

HISTORY OF I.B.E.W. LOCAL UNION 160

By: Robert Ring ó 1982

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (I.B.E.W.) Local Union 160 was originally chartered on June 25, 1935 in the Twin Cities Minnesota. This was the same year that the National Labor Relations Act, commonly known as the Wagner Act was signed. This law was written òto diminish the causes of labor disputes burdening or obstructing interstate and foreign commerce, to create a National Labor Relations Board, and for other purposes.

Two years prior to this law President Roosevelt instituted the òNew Dealö and the National Recovery Act (NRA) on June 16, 1933. The NRA was designed to stimulate both business and industry during the depression of the 1930ø. Section 7 of the NRA dealt exclusively with labor. Section 7a.1 states:

òEmployees shall have the right to organize and bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing and shall be free from the interference, restraint, or coercion of the employers of labor, or their agents, in the designation of such representatives or in self-organization or in other concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection;ö

Section 7c.3 then states:

òEmployers shall comply with the maximum hours of labor, the minimum rate of pay and other conditions of employmentí ö

These two laws, plus the conditions that existed in the Twin Cities area at this time, allowed for the formation of unions or other worker organizations in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

After World War I Minneapolis was widely known as an òopen shopö town by employers and as òone of the worst scab cities in the countryö to the laborers.

These sentiments stemmed from the fact that any union in town was infiltrated by agents of the employers and/or labor detectives. These two groups were used widely to undermine the unions and to push through the attitudes and suggestions of the employers. The strongest anti-union group of the time was the Citizens Alliance. The Citizens Alliance was comprised of all the major big business executives of the Minneapolis area. The Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce also had a great amount of influence in that many of the members belonged to both groups. Together these two groups lead the area in the formation of anti-union machinery that had the most complete system of underground affiliates in the country. With this amount of influence and firepower every major strike in the Twin Cities area through the 1940ø was fought and a majority of the unions were crushed.

To add to the strength of the anti-unionists was the fact that Minneapolis labor had always come cheap, from the wheat fields of the state. The employers then took advantage of labor in that they could always find available labor for the wages and conditions they had. Senator Charles A. Lindberg Sr. put this idea into words as follows òlabor has been figured as a commodity, treated as such and converted by many employers into great fortunes.ö

To combat the strong anti-union sentiment in Minneapolis, labor was supported by the Wobblies or I.W.W. (Industrial Workers of the World), who were organizing many different labor groups throughout the state. The Wobblies then aligned themselves with the Non-Partisan League from North Dakota. The Non-Partisan League was a group that believed in public ownership of industry and banks, along with anti-war activities and sentiments.

The anti-war sentiments of these two groups and others in the state irritated the state legislature to the point that they voted dictatorial powers to a seven man Commission of Safety. This commission under the cover of a campaign against national disloyalists influenced the U.S. Department of Justice to have a general raid on all the Wobblies from coast to coast. Yet the actual crux of their existence was to crush the Non-Partisan League and other worker organizations in the Northwest. Many Non-Partisan Leaguers were arrested but few were actually convicted or tried.

In July of 1918 the Non-Partisan League, combined with the labor movements in the state, formed the Farmers-Labor Party. This was done so that they could be politically heard and get some legal backing to their ideas and policies. By 1924 the Farmers-Labor Party had a large and strong following. They had changed their name to the Farmers-Labor Association which now had many dues paying members. After the 1930 election the Laborites had many of its members in all aspects of public office. They had even captured the Governors Chair in the person of Floyd B. Olson.

Olson was elected by advocating social change and the betterment of the working man's rights. These ideals were strongly needed in the U.S. and Minnesota at the time. The country was entering into a worldwide depression and the effects of it were already beginning to be felt.

In the early 1930's a few thousand men were homeless, jobless and bedding down in the Missions of the Minneapolis area. The mission support of this many men could not and would not last long, in that under the programs of President Hoover the cities and states had to handle all the types of cash assistance for those people that were looking for some type of relief. By January 1931, 35,000 men were unemployed in the Minneapolis area and by the end of the winter of 1931-1932 the state and local funds were near depletion. To add to the strife of the unemployed all private assistance funds had already ran out. As a result 1932 became the year of discontent; the federal government refused to act and dissidents and agitators were active everywhere. It is surprising to note that at this time the country was swinging politically to the left yet Minneapolis remained rather conservative with an upswing in union activities.

