

The Federal Government

... and ...

The Chicago Strike

By

EUGENE V. DEBS

Revised by the Author and Published
February 15, 1910

Sixty copies of this book, or sixty socialist books,
no two alike, mailed for \$1.00



CHICAGO
CHARLES H. KERR & COMPANY
CO-OPERATIVE

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THE CHICAGO STRIKE

By EUGENE V. DEBS

In the July issue of McClure's Magazine ex-President Grover Cleveland has an article on "The Government in the Chicago Strike of 1894." That there may be no mistake about the meaning of "government" in this connection, it should be understood that Mr. Cleveland has reference to the Federal government, of which he was the executive head at the time of the strike in question, and not to the State government of Illinois, or the municipal government of Chicago, both of which were overridden and set at defiance by the executive authority, enforced by the military power of the Federal government under the administration of Mr. Cleveland.

Cleveland Vindicates Himself.

The ex-President's article not only triumphantly vindicates his administration but congratulates its author upon the eminent service he rendered the republic in a critical hour when a labor strike jarred its foundations and threatened its overthrow.

It may be sheer coincidence that Mr. Cleveland's eulogy upon his patriotic administration and upon himself as its central and commanding figure appears on the eve of a National convention composed largely of his

disciples who are urging his fourth nomination for the Presidency for the very reasons set forth in the article on the Chicago strike.

His Knowledge Second Hand.

However this may be, it is certain that of his own knowledge ex-President Cleveland knows nothing of the strike he discusses; that the evidence upon which he acted officially and upon which he now bases his conclusions was **ex parte**, obtained wholly from the railroad interests and those who represented or were controlled by these interests, and it is not strange therefore, that he falls into a series of errors beginning with the cause of the disturbance and running all through his account of it, as may be proved beyond doubt by reference to the "Report on the Chicago Strike" by the "United States Strike Commission" of his own appointment.

What Was the Chicago Strike?

Simply one of the many battles that have been fought and are to be fought in the economic war between capital and labor. Pittsburg, Homestead, Buffalo, Latimer, Pana, Coeur d'Alene, Cripple Creek and Telluride recall a few of the battles fought in this country in the world-wide struggle for industrial emancipation.

When the strike at Chicago occurred did President Cleveland make a personal investigation? No.

Did he grant both sides a hearing? He did not.

In his fourteen-page magazine article what workingman, or what representative of labor,

does he cite in support of his statements or his official acts? Not one.

I aver that he received every particle of his information from the capitalist side, that he was prompted to act by the capitalist side, that his official course was determined wholly, absolutely, by and in the interest of the capitalist side, and that no more thought or consideration was given to the other side—the hundreds of thousands of workingmen whose lives and whose wives and babes were at stake—than if they had been so many swine or sheep that had balked on their way to the shambles.

The Object of Federal Interference.

From the Federal judge who sat on the bench as the protege of the late George M. Pullman, to whose influence he was indebted for his appointment—as he was to the railroad companies for the annual passes he had in his pocket—down to the last thug sworn in by the railroads and paid by the railroads (p. 340 report of Strike Commission) to serve the railroads as United States Deputy Marshal, the one object of the Federal Court and its officers was, not the enforcement of law and preservation of order, but the breaking up of the strike in the interest of the railroad corporations, and it was because of this fact that John P. Altgeld, Governor of Illinois, and John P. Hopkins, Mayor of Chicago, were not in harmony with President Cleveland's administration and protested against the Federal troops being used in their State and city for such a malign purpose.

This is the fact and I shall prove it beyond doubt before this article is concluded.

Cleveland Omits Reference to Judge Woods.

The late Judge William A. Woods figured as one of the principal Judges in the Chicago affair, issuing the injunctions, citing the strikers to appear before him and sentencing them to jail without trial, but President Cleveland discreetly omits all reference to him; and although he introduces copies of many documents, his article does not include copies of the telegrams that passed between Judge Woods, from his home at Indianapolis, and the railroad managers at Chicago, before he left home to hold court in the latter city.

Judge Woods had the distinction of convicting the writer and his colleagues without a trial and of releasing William W. Dudley of "Blocks of Five" memory in spite of a trial.

Judge Woods is dead and I do not attack the dead. I have to mention his name, and this of itself is sufficient.

Pullman's Contempt of Court.

