

Anu Lahtinen, anulah@utu.fi
docent (Universities of Turku & Helsinki, Finland)

Local, National and Nordic Efforts: Hyvinkää Wool Factory strike in 1928

It was wintertime 1928, and the Hyvinkää Wool Factory and its workers were unable to agree on salaries and benefits related to the employment in the factory. The owners of the factory wanted to cut the family benefits and to rise the rent of the company-owned dwellings. This was considered unacceptable, and the workers started a strike that lasted 7 months.

During the strike, workers were fired and driven out of their company-owned houses, but they also received financial and social support. As is often the case, the use of scabs heated the feelings of the strikers, but only 9 of the 1200 union members returned to work before the employer agreed on starting negotiations with employees. In the end, the trade union declared as a win of points the agreement on minimum wages for workers.

My presentation, based on my research on the history of Hyvinkää and its surroundings, deals with this strike, and my aim is to present the events in the local, national and Nordic context. The factory had a central role in the local economies of the municipality of Hyvinkää, situated in the Southern Finland, and the strike had long roots in history and it also affected the local community and the municipality in many ways.

I will contextualize the strike, scab work and their aftermath with the national situation, the position of trade organizations and the significance of taking industrial action. As the strike also received financial support from Nordic trade organizations, it can also be analyzed in the common Nordic context of supporting the claims of the workers.