

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE PULLMAN STRIKE

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The Pullman Strike has come to symbolize the clashes that occurred between labor and capital in the late nineteenth century. The strike became a national event that involved many groups, each with its own interests. The most significant groups were the American Railway Union, which represented the workers, the General Manager's Association, which represented the owners, and the Federal government. In a situation concerning two groups with clashing beliefs, the group chosen as a mediator or problem solver should be neutral and open to hearing both sides of the disagreement. When it became clear that the American Railway Union and the General Managers Association were not going to settle their disagreement quickly or nonviolently, the government became involved in order to prevent loss of life or property. It was also the responsibility of the government to be neutral when considering their course of action. Unfortunately, in the case of the Pullman Strike, many of the government officials involved with the case were tied to the railroad capital and therefore the federal government played a biased role. Therefore, "what began as a strike against one company ended as a war between the combined forces of the United States Army and the General Managers' Association" (Painter in Fink, p. 206).

The Pullman Strike is a complex topic that has been studied by many historians. Secondary works on the strike are abundant. Biographies have been written about some of the major figures involved. Examples are Ray Ginger's *The Bending of a Cross: A biography of Eugene Victor Debs* and Henry James's *Richard Olney-Evolution of a Statesman*. Historians have chosen different aspects to

focus on. Some historians only discuss the court cases that relate to the Pullman Strike but occurred after the strike was over. Two books that comment extensively on the involvement of the federal government in the strike are Gerald G. Eggert's *Railroad Labor Disputes: The Beginnings of Federal Strike Policy* and Almont Lindsey's *The Pullman Strike- The story of a Unique Experience and of a Great Labor Upheaval*. *The American Historical Review* journalist, Donald L. McMurry claims that, "Eggert's detailed treatment of legal and constitutional matters connected with the strike is comprehensive and competently done" (*American Historical Review*, p. 1250). Herbert R. Northput reviewed Lindsey's book and concluded that it effectively told the story of a great labor upheaval (*Political Science Quarterly*, p. 462). These secondary sources along with other secondary and primary sources depict a strike in which the power of the federal government was used by railroad managers to crush labor.

The United States government receives its power from the people and is expected to serve the people. The purpose of the *Constitution of the United States* is "to form a more perfect union and establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote general welfare, and secure blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity" (*United States Constitution*). Our founding fathers set up a system with different levels and branches and checks and balances so that no one part of the government would have too much power. They also set guidelines so that citizens could take part in the government. Since the government is supposed to treat all people the same, the government should have been neutral in Pullman Strike.

However, the government only represented some of the people in its actions in the Pullman Strike. The people that the government chose to represent were those who had money and power—the railroad owners.

The era of industrialization greatly changed American society. Organized factories and plants that used new technology and machines were built. Production became more efficient and the workplace was transformed. Socioeconomic divisions were a result of this industrialization. Factory workers fell into set, scheduled hours with routine tasks and little room for promotion. Industrialists made larger profits than ever before. They used this capital to expand their businesses and make even more profit. One very important thing that industrialists gained along with this money was power. By the late nineteenth century, owners of large enterprises and corporations controlled different industries and their workers.

George Pullman is an example of a wealthy businessman who profited during this time period. Although Pullman only completed fourth grade, his father left him in charge of the family business because he always had a knack for business. The knack was evident when Pullman was doing work related to railroads. During Pullman's era, railroads became a vital factor in American society. Pullman looked into many different areas of railroad work until he found one that captured his interests. Manufacturing and leasing railroad cars became Pullman's main business and interest. He developed sleeping, dining, and drawing room cars that changed the experience of traveling by rail. In 1867, The Pullman Palace Car Company incorporated. Pullman

"ranked as one of the most prominent corporate leaders in not only Chicago but also the nation as a whole" (Papke, p.7).

Pullman was different than other wealthy industrialists-- he had a vision. He developed the town of Pullman in Illinois so that he could control his workers, not only in his factories but also in their everyday lives. Pullman owned the entire town including the horses, arcade, church, library, and other institutions. His goal in creating this town was to create an environment in which his workers could "manifest 'habits of respectability,' that is, good manners, neatness, cleanliness, and sobriety" (Papke, p.12). To accomplish these goals, no saloons were built in the town and Pullman regulated every aspect of the workers' lives. Aside from their dislike for being controlled, residents of this model town were unhappy about their rent. The rent rates in Pullman were higher than rates of comparable housing in nearby towns. Although Pullman was paternalistic and really did care about his workers, the way in which they were treated and their opposing views put them on two different levels. The workers were oppressed and unhappy.

