

ORIGINAL
(2 sided)

original

THE WILLMAR 8

A G.T.Y. PRODUCTION

Produced by Mary Beth Yarrow and Julie Thompson

Directed by Lee Grant

ORIGINAL
(2 sided)

"The banks are made of marble
With a guard at every door.
The vaults are stuffed with silver
That the people sweated for."

NARRATOR LEE GRANT: On December 16, 1977, in Willmar, Minnesota, eight women, employees of the Citizens National Bank, walked out of their jobs and went on strike. They walked a picket line for the next year and a half, through the bitter cold of two Minnesota winters, isolated in their own community.

V.O. RADIO ANNOUNCER: And good afternoon, everyone, 24 degrees our present Willmar temperature reading and some good news: Mrs. Emery Memick of Route 1 wins \$19 in eating at the Timbers Family Restaurant.

NARRATOR: If you look up Willmar in an encyclopedia, you will find it was once a center for the Great Northern Railroad. The population is 18,438. It is the countyseat of Kandiyohi County. Composed mainly of farms and small business, its largest industry is the Jenny-O Turkey Processing Plant. Willmar is famous for its townspeople consuming more cups of coffee per capita than any other town in the United States. It has 3 banks, a savings and loan, one daily newspaper and 29 churches.

V.O. LEE GRANT: What is your opinion of the women's strike of Citizens National?

WOMAN: Are you taking my picture?

V.O. LEE GRANT: Yes.
We just want your opinion.

MAN: I don't want to be in that.

V.O. LEE GRANT: No?

MAN: No.

V.O. LEE: No comment?

MAN: No, I won't give it, you wouldn't want it.

WOMAN: I don't say anything.

MAN: No comment.

- V.O. LEE: No comment?

No comment?

WOMAN: No comment.

WOMAN: I have no comment.

MAN: Oh, I say they should call it off. That's what I think.
After all, this is a Christian town and it'd be nice if we
had peace.

(sound of organ music

V.O. LEE: Reverend Siple, what is meant by a Christian town?

V.O. REVEREND SIPLE: You'll find a higher percentage of people in church on a Sunday morning here than in the average community. The church here represents the status quo. It represents holding the level of society where it is.

V.O. LEE: Are there any Jews or blacks in this community?

REVEREND SIPLE: Not that I've been able to find. I expect there are, but I haven't been able to find them.

BUD HANSON: Good morning, my name is Bud Hanson and this is "Open Mike." We have four very interesting people in the studios with us today. We'll be opening our phone lines in a few minutes and we will welcome your calls on what has turned out to be a very controversial subject in Willmar. It's gained a great deal of attention nationwide and worldwide. Lee, let's find out what brings you to Willmar.

LEE GRANT: We were very anxious to get all sides to state their position and we haven't been able to do that. We've spent an awful lot of time on the phone -- talking to people to get to other people, to ask other people to please talk to us, to please commit themselves, to please just say anything that they want and there's like a wall of silence on it. I think that's why we're here.

V.O. REVEREND SIPLE: People kind of feel that if they ignore things that are distasteful and out of the ordinary, they'll go away. It doesn't make any difference whether it is a teenager on drugs or equal rights for women, you ignore it. You bury it. When I say bury it, I mean bury. You don't talk.

NARRATOR LEE GRANT: The town of Willmar had not had a strike since the railroad came 40 years before. Never a strike against a bank and not open and daily picketing of a respected institution on a main street.

(background music)

* Optical printed on film - see pages 4a and 4b.

V.O. LEE: What was the heaviest weather you ever picketed in?

IRENE: I think the heaviest day was a 70 below windchill when we first went out.

V.O. LEE: What do you do in 70 Below...?

IRENE: In 70 below, you walk real fast and constantly. And that keeps you warm. You can't stand and talk or, you know, do a lot of gibbering. You just walk and then you wear face masks that will cover all but your eyes.

V.O. LEE: How often have you picketed?

Sandi Trembl	Bookkeeper & Teller
Salary before strike:	\$425 per month
Married	

Shirley Solyntjes	Bookkeeper
Salary before strike:	\$475 per month
Married	

Teren Novotny	Bookkeeper
Salary before strike:	\$425 per month
Married	

Glennis Andresen	Teller
Salary before strike:	\$425 per month
Single	

Sylvia Erickson	Teller
Salary before strike:	\$500 per month
Married	
Two Children	

Doris Boshard	Head Bookkeeper
Salary before strike:	\$700
Married	
Three Children	

V.O. LEE: How often have you picketed?