After the first "Hundred Days" of the Roosevelt Administration the city began to calm down. This was a result of the Administration's instituting of the "New Deal" and the NRA; people were now receiving relief and once again had full stomachs. Even under the NRA workers were being exploited as they had been in the past and labor unrest was starting to build. The implementation of the NRA caused an increase in the size of labor unions, as many of the workers began to join. The employers handled this increase by laying off or firing those workers who were trying to or were interested in organizing labor unions.

The Citizens Alliance strongly backed the employers in the termination of employees for it was another attempt to break or crush the labor movement in the Twin Cities. With a record of smashing every major union in a generation the Alliance was more determined to fight unionism in this time of depression and diminishing profits.

In the spring of 1934 the trucking industry of Minneapolis went out on strike. The Strike was the most effective weapon in getting the rights and working conditions for labor, under section 7 of the NRA. The strike caused the breakdown of the economic activities in the Minneapolis area. This major impact was felt because Minneapolis was a major distribution center in the Northwest and trucks were the major source of distribution. The truckers backed by the NRA with the right to join or form unions and the Farmers-Labor political support became the first major challenge to the Minneapolis empire builders. The truckers rapidly became a strong organization under the direction of the Dunne brothers, Farrell Dobbs, and Karl Skoglund, who became the leaders and strategists of the strike. These men had experience in organized labor and most were members of the Wobblies. This knowledge and experience was very beneficial to the striking truckers. The Dunne brothers and Skoglund devised tactics and strike machinery that was to be used in labor strikes throughout the entire U.S. An example of one of these tactics was the "cruising picket squad" which were mobile units of picketers who would be transferred from place to place as they were needed.

These strike tactics and the political affiliation of some of the strikers caused the employers to believe that a Soviet take over was starting in Minneapolis. This could not have been farther from the truth. The laborers only wanted fair representation and better working conditions. With these opinions of the employers and the past belief that labor was at a surplus the Citizens Alliance built up their defenses and would not budge from the idea of Minneapolis as an "open shop" town. The Alliance was all for collective bargaining but did not believe that unions were the way to achieve it. So actually the Alliance was fighting unionism and strictly the rights of the workers.

A long and costly strike resulted, both financially and physically (deaths and bloodshed). Then in August of 1934 a settlement was reached and the first steps toward labor recognition were taken. This settlement had as results, the establishment of wage and hour standards, grievance machinery was set up, and the right to bargain collectively was explicitly recognized.

This was the mood of Minneapolis when Local Union 160 was conceived and started to take a foot hold.

It was in an anti-union, anti-workers organization atmosphere that Local Union 160 was formed. The union first took the shape of 13 men in the Trouble and Overhead Departments of the Minneapolis General Electric Division of Northern States Power Company (the Company or NSP). These men went to the supervisor of their respective departments to discuss a 10 dollar monthly cut in pay. These men felt that they should have some say in the formation of their wages and working conditions of their respective jobs. They were also looking for some type of job security and stability. When their talks with the supervisor did not get results they went to

Local Union 292 of the I.B.E.W. to ask for membership and representation in dealing with the Company. These 13 men were accepted into Local Union 292 at the fee of \$1.00 per month per man union dues. These men had gone to 292 in the hopes that being an established union their position would be better accepted.

Local Union 292 took the workers grievances to a city wide labor review board to get them settled. On this board sat two employees of NSP, President Pack and another minor company official. With this type of influence on the board the results were not too favorable. After meeting with the board Local Union 292 did little else to help the men in their representation with NSP. The men became dissatisfied with Local 292 and set out to form a union of their own.