Unfair treatment, long workdays, poor working conditions, and low wages were some of the main issues bothering workers. Many workers had been taken off wages and placed on piecework. Piecework meant that workers would get paid only for the number of products they made that were in good condition. It was a way of getting workers to manufacture even more despite the poor conditions in which they were forced to work. The employees always ended up getting the short end of the stick. When companies prospered, the owners, not the workers were the

ones who benefited. However when companies or the economy took a turn for the worse, employees felt it most. This was evident when "in the late summer of 1893, the national economic depression caught up with Pullman and Pullman approved firings, layoffs, and wage reductions" (Papke, p.17) Although he paid his workers less, he refused to lower the already high rent of his tenant/workers who lived in Pullman. The United States Strike Commission observed, "If we exclude the aesthetic and sanitary features at Pullman, the rents are from 20 to 25 percent higher than the rents in Chicago or surrounding towns for similar accommodations" (U.S. Strike Commission, *Report*, p. xxxii). When rents were raised even higher, workers were barely making enough money to survive.

Leaving Pullman was not an option for them since fear of losing work kept them in the town. Workers may not have been angered to the point of action about the raised rent, had the effects of the depression been distributed among everyone who worked for the company. This was not the case. David Ray Papke explains, "the workers were also irritated that foreman and company officers still drew high salaries and that the company kept paying quarterly dividend to stockholders" (Papke, p. 18). The workers seemed to be the only ones suffering. Even the *New York Times*, which is not known for its support of workers, concluded that the workers were treated unfairly. The *New York Times* reported that "It has been the policy of the Pullman Palace Car Company to reduce the salaries of its employees until the starvation point has been reached" (*New York Times*, June 28, 1894, p. 1). When the striking workers attempted to voice their requests,

Thomas Wickes, a vice president at Pullman's company, refused to grant their requests or even listen to their complaints.

Describing the organization of the American Railway Union, the United States Strike Commission Report officially read, "In March 1894, the employees of Pullman's Palace Car Company, being dissatisfied with their wages, rents, and shop treatment for the first time in the history of the town, sought organization, and joined the American Railway Union in large numbers" (U.S. Strike Commission Report, p. xxiii). The meeting had to be held outside of Pullman, since the town had no facilities for such purposes. The Pullman Company was opposed to workers conferring with each other and was hostile toward organized labor. After all, "the conditions created at Pullman enabled the management at all times to assert with great vigor its assumed right to fix wages and rents absolutely, and to repress that sort of independence which leads to labor organizations and their attempts at mediation, arbitration, strikes, etc." (U.S. Strike Commission Report, p. xxi). The Pullman Company refused to recognize any labor organizations. In fact the Pullman Company refused to even recognize the complaints of its workers. The *New York Times* referred to the workers' decision to strike as "a last resort to protect themselves and families against utter degradation" (*NY Times*, June 28, 1894, p. 1).

It is important to have a sense of chronology when analyzing the Pullman Strike. The American Railway Union played a major role in the strike although the union was not involved from the start. The American Railway Union was founded on June 20, 1893 when Eugene Debs

met with some others in Chicago and discussed the need for organized labor. The American Railway Union was a labor organization that was open to all Caucasian workers who were employed by the railway. The only workers who were not a part of this organization were managerial employees. In the spring of 1894, the American Railway Union prevailed in a strike against the Great Northern Railroad. This victory led to a great expansion of membership for the union. David Ray Papke reports "less than a year after its founding, the union had established 465 locals and signed up 150,000 workers" (Papke, p. 10). The American Railway Union realized that strikes were equally disastrous to employees and employers. Therefore, its "statement of principles expressed the belief that, by being reasonable and fair in demands and honorable in all relations, it would be possible to adjust differences without recourse to lockouts, strikes, blacklists, boycotts" (Lindsey, p. 111). The machinery of the union was geared to settle differences in a harmonious manner. The union had set guidelines in which problems were to be addressed. These guidelines included using boards of mediation and counselors. A strike was an option only when all methods failed and the majority voted in favor of striking. Due to their desire for harmony and their guidelines, the American Railway was not involved in the Pullman Strike from the beginning.

The Pullman Strike historically began on May 11, 1894. It was on this date that 4,000 of the 4,300 Pullman Palace Car Company walked out and went on strike (Papke, p. 18). In the days preceding the walkout, Pullman workers had tried to solve their problems through discussion with Thomas Wickes and George Pullman himself. Their

efforts went without reward. In fact, just the opposite happened. "After the meeting with Wickes and Pullman, several members of the grievance committee were dismissed from their jobs" (Papke, p. 18). In response, the workers decided to strike and the factories became ominously still.

