

# Teamster History

## *The Teamster History*

For more than a century, the Teamsters Union has helped millions of workers achieve the American Dream. Our success is a testament to those who came before us, who stood together to form a union and a labor movement.

These workers fought for the rights and privileges that today most Americans take for granted. Without the solidarity of unions, there would be no weekends, no pensions and no health insurance.

The best way to celebrate Teamster History is to highlight the actions and events that improved working and living standards for American families and communities.

Learning about the struggles and victories of the past will help union leaders, members and nonmembers alike appreciate the contributions Teamsters made not only to labor history but to American history. [Review the real story of the Teamsters in the 20th century.](#)

To get the visual concept of what makes the Teamsters Union so great, check out the [Teamster history visual timeline.](#)

The founding members of the union foresaw the growth and promise of the Teamsters as a model for workers everywhere. And they developed a philosophy that is as true and vital today as it was in 1903:

"Let each member do his duty as he sees fit. Let each put his shoulder to the wheel and work together to bring about better results. Let no member sow seeds of discord within our ranks, and let our enemies see that the Teamsters of this country are determined to get their just rewards and to make their organization as it should be -- one of the largest and strongest trade unions in the country now and beyond."

The stories, photos, audio recordings and videos that follow are not half-forgotten mementos of past glory days. They memorialize the marches, strikes, tears and victories of the past, but they also form a foundation of tradition, strength and pride upon which we build our future.

# The Early Years

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From colonial times to the turn of the last century, the men who drove horse-drawn wagons formed the backbone of North America's wealth and prosperity. Despite their essential role as guardians of trade -- the lifeblood of the economy -- they remained unorganized and exploited.

In a teamster's life, work was scarce, jobs were insecure, and poverty was commonplace. In 1900, the typical teamster worked 12-18 hours a day, seven days a week for an average wage of \$2 per day. A teamster was expected not only to haul his load, but to also assume liability for bad accounts and for lost or damaged merchandise.

The work left teamsters assuming all of the risks with little chance for reward.

In 1901, frustrated and angry drivers banded together to form the Team Drivers International Union (TDIU), with an initial membership of 1,700. The following year, some members broke away, forming a rival group, the Teamsters National Union.



## The Young IBT

Samuel Gompers, leader of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), was concerned by what he saw as a waste of resources and energy, and convinced the competing unions to meet and work out their differences. Agreeing that they were stronger in solidarity than separately, they re-joined forces to create the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) at a joint convention in Niagara Falls, N.Y. in August 1903. Cornelius Shea was elected its first General President.

The early IBT struggled. Labor laws were nonexistent, and companies used anti-trust laws against unions. In 1905, the IBT backed a bloody strike at the Chicago-based Montgomery Ward Company. The strike lasted more than 100 days, tragically took 21 lives, and cost about \$1 million. In the end, Montgomery Ward's cutthroat tactics broke the strike. In the face of this setback and other issues, the union realized changes were needed.

At the 1907 Convention, Dan Tobin, a strong young leader from Local 25 in Boston was elected General President. His leadership, which would guide the Teamsters for the next 45 years, brought new momentum and vision to the fledgling union.

The Teamsters now entered into a period of aggressive organizing which resulted in a broadening of the membership base as well as increased revenue and recognition. And, the types of team drivers joining the union in large numbers expanded to include gravel haulers, beer wagon drivers, milk wagon drivers and deliverymen for bakeries. Teamsters would soon move into representing drivers of the new "motor trucks," making them pioneers in the fledgling modern transportation industry.



### A Guardian of Social Justice

As the Teamsters Union grew in stature and became more confident in its ability to protect members in the workplace, the success rate of its efforts increased. The union was winning strikes, contracts were becoming standardized and benefits were won that reduced hours and increased pay. The efforts of the union also began to bring about much deserved respect and a sense of dignity to its members for their contributions to society.

The Teamsters were also becoming known as leaders on issues of social justice. In 1912, the union set a precedent when delegates to the convention voted not to accept or allow any entertainment by non-union employees. Further, the union was one of the very first to recognize the importance of organizing women.

Teamsters also demonstrated openness to racial equality, being able to boast, "Teamsters know no color line." By World War I, the Teamsters were on their way to being one of the most diverse organizations in the country.