During the strike the late George M. Pullman was summoned to appear before the Federal Court to give testimony. He at once had his private car attached to an east-bound train and left the city, treating the Court with sovereign contempt. On his return, accompanied by Robert Todd Lincoln, his attorney, he had a tete-a-tete with the Court, "in chambers," and that ended the matter. He was not required to testify, nor to appear in open court. The striker upon whom there fell even the suspicion of a shadow of contempt was sentenced and jailed with alacrity. Not

one was spared, not one invited to a "heart-to-heart" with his honor, "in chambers."

A Challenge to Cleveland.

In reviewing the article of ex-President Cleveland I wish to adduce the proof of my exceptions and denials, as well as the evidence to support my affirmations, but I realize that in the limited space of a single issue it is impossible to do this in complete and satisfactory manner; and as the case is important enough to be revived, after a lapse of ten years, by Mr. Cleveland, and as the side of labor has never yet reached the people, I am prompted to suggest a fair and full hearing of both sides on the public rostrum or in a series of articles, and I shall be happy to meet Mr. Cleveland or any one he may designate in such oral or written discussion, and if I fail to relieve the great body of railroad men who composed the American Railway Union of the criminal stigma which Mr. Cleveland has sought to fasten upon them, or if I can not produce satisfactory evidence that the crimes charged were instigated by the other side—the side in whose interest President Cleveland brought to bear all the powers of the Federal government—I will agree to publicly beg forgiveness of the railroads, apologize to the ex-President and cease my agitation forever.

The Cause of the Pullman Strike.

It is easy for Mr. Cleveland and others who were on the side of the railroads to introduce copies of documents, reports, etc., for the simple reason that the Federal Court at Chicago compelled the telegraph companies to

deliver up copies of all our telegrams and copies of the proceedings of the convention and other meetings of the American Railway Union, including secret sessions, but the Federal Court did not call upon the railroads to produce the telegrams that passed among themselves, nor between their counsel and the Federal authorities, nor the printed proceedings of the General Managers' Association for public inspection and as a basis for criminal prosecution.

Had the Strike Won.

Nevertheless, there is available proof sufficient to make it clear to the unprejudiced mind, to the honest man who seeks the truth, that the United States government, under the administration of President Grover Cleveland, was at the beck and call of the railroad corporations, acting as one through the "General Managers' Association," and that these corporations, with the Federal Courts and troops to back them up, had swarms of mercenaries sworn in as deputy marshals to incite violence as a pretext for taking possession of the headquarters of the American Railway Union by armed force, throwing its leaders into prison without trial and breaking down the union that was victorious, maligning, brow-beating and persecuting its peaceable and law-abiding members and putting the railroad corporations in supreme control of the situation.

That was the part of President Cleveland in the Chicago strike, and for this achievement the railroad combine and the trusts in general remember him with profound gratitude, and are not only willing but anxious that he shall be President of the United States forevermore.

A Precedent for Future Action.

In the closing paragraph of his article Mr. Cleveland compliments his administration upon having cleared the way "which shall hereafter guide our nation safely and surely in the exercise of its functions which represent the people's trust." The word "people's" is not only superfluous but mischievous and fatal to the truth. Omit that and the ex-President's statement will not be challenged.

Cleveland's First Move.

How did President Cleveland begin operations in the Chicago strike. Among the first things he did, as he himself tells us, was to appoint Edwin Walker as special counsel for the government.

Who was Edwin Walker?

"An able and prominent attorney," says Mr. Cleveland.

Is that all?

Not quite. At the time President Cleveland and his Attorney-General, Richard Olney, designated Edwin Walker, upon recommendation of the railroads, as special counsel to the government, for which alleged service he was paid a fee that amounted to a fortune, the said Edwin Walker was already the counsel of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway.

Turning for a moment to "Who's Who In America" we find:

Walker, Edwin, lawyer, * * * removed to Chicago in 1865; has represented several railroads as general solicitor since 1860. Illinois counsel for C. M. & St. P. R. R. since 1870; also partner in firm of W. P. Rend & Co., coal

miners and shippers. Was counsel for the railway companies and special counsel for the United States in the lawsuits growing out of the great railroad strike of 1894.

The Significance of the Appointment.