After the Pullman workers marched out of the shops on May 11, almost no violence occurred. This was the case since it was not the intent of workers to disrupt the community. The peacefulness and order of Pullman during the strike is proven by newspaper reports. The *Daily Inter Ocean*, an excellent Chicago newspaper of the period, reported, "No one would have guessed a great strike was on from the appearance of the pretty streets in Pullman" (*Daily Inter Ocean*, May 20, 1894). Even a month into the strike, the *Daily Inter Ocean* claimed that "it is rather as though each day was a Sunday, all is quiet and solemn and orderly" (*Daily Inter Ocean*, June 15, 1894). Although the American Railway Union was not officially involved yet, the peacefulness of the strike was due in part to their advisement. American Railway Union vice president, George W. Howard said in an address at Turner Hall in Kensington, "Now men you have work before you, and you must do it like American citizens. Use no threats, no intimidations, no force toward anyone who goes in the works" (Howard in Lindsey, p. 113). Although the strike was a "model strike," the Pullman Company continued to reject arbitration.

The American Railway Union's representatives gathered in Chicago about one month after the strike began. Roughly four hundred delegates came to the meeting with memories of the Great Northern Strike fresh

in their minds (Papke, 23). The delegates were optimistic and were itching to get involved after they visited the town of Pullman, personally met workers, and read the lengthy report of Pullman workers. The first step the American Railway officially took occurred when they made a request for arbitration. They selected a committee to meet with Thomas Wickes. The latter refused to negotiate in anyway with the American Railway Union. When arbitration seemed hopeless, the American Railway took the leap and became a major player in the strike. David Ray Papke recalls the date saying, "finally, on June 22, six weeks after the start of the strike, the convention took the step it had hesitated to take earlier. It passed a motion to refuse to handle Pullman cars or any trains with Pullman cars unless by June 26 the company responded to grievances" (Papke. P. 25). When the American Railway Union polled its lodges to see if they would support the plan, they all responded with enthusiasm for the boycott (Lindsey, p. 188). It became obvious that the boycott was not fueled merely by the conduct of the Pullman Company. It tapped the deep and persuasive alienation of labor in general. Workers were mad about their situation and their limited opportunities. The boycott was an effort by workers to end the mean and arbitrary treatment they received from distant owners of industries in which they worked.

One of the major reasons the government did not take on a neutral role in the Pullman Strike was Attorney General, Richard Olney. Prior to his appointment Richard Olney held no political office and was virtually unknown. In fact, historian and defender of Richard Olney, Henry James states, "President Grover Cleveland intrusted the

attorney-generalship to Olney in February, 1893, despite the fact that the two were almost strangers, having seen each other only once previous to the appointment. (James, p. 14 -17). Richard Olney was very stubborn by nature. Once he decided something, he would rarely change his mind. As Attorney General, Richard Olney was the one who decided the federal government's actions in the strike. "Far from standing neutral or being reluctant to intervene, Olney from the first was willing to throw the full weight of the federal government into crushing the boycott" (Eggert, p.158). Historian Almont Lindsey assessed the situation and concluded that, "the outbreak of the Pullman Strike had stirred up all Olney's resentment toward labor...In his opinion the strike represented an attack against railroad property, corporate control, and all that his world held dear" (Lindsey, p. 149).

Given his background, Olney was hardly the person one might turn to for a neutral, evenhanded reaction to the strike and boycott. A graduate of both Brown University and Harvard Law School, Olney had practiced with former congressman and Massachusetts Supreme Court Justice Benjamin F. Thomas in Boston. He married Thomas's daughter Agnes and took over Thomas's practice when Thomas died. (American Council of Learned Societies, p. 32). Olney's most important and lucrative clients were railroads. On at least two occasions he declined appointment to the Massachusetts Supreme Court so that he could represent railroads before the courts of New England instead. (Papke, p. 30).

Olney's specialty was not railroad labor squabbles but rather railroad management, merger, and consolidation. He helped transform the Boston & Maine Railroad from a small Boston-to Portland line into a system that controlled all major railroad traffic north of Boston. He was also the attorney for and a director of the Chicago, Burlington, Quincy; the Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe; and smaller New England lines. Incidentally, the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy line was the very same line that had broken a strike in 1888 in ways that helped turn Eugene Debs from the brotherhoods to industrial unionism. (James, p. 49). Being a railroad lawyer served Olney extremely well. His mansion with an elevator on Boston's prestigious Commonwealth Avenue was an indication of this. Before Olney accepted his appointment from President Cleveland, he sought assurances from the President that he could continue his private practice while serving in the cabinet. Indeed, Olney continued to receive substantial retainers from several railroads after he moved to Washington D.C.

There have been two important biographies written about Richard Olney. They are *Richard Olney and His Public Service* by Henry James and *Richard Olney: Evolution of a Statesman* by Gerald G. Eggert. James's biography was written in 1923 and stood alone for some years until Eggert wrote his book. Both of Olney's biographies present Olney basically as an unknown man in American history who had strong convictions. Neither biography is overly flattering. In reviewing *Evolution of a Statesman*, Robert McElroy claims that "It is a merit of Mr. James's biography that he does not seek to make a case for Mr. Olney. Frankly he admits the latter's limitations." McElroy also notes

that "James also emphasizes many good qualities such as ardent loyalty, perfect honesty of purpose, and unfailing diligence" (McElroy, p. 578). Geoffrey Blodgett reviewed *Richard Olney: Evolution of a Statesman* in *The American Historical Review*. Blodgett concludes that "Eggert worked long and hard to penetrate Olney's dour exterior. The new biography will not upset conventional impressions of the Boston strong man in Cleveland's second cabinet" (Blodgett, p. 1403). Overall, historians feel that Olney is a man worth studying although he is not well known and was not the most compassionate man.

