

THE GREAT STRIKE OF 1877

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The year 1876 was one of celebration. The centennial of the Declaration of Independence was heralded with speeches, fireworks, and prayers. In Philadelphia, a great exhibition made palpable the nation's progress in technology and the arts. Self-congratulation seemed in order, for the Union had been preserved, the railroad now linked both coasts, and new inventions like the telephone and the Corliss engine promised a bright and prosperous future.

Yet these were not altogether happy times. Reconstruction in the South seemed more and more tortured as the Ku Klux Klan continued its rampage of violence and whites found ways to limit blacks' newly won freedom. In the summer of 1876, word came from the West that General George Armstrong Custer and over 200 cavalymen had been wiped out at the battle of the Little Bighorn, and during the following year, Chief Joseph and his Nez Percés tribe gave the army all it could handle. Moreover, corruption tainted business and government at the highest levels, as a series of scandals rocked the Grant administration, Wall Street, and especially the nation's largest business, the railroads.

Worst of all, a severe economic depression continued into its fourth year. Millions were unemployed, and many who had jobs experienced severe wage cuts. In New York City, roughly one-quarter of the labor force was out of work, and police brutally dispersed angry crowds of the unemployed. Some workers questioned the logic of celebrating a hundred years of freedom when families went hungry in the streets, and a handful of laborers even began calling for a second American Revolution. The concentration of wealth in the hands of relatively few entrepreneurs raised questions in many workers' minds. Beneath the celebrations of the centennial, there was a haunting sense among working-class Americans that they were not living in the best of times.

Labor organizing and militancy had a long history in America. Before the Civil War, as the old artisan system broke down, as the division of labor grew more specialized, and as manufacturing wealth began to concentrate—in other words, as the dividing line between employers and employees grew ever sharper—labor unions formed in several crafts and industries. Their record was spotty; sometimes they succeeded in gaining worker control over wages, hours, and hiring practices; sometimes they failed. Some workers and labor



Image 2.1 Souvenir ribbon from the 1876 Centennial Exposition

The nation's centennial was marked by an extraordinarily ambitious exposition, designed to celebrate technological progress and the victory of free labor in the Civil War. Yet the commemoration occurred amidst a terrible economic depression that precipitated the great railroad strike of 1877.

Source: Susan H. Douglas Political Americana Collection, #2214. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library.

leaders criticized the system of production and distribution itself, asking why a relative handful of individuals should own so much wealth while most families barely scratched out a living.

But nothing on the scale of the Great Strike of 1877 had ever happened before. In the middle of that year, most of the nation's vast new transcontinental railroad system—the very symbol of American progress, wealth, and modernity—was shut down by angry employees. Tracks, engines, and switching yards were destroyed, related businesses were forced to close, and workers in other industries organized themselves for strikes. Rather suddenly, America looked less like a special land of opportunity for all and more like the London of Charles Dickens, where poverty ground down the working class, or like Paris, where the masses organized themselves for bloody revolution.

The strike began on July 16, in the town of Martinsburg, West Virginia. The Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) Railroad on that day announced a 10 percent wage cut for all employees, the second such cut in eight months and part of the policy for all railroads across the country. Workers grumbled that companies continued to pay generous dividends to stockholders during the depression but that those who labored were forced to take starvation wages. Men gathered and talked through the day. When the crew of one train abandoned their posts, other men refused to replace them, and soon everyone threw down their tools. Workers then rode all of the engines into the roundhouse and announced to B&O officials that no trains would move through Martinsburg until their pay was restored.

