and questionnaires were mailed to early members of the union. A list from the files of I. A. M. Lodge 21, supplied the names. Stamped self-addressed envelopes were enclosed with the questionnaires. Seventeen requests for information were mailed and eleven men responded. Samples of letter and questionnaire are given below.

1221 Charles Street
La Crosse, Wisconsin

My dear Mr. :

As a former employee of the Trane Company, I have chosen to write a history of the Trane Company Union as a seminar paper for my master's degree. In going through old letters in the union files, I came across a listing of early union members. I would appreciate it very much if you would answer the questions on the following page. This is the only way I can get the facts and the feelings of the men involved in the early union movement.

A prompt reply will be appreciated. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Raymond W. Knutson

Questionnaire

1. What were your reasons for taking part in forming a union in 1933?

2. Were threats made by the company officials in an attempt to discourage organizing? If any, what were they?

3. Were you discharged in 1936 over the 44-hour week put into effect by the company? If so, how and why were you rehired?

4. Can you suggest the names of men who were considered leaders in the early union movement?

5. Can you suggest men whom I might contact on these questions?

Summary of Answers Received on Questionnaire

Question:

1. Eleven gave low wages as the main reason. Six sought job security and four designated bargaining rights as a necessity.

2. Eleven answered no.

3. Eleven answered no. Four gave credit to the Wagner Act for reinstating those who had been discharged.

4. Three suggested Walter Heyn (deceased). Six suggested Jacob Buchel.

5. All answered no.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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PRIMARY SOURCES

Affidavits from union files

Sworn statements of twenty-seven men who were discharg-
for union activity.

Labor Agreements

Union contracts from 1938 until 1967.

Letters from the files of I. A. M. Lodge 21

Request for aid in gaining recognition and answers
from other union locals.

Official minutes of union meetings

Records of union secretaries.

Questionnaire

Questions concerning early union movements and com-
pany opposition.

Treasurer's records

Aid from Leonard Affelt, treasurer of I. A. M. Lodge
21.

SECONDARY SOURCES

A. BOOKS

Harbrecht, Paul P., Pension Funds and Economic Power, New
York, Twentieth Century Fund, 1959.

Rayback, Joseph G., History of American Labor, New York,
Macmillan, 1959.

B. NEWSPAPERS

The La Crosse Tribune

Issue containing strike information, especially issues from June 22, 1948 to July 25, 1948, August 1, 1955 through September 12, 1955, and from issues August 21, 1961 through November 1, 1961.