Richard Olney was able to use the power of the federal government to advance his beliefs. Not only was he using federal power to enforce his views, he seemed to act unchecked. This occurred for a number of reasons. Ray Ginger studied this aspect of the Pullman Strike and concluded that, "Throughout the critical period of the boycott, President Cleveland was occupied in a bitter fight with Congress over the Wilson Tariff Bill, and his only information about the strike came from Attorney-General Olney" (Ginger, p.129). Another reason Olney was so powerful is because of how he informed and advised President Cleveland. Since Olney had been a successful lawyer before his appointment, he knew how to make others see his point of view. Richard Olney was the guiding hand in shaping the view of the President. Proof of this claim is apparent when Olney went to the White House to prepare President Cleveland for sending troops to Chicago to enforce an injunction. At this point President Cleveland felt that the newspaper accounts of the strike were overdrawn for sensational purposes. He was "not planning to deal with the matter at all until

the next regular meeting of the cabinet on July 3. The attorney general's 'official account' of the situation must have been effective and alarming, for the President immediately galvanized into action" (Eggert, p.166). A third reason that Richard Olney held so much of the federal government's power in his hands is because he had a direct influence on judges involved with the strike.

Attorney-General Richard Olney's bias in the Pullman Strike is undeniably evident in his decision to appoint Edwin Walker as his assistant. The Who's Who in America, describes Walker as a lawyer who represented several railroads as general solicitor since 1860. According to Who's Who in America, he was the Illinois counsel for C., M. & St. P.R.R. since 1870 and also partner in the firm of W.P. Rend & Co., coal miners and shippers. Edwin Walker's ties with the railroads were undeniable. As if this is not bad enough, the reason that Edwin Walker was chosen was because he was the man who the General Managers' Association recommended. As historian Ray Ginger notes, the General Managers' Association "sent a wire to Richard Olney, suggesting he appoint Edwin Walker as a special attorney to handle the strike situation.... Within two hours, without even pausing to consult anyone, Olney had appointed Walker to represent the Federal government" (Ginger, p.125). There was no way that Edwin Walker would be able to look at the situation from a neutral standpoint. His ties to the railroad prevented this. A man with such an obvious bias should not have been appointed assistant to the Attorney General. The position in which he was appointed was a crucial one for the federal government. Walker was to be Olney's assistant working out of Chicago. That meant

that Walker was right in the midst of the action and Olney would depend on him for information and guidance.

Nobody missed the obvious bias of this appointment. Many people were upset when Richard Olney appointed Walker as his assistant. Papke notes "even in the inner circles of railroad ownership and management, questions surfaced about the Walker appointment" (Papke, p. 40). Questions arose because some wondered about the appearance such an appointment would leave. They wondered if it would make the government's bias too obvious. The newspapers, which tended to be unsympathetic toward workers, noted that the appointment was a direct result of the General Managers' Association (*New York Times*, July 2, 1894, p. 2).

If Richard Olney had taken more of a neutral position in the ordeal, he would have chosen a different assistant. There were plenty of people to choose from if he felt it was necessary to assign a special assistant. It is questionable whether or not a special assistant needed to be assigned in the first place. The federal government already had a United States District Attorney with a large number of assistants in Chicago. These assistants were amply able to attend to all of the government business there. However, Richard Olney felt the need to appoint one special counsel who would directly represent the federal government during the strike. By appointing just one individual rather than letting the group of assistants handle the strike, Olney could ensure that the assistant would have the same views as he and take actions to crush the strike. Even if this were not the reason for Richard Olney's decision to appoint a special

counsel, his partiality to labor was evident in his pick. First of all, the administration claimed to be Democratic during the strike. There were plenty of distinguished reputable Democrat counsels in Chicago who would have been suitable for the job. However, as the Illinois governor said, "the Attorney General and the President evidently felt that when the Constitution and the laws were to be disregarded and a new revolutionary policy was to be inaugurated, that they needed a Republican for that purpose" (Altgeld). Even if this was how the administration felt, there were plenty of distinguished Republican counsels in Chicago that did not have any ties with the railroads. However, the federal government did not consider this. Richard Olney obediently appointed Edwin Walker, a man who worked for the railroads for thirty-five years, as soon as the General Managers' Association directed him to do so. The General Managers' Association was committed to the belief that if one of their own lawyers were a special counsel to the United States, they would have an advantage in suppressing the strike.