Local sheriffs and militia were powerless to get the engines running, for the strikers grew too numerous. As they left Wheeling, state troops sent by the governor of West Virginia were met by angry workers, and when they got to Martinsburg, they found themselves overwhelmed by an orderly but determined crowd. Equally important, the soldiers themselves came mostly from laboring families and were sympathetic to the strikers. Finally, at the urging of the governor of West Virginia and the president of the B&O line, President Hayes dispatched 300 federal troops, who guarded strikebreakers sent from Baltimore. But by now thousands had gathered, including miners and canal workers, all angered by the conditions of labor in their industries. The federal soldiers managed to get trains moving out of Martinsburg, but soon strikers were ambushing these, side-railing and detaining them. Worse, the strike was spreading. Workers, one Baltimore leader declared,

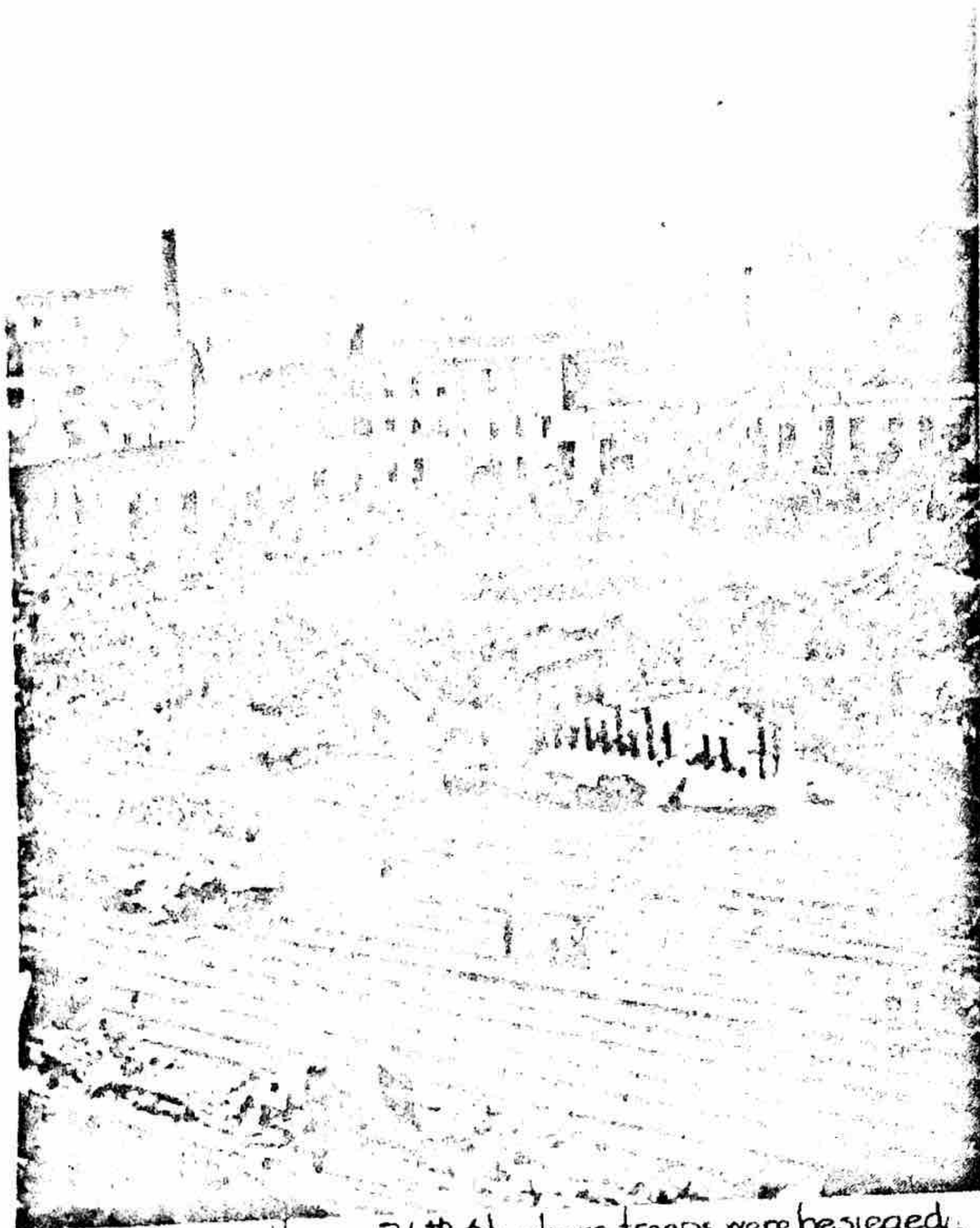
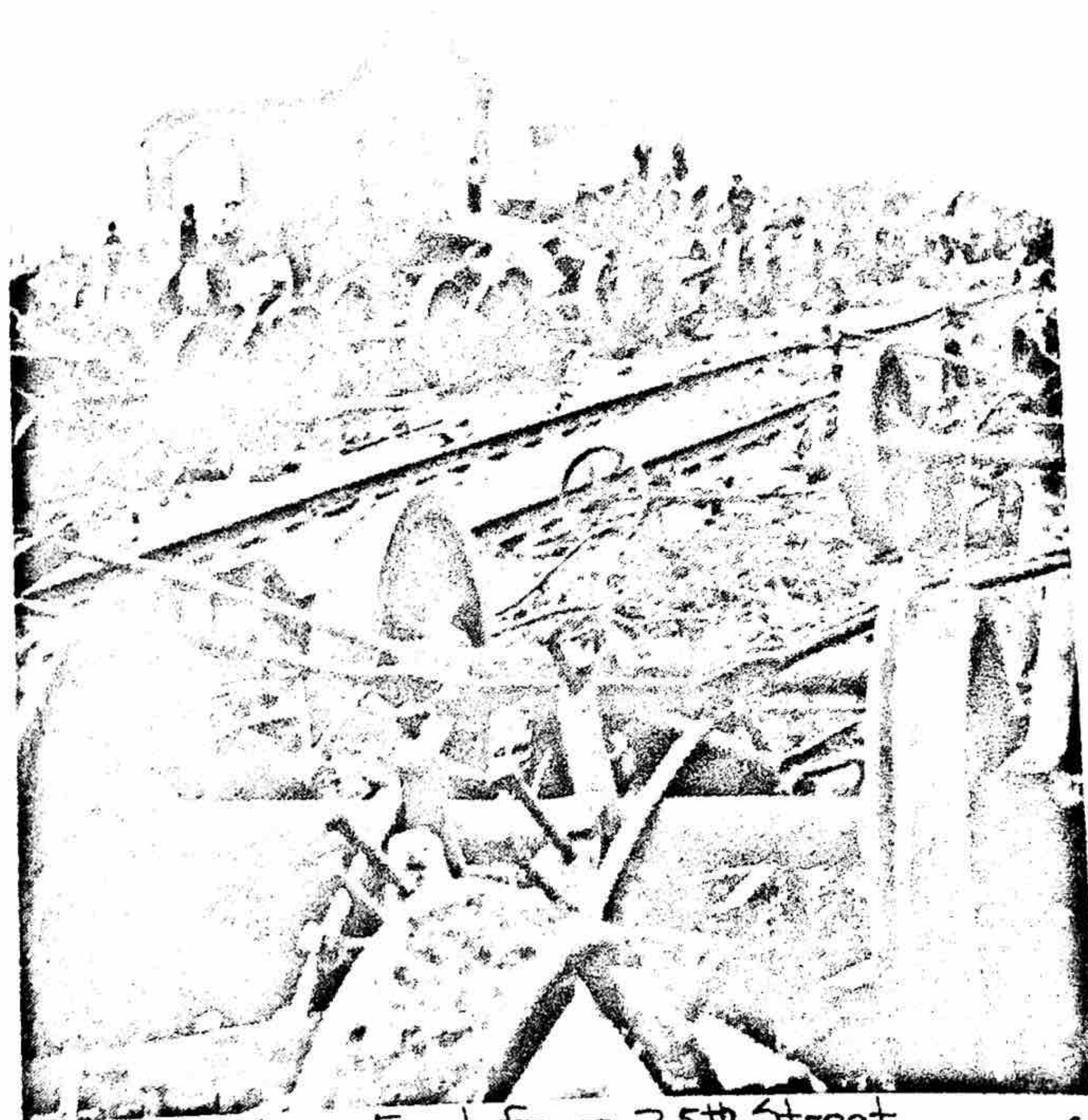
know what it is to bring up a family on ninety cents a day, to live on beans and cornmeal week in and week out, to run in debt at the stores until you cannot get trusted any longer, to see the wife breaking down under privation and distress, and the children growing up sharp and fierce like wolves day after day because they don't get enough to eat.