# Transcontinental Delivery

## *Transcontinental Delivery*

Teamsters were involved in the first transcontinental delivery of goods by motor truck. As a result of that event and other similar experiences, the union became a staunch advocate for improved roads and driver safety training.

Dan Tobin, the visionary General President elected in 1907, saw that technology was radically changing the freight-moving industry. Recognizing the trend and to motorization as more than a passing fad, he set out to organize the fast growing motorized truck delivery industry. He began by organizing motor truck drivers and prevailed on horse and wagon companies to train their drivers in automotive skills.

### True Pioneers

In 1912, Teamsters from the Charles W. Young Company in Philadelphia drove off on a mission that would not only change the very basis of the union, but would earn a place in the industrial history of the United States.

The five-man crew of Teamsters drivers set out from Philadelphia with three tons of Parrot Brand Olive Oil Soap, and headed for Petaluma, California. The cross-country trip was made in 91 days, arriving at City Hall in San Francisco on September 20, 1912.

The trip was kicked off with a big truck parade and display sponsored by the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. The drivers were real "pioneers" as there were few roads of any consequence along the route and no conveniences or comforts.

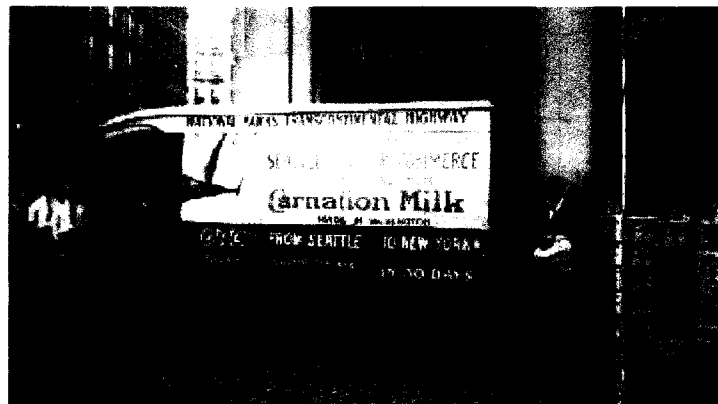
These drivers had no Stuckey's, no gas stations, no restrooms, no padded seats, no shocks on the truck and no real protection from the weather.

They faced many hardships and breakdowns along the way, but pushed on in true Teamster fashion, proud of their skills and their new craft.



By the time they reached their destination they had captured the imagination of the country and set an historic precedent. This first transcontinental delivery by motor truck would serve as the inauguration of a new era in the transportation of merchandise.

In 1916, as motor trucks and technology improved, Teamsters once again made news by participating in a cross-country delivery for Carnation Milk. This trip from New York to Seattle took only 30 days.



Fifty years later, Teamster drivers made the same Carnation trip as part of the Golden Pacemaker Run celebration in just six days -- with an additional leg to Los Angeles.



This was an exciting time -- full of possibilities for the future -- with one regrettable downside for Teamsters. The horses, or "teams," that had been the faithful and trusted companion of the drivers, came to the end of their road.

### An Honored Symbol

The Teamsters would show an ability to adapt to numerous changes over the coming decades, but through an almost unspoken agreement among the ranks, one thing would never change: The horse would always be a proud and lasting symbol for the members, honoring the heritage and traditions that gave rise to a great union.

As proof of their devotion to their loyal partners, even amid the many changes, Teamsters declared by proclamation at the 1916 Convention that the horse would always be the heart of the union and always remain a part of any badge, button, logo or flag.

# 1934 Minnesota Strike

## *1934 Minnesota Strike*

In 1934 Minneapolis was one of the major hauling centers of the United States, and the major distribution center in the Upper Midwest. Thousands of truck drivers were employed in the city's trucking industry, but many were unorganized.

A small group of organized drivers in the city made up General Drivers Local 574 of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. Local 574 had been trying for several years -- with little success -- to organize drivers in Minneapolis. They didn't care what industry the drivers were from, they wanted to create one large industrial organization for all drivers.

### A Hostile Environment

Union recognition for workers was difficult to obtain in Minneapolis. Since the turn of the century, an employers' organization known as the Citizens Alliance had been the major force active during labor disputes in the city. The group consisted of a council of prominent local property owners and various right-wing elements active in local politics. The Alliance took a strongly anti-union line, and was often not averse to using violence to break up strikes.