Olney's influence in choosing the judges to preside in the case further shows the government was trying to crush labor. These judges were Judge Peter Grosscup and Judge William A. Woods. Not unlike many other government officials involved with the case, these men too had ties with the railroads. Judge Grosscup's brother was a railroad lawyer. Also only a month earlier, Judge Grosscup himself had given a much-publicized Decoration Day address excoriating labor federations as a menace to civilization. It was evident in this address that Judge Grosscup had a negative view of workers and feared the emergence of

one big union. His address suggested that as a Judge he would do everything he could to suppress unruly workers. Judge Grosscup's own words were that, "The growth of labor organizations must be checked by law" (*Chicago Tribune*, June 15, 1894). They reflect the attitude that he brought with him to his dealing of the Pullman Strike. Also, historian Gerald G. Eggert suggests that, "Grosscup had been accused repeatedly during his tenure on the bench as favoring corporate interests while personally holding extensive assets in businesses affected by his decisions" (Eggert, p.167). Judge William A. Woods record and background were comparable to that of Grosscup. Woods was a brilliant man. He was described as having "acute legal mind" which means he had an ability to find a plausible reason for deciding whatever you wish. It was later shown that Judge Woods had accepted such important favors from railroads that his impartiality was doubtful. Since both of the Judges had connections to the railroad, it was assured that they would work with Olney and Walker to crush the American Railway Union.

An injunction is defined by *Webster's New World Dictionary* as "a court order prohibiting or ordering a given action." The fact that an injunction had to be issued is an indication that the strikers were not actually breaking any existing laws. Therefore the federal government took it into their hands to make their actions a crime. Judge Grosscup and Judge Woods stayed true to their interests and accommodated the needs and wishes of Edwin Walker. Chicago United States Attorney Thomas M. Milchrist and Walker prepared the application for the injunction. Before the court opened, Judge

Grosscup and Judge Woods helped them to revise it. The revisions served to make the injunction broader. The end result was astonishing. The *New York Times* referred to the injunction as a "Gatling gun on paper and a "veritable dragnet in the matter of legal verbiage, one of those peculiar instruments that punishes an individual for doing a certain thing, and is equally merciless if he does not do it, so it is difficult to understand how the strikers can maintain their present policy and at the same time evade its operation or escape its influence" (*New York Times*, July 3, 1894, p. 2). Using the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 as authority, the injunction prohibited the strike leaders from any action to aid the boycott. They were forbidden to answer questions and send telegrams. They were denied the right to urge men, by word of mouth, to join the boycott. It can be argued that it violated strike leaders constitutional rights to speak, write, and assemble freely. Even some conservative members of the legal profession at the time the injunction was issued wondered about the expansiveness of it. At the August 1894 meeting of the American Bar Association, Charles Chafli of St. Louis made a speech questioning the propriety of the injunction (*American Bar Association Report*).

The injunction also serves as an indicator of injustice because the way it was issued was illegal. Professor of history and political science, Willard L. King, discusses the legal dimensions of the injunction. The Federal statutes at the time required notice to the defendants before an injunction could be issued. This law held true unless the circumstances were such that peril would occur if notice were given. In that event, a court was allowed to issue a temporary

injunction and a prompt hearing was supposed to be set to decide the whether or not the injunction would be permanent. It is not surprising that government issued the injunction without notice to the defendants since riots were going on and cars were being burned. However a hearing should have been set to determine if the injunction was permanent. The defendants would be allowed to appear at this hearing and contest the injunction if they felt it was too broad, unjust, or improperly issued. (King, November 19, 1952). The fact that the injunction issued by Judge Grosscup and Judge Woods was issued without notice and was immediately permanent is proof that the federal government did not completely act within the bounds of the United States laws.

The government claimed that their main reason for involvement in the Pullman Strike was to make sure that interstate mail was not interrupted. If this was what the federal government was really worried about, they would not have become involved when they did. Eggert correctly points out that, "It could be argued in answer to the legal objection, that a boycott of Pullman cars would not actually interfere with interstate commerce inasmuch as freight and passenger trains could continue to pass as usual as long as the railroad companies made no attempt to attach Pullman cars" (Eggert, p. 156). Strikers had declared that they would not move trains that had Pullman cars attached. According to Almont Lindsey, "the American Railway Union had no desire to interfere with anything so vital and even declared that men would gladly be furnished to operate mail trains on condition that Pullman cars were not attached" (Lindsey, p. 150). If

the railroads had agreed to this provision, there would not have been any interruption of the mail. However, the railroad owners refused to run their trains without Pullman cars attached. In fact, some trains that usually carried mail and no Pullman cars, attached Pullman cars to create a problem with the mail. As soon as the General Managers' Association saw that the mail was interrupted, they quickly turned the situation to their advantage and requested the federal government to get involved.