The incidents begun in Martinsburg were repeated across the country. The strike was not well organized; during the depression, the small gains made by unions in previous years had been nearly wiped out, and the workers' organizations that did exist tended to be very conservative. The faith of many workers in equal opportunity meant that unions generally were not terribly strong, and as the need for labor solidarity in the face of ever larger companies grew apparent, owners used lockouts, blacklists, scabs, espionage, firings, and prosecutions to keep unions out of their shops. The lack of organization and preparation for a major strike gave the upheaval considerable spontaneity, as workers in various communities responded to local situations and did their best to control events. But sometimes things got out of hand.

The strike reached its climax in Pittsburgh. The Pennsylvania Railroad was America's largest private enterprise, controlling 6,000 miles of track and creating over 20,000 jobs. Three days after the Martinsburg incident began, Pennsylvania Railroad managers ordered that all trains running east from Pittsburgh be "doubleheaders," meaning that two engines pull twice the usual number of cars. Doubleheaders meant harder work, increased danger of accidents, and more layoffs. Brakemen, conductors, flagmen, and others walked off the job, and they were joined by angry workers from other industries. Once again, the state militia was called in, but as an officer explained, "The sympathy of the people, the sympathy of the troops, my own sympathy, was with the strikers proper. We all felt that those men were not receiving enough wages." Soon the soldiers laid down their weapons and fraternized with the strikers. But then 600 fresh troops from Philadelphia were called in; since they were not from the local area, they had less sympathy for the workers. A crowd of 6,000, including women and children there to support their husbands and fathers, began jeering and throwing rocks; the militia opened fire and, in five minutes, killed twenty people. When the soldiers retreated to the roundhouse, strikers armed themselves and

Pittsburgh Riots - July 21-22, 1877

Pittsburgh Riots - July 21-22, 1877.

Lower Engine House 26th St where troops were besieged.Looking East from 25th Street.

21

Images 2.2 and 2.3 Photographs of the 1877 Pittsburgh strike

The Pennsylvania Railroad transported Philadelphia militiamen to Pittsburgh to quell the strike of 1877. When the militia fired into the crowd, killing twenty strikers, the protesters—rather than fleeing—attacked the troops and the rail yards. The month of violence that ensued was the worst of the strike, and ended only when President Hayes called in other federal troops.

Source: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Pennsylvania State Archives.

attacked them, burned the roundhouse, tore up tracks, and destroyed over 2,000 cars and 100 engines.

And so the upheaval rolled across the country; in St. Louis, Chicago, Cincinnati, Buffalo, and countless other towns, workers from various industries refused to accept low wages, authoritarian owners, or armed coercion. For a few days, workers stopped the wheels of business and rejected the sovereignty of management. The general strike that had begun with the railroads gripped all parts of industry.

But the strike ended as quickly as it began. Lacking organization, the workers failed to make their demands clear, and the ability of laborers to counter management quickly eroded. The federal government mobilized thousands of troops, and cities reorganized their police forces. Soldiers moved into a town, drove off strikers, secured management's property, allowed strikebreakers to restart businesses, and then traveled on to the next town. Occasionally workers won concessions from management; more often, not. In all, over 100 laborers were killed.

The strikes threw disturbing new features of American life into bold relief. At the time of the uprising, about fifty corporations controlled 80,000 miles of line and employed hundreds of thousands of workers. As companies competed and sometimes drove each other out of business, the railroads were concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. A handful of men enjoyed private fortunes and paid themselves dividends even during depressions, but most of their employees would be wage laborers for life and would never rise to become independent entrepreneurs, that status so exalted by journalists and orators. And the railroads, it was clear, had merely led the way, for America now was less than ever a land of small shopkeepers and apprentices, but rather a nation of capitalists and workers.