But Local 574 finally got a break. In February of 1934, the local won a difficult strike at a coal yard and the victory prompted thousands of workers to join the union en masse over the next few months. This gave Local 574 an unprecedented boost, both in terms of membership numbers and credibility among drivers and warehouse workers. By May, the number of organized drivers and warehouse workers in Minneapolis had grown to 5,000.

But many companies in the city refused to recognize the union. The only recourse left to the workers was to call a general drivers' strike.

### Strike!

The strike began on May 16. The workers demanded recognition of the union, wage increases, shorter working hours and the right of the union to represent "inside workers" -- workers employed in distribution centers but who were not drivers, such as warehouse and loading bay workers.

The strike brought all trucking inside the city to a standstill. It also used some techniques that were not normally used in labor actions.



Flying pickets were established and deployed from the union headquarters. They patrolled the streets in a vast fleet of cars and trucks to ensure that no scab trucks were on the move. They displayed a special union sign so as to prevent confusion.

A committee of 100 strikers, which had broad representation from workers of most hauling companies in the city, was established to direct day-to-day issues and coordinate relief to strikers' families. The committee established a daily newspaper, *The Organiser*, which reported information and news about the strike to members and the community at large.



A Women's Auxiliary group consisting of female supporters and the wives of strikers was set up to conduct solidarity work from the union headquarters, such as organize daily demonstrations at city hall, beef up picket lines, run a food commissary and help operate a small hospital for strikers injured on the picket lines and their families. Some of the women even took part in street fighting when workers clashed with police.

The strikers committee also established an important link between the striking workers and organizations of the unemployed, who made up a third of Minneapolis' working population at the time.

The support of the jobless towards the strike undermined the employer's ability to find scab drivers.

## Violence Erupts

The first major instance of violence was on May 19 when police attacked a group of strikers who were attempting to stop scabs unloading a truck in the city's market area.



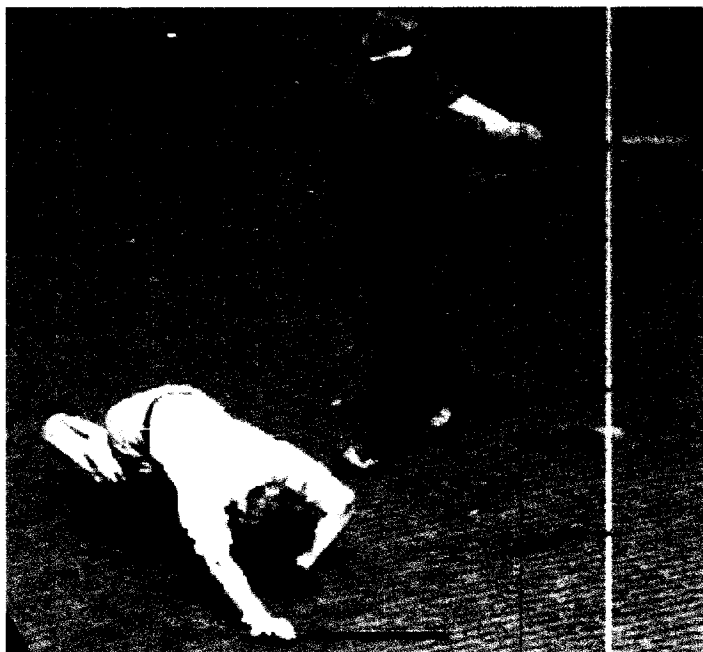
The market area became a central location for strike action and violence. Police attacks occurred again on May 21 and 22 when officers and members of the Citizens Alliance advanced on a group of 20,000 workers and supporters trying to stop the opening of the market area.

By this time, many other workers in Minneapolis had followed the Teamsters on strike in solidarity. About 35,000 building workers had walked out in protest of the police violence and many more struck for union recognition.

On May 25, employers in the city accepted many of the striker's demands and worked through other issues with the help of mediators appointed by the governor.

The strikers returned to work, but in a matter of weeks it became apparent that the employers were not abiding by the terms of the agreement. Many union members were fired. Between May and July workers filed more than 700 cases of discrimination. The companies also refused to recognize their agreement to let the union organize inside workers.