The General Managers' Association actions made it inevitable that mail would have to be interrupted. The statement that to discontinue Pullman cars on passenger trains would violate existing contracts was an excuse rather than a reason for resisting the boycott. According to the United States Strike Commission, a sample contract was presented to them at the close of the disorders and the testimony given by Everett St. John, general manager of the Rock Island railway and chairman of the General Managers' Association that revealed "The companies had complete discretion in the use of Pullmans. The contract made no mention of how many Pullman cars, or when, or on what classes of trains they were to be used." The contracts simply said that if any sleeping cars were to be used they must be Pullman cars. They did not require that sleeping cars be used. To the question of one of the strike commissioners, "Are you at liberty to leave Pullman cars off of any class of trains you desire?" St. John replied, "We are. It is entirely at the option of the company" (U.S. Strike Commission, Report, pp. 547-58). If the federal government were so worried about the mail, it would make sense that they would advise railroads to

refrain from adding Pullman cars to the mail trains. Instead the government did not take action while the General Managers' Association went out of their way to create a situation which would require government intervention in the dispute.

Since there were not specific laws about what a mail train was, the federal government and the General Managers' Association collaborated and took advantage of the obscure law. Almont Lindsey explains, "the law did not clearly specify what constituted a mail train, nor did it require written contracts between the government and the railroads" (Lindsey, p. 150). There was nothing in any statute, expressed, or implied, that would indicate that mail trains as such necessitated the attachment of Pullman sleepers. The postmaster general certainly could have addressed the emergency situation by expressly providing that only passenger trains free of Pullman cars could be used for the transportation of mail until the strike was over. However, the postmaster general was an amenable worker of the federal government and therefore did not take any action. Therefore the United States Department of Justice was compelled to interpret the law themselves. On June 28, 1894, in a letter to Richard Olney, the acting postmaster Frank H. Jones wrote, "In interpreting the law the Department of Justice in April, 1894, supplied its own definition of a mail train by ruling that it comprised of all cars that are hauled by such a train and that any person attempting to detach any part of it was guilty of obstructing the mail" (Lindsey, p. 151). That this was only an interpretation of the law was evident by the fact that Postmaster-General W. S. Bissell recommended to Congress before and

after the strike the need for a law clearly defining the character of the mail train. The interpretation made by the Department of Justice was comprehensive enough to make any striker liable who attempted to detach a Pullman car from a mail train or who attempted to delay a train because it had Pullman cars attached. Railroad officials remained adamant in their determination to have Pullman cars attached to as many 'mail trains' as possible. Any interference with Pullman cars on such trains was construed as obstructing the mail. The incidents were immediately brought to the attention of federal authorities. It was as if the railroad officials went about looking for a problem and when they finally found one, they could not wait to take action.

The procedures in which federal assistance was supposed to be applied for were not followed correctly in the Pullman Strike. On June 16, 1894, Richard Olney sent a dispatch to the Honorable William J. Allen that stated "I understand the State of Illinois is willing to protect property against lawless violence with military force if necessary. Please advise receivers to take proper steps to procure protection by civil authorities of the State. If such protection proves inadequate, the government should be applied to for military assistance" (Altgeld, p 655). This telegraph laid down the correct procedures that were to be followed. That is, the local authorities should be applied to first, and in case of their failure, then the Governor of the State should be applied to for assistance. If this failed, the Governor was then supposed to ask the federal government for assistance. This procedure worked well. On several occasions

during the coal strike as well as several occasions during the railroad strike, the United States Marshal for the Southern District of Illinois applied to the Governor for military aid to enable him and his deputies to execute the processes of the United States court, and in each instance troops were promptly sent to his assistance. This shows that the state of Illinois was always prompt and helpful when called upon. Governor John Altgeld claims that "the State administration stood equally ready to furnish any assistance which the United States Marshal at Chicago might require to carry out the orders of the United States court there" (Altgeld, p. 660). It would make sense that the United States Marshal in Chicago would look for the help of the Governor if a need arose since Richard Olney had only a few weeks before telegraphed that the Governor should be applied to for troops. But instead of pursuing this course, just the opposite occurred. No application of any sort was made to the Governor by the United States Marshal in Chicago or by any United States official in Chicago. A logical question would be why the federal government did not direct the United States Marshal at Chicago to apply to the state for troops. The answer is that "it subsequently developed that more than ten days before there was any trouble, the corporations of Chicago applied to the federal government for troops so that a precedent might be set under which they could in the future appeal directly to the federal government and become independent of local governments" (Altgeld, p. 168). This change of procedure obviously put the federal government in a position in which they could intervene without following traditional laws. It was a case of the federal

government setting things up because they knew they would want to intervene and crush the strike as soon as possible without having to wait for the state to take action.