In June of 1934 these men started a membership push of their own and applied for a charter with the I.B.E.W. for the Twin Cities with the title Local Union 160. By July of 1934 they already had elected union officials and were holding regular bi-monthly meetings at any union hall or rental hall that was available. During the month of July the local was visited by the International Vice-President of the Sixth District of the I.B.E.W., Mr. Mike Boyle. At this meeting Mr. Boyle spoke on the organizing and establishing of a union. He was asked to help organize Local Union 160, in reply he told the membership that a union brought together by its own members is stronger than any organization that is brought together by an outsider. With this in mind by the end of July the local had established a two man membership committee. This committee consisted of the only initiated members of the local, Brother Guss Gerdin and Brother George Phillips. These two members then went to meet with Local Union 292 to ask if any of their members who worked for NSP would join Local Union 160. By transferring to Local 160 the members would have a stronger collective bargaining base and more fraternal support. After this meeting with Local 292 twenty-eight (28) members transferred to Local Union 160.

At the same time Local 160 was also corresponding with the Central Labor Union of Minneapolis (CLU) and Teamsters Local Union 574. These correspondences and later meetings with these two groups had a major influence on Local 160. Local 574 and the C.L.U. taught the membership how to organize, negotiate and how to strengthen the union. Two members of Local 574 became very helpful to Local 160; they are Ray Dunne and Farrell Dobbs, both of whom were heavily involved in the 1934 Truckers Strike. Mr. Dobbs even helped in the negotiations with NSP, by either offering the local advice or sitting in on the negotiations.

One piece of information that both groups gave the local was the condemning of Company Unions or Associations. This advice was left to the whims of the Company. This action by the Company brought all the locals involved together in a committee that discussed the actions of the Company and how these actions would affect the unions. So in effect, the letter of the Company had actually strengthened Unionization in that the Locals were now meeting between themselves and discussing the actions of the Company.

Throughout the remainder of 1938 and through all of 1939 Local 160 was handling negotiations with the Company and also rounding out the functions of the Union. These functions included the inclusion of Union Stewards into the ranks of the membership and the settling of jurisdictional disputes.

The Union Steward is a member of the Local who is either voted into the position or appointed. This member must have a good understanding of the working agreement and must be willing to help others. Not only is the Steward a member but he is also an agent of the Union that is in constant contact with the situations that are governed under the agreement.

Jurisdictional disputes are the infringement of duties that belong to other trades or industries. These were happening very frequently in that there were no formal agreements between the trade unions of the time as to who had the rights to each part of a project or if they had any rights at all. The majority of the disputes that occurred dealt with other locals in the I.B.E.W. and which local had the right to use its members on specific jobs. Local 160 was given the jurisdiction over all work that was done on NSP properties.

By the fall of 1934 the Local was beginning to develop a strong following and its ranks were now over 100 members strong. Even with the increasing union ranks the Local did not give up on its membership drive and it also continued to stress the participation and organization of its membership. In September Mr. McGlogan, Deputy Commissioner of Public Works, spoke to the Local on the NRA and the workers' rights under that law. Most importantly he stressed the need for every working man to get into his respective trade organization and then once in the organization to defend it. Mr. McGlogan then told the membership that when approached by the employer and asked what he, the worker, was expecting from the Union, he was to answer that he wanted "Economic Protection".

Other aspects of Section 7 of the NRA were now becoming obvious all over the country as well as in Minneapolis. Organizing of unions was on the upswing. Almost every trade and industry was now organizing. The workers were also banding together to fight oppressive management and poor working conditions. Sit-down strikes were becoming popular among the workers in the East and Midwest. Once a successful strike had been completed the workers involved would spread the word and help others in similar situations.

Minneapolis had one of these types of union organizations, in the body of Local 574 which was willing to help all those who wished to organize. This Local also carried a lot of authority in that they had defeated the Citizens Alliance in the Truckers Strike of 1934.

It was this type of help that allowed Local Union 160 to put together a labor agreement and have it ready to be proposed to NSP's President Pack in October 1934. This agreement was then taken to Mr. Pack in November 1934. Pack was very enthusiastic about the organization of Local 160 and the first meetings with the Company were a success. At the meeting the Union was given permission to post bulletins and hold meetings in reference to the formation of Local Union 160. This eagerness on the part of Pack did not sit easy with all of the members. This was because the membership had heard speeches and been told stories of how companies had gotten labor to fight amongst themselves. Not to forget the fact that many companies tried to buy off the main organizers with management positions or money. Guss Gerdin, one of the original members of Local 160, was offered an undisclosed management position if he would discontinue his organizational practices. Attempts such as this made the membership more determined to unionize and develop a strong bargaining unit.