The workers again took up the strike on July 17. Three days later, the most violent episode of the strike took place. A large group of unarmed workers were fired on by more than 100 police officers. They had been lured to a street corner by deputies in a scab truck. The incident became known as "Bloody Friday."



A public commission set up after the strike later testified that "Police took direct aim at the pickets and fired to kill. Physical safety of the police was at no time endangered. No weapons were in possession of the pickets".

Two pickets, John Belor and Henry Ness, were killed and the hail of bullets. More than 65 other workers were injured. Many were shot in the back.

The police violence left the working class of Minneapolis stunned, and offers of support and donations flooded in from other unions.

Workers took part in strikes to protest the shootings, including a one-day strike of all of the city's transport workers.

*The Minneapolis Labour Review* reported that a crowd of 100,000 people attended Henry Ness' funeral.

Governor Floyd B. Olson immediately declared martial law in Minneapolis, deploying 4,000 National Guardsmen at his disposal.

Picketing was banned and scab driven trucks -- issued military permits -- began to move again.

The union, seeing this as an attempt to break the strike, demanded that all permits be revoked and in defiance of the martial law, the workers vowed again to return to the picket lines on August 1.

On the night of July 31, the union headquarters were surrounded and raided by the National Guard troops, who arrested many of the strike leaders.

But rather than hide, the union rank and file called a mass rally demanding the release of the arrested union leaders. Nearly 40,000 people marched on the stockade. The leaders were released and the captured union headquarters was surrendered.

## Strike Ended

The strike finally ended on August 21. Through mediation, the employers and Citizens Alliance accepted the union's major demands. Elections were held in workplaces and many more workers joined the union. Many workers also later won major pay increases through arbitration.

The Citizens Alliance had been broken, and with it the backbone of resistance towards union organization in Minneapolis. Workers in many other industries began to organize themselves, and the city maintained a strong union presence throughout the 1930s.

The strike was instrumental in building a strong union tradition in Minneapolis and across the Midwest, with a writer of the *Minneapolis Labour Review* later noting that, "The winning of this strike marks the greatest victory in the annals of the local trade union movement ... it has changed Minneapolis from being known as a scab's paradise to being a city of hope for those who toil."

The Minneapolis strike of 1934 is widely seen as a pivotal moment for the Teamsters and for the labor movement. Membership in the union grew as barriers against "non-craft" workers came down. The union also grew in stature, proving to be a powerful force in the labor movement. The outcome of the strike also led to the enactment of legislation acknowledging the rights of workers to organize and bargain, including the National Labor Relations Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act.

## Teamsters and World War II

### *Teamsters and World War II*

In times of war, Teamsters have always answered the call to service at home and abroad.

During World War I, Teamsters enlisted in the armed forces and helped the military move from cavalry to motorized units. Teamsters not only were skilled drivers, but also were among the few trained to fix motor vehicles of any kind. These skills were crucial in the first battles of modern warfare.

Teamster men and women worked in many capacities on the home front and it was estimated that four out of five Teamsters purchased liberty bonds.

### Allied in War Effort

World War II saw an even greater Teamster effort. The Union was an integral part of the Allies' victory in World War II, contributing on the battlefield and on the home front.

In 1942, President Roosevelt asked Teamsters General President Dan Tobin to travel to Great Britain and report back on how British unions were helping to win the war. On his return, Tobin urged the U.S. labor movement to emulate the British approach suspending all labor discord in the face of the Axis' threat to world freedom.

The Teamsters led organized labor in a pledged to refrain from all work stoppages for the duration of the war. Tobin fully subscribed to this policy, maintaining that, "A man who quits work now without the consent and approval of his

union -- which he cannot get -- is and should be and will be classed as an enemy of our nation and of our government."

## Buy War Bonds

The National Conference of Teamsters was formed to help meet the economic and military crises facing the U.S. by actively promoting war bonds. Teamsters local unions, joint councils, and regional conferences followed suit, raising more than \$2 million in war bonds during the first 18 months of the war. And, the Teamsters offered to give the government an interest-free loan of \$8 million from its treasury to help win World War II. President Franklin Roosevelt politely declined the offer, but stated, "(Your offer) should be an example to the whole country."

The Teamsters determination to make sure Allied Forces were victorious did not stop there. The union invested 60 percent of its liquid assets in U.S. Treasury bonds during World War II. And it continued to buy bonds as a show of support.