Federal troops were sent to Chicago before there was even a problem. On July 2, 1894, the reports made by the railroads themselves are proof that the situation was under control. The Wisconsin Central Railroad reported, "All passenger and freight trains moving and business resumed its normal condition" (D.C. Heath and Company, p. 44). The Chicago and Northern Pacific Railroad report read: "Suburban trains all running about on time. Freight moving without interruption" (D.C. Heath and Company, p. 44). Six other railroad companies issued similar reports for July 2, 1894. The railroad reports coincide with statements made by fire departments in Chicago. The fire departments claimed that for the first three days of July, no attempt was made to destroy railroad property. Part of the reason that there was no violence is because as, David Ray Papke notes, the "American Railway Union urged the workers to conduct themselves like gentlemen and to abide by the law" (Papke, p. 21). Although strikers were not acting in a violent fashion and trains were still moving, the federal government could not wait to intervene and crush the American Railway Union. On the morning of July 3, 1894, Edwin Walker sent a dispatch to Washington, asking that federal troops be sent to the city. On the afternoon of July 3, 1894, federal troops arrived in Chicago and officially went on duty. Governor John Altgeld makes it clear that, "up to this time there had been no serious disturbance of the mails, no destruction of property" (Altgeld, p. 665). Also according to the

railroad themselves, there was no serious interference with the operation of the railroads or interstate commerce. Since no problems had arisen, it does not make sense that the federal government would send troops unless the government was serving its own interest of crushing the strike.

The federal troops that were sent to Chicago to intervene with the strike were not a positive force. In fact, the trouble did not start until the United States troops arrived on the scene. There had been no major problems in Chicago when the first federal troops arrived on July 3, 1894. The first disturbances did not occur until July 4, which was after the arrival of the troops. The presence of armed, uniformed soldiers in Chicago was destabilizing. They angered not just the peaceful strikers but also regular inhabitants of Chicago. Chicago had many tramps, drifters, and men and women seeking employment. They were not members of the American Railway Union. These people were unhappy with the government because they blamed them for their unemployment and poverty. David Ray Papke claims that for these people, "taunting soldiers or throwing a rock at authority was a way to relieve ennui and assert oneself" (Papke, p. 33). Although the American Railway Union strongly advised against violence, some of its members took action because they felt oppressed by the hovering federal troops. Within a day of the first troops reaching Chicago, mobs tipped and set on fire their first railroad cars.

The federal troops did not help bring peace during the Pullman Strike. In fact, the opposite can be proven. In the words of Governor John Altgeld, "Instead of overseeing the mob or exerting their

influence for good, their presence added to the excitement, and instead of suppressing rioting"...rioting continually worsened as more federal troops entered the picture. (Altgeld, p. 660-679). General Miles was in command of the army in Chicago. General Miles wrote a report in which he does not refer to anything in particular that the federal troops did. When violent or dangerous situations arose, the State troops were able to handle them and take care of the problems. There was not a need for the federal government to go over Governor John Altgeld's head. If they had not, some historians argue that the Illinois soldiers could have kept the situation under control. Governor Altgeld went as far as to argue that the situation would not have been so bad in the first place. No one can know how much truth there was to Governor Altgeld's claim since that was not the way in which the events took place. However, it cannot be disputed, after reviewing reports of the federal troops and of state troops, that the state troops were able to handle the strike more efficiently. Records show that every time, and there were not many, that State assistance was called upon in Illinois to help solve a riot, railroad fire, etc., Governor Altgeld sent troops immediately.

It was not necessarily the fault of federal troops that they caused problems and were not able to stop the riots. The federal troops were placed in an unusual position and put at a disadvantage. They did not understand the issues that the unhappy workers faced. They were brought into Chicago and told that the strikers were the enemy. The strikers responded to the troops in a negative way. First of all, the workers felt oppressed by the government when the troops

appeared. Secondly, the vast number of soldiers that appeared probably made an impact on strikers. The United State Strike Commission Report shows that a total of 14,186 men were sent to Chicago between July 3 and July 11, 1894. The reason that so many men were placed in Chicago is because Richard Olney and Edwin Walker were trying to carry out their plans to crush the strike and do it as fast as possible. This way, it would be an example to all Americans and other workers would not try to strike in the future. Evidence of these aspirations can be found in the correspondences between Olney and Walker. Olney confided to Walker, "If the rights of the United States 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" (*Appendix to the Report of the Attorney General*, 1896, p. 60). The reason that Richard Olney and Walker wanted federal troops and not the state troops was two-fold. First of all, the federal troops were under the direct command of federal officials unlike the state troops who answered to Governor Altgeld. Secondly, there is a psychological or sociological benefit to sending troops that were not directly involved with the people in the strike. Federal troops came from all over the nation unlike state troops who obviously were from Illinois. It was unlikely that a soldier in the federal army would sympathize with workers in Chicago. Olney knew that federal troops would be outsiders and believed this was a good thing. He did not anticipate or acknowledge the flip side of the same thought. The flip side is that since the federal soldiers

were outsiders, they ended up causing more problems and could not relate to or fix problems efficiently.