Here is the situation: There is a conflict between the General Managers' Association, representing the railroads, and the American Railway Union, representing the employes. Perfect quiet and order prevail, as I shall show, but the railroads are beaten to a standstill, utterly helpless, can not even move a mail car, simply because their employes have quit their service in a body. Note also that the employes were willing to haul the mail trains and all other trains, refusing only to handle Pullman cars until the Pullman Company should consent to arbitrate its disagreement with its striking and starving employes. But the railroad officials determined that if the Pullman cars were not handled the mail cars should not move.

This is how and why the mails were obstructed and this was the pretext for Federal interference. In a word, President Cleveland, obedient to the railroads, took sides with them and supported them in their conflict with their employes with all the powers of the Federal government.

Strike Commission Report vs. Cleveland.

To bear out these facts it is not necessary to go outside of the official report of the Strike Commission, which any one may verify at his pleasure. The only reason I do not

incorporate the voluminous evidence is that the space at my command must be economized for other purposes.

It is thus made clear that President Cleveland and his Cabinet placed the government at the service of the railroads.

Edwin Walker, their own attorney, made the agent of the government and put in supreme command of the railroad and government forces! What an unholy alliance! And what a spectacle and object lesson!

Upon Walker's representations Cleveland acted; upon Walker's demand, the Federal soldiers marched into Chicago; upon Walker's command, the great government of the United States obeyed with all the subserviency of a trained lackey.

Suppose Cleveland Had Appointed Darrow?

Suppose that President Cleveland had appointed Clarence S. Darrow, attorney for the American Railway Union, instead of Edwin Walker, attorney of the General Managers' Association, as special counsel for the government!

And suppose that Darrow had ordered the offices of the General Managers' Association sacked, the books, papers and correspondence, including the unopened private letters of the absent officers, packed up and carted away and the offices put under the guard of Federal ruffians, in flagrant violation of the Constitution of the United States, as was done by order of Walker with the offices of the American Railway Union!

And suppose, moreover, that the American

Railway Union, backed up by Darrow, agent of the United States government, had sworn in an army of "thugs, thieves and ex-convicts" (see official report of Michael Brennan, superintendent of Chicago police to the Council of Chicago) to serve the American Railway Union as deputy United States Marshalls and "conservators of peace and order"!

And suppose, finally, that the expected trouble had followed, would any one in possession of his senses believe that these things had been done to protect life and property and preserve law and order?

That is substantially the case that President Cleveland is trying to make for himself and his administration out of their participation in the Chicago strike.

The Real Lawbreaker the Railroads.

The implication that runs through Mr. Cleveland's entire article is that the railway corporations were paragons of peace and patriotism, law and order, while the railway employes were a criminal, desperate and bloodthirsty mob which had to be suppressed by the strong arm of the government.

No wonder the ex-President is so dear to the iron heart of the railroad trust and every other trust that uses the government and its officers and soldiers to further its own sordid ends.

Let us consider for a moment these simple questions:

Who are the more law-abiding, the predatory railroad corporations or the hard-worked railroad employes?

What railroad corporation in the United States lives up to the law of the land? Not one.

What body of railroad employes violates it? Not one.

The Brazen Defiance of Law by the Railroads.

The railroad corporations are notorious for their brazen defiance of every law that is designed to curb their powers or restrain their rapacity.

The railroad corporations have their lobby at Washington and at every State capital; they bribe legislators, corrupt courts, debauch politics and commit countless other legal and moral crimes against the commonwealth.

The railway employes are a body of honest, useful, self-sacrificing, peace-loving men who never have and never will be guilty of the crimes committed by their corporate masters.

And yet President Cleveland serves the corporate masters and exalts and glorifies the act while he attempts to absolve the criminals and fasten the insufferable stigma upon honest men.

Nothing further is required to demonstrate beyond all cavil the capitalist class character of our present government.

The Strike Commission's Report.

Now for a few facts about the strike. It began May 11th, 1894, and was perfectly peaceable and orderly until the army of "thugs, thieves and ex-convicts," as Superintendent of Police Brennan called them in his

official report to the Council of Chicago, were sworn in as deputies by the United States marshal at the command of Edwin Walker, attorney of the General Manager's Association and special counsel for the government. Let us quote the report of the Strike Commission, consisting of Carroll D. Wright, Commissioner of Labor, who served ex-officio; John D. Kernan, of New York, and N. E. Worthington, of Illinois, two lawyers, appointed by President Cleveland.

Let it be noted that the railway employes, that is to say, the working class, had no representative on this Commission.