In searching for more strength and support Local 160 affiliated with the State Federation of Labor. In doing this they had broadened their base from which to draw knowledge and experience. The union was also beginning to receive more support from Mike Boyle. Mr. Boyle had been sending the local letters in regard to the proposed NSP Labor Agreement.

After the Company had reviewed the Union's proposed agreement they sent their own proposal to the Local. The membership turned down the Company's proposal and all but one of Mike Boyle's suggestions. The membership drafted their proposal and borrowed Boyle's proposed arbitration procedure. This new agreement was then brought before Mr. Pack in January 1935 and the negotiations continued. An important foothold of this agreement was that Local 160 was pushing for 51% membership in all departments that were to be covered by the agreement. In doing so, the Union would have the strength in numbers and could effectively defend their decisions and proposals.

Besides working on the 1935 Agreement Local 160 was also building their local. The Local became active and sympathetic in all strikes and organizing of other locals in the area. Each meeting had time set aside to discuss the events and actions of other locals in the area. Local 160 often helped out financially if they could, which was usually done by attending the dance or picnic of the other locals that were used as fund raisers. By joint participation in such events the brotherhood of the union movement as a whole was stressed. Local 160 also had some brotherhood practices of their own. The Union would send flowers to all members that were ill. This added to the fraternal feelings of the organization, while at the same time adding to its strength. Everyone felt as if they belonged to the group.

In the spring of 1935 the Union had grown to over 250 members strong and was now renting a hall on North 8th Street in Minneapolis. The negotiations with NSP were moving slow and the membership was becoming unhappy for they thought that the Union was now at a standstill. Many believed that the Executive Board and the International Office (I.O.) were not pulling their weight. With this in mind the membership voted to elect new members to the Executive Board, while at the same time they contemplated not paying their per capita dues to the I.O. until they received some type of representation or recognition.

On June 25, 1935 the Local got some of the recognition that they were looking for. They were officially chartered as a member of the I.B.E.W. This also caused some problems in that the Local only had sixteen accredited members in their ranks. So Local 160 had to continue their membership drives and stress that the members be initiated and that they pay their dues regularly. Local 160 sent off a letter almost immediately to the I.O. requesting some type of guidance in correcting this matter. The I.O.'s answer to this letter is unavailable because at that time Local 160 was using a shoe box as its filing system and all of the correspondences prior to 1939 have been lost or misplaced.

After the chartering of the Union the Executive Board took on new duties in that it was given the power to act in place of the membership between the meetings. Besides this new power the Executive Board was also given the authority of the Organization Committee by the membership. The membership also had some more authority given to them in that the 1935 Agreement was officially settled. Even with the unions small bonafide membership they had

won the right to bargain collectively with the Company along with the mechanism to have their demands heard.

With these new found successes the membership decided that they must continue the push for more members and their involvement. So the Executive Board in the capacity of the Organizational Committee decided that an official organizer was needed, so they selected an organizer from Duluth. Even though this was an excellent idea, the Executive Board had decided on a poor choice. This organizer, Mr. Johnson, was a superb negotiator and union man yet he was not dynamic enough to draw new members into the organization. In fact during a week that he was available to hold discussions with perspective or unsure members, no one showed up to visit him at the Local's office. When this approach failed the Executive Board decided to send a committee door to door to visit with the employees of the company to inform and answer questions about the union. Temporary members were also given union cards in that they would increase the Union's membership.

To add to the problems of Local 160, the fall of 1935 was a bad time for the city of Minneapolis. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration started to cut back its relief funds to the local and state governments. The Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) was put into effect, but it did not get underway as quickly as had been expected so there was a lag in relief for many people. Many people were added to the relief roles during this lag period. These relief roles were already functioning over their purposed limits and were quickly becoming depleted. Not to mention the food supply in the city was very poor. Those who depended on bread lines often got food that was stale or unfit for consumption. Both of these problems lead to the Farmer-Labor Association politicians who had campaigned on the promise of higher relief and more food for all. When these officials reached their respective offices they elected to raise the forms of relief as promised. This put a burden on the entire system in that federal subsidies had been taken away or cut back. In order for the city to make sure that the people who needed it most were getting the relief, they started investigating all those who were applying for relief. This action by the city infuriated the rank and file of the city, who felt that the city was snooping into their private lives. About this time the W.P.A. started to remove people from the relief roles and put them to work to earn their relief money. These people were usually put to work building bridges and/or parks.