The government's biased role in the Strike is further proved by the fact that the government was worried how the public would view the strike. The government wanted to make sure the public saw the strike in a way that made intervention seem necessary. Therefore the government hired it's own photographers to take pictures for newspapers and journals. The real reasons for intervention, which were to suppress the American Railway Union and end the strike on Pullman's terms, constituted an unprecedented abuse of governmental authority that could not be openly admitted. The government wanted to take advantage of the advances in photojournalism that took place before the Pullman Strike but they encountered some problems in doing so. In *Pullman Strike Pictures*, Larry Peterson discusses the impact of photography and art in the Pullman Strike. During the 1890's, photojournalism became very important in the United States. Each major participant in the Pullman Strike used commercial print media to try to get others to see their point of view. Pullman and the government took advantage of the advances in photojournalism more than the American Railway Union since Pullman and the government had more resources to do so. However, as Peterson recognizes, the Pullman Strike raised some 'novel' publicity problems that taxed the government's informal procedures for dealing with pictorial press. The pretext for sending the army to Chicago, which was to ensure delivery of the mails, did not lend itself to compelling pictures. Another problem for the government was that "the sheer number of vignettes of

camp life suggested that the troops spent more time posing for the camera than protecting rail traffic" (Peterson, p. 30). The government solved its problems by taking real pictures and sketching on top of them. Illustrators humanized soldiers and changed images around so that the viewer would sympathize with the government. The government also tried to use dramatic drawing to draw attention to their cause. An example is a drawing that can be found in the July 10, 1894 issue of *Harper's Weekly*. The photograph depicts a train leaving the stockyards led by the United States Cavalry escort. The horses and men leading the train look valiant and righteous. The strikers who are on the sides of the picture look unruly, violent, and rebellious. This picture is just one example of the many sketches, hybrid drawings, and photographs that the government used to make the public believe the government was doing what was best for the nation.

The deputy marshals involved with the Pullman Strike offered one of the most shocking piece of evidence to suggest that the case was not handled in a fair manner. The General Managers' Association selected and appointed 3,600 United States deputy marshals. The United States Strike Commissioners report states that the deputy marshals were armed and paid by the railroads, and acted in double capacity of railroad employees and United States officers. While operating the railroads they assumed and exercised unrestricted United States authority when their employers told them to or when they deemed it necessary. The deputy marshals were not under the direct control of any government official while exercising authority. This arrangement clearly placed officers of the federal government under the control of

the railroad owners. The United States Strike Commissioners themselves comment that, "It is a bad precedent, that might lead to serious consequences" (United States Strike Commissioners Report). Not only was the way in which deputy marshals were hired unjust, but the people picked as deputy marshals were immoral. The Strike Commissioners are not the only ones who found fault with this situation. Michael Bennan, Superintendent of the Chicago police, denounced the deputy marshals as "thugs, thieves and ex-convicts" (Debs, p. 190). It is ironic that these were the men that the federal government pressed into service to preserve order and protect life and property.

When the private army was formed, it became evident that the government's interests had completely collapsed with those of the General Managers' Association. The government had been taken over by corporate interests. It is examples and situations like this that built the foundation for a few different third party political groups during the Gilded Age. One example of a third party is the Populists. The cause in which Populists fought for directly relates to the Pullman Strike. As stated in the Omaha Platform, "we [the Populists] seek to restore the government of the Republic to the hands of the 'plain people' with whose class it originated" (Populist Principles in Fink, p. 195). The Pullman Strike encouraged people to join political groups whose aim it was to give the government back to the people. Says Worth Robert Miller in an essay entitled, "Farmers and Third-Party Politics," "The Populist revolt was a major challenge to socioeconomic elite precisely because it was a thoroughly American

response to the dislocations caused by Gilded Age development" (Miller in Calhoun, p. 236).

Another third party that developed was Socialists. Eugene Debs became the head of this party. The Socialist Party wanted to put an end to private property in the means of production. They believed that if the government owned the means of production, workers would not be taken advantage of. Also wealth would not be able to accumulate only in the hands of a few people. Many workers joined the Socialist Party during the late nineteenth century.

In conclusion, the government did not play a neutral role throughout the Pullman Strike. With the power of the federal government backing them, the General Managers' Association was invincible. The government should have taken an impartial stance from the start. Too many people in the government, from the United States Attorney General to judges, were involved with railroad capital in some way and supported the owners. These connections blocked them from looking into each side of the dispute. As his biographers noted, Richard Olney was the key player in oppressing the workers. He was a man who entered politics virtually unknown and remains almost unknown today. However, by looking at his actions during his tenure as Attorney General, it is obvious that he was an important figure in the history of labor relations in the United States. He made decisions for the government and brought about the end of one of the most famous Strikes in history. Although the government's actions ultimately ended the strike, they created a great number of larger problems along the way such as violence and disillusionment of citizens.

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