From the report they issued we quote as follows:

A. R. U. Leaders Advise Against Strike.

"It is undoubtedly true that the officers and directors of the American Railway Union did not want a strike at Pullman and advised against it. * * * (P. xxvii.) (Yet the people were told over and over and still believe that Debs ordered the strike.)

Railroads Set the Example.

"It should be noted that until the railroads set the example a general union of railroad employes was never attempted." (P. xxxi.)

"The refusal of the General Managers' Association to recognize and deal with such a combination of labor as the American Railway Union seems arrogant and absurd when we consider its standing before the law, its assumptions, and its past and obviously contemplated future action." (P. xxxi.)

“* * * the rents (at Pullman) are from 20 to 25 per cent higher than rents in Chicago or surrounding towns for similar accommodations.” (P. xxxv.)

Strike Commission Contradicts Cleveland.

“The strike occurred on May 11th, and from that time until the soldiers went to Pullman, about July 4th, 300 strikers were placed about the company’s property, professedly to guard it from destruction or interference. This guarding of property in strikes is, as a rule, a mere pretense. Too often the real object of guards is to prevent newcomers from taking the strikers’ places, by persuasion, often to be followed, if ineffectual, by intimidation and violence. The Pullman Company claims this was the real object of these guards. **These strikers at Pullman are entitled to be believed to the contrary in this matter, because of their conduct and forbearance after May 11th. It is in evidence, and uncontradicted, that no violence or destruction of property by strikers or sympathizers took place at Pullman, and that until July 3d (when the Federal troops came upon the scene) no extraordinary protection was had from the police or military against even anticipated disorder.**” (P. xxxviii.)

This paragraph from the report of Mr. Cleveland’s own Commission is sufficient answer to Mr. Cleveland’s article. It is conclusive, crushing, overwhelming.

Deputies Started the Trouble.

There was no trouble at Pullman, nor at Chicago, nor elsewhere until the Railroad-

United States deputy marshals were sworn in, followed by the Federal troops.

Governor Altgeld, patriot and statesman, knew it and protested against the troops.

Mayor John P. Hopkins knew it and declared that he was fully competent to preserve the peace of the city.

Superintendent of Police Called Them "Thugs."

Michael Brennan, superintendent of the Chicago police, knew it and denounced the deputy marshals, Edwin Arnold's hirelings, the General Managers' Association's incendiaries and sluggers, as "thugs, thieves and ex-convicts."

These were the "gentlemen" President Cleveland's government pressed into service upon requisition of the railroads to preserve order and protect life and property, and this is what the ex-President calls "the power of the National government to protect itself in the exercise of its functions."

As to just what these "functions" are when Grover Cleveland is President, the railroad corporations understand to a nicety and agree to by acclamation.

Profound Peace Reigned.

The only trouble there was when the "deputies" were sworn in, followed by the soldiers, was that there was no trouble. That is the secret of subsequent proceedings. The railroads were paralyzed. Profound peace reigned. The people demanded of the railroads that they operate their trains. They

could not do it. Not a man would serve them. They were completely defeated and the banners of organized labor floated triumphant in the breeze.

Beaten at every point, their schemes all frustrated, outgeneraled in tactics and strategy, the corporations played their trump card by an appeal to the Federal judiciary and the Federal administration. To this appeal the response came quick as lightning from a storm cloud.

Peace Fatal to Managers' Association.

Peace and order were fatal to the railroad corporations. Violence was as necessary to them as peace was to the employes. They realized that victory could only be snatched from labor by an appeal to violence in the name of peace.

First, deputy marshals. The very day they were appointed the trouble began. The files of every Chicago paper prove it. The report of the Strike Commission does the same.

That was what they were hired for and their character is sufficient evidence of their guilt.

Second, fires (but no Pullman palace cars were lighted) and riots (but no strikers were implicated.)

Third, the capitalist-owned newspapers and Associated Press flashed the news over all the wires that the people were at the mercy of a mob and that the strikers were burning and sacking the city.

Fourth, the people (especially those at a distance who knew nothing except what they saw in the papers) united in the frenzied cry: "Down with anarchy! Down with the A. R. U.! Death to the strikers!"

Disturbances Started by Deputy Marshals.

The first trouble instigated by the deputy marshals was the signal for the Federal Court injunctions, and they came like a succession of lightning flashes.