IRENE: Everyday. We're not like another union local, in that there is probably in most of them from 2-500 members, maybe more. So they have that many people to run their strike. They have a committee for publicity, they have one for raising money, they have one for picketing. We do it all.

NARRATOR LEE GRANT: On coffee breaks, they started to talk...tellers and bookkeepers. They were treated unfairly, passed over for promotions, paid less than men and expected to give overtime without pay when needed. Slowly their small talk turned to issues. Then came the straw that broke the camel's back.

DORIS: It was the last straw when they hired another man and wanted us to train him for a management position.

JOHN MACK: The bank never conceived of these women as possible managerial material. They got the best possible women they could for their jobs, and these were some pretty high caliber individuals, and then it forgot about them.

IRENE: If we're qualified to train him in, then why aren't we qualified for the job? Or given the chance for the job?

DORIS BOSCHARD: We had done this many times in the past and the men would move right up the ladder to management and the women

were still down at the bottom training everybody that came in.

JOHN MACK: The gentleman involved was hired for reasons having to do with the usual reasons people get hired in a bank like this... family connections. Leo knew his father, his father knew Leo.

LEE GRANT: Leo?

JOHN MACK: Pirsch, the president of the bank.

V.O. LEE: Do you feel you were qualified to do...?

IRENE: Yes, I do.

DORIS: And then we complained.

V.O. LEE: And what happened?

DORIS: We were told, "We're not all equal, you know."

IRENE: I mean he flat out told us, "We're not all equal." And I don't think you have that happening too often nowadays even though sometimes the undercurrent is there.

LOUISE MACK: As Mr. Pirsch said in one interview that he gave, "The bank officers are up here and the women are down there." And that, that pretty much says it.

JOHN MACK: You first have to go through these bureaucracies, either the Minnesota Department of Human Rights or The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, The EEOC. This was our first step.

I had the pure case of discrimination. There was just no doubt about it. The bank had been discriminating against these people and was saying so. You had the bank president making speeches, saying things like, "You aren't the chief breadwinner here", and you had eight people who were willing, as a body, to get up and say, "Go jump in the lake, bank."

NARRATOR LEE: On December 16, 1977, eight women took the most unexpected step of their lives. They filed charges of unfair labor practices at the National Labor Relations Board and went out on strike. The first bank strike in the history of Minnesota.

V.O. MAN: I think a lot of the women in the community are scared...

V.O. LOUISE MACK: I think their fright related to the fact that for these women who came out of a very traditionalistic, middle-class rural setting, what they were questioning was an establishment that is not to be questioned in their values. They were risking their friends, they were risking their jobs, they were risking, if they did this and it somehow didn't work, that they would never be able to get a job in this town again.

V.O. MAN: None of these eight women thought of themselves as people who had any real power over their lives when this began. But, its' through this kind of affront to one's personality that people learn, through political action, that they really are worthwhile people.

MAN ON STREET: I was born in Iowa. (sound of traffic) Good old state. But I'm pretty well to home here now. But I think a lot of people are in sympathy with the strikers because they have been walking out on the street here in the winter-time. Don't get any further, don't get no satisfaction.

TWO OLD WOMEN: We wouldn't cross the picket line. We belonged to the union for 40 years.

V.O. LEE: What union do you belong to?

TWO WOMEN: Railroad.

V.O. LEE: Oh, you're railroad people.

TWO WOMEN: We know what it is to belong to a strong good union. If you hadn't belonged it would have been...(laughter) I hope they get a favorable settlement.

But there's something wrong with the National Labor Relations Board. What if they had a family they had to support...

V.O. LEE: They've got family.

TWO WOMEN: Yeah, well, are they supposed to starve while the Relations Board makes up their minds?

V.O. LEE: You've got a point.

DAVE ROE: One thing that's basically important, that people are forgetting: why this has drawn out so long. Here is the National Labor Relations Board and we waited now for nearly two years for them to make a decision. And this is no different than the fight we're having with the J.P. Stevens Company. The only difference is we're talking about several thousand people and a huge conglomerate, and here's a small bank with eight trade unionists. One of the things that we tried to get in the last Congress of the United States, was changes in the labor law that would have permitted us to speed up the whole workings of the National Labor Relations Board so that we could expedite that process and for those people who elected to have a union, could have one, you could negotiate a contract and go on.

NARRATOR LEE GRANT: If they won the National Labor Relations Board ruling, they would receive back pay and immediate reinstatement in their jobs, at which other women were now working. If they lost, they could appeal but they could not sustain themselves financially any longer.