By December 1935 not only did the Union have external problems but they had internal ones as well. The G.E. Division of NSP had been ignoring different aspects of the 1935 Agreement. The Company was not compensating the employee for overtime as it was stated in the agreement. The Company was paying the proper time and a half, but was not giving the men time off on good weather days as was specified. So the Union was taking these grievances to President Pack to have them taken care of. This was also in conflict with the Agreement, which stated that grievances were to be taken to the supervisors of each department. The problem of the grievances was handled quickly in that committees from both the Union and the Company would meet before the Director of Personnel, Mr. Grenecher, and all the grievances would be handled collectively.

It was once again time for the union to start negotiating another labor agreement with the Company. To help themselves establish better negotiation skills Local 160 called on the talents

of Farrell Dobbs. Mr. Dobbs was Secretary-Treasurer of Local 574 and was a very eloquent speaker and negotiator. Dobbs sat in on the talks with Pack in December 1935. At this meeting Mr. Pack found out what a smooth and knowledgeable negotiator Mr. Dobbs was, at which time Mr. Pack refused to negotiate if Mr. Dobbs was present. Pack then also decided that he would only negotiate in the presence of a representative of the I.O. and then sent his 1936 proposals to the International Office of the I.B.E.W. Local 160 then gets the backing of the American Federation of Labor on the issue of self-representation in negotiations.

At the start of 1936, Local 160 was continuing their membership drives and stresses the importance of paying your dues. To bring about the payment by more members the union restructured the payment system. The dues stood at \$3.00 per month per member, with a \$7.00 initiation fee. The Local approves the payment of the initiation fee at the rate of \$1.00 per month for 7 months. This was done to relieve some of the initial financial burden of the union dues for the members. The importance of dues paying members was the fact that they created a greater voice for the local in the eyes of the I.O. and also gave the Union more funds to work and grow with.

The negotiations with the Company were going strong and Mr. Dobbs stressed the necessity of stating the maximum compensation that was being sought to ensure that when the Company counters the proposal, it is greater than the minimum that you were willing to settle for. The higher you asked the more you stand to make as long as what you are asking is in reason. This technique usually gets the Company to give more than they had originally intended on. Local 160 sent a proposal to the Company with this idea in mind in January and it was not countered until late February.

While waiting to hear from NSP, Local 160 was continuing to be involved in all aspects of union affiliation, the endorsement of strikes to the showing of Union Cards by all workers that the members came in contact with. In doing these things they were once again stressing the importance of the union brotherhood in all trades and industries.

After the union received the counter proposal from the Company, they continued to monitor the actions of the Company. They had been stalling since the beginning of the negotiations and things were not getting any better or moving any faster. Added to the stalling practices of the Company was their proposal of a wage decrease together with ineffective grievance procedures in the eyes of the Company. On the request of the Executive Board the Union called a special meeting of the membership to keep them aware of the past and present events. By the June 29th membership meeting the situation had not been corrected so the Underground and Overhead Departments decided to do something about it, with the Union's backing. On June 30, 1936 the Underground and Overhead Departments voted to strike and it was approved by the membership. The Company still refused to negotiate with two departments out on strike, so in a meeting on the evening of July 1, the rest of the Union voted to join the picket lines. So with the total company strike called and in effect, the Company had an Agreement signed by President Pack and agreed to by the Union and in the Union's hands on July 15, 1936. This agreement did not solve all the problems that existed between the two parties but it was a start.

At the membership meeting of July 15, 1936 Henry Shultz was appointed the Union's first Business Agent. This was an interesting appointment in that Shultz did not belong to the Union nor was he an employee of NSP. He had been of great help with the paper work and formalities of forming the Union besides the fact that he was a friend of both Mr. Dobbs and Mr. Dunne, the influential Organizers and friends of the union.