Teamsters General President Dan Tobin summed it up: "We weren't fooling when we told President Roosevelt that all of our assets were behind the government in the war and we weren't fooling when we said this war must be won regardless of cost in men and money. The Teamsters are supplying men and money to the limit of their resources."

The National Committee also organized all kinds of "drives" to help with the war effort, including drives to collect scrap metal and rubber to be used in military supplies. Nationwide, Teamsters took these activities very seriously.

Members of Local 364 in South Bend, Indiana were a perfect example of the Teamster spirit during the war. They collected 2 million pounds of scrap metal from old stoves, fences and other materials that went to the battle fronts in the form of guns, tanks and ammunition. Their effort won national recognition from the War Services Board.

## On the Front Lines

By 1942, 125,000 Teamsters were in military operations for the Allied forces. The Allied victory would not have been possible without the Teamsters who drove troops to the front.

Teamster members did not hesitate to volunteer for service after the attack on Pearl Harbor, often going down in groups with other members from their locals to sign up together. They served in every branch of the armed forces, engaging in everything from building the Burma Road and implementing the Red Ball Express supply line in France, to landing on the beaches of Normandy.

Teamsters won scores of medals for bravery and dedication to duty in all times of crisis, including three members who received the highest honor, The Congressional Medal of Honor. Gen. George Patton, Gen. Omar Bradley and



the Allied Supreme Commander Gen. Dwight Eisenhower all commended the Teamsters for their dedication, skill and service in the armed forces.

## Teamsters at Home

As in WWI, Teamster women did their part for the war effort too. Women took on many jobs previously held only by men and proved they could hold their own in any work setting. They did every job given them and did them well. Teamster women also served in the women's branches of the military at posts in the United States and overseas. Many employers were sorry to lose the women workers when they gave up their jobs to the returning veterans in 1945.

Following the war, the IBT made sure all Teamster veterans kept their seniority when they returned from the war and went back to work. The Teamsters were one of the only groups to do this for their members. A decade-long national campaign, "Have It Delivered," promoted Teamster freight and delivery services, creating more jobs for members returning after wartime service.

Intense organizing campaigns in booming post-war industries such as the automotive trades, food processing, dairy, and workers servicing vending machines were also used to create more Teamster jobs.

The Teamsters have continued to serve their country in many ways in times of war and national crisis. Our members have served honorably in Korea, Viet Nam, the Gulf War, Iraq and Afghanistan. Local and Joint Councils continue to support and aide soldiers and veterans as well.

Currently the Teamsters support a program called Helmets to Hardhats, a training program helping returning vets find jobs in the construction industry.

## Master Freight Agreement

*Master Freight Agreement*

January 15, 1964 became a monumental day in Teamsters history when the first National Master Freight Agreement was signed in Chicago. This contract would provide solid, standardized protection and benefits to more than 450, 000 over-the-road and local cartage drivers across the country.

The contract, which was described as an impossible task by critics and friends of labor alike, was a milestone for labor unions everywhere. James R. Hoffa, architect, chief negotiator, and overall firestorm of energy behind the agreement, considered this the crowning achievement of his tenure with the Teamsters.

## A Dream Becomes Reality

The NMFA of 1964 brought more workers into the middleclass than any other single event in labor history. Hoffa was determined to improve the standard of living for workers, and increase respect for "non-craft" laborers such as over-the-road drivers.

The agreement was the first step in a larger dream to nationalize union contracts. And it revolutionized the way in which goods of all types were moved across the country.

Over-the road and cartage drivers -- empowered through economic gains, stability, and a strong Teamsters Union -- became a force in America's political landscape. Political leaders began to realize the concerns and interests of this group must be recognized, as they could easily mobilize into a formidable voting block as never before imagined.

## Path for the Future

Hoffa believed the only way for workers to maintain standards they had achieved, and for unions to survive would be through master contracts throughout all the trade divisions of the Teamsters.

Just as employers are organized on national level, so must labor consolidate its power -- and this was the breakthrough in the NMFA of 1964. The agreement gave the Teamsters power equal and even beyond that of the big trucking companies.

In the changing world of economics and trade, this blueprint remains the course all unions must take in order to ensure their hard earned legacy is not diminished in the future.