V.O. JOHN MACK: Now, true, we did get a settlement from the EEOC which kept them alive basically through January, but they've had to live almost entirely on contributions.

V.O. LEE: What kind of a two years has it been?

V.O. IRENE: Long. Very long.

V.O. DORIS: Very hard times.

GLENNIS: It's rough. It's really rough. But you learn to budget. Actually, it's good for the soul.

V.O. LEE: What's the one that's out of your budget right now?

GLENNIS: Anything over 23¢ a can. I was looking at the vegetable beef and that was a little bit more.

V.O. LEE: What happened? What made you mad?

GLENNIS: Somebody was taking some of my independence and freedom away, by saying that I could not and would not be able to apply for a position. They were taking away what working is all about.

And saying that I would be stagnant in my job and I cannot stand stagnance. I have to grow and be able to live and breathe and be free or else I just wither and die.

V.O. LEE: Did you break up with your husband during the strike?

GLENNIS: Yes.

V.O. LEE: How did your church react to that?

V.O. GLENNIS: My pastor gave me this book to help me. "I suddenly realized what was wrong in our family -- I had been out from under my husband's authority and we were all suffering because of it." And another one, "When a woman has a truly submissive spirit, she has far greater power to appeal than most people realize." My pastor stressed that commitments that were made during the ceremony were stronger than the necessity for love in a marriage.

V.O. LEE: You mean that love was not necessary?

GLENNIS: That's right. That love was not that necessary in a marriage so long as you stressed the commitments.

V.O. LEE: Are you all members of a church?

GROUP; Yes.

V.O. LEE: Every single one?

GROUP: Yes.

V.O. LEE: Are you all members of different churches?

GROUP: Yes, we have a Lutheran, a couple of Lutherans, a Catholic, Methodist, a Christian Reformed.

V.O. LEE: Are you all religious?

IRENE: I think we're religious in our own way, in our own private ways, yes.

(sound of piano)

V.O. SYLVIA: Should we do that one more time? We're doing that one pretty good. We're going to sing this for Easter so we really got to learn the words.

(sound of children singing)

I didn't know how my church felt. I did know how much my minister felt and I kind of...I knew how my parents felt. My father felt okay, but my mother was kind of reserved about it because she's never worked outside the home and hated to see me fighting. But then when I had the meeting with the board of the church about filming in the church, I found out that there are people that think it's alright.

(sound of church music)

NARRATOR LEE GRANT: Many of the people who thought it was alright attended a service for the women at the Unitarian Church.

(sound of church music)

V.O. WOMAN: And now I would like to introduce Glennis Andresen.

GLENNIS: I guess now is the time to give Irene a formal apology for throwing the snowballs which gave her her cold. We have not been asked to speak to any congregation in Willmar but for here, and we want to thank you very much for letting us share things with you. Thank you.

(applause)

V.O. LEE: What do you think of the bank strike?

MAN: If the story the way it's been conveyed to us is true, I think they've got all the right in the world to do what they're doing.

MAN: It's okay.

WOMAN: I wish. I wish them luck.

WOMAN: If they're doing the work of a man, they should be paid.

MAN: My wife works and I figure if she's doing the same job as a

man, that she should get paid the same as a man and well, I agree, I feel they're right.

NARRATOR LEE GRANT: Like this man, the families and husbands of the women quietly supported them.

ROY BOSKARD: I was all for it. Whatever she could do, fine.

V.O. LEE: Did you feel that if Roy didn't support you that you would have been able to take this action?

DORIS: No. I couldn't have without his support.

(sound of song)

V.O. TERENCE: I was really undecided, but he told me to go on strike. I was worried about finances, you know, I wanted him to understand what could happen in the future.

NARRATOR LEE GRANT: In a double-income family, the financial burden on husbands was overwhelming. Parents helped when they could, but necessities were often lost.

LEE GRANT: What did your father say?

V.O. SHELLEY: He didn't have no comment. He didn't say anything. But my mom does.

LEE GRANT: What does she say?

SHIRLEY: She says, hang in there, get him.

NARRATOR: However, for the most part, the people of Willmar were angry and reluctant to talk.

(man's voice on loudspeaker)

MAN: No, no, you don't involve the editor of this newspaper in any manner. There's such a thing as responsible journalism. Divide this town up and down and you'll regret you ever did it.

V.O. T. CAINE: At the top in this newspaper, we have a very conservative group of people, liberal in the historical sense of Minnesota, old-line populists, but when it comes to the issue of Women's Rights, extremely conservative. They genuinely believe that if women go to work, the family is threatened.

