

PERRY S. BOWER

60 OSBORNE ST., NORTH
WINNIPEG

September 13, 1966.

His Worship Mayor Ivan Allen, Jr.,
Atlanta, Georgia.

Dear Mayor Allen:-

I have been reading with interest about the striking firemen in Atlanta.

First of all, I commend you on your firm stand. In my opinion, a strike, under any circumstances, is a form of blackmail, particularly when a strike occurs in an important service industry essential to the health and safety of the community, when it becomes a form of social blackmail which sooner or later, I am sure, will not be tolerated.

In 1919, we had a "general" strike in Winnipeg at which time did not only the Fire Department go on strike but so also did the Police, Garbage Collectors, Bus and Streetcar Operators, Telegraph Operators, Postal employees, Telephone Operators, and Printers. There were other workers in less important jobs who also went on strike which lasted for six weeks.

The business community organized what was known as a "Committee of 1000". Essential services were maintained by volunteers, particularly the Fire Department which at that time consisted largely of horse-drawn vehicles. In order to prevent the strikers from wearing out the horses by false alarms, it was necessary to keep armed guards on each fire alarm box. An emergency task force of citizens was armed and encamped on several school grounds under the command of experienced military people. After several weeks, the Post Office issued an ultimatum of return to work which was not accepted by the strikers, and all federally employed personnel in the Post Office were discharged and most of them were never rehired.

The strike eventually broke down for two reasons. First, the strikers began to find that their own families were unable to get food, fuel, and ice. Secondly, soldiers returned from overseas after the First World War began to take the jobs that the strikers had vacated and they were

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in no mood to be intimidated. The final straw was the arrest of the strike leaders who were charged with sedition and a number of them were sent to the penitentiary.

There was no serious strike in Winnipeg after that for twenty years. Since then, perhaps the most outstanding strike has been that of the Typographical Union which threatened to close down our two daily papers. This strike occurred in the late 1940's and none of the strikers were re-employed and I don't believe the newspapers missed more than one edition.

In our neighboring province of Saskatchewan, the Public Utility workers have recently gone on strike (the electrical facilities in this case are owned by the Province). The government of the Province has recently enacted legislation which compels the strikers to go back to work at a smaller increase in pay than had been suggested by the Province across the bargaining table. At the moment, we are waiting to see whether the strikers will defy the legislation. If they do, I have no doubt that the government, which fortunately is in a strong position in the House, will take extremely firm steps to deal with them.

I commend you on your stand.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Perry S. Hansen".

PSB/fme