# Teamsters and Civil Rights

## *Teamsters and Civil Rights*

Dignity in the workplace does not only come from good contracts. It comes from equality -- something the Teamsters Union has fought for from its beginning.

Women's rights, civil rights, the rights of migrant workers, as well as protections for minor, senior and disabled workers are just a few of the causes the Teamsters have taken up in the name of fairness.

Through legislation, donations and activism, the Teamsters Union has made more of a difference in these areas than perhaps any union or single organization in North America. Wherever working men and women marched for jobs, civil rights or justice, the Teamsters were on the front lines.

This does not mean it has been an easy road for minorities -- or women of any color. Overall however, the Teamsters Union tried to do the right thing and protect all its members. And it's usually been ahead of the other unions and society in general. There still is much to do, but the Teamsters have a good history to build upon.

### Equal Pay for All

The Teamsters did not just talk equality -- they lived it. Early Teamsters would not allow southern locals to follow the practice of segregation, and in fact threatened to pull charters in cases where this was violated. The first local in New Orleans was governed by an Executive Board that consisted of black and white members, defying southern tradition. By 1906, editorials in the Teamsters magazine were making impassioned pleas for all local unions, but especially those in the south, to organize African-American workers.

The International Brotherhood of Teamsters also championed the cause of women's rights early on. The following was printed in the July 1917 issue of the *Teamsters Journal*:

"Equal pay for equal work should become a constant, vigorous slogan among all employees in all crafts. The strength and brains of women and girls are exploited the world over and especially so in the United States. All working men and women should become actively, and, if necessary, drastically interested in fighting for equal pay for duties performed by either sex. The standard of living in every workingman's home is lowered by sexual inequality of pay and both sexes should band together and swat the curse from all parts of the earth where it exists."

Later that same year the Teamsters won a clause in a contract for women laundry workers that required equal pay regardless of race. This was a huge achievement and became the first "color blind" contract for workers. This action brought criticism and even threats to the union and its leaders, but they would not be intimidated. By 1919 the Teamsters adopted "Equal Pay for All" as their national slogan.

## The Civil Rights Movement

As the civil rights movement grew in the 1950s and 1960s the Teamsters became very involved. The union provided money and supplies to many civil rights groups, including the more than 700 families living in "Freedom Village," who faced retribution for registering to vote in 1960.

The Teamsters had a good working relationship with the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., with representatives on civil rights boards and committees. And, union members and leaders were active participants in the movement at a time when such actions were considered risky, if not down right dangerous for any organization.



Scores of Teamsters members were among the more than 200,000 people who participated in the historic March on Washington in 1963. Buses carrying Teamsters arrived from near and far, some driving through the night to join the activities on time. Members who attended described the event as "the greatest peaceable demonstration in the history of the nation." Others reported feeling great pride in the union for its support of the civil rights movement.

But the Teamsters' involvement in social causes was not without consequences.



Viola Liuzzo, the wife of a Teamster business agent was murdered as she drove Marchers to Selma, Alabama in 1965. Dr. King as well as many rank-and-file members, James R. Hoffa and other Teamster leaders attended her funeral.

The union continues to strive for political and social justice. The Teamsters have many different caucuses keeping an eye on inequality in the workplace and in Washington. The International's Human Rights Commission with delegates from three caucuses -- the Teamsters National Black Caucus, the Teamsters Hispanic Caucus and the Teamsters Women's Caucus -- are all hard at work to support Teamster diversity.

## Teamsters and DRIVE

### *Teamsters and DRIVE*

In 1959, The Teamsters recognized the need to develop comprehensive legislative and political programs within the union following the passage of the Landrum-Griffin bill and other anti-labor legislation.

In November of that year, James R. Hoffa established the Department of Legislation and Political Education. Hoffa called for the department to develop a political action program with member support. D.R.I.V.E. -- Democratic, Republican, Independent Voter Education -- is born.

Officially launched in 1960, D.R.I.V.E. has two main objectives:

- To elect candidates to public office who are friendly to the interests of Teamster members;
- Passage or defeat of legislation of special concern to Teamster families.

D.R.I.V.E. committees are formed to meet those goals through activities such as screening and recommending favorable candidates, launching registration drives and developing plans for get-out-the-vote campaigns in primary and general elections. Funding is strictly voluntary and kept separate from dues.