GLENNIS: Two years ago my awareness was in a different place. My head was just totally wrong and a feminist was a woman-libber, was somebody who was out of control, and just totally strange, kinky if you would.

DORIS: I didn't know what a feminist was until I looked it up in the dictionary.

TEREN: Yeah - As far as equal pay for equal work...

SHIRLEY: Yeah,yeah.

SANDI: Many women might not think that they should wait hand and foot on their husband, you know, and they put their foot down, you know, "You go get your own beer"; "you do this yourself"; "You help around the house? I have to work, you'd better help me around the house, you know."

SYLVIA: The equal treatment, that has always been in the back of my mind, but I had never fought for it.

NARRATOR: The lawyer for the women, John Mack, lost his position as Kandiyohi Republican Party Chairman because he took this case. What else can happen to the people involved?

T. CAINE: Well, I think quite a bit can happen to people, at least happen to some people. You see, almost all of us who are involved in this, are related in one way or another to people who are involved with the bank or who are on the bank's side.

V.O. One of these women in the union is thought of in every single business in this community,as far as I know, as the key troublemaker who created the strike. Now, she definitely was not, but the bank has scapegoated her and has scapegoated her very badly. There has been the threat that if the strike would try to sell their home, that they would be put in a position where they could not do it. Now, that threat has never been carried out but the threat has been made.

V.O. SHIRLEY: She keeps the spirit up a lot of times on the picket line when it gets down. She's helped us out in a lot of problems and she's been having a lot of problems at home and it's been rough.

NARRATOR: News and televisions stations picked up on the small drama played out in a small town and suddenly, they were asked to speak to labor groups, schools and the media. None of them had ever spoken in public. They were forced to and they learned to articulate what they felt.

GLENNIS: It's always been a hot subject to handle and nobody has really had the guts to go out and hit the banking institution, the cornerstone of America.

PHIL DONAHUE: A man who has never been in a bank, at least as an employee before.... comes in and a nineteen-year veteran who's making \$575 a month, is asked to train this man who, at the entry level is making \$700, and presumably he then would be promoted to perhaps cashier, teller...?

Are you married, Miss Wallin?

IRENE: Yes, 21 years.

DONAHUE: Ah, kids?

IRENE: Three,

DONAHUE: Yeah, housewife...Minnesota...

IRENE: Yes.

DONAHUE: Children, probably in the church choir, the whole business..

IRENE: Yes.

DONAHUE: In what union are you now?

GLENNIS: Welcome to the Willmar Bank Employees Association, Local 1.

DONAHUE: You formed your own then?

GLENNIS: Yes, we did.

V.O. LEE GRANT: Were you ever involved with any political activity
before?

DORIS: No. Nothing.

JANE: No. I thought politics were boring.

SANDI: Never. I very seldom even read the newspaper. If it's on
TV, I turn the channel.

SHIRLEY: No, not me either.

V.O. LEE GRANT: Then this is your first time?

TERREN, SHIRLEY: Yes.

SYLVIA: No, not at all. Not in anything, the most I was involved in politics was to vote.

V.O. LEE GRANT: What are you reading nowadays?

GLENNIS: Sal Alinsky, REVELLE FOR RADICALS, if you can believe it. Quite a stray point, huh?

V.O. LEE GRANT: It's a big contrast.

GLENNIS: Mike Pirsch gave it to me. The son of the bank president, Leo Pirsch.

V.O. LEE GRANT: Mike, what is it in a family that forms a bank president on one side and a labor representative on another?

MIKE PIRSCH: I hate injustice. Some time ago, I decided that making money wasn't that important.

GLENNIS: He's a business agent and organizer for a local union down in Rochester, Minnesota, very supportive of the strike.

MIKE PIRSCH: If they had wanted to settle, the board of directors of the bank, they could have turned it around into something

beneficial to themselves. To say, "We made a mistake, we're going to right the wrong and we're not going to be what we were before." But they took it personally and said, "How could my employees do this to me?"

PHIL DONAHUE: I am going to try and talk to the president, alright? I want to see at least if we can't. These women claim... hello.

BANK TELEPHONE OPERATOR: Yes?

PHIL DONAHUE: Hi, is this Citizen's National Bank of Willmar? Ah... hello?

BANK TELEPHONE OPERATOR: Yes.

PHIL DONAHUE: Mr. Pirsch, please.

BANK TELEPHONE OPERATOR: May I ask who is calling?

PHIL DONAHUE: Yes. This is Phil Donahue, the TV guy.

