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ONLY a few weeks ago occurred the biggest strike of girls that has ever taken place in this country. Forty thousand shirtwaist makers went to business on Tuesday morning as usual, labored industriously and placidly for one hour, and then, at the giving of an understood signal, suddenly put on their things and walked out, leaving the rooms full of work and the "bosses" of indignation. Now, this sort of thing on a lesser scale is happening all the time all over the country, and so it may be interesting to know how girls run the strikes they make.

They don't go home and help their mothers until their employers come to terms. The society of a tired, tired mother and a house full of children always tearing their clothes or wanting something to eat is not apt to make a girl see the bright side of losing a weekly salary even for a short time. The girls know that if they went home their courage would be likely to sizzle out at the end of an hour. So they run "headquarters."

"Headquarters" at the beginning of a big girls' strike is usually a rather large, dingy building that is literally packed by a mass of excited young women, who are very sure that they want to win the strike, but who aren't quite aware how to go about it. Interspersed among them, about one to every one hundred or one hundred and fifty, are the officers of the local Woman's Trade Union League, who are usually women of education and income, social workers, most of them. It is the business of these officers to evolve

some degree of order out of the black mass moving about them.

"Sadie," calls one excited young woman to a bosom friend across the room, "we win sure, Sadie. My boss, he is crazy mad because we leave, and that is good, because it shows he needs us bad."

"I go to theatre with you the first Saturday afternoon after we work again," shouts back the friend, triumphantly.

Above the din emerges the voice of one of the trade union officers, who is mounted on something high—a table, or perhaps a soapbox.

"Girls," she calls, "we are so crowded here that it is impossible to do any work. We have just gotten two other halls to meet in, (she gives the addresses,) and I want about one-half of you to go to them right away."

The girls thin out gradually until there are left in the headquarters only about twice as many as the building could comfortably accommodate. But it must be understood that makeshift arrangements are the best that could possibly be expected. No one could demand adequate handling for a couple of thousand girls in a couple of hours' notice. Besides, to provide it wouldn't be worth while, because the cost would be too great, considering the short time it is generally needed.

The hall decently thinned out, most of the officers will be apt to retreat to the largest room on the first floor, close themselves in by tables and chairs, and then have a big sign tacked up in front of their door saying "Bureau of Information Inside."

Each woman or each two women seated

at a table will have charge of a special branch of the work to be done. Three or four women will walk around the room directing the girls to the proper tables.

Now, the work can be briefly divided into two heads—first, to keep the girls who have struck, striking, and secondly, to get the girls who haven't struck to go striking.

To do the first the walking bureaus of information will tell the young women to collect in halls and then to send delegates to the tables to ask for speakers to address them.

Soon the lady at the "speaker's table" will be mobbed with strikers requesting to have men or women sent to hearten them. All sorts of girls make the request. Some are neatly, one might almost say fashionably dressed. They beg to have the speakers sent quickly, as when "the crowd begins to get nervous it loses its courage almost in a minute." Some are dressed in foreign fashion and stand at the table dumb, their wishes only written in their asking faces—they can speak but Italian or "Jewish." These usually represent gatherings of their own race, and consequently require men using their particular tongue to address them—fearfully difficult people to get, by the way. Yet some of the girls are brilliantly, gayly, gaudily clothed, and remark that "of course we don't just need a man, but it would make us feel real good to have him."

The speakers are gotten wherever they can be. Socialist locals send some. The rest are people who are interested in the labor movement.

When a foreign talker can not be procured one of the girls of the gathering who knows English and who is bright and self-possessed stands up on the platform and repeats the sentences in the desired tongue.

The addresses brighten the young women up astonishingly. The talker may say exactly the self same thing that has been told a girl perhaps five minutes before by a striking comrade, and yet, hearing it uttered authoritatively from the platform will make it seem twice as convincing.

The business of getting the non-union "scabs" to strike is the most delicate and dangerous of all. The unions believe it must be done, and yet it is fearfully apt to lead to bitter feeling, and even to fist fights and the police station.

The union girls can't send committees of themselves into their shops to talk to the non-union ones who haven't struck, because the bosses wouldn't allow any such committee to enter. So there are two things left to do. They could get at the workers by sending strange, striking friends to the shop to apply for and probably procure employment there. The friend would then work quietly with the girls for half an hour, an hour, a day—until a good opportunity arose—and then she would suddenly address the rest and beg them to leave. The difficulty with this plan is that to get a nervy, magnetic, cool-headed "friend" is hard. So, most of the work of inducing the "scabs" to strike is done by means of union girls standing on the streets around their particular shops and talking to the non-

union ones as they go to and fro from their work.

"Don't be scabs," they plead. "Come on and help us. Don't be scabs."

Now, no girl likes to be called a "scab." She's apt to retort with adjectives like "lazy" and "good-for-nothing," and then somebody on one side gives somebody on the other a push and then—there is a general mix-up.

The police often have to interfere, and, to the sorrow of the union treasures, the strikers are generally arrested and fined.

Sometimes, however, by tactful or heart-felt pleading, picketing is made very effective. It is generally done under the leadership of one of the impromptu table committees before described.

Never is joining a union so popular, strangely enough, as during a strike.

If any employer, induced by the continuance or the spread of a strike, is willing to settle, he is promptly taken to the executive office at "headquarters" to sign up. His employees will have met previously to agree on their demands. Often, instead of showing each other distrust or ill will, the "boss" and his rebellious workers go up to the office laughing and chaffing each other.

On the whole, the chief difference between the headquarters of men's and women's unions during a strike is that those of the men have not such an excited atmosphere. The men don't talk so much nor so fast nor so loud. But it's a scientific fact, anyhow, and the tongue of a woman is longer and more pliantly made than that of a man.