The notion that America had escaped the curse of class conflict—Europe's blight of a rich upper class and an oppressed working class—seemed no longer plausible, if it had ever been true. The events of 1877 made it abundantly clear that a deep chasm divided and would continue to divide the rich and the poor in America. The Great Strike also gave a glimpse of how government would respond to this state of affairs. In the past, civic officials often took the part of the workers, for they represented local control rather than the distant power of faceless corporations. But in 1877, as in future conflicts (and there would be many intense labor struggles in the coming decades, in steel, mining, and textiles, indeed, in hundreds of trades, at thousands of job sites, involving tens of thousands of workers), state and federal power were the creatures of the rich and powerful. When the government intervened, it was to protect private property against the claims of workers.

INTRODUCTION TO DOCUMENTS 1, 2, AND 3

The documents in this section are as much about how individuals responded to the strike as about the strike itself. Document 1 is a proclamation issued by the sheriff of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, during the strike. It is followed by the sheriff's testimony one year later about his experience in those tense days of July 1877. Note not only the urgency and disorder brought by the strike but also his testimony that many of the rioters were not railroad men. Document 2 appeared in a leading journal of the day, the *North American Review*, in September 1877. It is a letter written by an anonymous striker justifying the actions of those who had taken part in the uprising. Document 3 is an article that the *North American Review* solicited from Colonel Thomas Scott, the president of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Note how both identified their own interests with those of the nation. Compare the striker's assumption that all value is created by labor with the railroad president's belief that the best interests of his company and of the nation were one. How did each writer define patriotism? How did they differ on what constitutes fairness? Did they share any common ground?

1. PROCLAMATION AND TESTIMONY OF SHERIFF WILLIAM JENNINGS (1877)

PROCLAMATION

Sheriff's Office, Harrisburg, PA.

WHEREAS, For the past two days the peace and good order of the country have been disturbed and grave apprehensions exist lest injury be done;

And whereas, The duty rests upon me to preserve the peace and promote tranquility;

Now, therefore, I William W. Jennings, high Sheriff of the county of Dauphin, do hereby enjoin all persons to remain quietly at their homes or places of business, to avoid gathering upon the streets and highways, thus by their presence keeping alive the excitement which pervades the community, and to further the restoration of good order, I charge upon parents to prevent the half grown lads over whom they have control from frequenting the streets.

And I hereby announce my resolute determination, with the aid of special deputies whom I have appointed, and the posse which I have summoned to preserve the peace and protect the person and property of the people within my bailiwick, and I hereby call upon all good and law abiding citizens to assist me and those acting with me to enforce the law and maintain good order.