BANK TELEPHONE OPERATOR: Okay...I...am sorry but Mr. Pirsch is busy.

DONAHUE: We're doing a program here and, as you know, we've invited Mr. Pirsch to be on the program and we weren't successful. I know he's busy and I do not expect him to drop everything to run down here, and I don't want to be, I don't want to

appear to be steamrolling you here but, but we have, we have two women here who are sincerely offering the information to us that your bank has been unfair to them and we would just like...doesn't Mr. Pirsch have a minute and a half for us on the telephone to at least give us his position on this issue? What do you think?

BANK TELEPHONE OPERATOR: Ah, just a minute please...

...No, he is in a meeting right now.

DONAHUE: Would it be possible to chat with Mr. Pirsch later on today?

BANK TELEPHONE OPERATOR: No, I don't think so.

DONAHUE: How about tomorrow?

BANK TELEPHONE OPERATOR: No, I don't believe so.

DONAHUE: Yeah, you know we've been trying for two days now to reach Mr. Pirsch without success.

BANK TELEPHONE OPERATOR: Well, he's been out of the office.

DONAHUE: Okay, alright. Alright, that's it, alright. Thank you.

We'll be back in just a moment.

(Sound of Donahue Show theme)

NARRATOR LEE GRANT: At the Lakeland Cafe, one of the bank's board members arrived for lunch.

LEE GRANT: Mr. Hulstrand, I'm Lee Grant.

MR. HULSTRAND: Yes, how are you?

LEE GRANT: We've been trying to get in touch with you. Have you a comment to make about the strike?

MR. H.: Yeah, well the board decided not to make any comments yesterday.

LEE GRANT: I see. So you won't be meeting with us to talk?

MR. H.: No.

LEE GRANT: Well, alright, thank you very much.

MR. H.: You betcha.

NARRATOR LEE GRANT: That was the one and only contact we were able to make with anyone from the bank.

V.O. LEE GRANT: How do you spend your day?

JANE: Who are you talking to me? Me?

V.O. LEE GRANT: Yes.

JANE: Oh, at the labor home and then, come home, watch TV mostly.

V.O. LEE: You mean this.

JANE: Yeah, I'm addicted, I guess.

V.O. LEE: How many hours a day?

CAROL (JANE'S MOTHER): It's all evening. I'd say about six hours.

V.O. LEE: Do you wear all those earrings?

JANE: I don't go very many places anymore to wear earrings.

V.O. LEE: Why?

JANE: Can't afford to go out.

V.O. LEE: Who gave you the valentine?

JANE: My boyfriend.

V.O. LEE: Are you glad that you stuck it out?

JANE: Sometimes, you really get frustrated and you can't wait

until it's all over and you can hopefully go back to work and just start leading a normal life, I guess.

V.O. LEE: Would you do it again?

JANE: No, I don't think so.

(sound of piano playing)

JANE: Can I quit now? This is the hard part.

V.O. IRENE: She did not want to go out on strike and she was not as involved as far as showing her feelings. But the first day on strike she came to the picket line, which was a surprise to use and she's been there ever since. And I think that Jane doesn't even know how strong she really is.

NARRATOR LEE GRANT: For a while, the NOW organization, regarded as a coven of ultra-radicals in Willmar, were the only ones to join them on the picket line. Then slowly the giant labor organizations became aware of the small group and periodically responded to them, but could not give them protection - the ultimate step of absorbing the vulnerable eight member union into a parent body that could have an affect on the bank.

BOB KILLEEN: They're never going to belong to the UAW, I know that.

LEE GRANT: Why?

BOB KILLEEN: Well, it's just that our union doesn't get involved in that type of organization. Now, we keep pretty much to factory people. But, ah, when we see people, no matter who they are, getting stepped on and mistreated by employers, I just feel that we have an obligation as human beings, to help them out. That's the only reason we're out there.

DAVE ROE: Well, we regard them as part of the family.

V.O. LEE GRANT: Then there isn't, like a problem thinking about it as a feminist group?

DAVE ROE: They're trade unionists. They happen to be eight women but that's of no consequence, there are eight people out there that want to belong to a union, they're trade unionists, they talk like trade unionists, and they sure as hell act like trade unionists. And that, of course, is why they're getting the support.

BOB KILLEEN: If there was a ERA Amendment passed now that was part of the law of the land, they couldn't get by with this kind of thing. These women out there are second-class citizens.

(sound of union song)

NARRATOR: The UAW sent thirty volunteers who drove a hundred miles to Willmar to march down the parade route. It was the first parade of its kind down Litchfield Avenue.

