



Global Nonviolent Action Database

Published on *Global Nonviolent Action Database* (<https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu>)

Granite workers strike, picket, and march against wage stagnation and job insecurity, 1933

1 April

1933

to: 1 June

1933

Country: United States

Location City/State/Province: Barre, Vermont

Goals:

Raise in pay, stopping of paycuts and layoffs

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 016. Picketing
- 116. Generalised strike

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 016. Picketing
- 116. Generalised strike

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 016. Picketing
- 116. Generalised strike

Methods in 4th segment:

- 016. Picketing
- 116. Generalised strike

Methods in 5th segment:

- 016. Picketing
- 116. Generalised strike

Methods in 6th segment:

- 016. Picketing
- 116. Generalised strike

Classifications

Cluster:

Economic Justice

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

Stonecutters' Union, Quarry Workers Union

External allies:

civilians in Barre, ACLU, Vermont Federation of Labor

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Quarry Workers Union
- Stonecutters' Union

Groups in 2nd Segment:

- Quarry Workers Union
- Stonecutters' Union
- civilians in Barre

Groups in 3rd Segment:

- Quarry Workers Union
- Stonecutters' Union

Groups in 4th Segment:

- Quarry Workers Union
- Stonecutters' Union

Groups in 5th Segment:

- ACLU
- Quarry Workers Union
- Vermont Federation of Labor
- civilians in Barre

Groups in 6th Segment:

- Quarry Workers Union
- civilians in Barre

Segment Length: 10 days

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Washington County Sheriff's office, Vermont Governor Stanley C. Wilson, Barre-based Granite Companies, National Guard

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not known.

Campaigner violence:

Armed strikers attacked citizen strikebreakers

Repressive Violence:

Not known.

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

4 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

1 point out of 3 points

In 1933, granite workers in the city of Barre, Vermont (VT), United States labored under nation-wide economic distress. The Great Depression was in its fourth year — a monumental stock market crash throughout much of the world in 1929, combined with a massive drought in the US, placed strain on the capitalist system, putting millions out of work and causing wages and job growth across the country to reverse. Granite companies began cutting staff and offering lower pay raises. In Barre, referred to as “the Granite Capital of the World” by local residents, workers in granite quarries and processing houses grew restless.

Quarry Workers Union and Stonecutters Union workers in six out of the seven companies operating in Barre went on strike on 1 April. In talks with Washington County (location of Barre) Sheriff Henry G. Lawson, union leaders requested to police themselves while picketing — being allowed to maintain their own peace by democratic process. The sheriff did not agree to the unions’ request, posting a small group of deputies near the picket line. However, citizens opposing the disruption attacked protestors, provoking an armed response by some union members.

On 9 April, a little more than a week after the strike began, Governor Stanley C. Wilson ordered 150 deputies to Barre to break the strike. The local community, however, remained supportive, bringing food and other supplies (as well as moral support) to those on the picket line. A federal labor committee, meanwhile, sought an agreement between the companies and the unionists.

On 29 April, Barre granite companies proposed the very same contract which the union initially rejected. The Quarry Workers Union rejected it once more. The Stonecutters Union, however, accepted this agreement, signaling a potential break of the strike on 5 May. In what appeared to be a final blow, the National Guard stepped in on 8 May, causing many strikers to retreat. Most quarries began operations within the next few days, despite community protest efforts — “lodged by farmers, churchmen, the ACLU, the Vermont Federation of Labor, and a committee of Barre businessmen,” according to reporter John Lawson — to remove the National Guard and allow strikes to continue.

By 1 June 1933, the strike had ended, with strikers agreeing to pre-strike wages. Court cases against arrested strikers continued until August.

Research Notes

Sources:

Anon. 1933. "150 deputies ready in granite dispute." The Washington Post (1923-1954) Retrieved 15 April, 2019. (<https://proxy.swarthmore.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/150475643?accountid=14194>).

Anon. 1933. "Tear Gas Checks Granite Strikers." The Washington Post, May 10, Retrieved May 30, 2019. (<https://proxy.swarthmore.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/150454992?accountid=14194>).

Guma, Greg. 2017. "Commentary: Class Struggle in Early 20th Century Barre - VTDigger." VTDigger, 6 Jan. Retrieved April 15, 2019 (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190529181351/https://vtdigger.org/2017/01/06/greg-guma-class-struggle-early-20th-century-barre/>).

Wood, Paul. 2014. "Granite Column Unionizing the Granite Worker." Times Argus. Retrieved April 15, 2019 (https://web.archive.org/web/20190529181457/https://www.timesargus.com/news/granite-column-unionizing-the-granite-worker/article_5fa7bc81-2210-5065-8d32-73744e6247b9.html).

Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:

Matt Koucky, 30/05/2019

A project of Swarthmore College, including Peace and Conflict Studies, the Peace Collection, and the Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility.

Copyright Swarthmore College.



Global Nonviolent Action Database is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivs 3.0 Unported License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).

Original website design and artwork created by [Daniel Hunter](#).

Permissions beyond the scope of this license may be available at <http://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu>.

Registered users can [login](#) to the website.

Source URL (retrieved on 06/28/2019 - 14:17): <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/granite-workers-strike-picket-and-march-against-wage-stagnation-and-job-insecurity-1933>

Links:

[1] <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/category/pcs-tags/local-community-or-neighborhood-level-campaign>