### Teamster Women Take the Wheel

Sid Zagri, D.R.I.V.E.'s first director, quickly realizes that one of the best resources the union has is wives and women members, who had a long history as political organizers. He develops a partnership with Josephine Hoffa, wife of the General President, to create a women's auxiliary political action program. The ultimate goal was to have a major auxiliary in every Joint Council and make each D.R.I.V.E. unit a political force at the precinct and block level.

Mrs. Hoffa had seen her husband and others physically beaten and subjected to unfair court battles as they tried to improve workers lives. She knew unions could only hold on against tough odds by active participation and constant vigilance. She was one of the first to see that political action was the best defense against the erosion of worker rights in the 1950's.

"Labor's enemies don't stop for lunch -- so neither can we," she said.

She knew taking on a task like D.R.I.V.E. was not for the faint hearted. Many women seemed to not care at all about political issues. Many did not even vote.

She traveled from city to city in 1960 and early 1961 attending rallies that only a handful of people would attend. She and her family were subjected to negative editorials and nasty editorial cartoons for her actions, but she never stopped trying to create D.R.I.V.E. groups.

"Labor unions were not built by men and women who got their feelings hurt or quit after the first disappointment," she said.

On April 9, 1961, James R. Hoffa conducted the largest telephone conference to date, speaking with more than 1 million members. His message about D.R.I.V.E. and encouragement for women's committees was wired into meeting halls and theatres in more than 170 cities.

Finally, the tide began to turn. By 1963 the numbers of attendees at her rallies and luncheons ranged from 1,200 to 5,000.

## D.R.I.V.E. in Action

Mrs. Hoffa's efforts also included the "D.R.I.V.E. in Action" program, which included DRIVE magazine, issue specific political action kits, letter writing campaigns and political action training programs.

Included in the activities kits were the "DRIVE Goes to a Party" hostess packets. Teamster women were asked to host neighborhood parties and talk about the goals of D.R.I.V.E. -- and discuss issues relating directly to their families and communities. They then would teach friends and neighbors at the party how to get voter registration drives and other activities started in their wards and precincts.

The party idea was very well received by D.R.I.V.E. members and the parties were successful in neighborhoods across the country.

Mrs. Hoffa's most important achievement was the D.R.I.V.E. motorcades held throughout the 1960s.

Between 1962 and 1968, more than 15,000 women delegates from Teamster joint councils, state conferences and auxiliaries -- women of all races, and from different neighborhoods and states -- boarded buses and traveled for hours to speak with their senators and representatives about labor and social justice issues.

When they returned home, the women visited schools, churches and even went house to house to talk about the experience and give an evaluation of how well the politicians understood or were meeting local community needs.

## Earning Respect

At first leaders on Capitol Hill brushed off the women, but later came to respect their dedication and knowledge.



Senator Hubert Humphrey said he had never seen a more effective political action program than the Teamster women's motorcades.

The women also were not shy about holding senators and representatives accountable for their campaign promises. Especially daunting for the politicians were the Teamster "Scoring banquets" held in Washington. D.R.I.V.E. delegates would get up one at a time and rate politicians' voting records -- often with the spotlighted senator or congressman seated at the table. The press loved the events and attended in large numbers.

D.R.I.V.E. quickly became one of the strongest political action groups in the country and remains so today.

A 1963 *Business Week* magazine quotes an anti-labor congressman as saying: "We may not like those D.R.I.V.E. women, but they are effective."

The D.R.I.V.E. message soon becomes known as "The Great Conversation" on Capitol Hill. The issues raised by "The Great Conversation" soon become topics of discussion in policy meetings during the Johnson administration and many are adopted by President Johnson's "Great Society."

Changes in the workforce, deregulation and economic hard times led to a drop in D.R.I.V.E. Motorcades and other activities, but the program kept going despite the difficulties.

Teamsters still fight anti-labor legislation through D.R.I.V.E. and work hard to protect all working families. The Teamsters have honed their political skills greatly in the decades since D.R.I.V.E. was formed and have become a leading voice for workers in Washington. But, D.R.I.V.E stays true to its principles and still depends on voluntary member support for funding; it still uses rank-and-file grassroots activities to achieve its goals.