(song lyrics being sung)

NARRATOR: The only incident was caused by an elderly gentleman trying to run down the visitors from Minneapolis.

V.O. KILLEEN: He was just trying to create an incident. I'm sure he probably got a READERS DIGEST approach to the whole labor movement.

NARRATOR: Usually, Willmar loves a parade. There's one every summer for the Coffee Festival Queen. They line up three deep. This time the streets were empty. Nobody came.

KILLEEN: I'll bet you that every bank president in this state is looking at that Willmar strike. And I'll bet you that most every employee working in a bank is looking at that strike hoping that them girls win. And if they do, you're going to see some other banks follow through.

V.O. LEE GRANT: You guys were there at 30 degrees below zero and you marched. Where was the AFL-CIO?

KILLEEN: I don't know...the AFL are...they're good people and they've got some problems. I don't know what they are but, I guess you'll have to ask them.

V.O. LEE: I will.

(sound of laughter)

V.O. LEE: What support has the AFL-CIO shown these women?

DAVE ROE: Everything that I did for these eight women over the couple of years, when they came to the convention, two of them, we made another pitch, we raised some money for them. I got two kisses from right up there on that podium and I thought that was pretty good, that was worth it all for me.

V.O. LEE: Raise some more money, and you'll be covered with kisses.

ROE: It wasn't an affectionate thing, it was a real "thank you" type and I appreciate it. We offered one of the women a job here, Glennis Andresen. She said, "Wait until it's over." I said, "That's fine, then we'll...do it." We would have taken her and she'd have been working right here in the legislature but she wanted to stay right there.

V.O. LEE: I think they need to stick together. Even though they're going through considerable hardship now.

NARRATOR: As their money began to run out, the women bargained away certain points of their strike in exchange for unconditional reinstatement at the bank. But, the bank rehired only one, Doris Boshardt, whom they demoted from head bookkeeper to teller. The women's plan backfired, isolating Doris inside the bank while freezing the seven other women outside.

V.O. LEE: I want to ask you about Doris.

REVEREND SIPLE: I think she's conducted herself with a great deal of restraint and maturity.

V.O. I don't know whether you know it, but in the midst of this last fall, her son had open heart surgery and that put a lot of personal strain on her apart from the issue that we're talking about.

V.O. DORIS: In September, they called me back and I either had to go back or I had to quit everything. So I went back alone. On my noon hours I always go out and meet the other women, the striking women, we go to lunch together and this is what kept my day going.

V.O. SYLVIA: She's in that bank all by herself and she needs the support we can give her and we need her support.

V.O. DORIS: It was really rough because they gave me a lot of harassment, a lot of hassling.

ON CAM. There was a note in my teller drawer when I opened it one morning, and it had a little animal cracker on there, it was a little pig and it said, "Doris, oink, oink." And then when I went down for coffee one day, I always go for coffee by myself, there in the coffee room was caricatures on the wall depicting all the different women, and our lawyer, also, was in there. And they had them as clowns and cats and foxes and wolves and little girls with pigtails and different things like this.

V.O. DORIS: This has grown into more than we expected it, at first we started out for ourself, you know, but anymore, it isn't for ourself. It's all of our supporters and all of the women who have written us from all over the United States, saying, "Hey, we're in the same boat. What can we do about it?"

NARRATOR: As their novelty in the media waned, the outside world forgot. What kept them going were letters from people like themselves. They surrounded themselves with these.

V.O. LEE GRANT: Which one is your favorite?

TEREN: Well, there's one in here that, her last name is the same as mine. She's a sister, Sister Maggie Novotny, and one of us got a phone call from her before she wrote this letter, it's just a short letter. She said that if her and the other sisters would have had clothes for winter they would have come out and helped picket with us. And I thought, that was really nice. You know, the thought counts, too, as much as manpower on a picket line.

GLENNIS: A lot of people who sympathize with us and who really understand what we're doing, are ones who are in the same situation and so therefore, they cannot afford either to sent out contributions because they're in the same boat. Our supporters are our equal in society.

POKER TABLE - SYNC: We are the Willmar Eight.

SYNC: We don't want to be called the Willmar Eight.

V.O. LEE GRANT: Could you please articulate why that subject is too sensitive for this table?

POKER TABLE - SYNC: Well, I think it's sensitive because many of our friends are involved, and I don't think we actually know the facts on either side, but I think the issue has caused a lot of hurts for many of our friends and I don't want to be involved in adding any more.