Next, the general offices of the American Railway Union were sacked and put under guard and communication destroyed. (Later Judge Grosscup rebuked the Federal satraps who committed this outrageous crime, but he did not pretend to bring them to justice.)

Next, the leaders of the strike were arrested, not for crime, but for alleged violation of an injunction.

Next, they were brought into court, denied trial by jury, pronounced guilty by the same judge who had issued the injunction, and sent to jail from three to six months.

The Concluding Words Not Yet Written.

The Supreme Court of the United States, consisting wholly of trained and successful corporation lawyers, affirmed the proceeding and President Cleveland says that they have "written the concluding words of this history."

Did the Supreme Court of the United States write the "concluding words" in the history of chattel slavery when it handed down Chief Justice Taney's decision that black men had "no rights that the white man was bound to respect?"

These "concluding words" will but hasten the overthrow of wage slavery as the "concluding words" of the same Supreme Court in 1857 hastened the overthrow of chattel slavery.

The railroad corporations would rather have destroyed their property and seen Chicago perish than see the American Railway Union triumphant in as noble a cause as ever prompted sympathetic, manly men to action in this world.

Peace Overtures Turned Down.

The late Mayor Pingree of Detroit came to Chicago with telegrams from the mayors of over fifty of the largest cities urging that there should be arbitration, (P. xxxix. Report of Strike Commission.) He was turned down without ceremony, and afterwards declared that the railroads were the only criminals and that they were responsible for all the trouble.

On June 22d. four days before the strike against the railroads, or, rather, the boycott of Pullman cars, took effect, there was a joint meeting of the railroad and Pullman officials. (P. xlii. Report of Strike Commission.) At this meeting it was resolved to defeat the strikers, wipe out the American Railway Union, and, to use their exact words, "that we act unitedly to that end."

This was the only joint meeting of the kind that had ever been held between the officials of the railroad companies and the Pullman company. They mutually determined to stand together to defeat the strike and destroy the union.

Now, to show what regard these gentlemen have for courts and law and morals, this incident will suffice:

Railway Officials Perjure Themselves.

When the officers of the American Railway Union were indicted by a special and packed grand jury and placed on trial for conspiracy, the general managers of the railroads were put on the witness stand to testify as to what action had been taken at the joint railroad and Pullman meeting described, and each and every one of them perjured himself by swearing that he had no recollection of what had taken place at that meeting. Sitting within a few feet of them I saw their faces turn scarlet under the cross-examination, knowing that they were testifying falsely; that the court knew it, and that every one present knew it; but they stuck to their agreement and uniformly failed to remember that they had resolved to stand together, the railroads agreeing to back the Pullman company in defeating their famishing employes, and the Pullman company pledging itself to stand by the railroads in destroying the American Railway Union.

That is what their own record shows they resolved to do, and a little later they concluded to forget all about it, and to this they swore in a Federal Court of law.

I have copies of the court records, including the testimony, to prove this, and the files of all the Chicago dailies of that time contain the same testimony.

These are the gentlemen who have so much to say about law and order—the vaunted guardians of morals and good citizenship.

When A. B. Stickney, president of the Chicago Great Western, who had been victimized by them, told them to their faces that there was not an honest official among

them and that he would not trust one of them out of his sight, they did not attempt any defense, for they knew that their accuser was on the inside and in position to make good his assertions.

The Deputies as Viewed by the Commission.

I must now introduce a little evidence from the report of the Strike Commission bearing upon the United States deputy marshals who were sworn in by the railroads "to protect life and property and preserve the peace":

Page 356: Superintendent Brennan, of the Chicago police, testifies before the Commission that he has a number of deputy marshals in the county jail **arrested while serving the railroads as United States deputy marshals for highway robbery.**

Newspaper Reporters' Evidence.

Page 370: Ray Stannard Baker, then a reporter for the Chicago Record, now on the staff of McClure's Magazine, testified as follows in answer to the question as to what he knew of the character of the deputy marshals: "From my experience with them it was very bad. I saw more cases of drunkenness, I believe, among the United States deputy marshals than I did among the strikers."