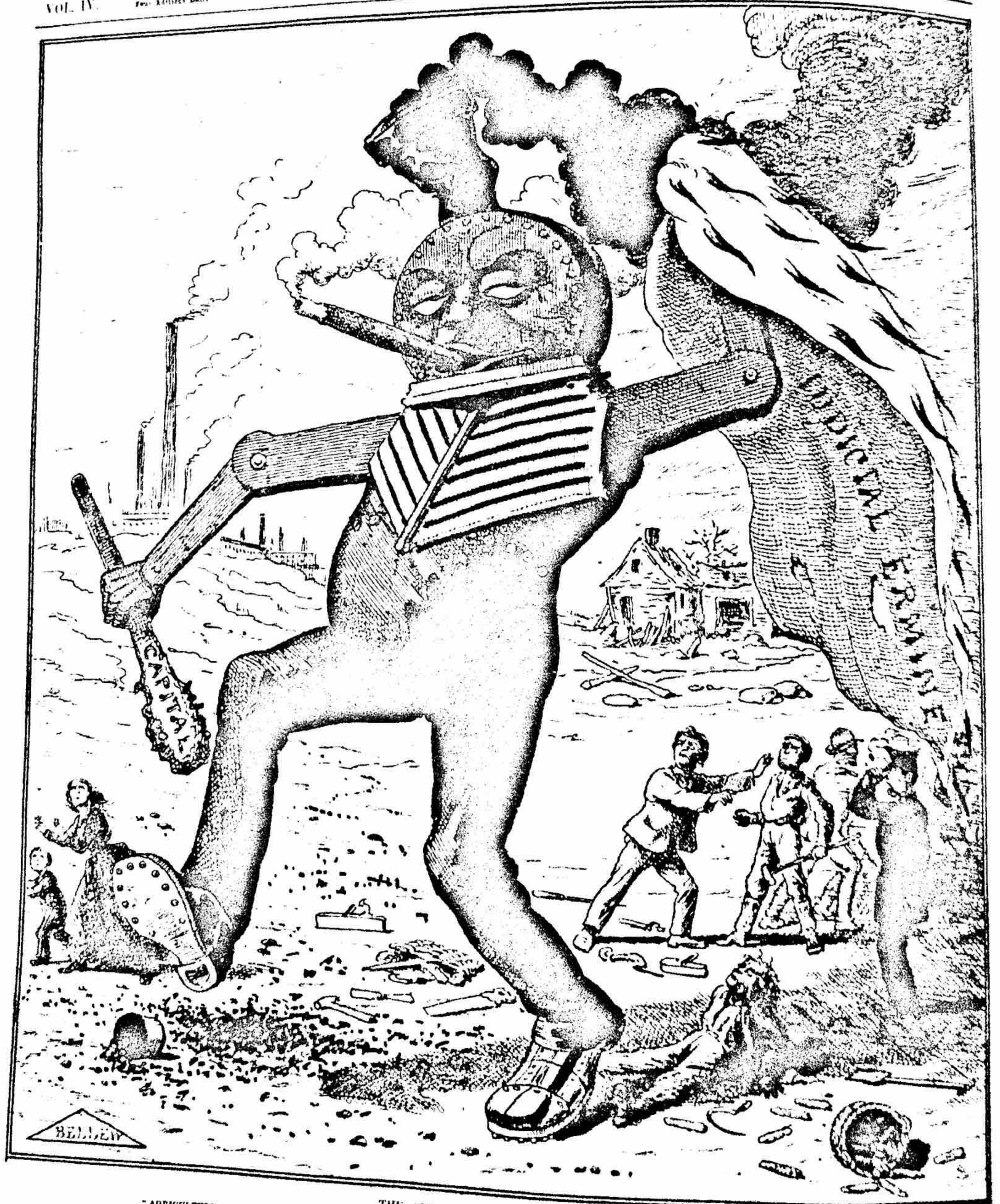
Given under my hand this 23d day of July, A.D. 1877.

Wm. W. Jennings, Sheriff

THE DAILY GRAPHIC

AN ILLUSTRATED EVENING NEWSPAPER

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 1874.



THE AMERICAN FRANKENSTEIN
"AGRICULTURE, COMMERCE, AND MANUFACTURE ARE ALL IN MY POWER; MY INTEREST IS THE HIGHER LAW OF AMERICAN POLITICS."

Image 2.4 Frank Bellew, The American Frankenstein
Anxiety about the sheer power and size of the railroads permeated America in the 1870s. Frank Bellew captured that fear by portraying an "American Frankenstein" that ran destroyed small communities and families. The caption beneath reads "Agriculture, Commerce, and Manufacture are all in my Power; My Interest is the Higher Law of American Politics." The tattered robe of "Judicial Ermine" refers to the corruption of the courts by big business.

Source: New York Daily Graphic, April 14, 1874.

TESTIMONY

Harrisburg, March 12, 1878

W.W. Jennings:

By Mr. Lindsey:

- Q. You were sheriff of Dauphin county in July last?
- A. Yes, sir.
- Q. Still sheriff?
- A. Yes, sir.
- Q. Were you at home at the time of the first disturbance that broke out in Harrisburg[?]
- A. . . . I arrived home Monday evening, July 23, about half-past six or seven o'clock.
- Q. Just state how you found the city as to order and quietness when you arrived home?
- A. I found the city under a great deal of excitement. The trains, I was informed, had been stopped from running, and I immediately went to my counsel, Mr. Wise, for instructions in regard to my powers and duties, and met a number of the prominent citizens, and went to work at once under advice of my counsel to prepare a proclamation, and I was informed by the major and other citizens, that the citizens had been notified to assemble at two strokes of the court-house bell. I went around town and endeavored to get parties together, until about ten or eleven o'clock, as near as I can recollect, and spent sometime preparing a proclamation and advising with the prominent citizens, and one came to me at the Lochiel Hotel and said that the rioters were breaking into the stores on Market street. I called upon the good citizens for the preservation of law and order to go with me and suppress the riot. I suppose about one hundred