V.O. She's reluctant to talk about it but there again, it may be cause they're good friends of the Pirsches, as we all are in this group.

SYNC: I'm on Leo's side, because he's my friend...for 30 years.

V.O. WILLMAR 8: People are getting down on us for getting down on Leo.

Well, I remember in the beginning when the chairman of the board's son called us a bunch of Christian lesbians. I can remember that.

POKER V.O. I'm out.

Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.

- V.O. Playing poker is kind of an outlet for us. We've been playing for about 19 years, the same group. We've remained friends for 19 years...win or lose...The money exchanges hands so nobody is ever hurt financially with our games.
- V.O. If I lose 20 bucks on this, you're in trouble. What if I go to Las Vegas with no clothes?
- V.O. WILLMAR 8: If we can make it now with these next fund raisers through March, then we'll probably have to start to really think about what we're going to do if our decision isn't out.
- SYLVIA: Well, I've been thinking, though, you know, maybe I can get myself a job parttime, like that nursing home at night. A couple of nights a week. Now that wouldn't, shouldn't, be so hard to make up sleep, you know.
- V.O. LEE GRANT: Do you ever discuss political issues?
- V.O. POKER: We hesitate to discuss it too much for fear that there may be some ill feeling and we don't like to get into controversial subjects while we're playing.
- V.O. WILLMAR 8: I think we know just about everything there is to know about each other by now because on the picket line all you have to do is talk.
- V.O. I think at first we were scared to confront each other...with

our problems.

V.O. Because, we thought if we'd get angry with somebody, they're going to drop.

TERREN: It's a lot better for us to get it out, say what we want to and get it out. Glennis and I had it out once.

V.O. LEE GRANT: So that's what you use the picket line for.

V.O. Oh yes, a real good couch therapy.

SYLVIA: We touch on every subject imaginable.

V.O. POKER: Being the mother of six daughters, it's time that women were recognized. Being women, we should become more informed about what the NOW is and what the Equal Rights Amendment means. But I think we get too complaisant in this community...

V.O. I disagree.

POKER - SYNC: ... I think it's a lackadasical attitude, not being interested, really.

V.O. I don't think women should assume all man's roles.

V.O. I think she should be given the opportunity if she's qualified and if she's trained.

V.O. And if she wants to do it.

V.O.: But they are able to do it...highways

SYNC: My husband has women that work down at his mail dock at the post office.

V.O.: I would to feel that I could do all the masculine things that my husband does.

SYNC: And if there's a hundred pound mail sack that has to be thrown into a mail truck, he expects her to do it, or she has no business at that job. But he's giving her a chance, the government gives women a chance.

But tell me in turn, can they be treated like a lady, expect to be treated as a lady if they work right alongside men?

WILLMAR 8: For anybody who wants to know, White Drug is taking inventory. There might be something that somebody could...

V.O.: Oh yeah?

SYNC: I'm not sure they're going to hire the Willmar 8 for that.
I really have my doubts.

NARRATOR: The strike fund was empty. Fulltime work outside Willmar

would separate them, parttime work in Willmar seemed impossible to find. Glennis was calling about an inventory job at White Drug.

POKER - SYNC: I don't feel any need for an outside job. I love my husband, I love my children, I love cleaning my house. I get a lot of satisfaction out of that. I don't think I have to make any excuse to ladies.

V.O. I think that when you feel confident in yourself, you can be assertive in a nice way without being overly aggressive.

SYNC: Not only here, it's all over. They're having assertiveness classes. And most of these classes are attended by women. So they can be recognized for their assertiveness, not their aggressiveness.

GLENNIS: Thank you. Bye-bye.

V.O. LEE GRANT: She was told the position was filled.

V.O. They're all filled up.

V.O. Just keeping checking on Thursday, because a lot of times they don't show up you know.

V.O. IRENE: Okay, who is really short this payday? Who is really in trouble?

GLENNIS: I just don't know what to do. I really don't.

V.O. If we're going to each...
...if we split it equally, I'll give up part of my money.

GLENNIS: I'm not going to ask you to do that.

TEREN: I know that, but everything's paid up for me, all I have is
my regular bills and...

GLENNIS: You guys, I can't ask you to do that.

TEREN: I want to.

V.O. We're in this together.

IRENE: That's right. Everybody knew when we went out, that this
might happen, you know, that you want to stay in for the
duration and we have to help each other do it.

SANDI: Just take it, because next time it might be me, or any one
of us.

IRENE: How much can you get along without, Teren?