Pages 366 and 367: Malcomb McDowell, reporter for the Chicago Record, testified: "The United States deputy marshals and the special deputy sheriffs were sworn in by the hundreds about the 3d and 4th of July, and

prior to that, too, and everybody who saw them knew they were not the class of men who ought to be made deputy marshals or deputy sheriffs." * * * "In regard to most of the deputy marshals they seemed to be hunting trouble all the time." * * * "At one time a serious row nearly resulted because some of the deputy marshals standing on the railroad track jeered at the women that passed and insulted them." * * * "I saw more deputy marshals drunk than I saw strikers drunk."

These were Edwin Walker's justly celebrated guardians of the peace.

Page 370: Harold I. Cleveland, reported for the Chicago Herald, testified: "I was on the tracks of the Western Indiana fourteen days." * * * "I saw in that time a couple of hundred deputy marshals. I think they were a very low, contemptible set of men."

Hired and Paid by the Railroads.

Now follows what the Strike Commissioners themselves have to say about the deputy marshals, and their words are specially commended to the thoughtful consideration of their chief, President Cleveland: "United States deputy marshals, to the number of 3,600, were selected by and appointed at request of the General Managers' Association, and of its railroads. They were armed and paid by the railroads, and acted in the double capacity of railroad employes and United States officers. While operating the railroads they assumed and exercised unrestricted United States authority when so ordered by their employers, or whenever they regarded it as necessary. They were not under the direct

control of any government official while exercising authority. This is placing officers of the government under control of a combination of railroads. It is a bad precedent that might well lead to serious consequences."

The Government Serves the Corporations.

Here we have it, upon the authority of President Cleveland's own Commission, that the United States government under his administration furnished the railroad corporations with government officers in the form of deputy marshals to take the place of striking employes, operate the trains and serve in that dual capacity in any way that might be required to crush the strike. This is perhaps more credit than the ex-President expected to receive. His own Commission charges him, in effect, with serving the railroads as strike-breaker by furnishing government employes to take the places of striking railroad men and arming them with pistols and clubs and with all the authority of government officials.

Page after page bears testimony of the disreputable character of the deputy marshals sworn in to the number of several thousand and turned loose like armed bullies to "preserve the peace."

The report of the Strike Commission contains 681 pages. I have a mass of other testimony, but for the purpose of this article have confined myself to the report of Mr. Cleveland's own Commission.

How the Strikers Were Defeated.

Hundreds of pages of evidence are given by impartial witnesses to establish the guilt of

the railroad corporations, to prove that the leaders of the strike counselled peace and order; that the strikers themselves were law-abiding and used their influence to prevent disorder; that there was no trouble until the murderous deputy marshals were sprung upon the community, and that these instigated trouble to pave the way for injunctions and soldiers and change of public sentiment, thereby defeating the strike.

Confirmed by Cleveland.

President Cleveland, unwittingly, perhaps, confirms this fact. On page 232 of his article he quotes approvingly the letter written to Edwin Walker, special counsel of the government and regular counsel of the railroads, by Attorney-General Richard Olney, as follows: "It has seemed to me that if the rights of the United States (Railroads?) were vigorously asserted in Chicago, the origin and center of the demonstration, the result would be to make it a failure everywhere else, and to prevent its spread over the entire country."

That is the point, precisely the point, and Mr. Cleveland admits it. It is not the "obstruction of the mails," nor disorder, nor the violation of law that arouses Mr. Cleveland's government and prompts it to "vigorous" assertion of its powers, but the "demonstration," that is, the strike against the railroads, and to put this down, not to move the mails or restore order—a mere pretext which was fully exposed by Governor Altgeld—was the prime cause of Federal interference, and to "make it a failure everywhere" all constitutional restraints were battered down, and as

a strike-breaker President Cleveland won imperishable renown.

Strike Leaders Exonerated by the Commission.

Particular attention is invited to the following which appears upon page xlv:

“There is no evidence before the Commission that the officers of the American Railway Union at any time participated in or advised intimidation, violence or destruction of property. They knew and fully appreciated that as soon as mobs ruled the organized forces of society would crush the mobs and all responsible for them in the remotest degree, and that this means defeat.”

And yet they all served prison sentences. Will President Cleveland please explain why? And why they were refused a trial?

In Whose Interests Were Crimes Committed?

Read the above paragraph from the report of the Strike Commission and then answer these questions:

To whose interest was it to have riots and fires, lawlessness and crime?

To whose advantage was it to have disreputable “deputies” do these things?

Why were only freight cars, largely hospital wrecks, set on fire?

