

Linton Telephone Operators Strike

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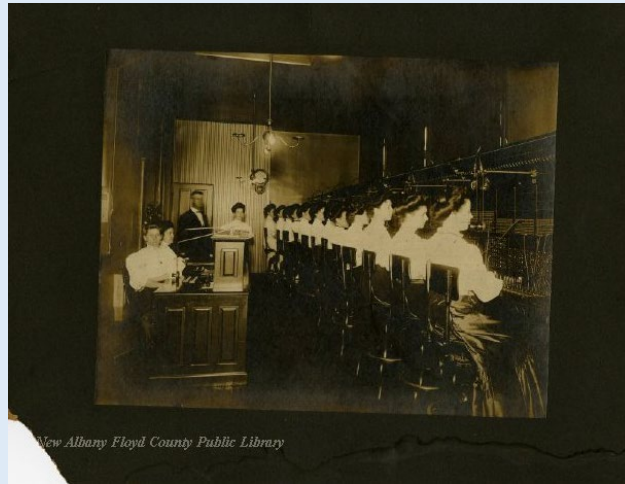


Photo Courtesy: Indiana History Room Archives (Telephone office in New Albany, Indiana)

In the days after their walk out, the company brought in replacement workers from Indianapolis, causing outrage among the strikers and other unionized workers in the town. Violence erupted after an “indignation meeting” was held in support of the striking workers.

The Linton telephone operators requested to negotiate with the company, but the company was unwilling to meet their demands. In response to the strike, Governor James Goodrich declared martial law in the town and sent in the Indiana National Guard, which sparked a new wave of violence.

Faced with mounting damages and a town unified around the striking women, Governor Goodrich agreed to get the troops out of the streets and send a committee to the city to investigate the situation and arbitrate an agreement.

Through arbitration, the company agreed to most of the striking workers’ requests, even placing Thelma Anderson in the position of chief operator. However, the New Home Telephone Company continued to refuse to recognize the union.

Despite this, their struggle for recognition inspired other women in the area. Before their strike was even complete, another group of female workers in the area went on strike. This time, it was the teachers of Stockton Township, which is just outside of Linton.

In the early 1900s, telephone operating was a strenuous job. Operators were expected to transfer up to 10 calls every second. They worked under heavy oversight in a restrictive work environment for low wages and little opportunity for advancement.

Because of these conditions, 13 women, led by Thelma Anderson, staged a walk out at the New Home Telephone Company in Linton, Indiana on April 24, 1919. The women were demanded \$8 a week minimum pay, an 8 hour work day, and the recognition of their union by the company.

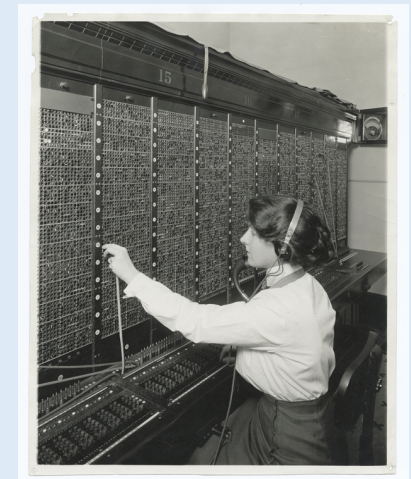


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