The remainder of 1936 was spent on the settlement of Seniority disputes between the members and the Company. This was one of the problems that were not settled by the 1936 Agreement. The Union had two separate signed agreements with the Company and neither of them was followed. The Union went to bat for many employees when there was a lay-off or changing of company starting dates that did not follow the agreements. In one such case the Union got a member back to work after he had unfairly been laid off instead of the low man. Not only did the Union get this man his job back but he was also awarded back pay for the time that he had been laid off.

While helping the present members of Local 160 Shultz and his assistant Heigel were out organizing branch locals in St. Cloud and St. Croix Falls. By increasing the membership of the Local to these outlying divisions the Union was able to increase their power and effectiveness in that the Branch Locals would abide by the decisions and actions of Local 160 so that an all company strike would close down more than just the Minneapolis Division. Together with the new divisions the union was starting to increase its departmental memberships. Even with all the success that the Union has had with the Company on the behalf of its members there was still the need to stress the importance of paying the membership dues.

By February of 1937 the NSP Agreement negotiations had hit a standstill and neither side was getting anywhere with the talks. So to get something from the Company the members decided to call a company strike. This strike was an effective tool in that the membership was willing to give up everything while their union was still in its infancy. To further show their intent on the suggestion from I.V.P. Mike Boyle, the Union decided to amalgamate with Minneapolis Local 292 on March 1, 1937. This amalgamation and the influences of Mike Boyle helped Local Union 160 to win the eight day strike with NSP. This was a major landmark in the negotiations with the company in all that was accomplished with the Agreement. This Agreement called for the representation of 3,000 employees even though only 26 of NSP's 5,000 employees belonged to the union. Also, the wage scale was returned to pre-depression levels along with explanation of seniority rights and working conditions. The I.O. played a major role in the negotiations in that they convinced NSP to bargain with only one Union in that they would not have any jurisdictional disputes within the Company in the future. This Agreement had also been developed through the process of sifting through agreements from locals nationwide. But most important of all the accomplishments of the strike was that all those involved were paid for the eight days that they were on strike.

The workings of Local 160 from March 1, 1937 to September 1, 1938 are unknown in that the local was amalgamated with Local Union 292. When conferring with Local 292 it was found that they did not have any records from the 1930's because they had a practice of not retaining their records for long periods of time.

Records for Local Union 160 again became available on August 30, 1938, when they were re-chartered by the I.B.E.W. The official name was Local Union B-160 and their first official act was the election of new Executive Board members and a Business Manager/Financial Secretary. The Executive Board retained all the privileges that they had prior to the amalgamation with Local 292. The Business Manager/Financial Secretary had the job of organizing and informing the membership as to the financial situation of the Union. He also had control over the expenditures of the Union and also its receipts.

Right after the settling of the election Local 160 went about their business of getting a new Agreement with NSP for 1939. The promptness of this agreement was because NSP had again been stalling the negotiations on all aspects of the Operating Agreement. Local 160 now wanted to get the 1939 Agreement settled before the 1938 Agreement ran out.

The major stalling tactic that the Company was using was the unavailability of Mr. Miller, the Director of Labor Relations for the Company. Then when Mr. Miller was available to meet with our representatives, he would not stand by anything that he had agreed on.

In October 1938, President Pack sent out a letter to all the locals representing employees and NSP. This letter stated that NSP was cancelling all agreements with these locals. The Company had done this in the hopes of slowing down the unionization of the Company and maybe a way of putting an end to the union movement in the Minneapolis area. Once the Agreement had been cancelled the employees would be the locals and then sent to the I.O. where the dispute was settled by the International Officers of the Unions in question. This was done by consulting the Constitution of each and any Agreements that exists between the two parties.

A major body was added to Local 160 that was the Seniority Board. This board had the power to assign the seniority dates or company starting dates of the union members. These dates were then used in promotions, lay-offs, and eventually the assignment of a pension. In the development of this board the seniority lists were transferred from the responsibility of the Company to that of the Union. Once the Union had the correct and accurate lists they were given to the Stewards for posting and could be used as a ready reference in case any dispute should arise.