Why have the railroads not yet recovered damages from Cook county, Illinois, for failing to protect their property? Why are they so modest and patient with their suits?

The riots and incendiarism turned defeat

into victory for the railroads. They could have won in no other way. They had everything to gain and the strikers everything to lose.

The violence was instigated in spite of the strikers, and the report of the Commission proves that they made every effort in their power to preserve the peace.

When a crime is committed in the dark the person who is supposed to be benefited by it is sought out as the probable culprit, but we are not required to rely upon presumption in this case, for the testimony against the railroads is too clear and complete and convincing to admit of doubt.

Imprisoned Without Trial.

If the crimes committed during the Chicago strike were chargeable to the strikers, why were they not prosecuted? If not, why were they sentenced to prison?

The fact that they were flung into prison without evidence and without trial, and the fact that the Supreme Court affirmed the outrage, seemed to afford Mr. Cleveland special satisfaction, and he accepts what he calls the "concluding words" of the court as his own final vindication.

Judge Trumbull's Opinion.

The late Senator and Judge, Lyman Trumbull, for many years United States Senator, chairman of the Senate Committee on Judiciary, Supreme Judge of Illinois, author of the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States, personal friend of Abraham Lincoln, and, above all, an honest man, wrote:

"The doctrine announced by the Supreme Court in the Debs case places every citizen at the mercy of any prejudiced or malicious Federal judge who may think proper to imprison him."

President Cleveland doubtless understands the import of these ominous words. Let the people, the working people, whom the ex-President regards merely as a mob to be suppressed when they peaceably protest against injustice—let them meditate upon these words at their leisure.

When the strike was at its height and the railroads were defeated at every turn, the Federal Court hastily impaneled a special grand jury to indict the strikers. The foreman of this jury was chosen specially because he was a violent union hater, and he afterward betrayed his own capitalist colleagues in a matter they had entrusted to his integrity.

The jury was impaneled, not to investigate, but to indict.

A Tribune reporter, who refused to verify a false interview before the jury, and thereby perjure himself to incriminate the writer, was discharged. The Chicago Times published the particulars.

An indictment was speedily returned. "To the penitentiary" was the cry of the railroads and their henchmen. A trial jury was impaneled. Not a juror was accepted who was of the same political party as the defendants. Every possible effort was made to rush the strike leaders to the State prison.

The Failure of the Prosecution.

After all the evidence of the prosecution had been presented they realized that they had

miserably failed. Not one particle of incriminating testimony could the railroads produce with all the sleuth hounds they had at their command.

Next came our turn. The General Managers were dumbfounded when they were, one after the other, put on the stand. Eighty-six witnesses were in court to testify as to the riots and fires. Assistant Chief Palmer and other members of the Fire Department were on hand to testify that when they were trying to extinguish the flames in the railroad yards they caught men in the act of cutting the hose and that these men wore the badges of deputy marshals. Other witnesses were policemen who were ready to testify that they had caught these same deputies instigating violence and acts of incendiarism.

The Jury Dumbfounded.

The jury had been packed to convict. When our evidence began to come in their eyes fairly bulged with astonishment. There was a perfect transformation scene. The jurors realized that they had been steeped in prejudice and grossly deceived.

The General Managers testified that they did not remember what had taken place at the joint General Managers' and Pullman meeting. Their printed proceedings were called for. They looked appealingly to Edwin Walker. The terror that overspread their features can never be forgotten by those who witnessed it. Their proceedings would expose their mendacity and convict them of conspiracy and crime. Something must be done, and done quickly. Court adjourned for lunch. When it re-

convened Judge Grosscup gravely announced that a juror had been suddenly taken ill and that the trial could not proceed.

The "Illness" of a Juror.

The next day and the next the same announcement was repeated. We offered to proceed in any of the several ways provided in such exigencies. The prosecution objected. The cry, "To the penitentiary" had subsided. To "let go" was now the order of the railroads. Not another session of court must be held, for their printed proceedings, the private property in the strong box of each member, and full of matter that would convict them, would have to be produced. All the proceedings of the American Railway Union had been produced in evidence by order of the court and the court could not refuse to command the railroad officials to produce the proceedings of their association. These proceedings were brought in at the closing session of the trial, but by order of the court the defendants were forbidden to look into them and Edwin Walker, the government counsel, watched them with the faithful eye of a trusted guardian.