or one hundred and fifty went with me, and went down Market street, and we dispersed the mob. We arrested a couple of the rioters there. Afterwards came back, and I sent squads out. I then organized the party into companies, and I sent squads out to arrest and take these men out of bed who had been prominent and active as rioters, who I was informed had been prominent and active as rioters, and we put those in jail. The next morning I had my proclamation out, and also orders organizing companies. The citizens responded promptly. We organized some ten or eleven companies, and we ran the town on military principles for about one week. We had an officer of the day detailed to patrol the town at night, and we had the fire department under command, and everything in readiness if there would be any further trouble. . . .

- Q. Did you have any difficulty in raising a posse of citizens?
- A. No, sir; I cannot say that I had any great difficulty.
- Q. They joined cheerfully.
- A. They responded to my call. I arrived here at seven o'clock on Monday evening, and on Tuesday evening I paraded in the streets about nine or ten hundred men, organized as a regiment. My proclamation in the morning—that was issued on Tuesday morning. I had it printed during the night, and I had it posted all around town by daylight almost, and one of my proclamations called for them to assemble at the court-house, at two o'clock in the afternoon, and I supposed there were six or eight hundred men at two o'clock that afternoon there organized into companies. . . .¹

2. A STRIKER DESCRIBES "FAIR WAGES" (1877)

The newspapers have fallen into line to defend the railway companies, who thus have brought all the great guns of public opinion to bear on one side of the fight, so the strikers have got the worst of

it before the community. We have been so handled that if a workingman stands out to speak his mind, the public have theirs so full of pictures of him and his doings in the illustrated papers, that he is listened

to as if he was a convicted rough pleading in mitigation of penalty, instead of an honest and sincere man asking for a fair show. I would not have any one mistake what my principles are and have been. I don't envy any man his wealth, whether it is ill-gotten or not. I am a workingman, therefore an honest one, and would refuse a dollar I did not earn, for I am neither a beggar to accept charity nor a thief to take what belongs to another, however he came by it. If it be his according to law, I, for one, am ready to protect him in his legal rights, and in return I want to be protected in what I believe to be mine.

Forty years ago my father came over to this country from Sweden. He had a small business and a large family. In Europe business does not grow as fast as children come, and poverty over there is an inheritance. He heard that North America was peopled and governed by workingmen, and the care of the States was mainly engaged in the welfare and prosperity of labor. That moved him, and so I came to be born here. He, and millions like him, made this country their home, and their homes have mainly made this country what it is. Until lately the States kept their faith and promise to the people, and we, the people, showed ours when trouble came; an assessment of blood was made on our shares of liberty, and we paid it. That is our record. We did not fight for this party or that party, but for the country and against all that were against the United States. . . .

So it was before the war, but since then, it seems to me, the power has got fixed so long in one set of hands that things are settling down into a condition like what my father left behind him in Europe forty years ago, and what stands there still. I mean the slavery of labor. The landed aristocracy over there made the feudal system, just as the moneyed men of this continent are now making a ruling class. As the aristocracy used to make war on each other, so in our time the millionaires live on each other's ruin. As the feudal lords hired mercenary soldiers to garrison their strongholds and to prey on the common people, so the railway lords and stock-exchange barons hire a mercenary press to defend their power, the object

of both being the same: the spoils of labor. It looks very like as though this country was settling down into the form and system we fled from in Europe. . . .

We are sick of this game, we are soul-weary of looking around for some sympathy or spirit of justice, and, finding none, we turn to each other and form brotherhoods and unions, depots of the army of labor, officered by the skilled mechanic.

This organized force is now in process of formation, and prepared to meet the great questions of the age: Has labor any rights? If so, what are they? Our claim is simple. We demand *fair wages*.

We say that the man able and willing to work, and for whom there is work to do, is entitled to wages sufficient to provide him with enough food, shelter, and clothing to sustain and preserve his health and strength. We contend that the employer has no right to speculate on starvation when he reduces wages below a living figure, saying, if we refuse that remuneration, there are plenty of starving men out of work that will gladly accept half a loaf instead of no bread.