Local Union 160 grew from a group of 13 interested and adventurous men to a strong and influential membership of 1076 in the year 1939. This membership also had grown from two departments to cover workers into four divisions in all parts of the state. With strong membership and one that was looking to the future and expansion I.B.E.W. Local Union 160 had made its mark in the city of Minneapolis. With this it is easy to see how Local 160 grew to its position of status in NSP and throughout the state.

Another important time period for Local 160 was in 1948.

In January 1948, Local Union B-160 of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (I.B.E.W.) took the steps towards a "Union Shop" Agreement that the Local had been advocating since their 1940 contract negotiations with Northern States Power Company (NSP).

The initiation of the "union shop" Agreement came in the form of a petition to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) for the Authority for Bargaining Relative to Union Security. This petition was filed as a result of the passing of the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 (the Act). Section 8(a) (3) of the Act stated the following:

Nothing in this Act or in any other statute of the United States, shall preclude an employer from making an agreement with a labor organization to require as a condition of employment membership therein on or after the thirtieth day following the beginning of such employment or the effective date of such agreement, whichever is the later.

To have effect, such an agreement must be supported by the following conditions of the law:

- a) The labor organization is the designated or selected representative of a majority of the employees of the employer, and
- b) The union has filed required reports and statements with the Secretary of Labor and affidavits with the National Labor Relations Board, and
- c) The National Labor Relations Board has certified, following a secret election that a majority of the employees eligible to vote have voted to authorize the union to make a union shop agreement.

The definition of "union shop" in the Act is different from the definition of a real union shop. In the Act the only way that the union can have a man discharged from his job is expulsion from the Union for non-payment of his dues and initiation fee. The standard or real definition of a union shop is "an organization in which all employees in the bargaining unit must become union members within a certain period of time after they are hired."

Expulsion from the union on grounds other than non-payment does not justify cause for the company to discharge an employee. Also where a membership was not available to a member on "the same terms and conditions generally applicable to other members" the company does not have to require union membership of an employee. Under any other situation, membership in the union is required as a condition of employment.

In considering the Union Shop ruling of the Taft-Hartley Act the Executive Board of Local B-160 took action to comply with the Act. In their regular meeting on January 27, 1948, the Executive Board decided to apply for a petition for an authorization election on the Union Shop issues. This petition was to be filed prior to the start of the 1948 contract negotiations with NSP. Under the Act, to obtain such a petition, the Union needed authorization signatures from at least 30% of the membership in the NSP bargaining unit. To enhance the process of obtaining signatures the Union printed up authorization cards and mailed them to the membership, which was to sign the cards and return them.

Petitions of compliance to the Act must also be supported by two NLRB forms, 1080 and 1085. Form 1080 lists the names and dates of the incumbent union officials. Whereas form 1085 certifies that the Union's financial information is reviewable by the membership.

The Authorization Petition along with these two NLRB forms was filed with the Regional Director of the NLRB in compliance with the Rules and Regulations of the NLRB. Compliance with these rules meant that Local B-160 also had to comply with Section 9 (f), (g), and (h) on the Act. Explained for the purpose of these Rules and Regulations compliance with Section 9 (f), (g) of the Act means (1) that the Labor pursuant to the rules of the Department of Labor; and (2) that there is on file with the regional director, either as part of the charge or otherwise, a statement by an authorized representative of the labor organization under oath, that has such letter, and giving the number and expiration date thereof. To comply with Section 9 (h) the organization must have affidavits on file with the regional director and the General Counsel in Washington D.C. These affidavits should contain the names and description of the offices of the local as well as the names and dates of the incumbents and a sworn statement that the individual, the organization, and the affiliates are not members of the Communist Party or any other organization that believes in or teaches of an overthrow of the U.S. Government.

The form that must be filed with the Department of Labor is the Labor Organization Registration (LOR) form. This form states the Union's officer's names, positions, and wages along with information on the By-laws, Constitution, finances, and dues of the Union in question. This form and the two NLRB forms were all filed in compliance with the Act by the 19th of February 1948.