Teran: Well, take like \$40 off what I'm getting and I'll be fine
with that, and if anybody else needs a little bit more and
I'm still ahead, I'll be glad to give more.

GLENNIS: Thanks a lot.

V.O. IRENE: Well, sometime you'll probably be able to do it for someone else, right?

GLENNIS: You better believe it.

TEREN: Glennis, just keep smiling and that will be payment enough for me.

GLENNIS: Thanks, Irene.

IRENE: You're welcome...We're going to make it though this thing, you know...one way or another.

V.O. LEE GRANT: What would you do without each other?

SANDI-SYNC: I don't know.

V.O. LEE GRANT: How do you feel about the other women?

SANDI - SYNC: Very close.

V.O. LEE: What have they done for you?

SANDI -SYNC: Oh, you know, able to listen, we understand each other very well, you know. We can come on day and we're quiet or something...

...and we just know by the look in their face if it's just their quiet day or something's bothering them. And we usually work things out together, always.

V.O. Somebody laugh. We don't sit around here and cry all day.

(union song)

NARRATOR: Rumors about the bank began to circulate, they were confirmed.
The bank had sold.

ROE: Is that right?

V.O. LEE: That is right.

KILLEEN: And that just came off today, huh?

V.O. LEE: Do you think the bank selling had anything to do with the women's strike?

ROE: Oh, I think that it did. I really do, I really do.

NARRATOR: It was the first time the women knew they'd had an effect. The Citizen's National Bank was the only bank in Willmar to show a loss in its growth rate, which went from plus 12% in 1976, when the action started, to minus 6% in 1979, which seemed to indicate that people in Willmar were not as indifferent as they seemed. Leo Pirsch's words, "We're not all

equal, you know", had sent eight women to the picket line. In February, he retired as president of the bank.

(sound of singing)

V.O. MAN: How about a nice hand for those girls who stood out there and marched around in the cold and rain and sleet and snow? Like I said earlier, they got more guts than most men do.

NARRATOR: They were unprepared for the news when it came. On March 23, 1979, Judge Elbert D. Gadson of the National Labor Relations Board handed down his decision. He was to determine whether the women's grievances qualified as unfair labor practices and, if so, were they the cause of the strike. His decision was unfavorable to the women. He ruled that the bank had committed unfair labor practices, but they were not the cause of the strike. Among the charges he did find to be an unfair labor practice, was the failure of the bank to invite the union employees to the company picnic. There would be no back pay for the women, no immediate reinstatement of their jobs. The bank was ordered to post a notice for 60 days on its bulletin board stating they would not discriminate against union employees in the future. The bank knew the decision was theirs. A newsman from Channel 7 reported that the women were so disturbed when they received the news, that he could not film their reaction out of respect for their feelings. The strike was over.

TEREN: I just don't want anybody to get the impression that we're super human, we can withstand anything. We can't. We've gone through a lot of problems and one thing that we have going for us is that we have each other to fall back on. That's our greatest means of support. And we cherish that, I think.

SONG LYRICS: Like a rose through the concrete
That refuses to die,
We take from your courage
Now we too can try.
And the tears that you give us
Are like gifts of the rain.
They nourish our spirits
So our rose may bloom again.

What makes you stand and fight and refuse to surrender?
What made us think you were foolish to try?
What makes you care enough to make us remember?
That we can never let our roses die?

GLENNIS: There's been a reawakening of situations in banking. I've gone to another bank in Willmar. One of the tellers asked me the same thing, "Are you going to win?" And I just answered her back with a question. "How are you standards here at work? Have they improved since we started this?"

And she goes, "Oh yeah", and I said, "Then we've won."

"We have won already."

SONG LYRICS: Like a rose through the concrete
That still can believe,
Though they build their walls higher
Though they drive you to thyour knees
Like a rose through the concrete
That refuses to die.

INSERT:	GLENNIS	WORKING AS A BARMAID AT THE ELK'S CLUB
	SANDY	UNEMPLOYED
	JANE	UNEMPLOYED
	DCRIS	STILL WORKING AT THE BANK
	IRENE	SELLING EYEGGASSES
	SHIRLEY	BOOKKEEPER AT K-MART
	TEREN	STUDENT
	SYLVIA	PART-TIME NURSE'S AID

Since the Willmar 8 first filed their calims in 1976, women in the banking industry have sued for and won millions of dollars. Their actions have resulted in higher pay and promotiong and the dignity that comes from standing up for their rights. As a result of organized pressure by working women, in 1978 the Department of Labor officially targeted the banking industry as a top-priority for enforcement of equal employment.