We were not allowed to examine the proceedings of the General Managers' Association, notwithstanding our proceedings, telegrams, letters and other private communications had been brought into court by order of the judge, inspected by Edwin Walker and others and printed in the court records for public inspection.

It was at this point that the court adjourned and the juror was taken ill.

Ten years have elapsed. He is still ill, and we are still waiting for the court to reconvene and the trial to proceed.

Government Refused to Go On with the Case.

Every proposition to continue the case was fiercely resisted by Edwin Walker, special counsel of the government and general counsel of the railroads.

Clarence S. Darrow objected to Mr. Walker's appearing in that dual capacity, representing at the same time the government and the railroads—the supposed justice of the one and the vengeful spirit of the other—but Judge Grosscup overruled the objection.

The trial was postponed again and again, the interest in it gradually subsiding, and many months afterward, when it was almost forgotten, it was quietly stricken from the docket.

Jurors Greet Defendants.

When the remaining eleven jurors were discharged by the court, Edwin Walker extended his hand to them, but they rushed by him and surrounded the writer and his co-defendants, grasping their hands and assuring them, each and every one of them, that they were convinced of their innocence and only regretted that they had been prevented from returning their verdict accordingly. The details appear in the Chicago papers of that time.

At the very time we were being tried for

prison for contempt, the program being that conspiracy we were serving a sentence in six months in jail should be followed by as many years in penitentiary.

For a jury to pronounce us innocent in substantially the same case for which we were already serving a sentence would mean not only our complete vindication but the exposure of the Federal Court that had, at the behest of the railroads, sentenced us to prison without a trial.

And so the trial was abruptly terminated on account of the alleged illness of a juror and they could find no other to take his place.

These are the facts and I have all the documentary evidence in detail and only lack of space prevents me from making the exhibits in this article.

If President Cleveland or the Railroad Managers doubt it I stand ready to meet them face to face in discussion of the issue upon any platform in America.

The Greatest Industrial Battle in History.

The Chicago strike was in many respects the grandest industrial battle in history, and I am prouder of my small share in it than of any other act of my life.

Men, women and children were on the verge of starvation at the "model city" of Pullman. They had produced the fabulous wealth of the Pullman corporation but they, poor souls, were compelled to suffer the torment of hunger pangs in the very midst of the abundance their labor had created.

A hundred and fifty thousand railroad employes, their fellow members in the

American Railway Union, sympathized with them, shared their earnings with them, and after trying in every peaceable way they could conceive of to touch the flint heart of the Pullman company—every overture being resented, every suggestion being denied, every proposition spurned with contempt—they determined not to pollute their hands and dishonor their manhood by handling Pullman cars and contributing to the suffering and sorrow of their brethren and their wives and babes. And rather than do this they laid down their tools in a body, sacrificed their situations and submitted to persecution, exile and the blacklist; to idleness poverty, crusts and rags, and I shall love and honor these moral heroes to my last breath.

There was more of human sympathy, of the essence of brotherhood, of the spirit of real Christianity in this act than in all the hollow pretences and heartless prayers of those disciples of mammon who cried out against it and this act will shine forth in increasing splendor long after the dollar worshipers have mingled with the dust of oblivion.

Had the carpenter of Nazareth been in Chicago at the time, He would have been on the side of the poor, the heavy-laden and sore at heart, and He would have denounced their oppressors and been sent to prison for contempt of court under President Cleveland's administration.

President Cleveland says that we were put down because we had acted in violation of the Sherman Anti-Trust law of 1890. Will he kindly state what other trusts were proceeded against and what capitalists were sentenced to prison during his administration?

A Tribute to Altgeld.

He waited ten years to cast his aspersions upon the honor of John P. Altgeld and if that patriotic statesman had not fallen in the service of the people, if he were still here to defend his official acts, it is not probable that the ex-President would have ventured to assail him.

Reluctantly, indeed, do I close without the space to incorporate his burning message to President Cleveland and at least some extracts from his masterly speech on "Government by Injunction."

His memory requires no defense, but if it did I could speak better for him than for myself. He never truckled to corporate wealth; he did not compromise with his conscience; he was steadfast in his devotion to truth and in his fidelity to right, and he sought with all his strength to serve the people and the people will gratefully remember him as one of the true men, one of the great souls of his sordid age.

The Chicago strike is not yet settled, and its "concluding pages" are **YET TO BE WRITTEN.**