After filing all the necessary documents with the proper agencies, the Local began to try and resolve a minor dispute with the Company in regards to the upcoming 1948 contract negotiations. This dispute was over the inclusion of Foreman into the bargaining unit. This matter was handled through correspondences between the Union and Frank J. Gleason, Director of Personnel at NSP. It was the contention of the Company that the foremen were supervisors by definition under Section 2 (11) of the Act. They took this position from the fact that foreman controlled the work duties and had the ability to discipline workers when it was needed. The Union sighting previous agreements in which the foremen were a part of the bargaining unit wished to keep them as such under the new provision of the Act.

During the week of March 2, 1948 Local B-160 received a letter from William L. Connolly, Director of the Division of Labor Standards. This letter was a notification from the director that the Local had correctly filed all the necessary paperwork with the Department of Labor and could now proceed with the NLRB Petition. A copy of this letter was sent to the regional director along with a copy of the current (1947) NSP working agreement. The Union then received a letter dated March 9, 1948 stating that the regional director of the NLRB had accepted the Union's petition for Authority for Bargaining Relative to Union Security. This letter was signed by Charles M. Ryan, Regional Director of the NLRB and also informed the Union that the Attorney Erwin A. Peterson would be handling the investigation.

On March 11, 1948 the Union received a registered notice of a joint conference with NSP to be conducted by Erwin Peterson. This conference was to discuss and collect additional information needed by the NLRB to expedite the election petition's processing. This conference was held on March 12, 1948 at 3:00 p.m. in room 801 of the Wesley Temple Building in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In attendance at this conference were Union and Company Officials, who discussed a variety of issues including the size and eligibility requirements of the bargaining unit.

The Union was notified of Erwin Peterson's decision of the election proceedings on March 15, 1948. This decision was a result of the discussions at the March 12th conference with NSP. Mr. Peterson ruled on the extent of the Union Shop Coverage for Supervision. In his ruling Mr. Peterson sided with the Union in that he decided that the foremen should be included in the bargaining unit in the NSP contract.

This decision by Mr. Peterson initiated the signing of an Agreement for Consent Election by Frank J. Gleason, Director of Personnel at NSP and Harry E. Leonard, Business Manager at Local Union B-160. This document was signed on March 19, 1948 in the presence of Charles M. Ryan, Regional Director of the NLRB. The terms of this agreement determined the wording of the ballots, eligibility requirements of the voters, time and place of the election, and the appropriate bargaining unit for the contract. This agreement finalized the filing of the petition and allowed for the election to follow. The date of the election would be determined by Mr. Ryan from a list of suggested dates provided by the Company and the Union.

On April 1, 1948, Mr. Ryan notified the parties of his decision on the time and place of the balloting for the Union Shop Election. The election was to take place on April 15, at the NSP warehouse on 16th and Chestnut in Minneapolis, from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and was to use the February 29, 1948 payroll roster for the list of eligible voters. Elections would also be handled by mail and at outstate NSP generating facilities for those eligible workers who were unable to attend the election in Minneapolis. Along with this notice were election posters and instructions to the election observers. These observers would be allowed to remain at the polling place to assist in the direction of the balloting and challenge any voter whom they thought did not fit the voting requirements.

Between April 1st and April 15th, the Union began campaigning for the passage of the Union Shop Petition. This campaign was handled by the Business Manager at the Union meetings and through memos that were mailed out to all the members in the NSP bargaining unit. These memos stated the importance of the Union Shop and stressed the fact that not voting in the election would be considered a vote against the Union by the procedure of the election. In that, a majority of the eligible voters was needed to pass the Union Shop issues.

When the election was held on April 15, 1948, there were 1,081 eligible voters on the February 29th payroll roster. Of those eligible voters, 1,021 voted, 72 of those were challenged, 22 were void or no votes and 927 members voted in favor of the Union Shop Agreement. Those 927 votes consisted of 86% of the eligible voters and 94% of the voting membership. This type of a response from the employees showed Local Union B-160 that the membership truly wanted representation and that the union was the type that they desired. The voters decision is documented by a Certificate of Results of Union Authorization Election issued and signed by Charles M. Ryan on April 22, 1948.

The results of this election with NSP set a precedent in all of the Unions organizational and negotiating activities from 1948 to the present. At the time of this report (1982) 60% of the Unions contracts are Union Shop and the other 40% of the contract are either Open Shop or Maintenance of Membership.