

Vital chapter of Teamster history

TEAMSTER POWER by Farrell Dobbs, a Nomad Press book exclusively distributed by Pathfinder Press, New York, 256 pages, \$8.95, paperback \$2.95.

Between 1933 and 1939 the International Brotherhood of Teamsters grew from about 90,000 members to nearly 500,000.

THAT SURGE sent the IBT on its way to becoming the largest labor organization in the country.

The historic campaign which brought about this phenomenal growth and which fundamentally changed the union is the subject of this book by the man who has been credited as its principal architect.

FARRELL DOBBS' account of the imminently successful drive to organize the over-the-road drivers in the central states which led to the founding of the powerful Central Conference of Teamsters and the pattern of area-wide and national agreements makes most fascinating reading.

Teamster Power will be instructive and enjoyable reading for anyone interested in labor history—especially Teamster history.

THE BOOK DEALS with exciting events of the relatively recent past of which, nevertheless, few people in the movement today have first-hand knowledge, let alone as extensive knowledge as Dobbs.

Teamster Power is the second in a projected series of three books in which Dobbs tells about his involvement in the Teamster movement. The first, **Teamster Rebellion**, (Nomad Press book distributed by Pathfinder Press, New York, 192 pages, \$6.95, paperback \$2.25), deals with the struggles in 1934 of Dobbs' home local, General Drivers Union, Teamster Local 574 in Minneapolis.

IN 1934, LOCAL 574 was engaged in a struggle against trucking bosses in Minneapolis which gained national attention. That struggle, along with simultaneous

strikes of auto workers against Auto Lite in Toledo, maritime workers on the West Coast under Harry Bridges, and textile workers in the East, signaled the beginning of a period of great advances for American workers.

The series of the Minneapolis Teamsters' strikes in 1934 and the evolution of Local 574 into the leading force among organized labor in Minneapolis is the subject of Dobbs' first book.

Teamster Power takes up where **Teamster Rebellion** leaves off. It tells how the powerful Local 574 was used as a base for the drive to bring union protection and union benefits to the over-the-road drivers. Over-the-road truck drivers then constituted one of the most neglected and most criminally exploited segments of the work force.

DOBBS' WRITING IS about the courage of workers and their determination to extract from the bosses justice and decent conditions. It is about workers' solidarity and it is about militancy.

Dobbs describes in fascinating details the leadership processes and the tactical and strategic considerations along the road.

THE FORCES LINED up against Local 574 and its members were indeed powerful and numerous. They included the press, the commercial establishment and, to a large extent, the power of the state itself, most notably the police and the courts.

In addition, the leaders of Local 574 initially had to contend with resistance to their program by the International. Their approach to meet changed conditions was away from the traditional emphasis on organization by crafts to organization along industry lines. It was fiercely resisted by the International.

THE CONFLICT LED to the revocation of Local 574's charter in April of 1935. When the local union and its leaders won reacceptance by the International in July of 1936, the union was in fact re-chartered as Local 544. (The

matter of the local number is of more than passing interest to Joint Council 13 Teamsters, especially to Teamsters in the Cape Girardeau area who inherited the famous "574" when their local union was chartered in November of 1941.)

THE STEP-BY-STEP development of the area-wide structure to maximize the union's strength and the process by which the employers were forced to the bargaining table to negotiate the first area contract and the heroic struggle of Teamsters in the Omaha-Council Bluff area to whip recalcitrant employers of that area into line make very exciting reading.

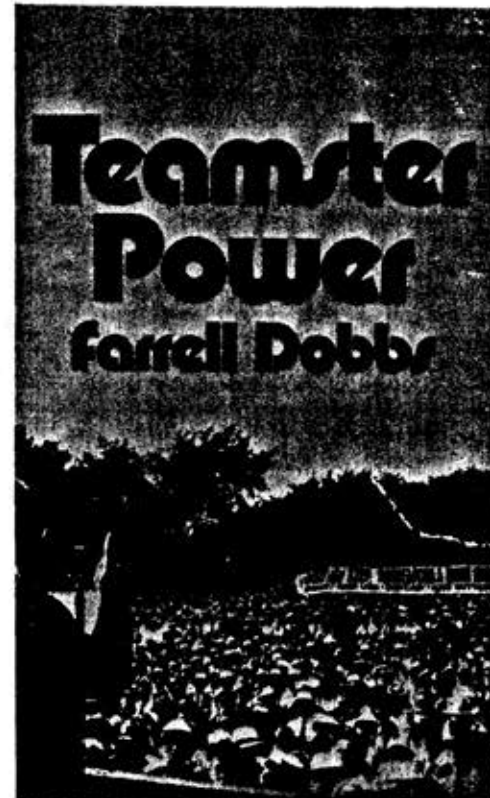
Some readers are likely to be put off by the socialist rhetoric of Dobbs and his inferences that class consciousness on the part of the workers was their prime motivation for courageous and militant participation in the struggles.

IT IS UNDISPUTABLY true that Dobbs and his close associates in the movement—especially the Dunne brothers, Grant, Miles and Ray, and Carl Skoglund—were Trotskyists and were motivated by their understandings of the realities of class conflict.

Their revolutionary convictions can be regarded as the prime reason for their temporary conflicts with the International although they were nominally drummed out of the International for their local union's delinquency in per capita taxes.

REGARDLESS of their politics, however, Dobbs and his associates were outstanding trade unionists with a genius for organization and a keen sense of union politics and the "art of the possible" which enabled them to pull together many diverse elements in the Teamster movement and put them all together for the magnificent effort that was the initial 11-state campaign to organize over-the-road drivers.

Former General President James R.



Hoffa, who as an organizer participated in the campaign, said in his book **The Trials of Jimmy Hoffa**, "I wouldn't agree with Farrell Dobbs' political philosophy or economic ideology, but that man had a vision that was enormously beneficial to the labor movement."

Readers of **Teamster Power** are sure to concur with that assessment.

Reviewed by Gus Lumpe