We contend that to regard the laboring class in this manner is to consider them as the captain of a slave-ship regards his cargo, who throws overboard those unable to stand their sufferings. Let those who knew the South before the war go now amongst the mining districts of Pennsylvania, and compare the home of the white laborer with the quarters of the slave; let them compare the fruits of freedom with the produce of slavery!

. . . Let me put this matter in a plain way, as we understand it, and use round numbers instead of fractions, as we have to deal with hundreds of millions,—dividing the subject into sections.

1. In the United States the amount of capital invested in railway property last year was \$4,470,000,000, made up of \$2,250,000,000 capital stock and \$2,220,000,000 bonded debt. The gross earnings were \$500,000,000, or about eight and a half per cent on the capital. The running expenses (of which the bulk was for labor) were \$310,000,000, leaving \$185,000,000 as [profit] interest to the capitalist, or barely four per cent on his investment.

Labor is admitted into this enterprise as a preferential creditor, to be paid out of gross earnings before the most preferred mortgagee or bond holder receives a dollar. For as capital could not build the roads nor equip them without labor, so the enterprise, when complete, cannot be run without labor.

Capital, therefore, takes a back seat when it comes to the push, and acknowledges not only that labor has the largest interest in the concern, but takes the first fruits.

I take the railroad as a sample out of all enterprises, and if we could get at figures, there is no doubt it is a fair sample of the crowd. If, then, labor is the more important and essential factor in the result, when it comes to the question which of the two shall suffer in moments of general distress, the capitalist in his pocket or the laborer in his belly, we think the answer has been already settled by the rights assumed by one and acknowledged by the other

2. It is manifestly unjust that the workingman should be subject to under wages in bad times, if he has not the equivalent of over wages in good times. If railroad companies in concert with the laboring class had established a tariff of labor, and paid a bonus on wages at every distribution of dividends, that bonus being in proportion to the profits of the road, so that each man becomes a shareholder in his very small way, then he would have submitted to bear his share of distress when all were called on to share trouble, but to share it equally and alike.

3. When folks say that labor and capital must find, by the laws of demand and supply, their natural relations to each other in all commercial enterprises, and neither one has any rights it can enforce on the other, they take for granted that the labor "market" is, like the produce market, liable to natural fluctuations. If that were so, we should not complain. But it is not. The labor market has got to be like the stock and share market; a few large capitalists control it and make what prices they please. This sort of game may ruin the gamblers in stocks, and injure those who invest, but the trouble is confined mostly to those who deserve to lose or those who can afford it.

But not so when the same practice operates in the labor market. The capitalist must not gamble with the bread of the workingman, or if he does, let him regard where that speculation led France one hundred years ago, when the financiers made a corner in flour, and the people broke the ring with the axe of the guillotine.

4. When the railway companies obtained privileges and rights over private property, and became by force of law the great landowners of the state, holding its movable property as well, and controlling every avenue and department of business, public and private, they became powerful monopolies. The state endowed them with powers to frame laws of their own and deprived citizens of their property, means, facilities of transport, to vest it all in these corporations. Thus endowed, they cannot pretend they are no more than ordinary commercial enterprises. They are responsible to the state for the result of their operations, if they disturb fatally the order of our concerns. They are not independent. The state has claims upon them it has not on private concerns. They may not accept liabilities and then decline responsibility. It behooves the state to decide what the people are entitled to in return for all they have conceded to these companies, and to enforce such claims.

5. The English Parliament legislated on the question of the number of hours a workingman should labor. It limits them to so many. It legislates for his health and supply of light and water. In all these matters the capitalist has an interest. (He does as much for his horse.) But when it comes to the question of a proper amount of food and clothing, of warmth and shelter, the government declines to interfere. It leaves the question of fair wages to be adjusted between employer and employed.

And so I leave it, fearing I have put the matter in rough language, but not intentionally rude, having a deep and loyal faith in the humanity and justice that abide in the hearts of all this community, and wishing that God had given me the power to touch them.

A "Striker"²

3. "THE RECENT STRIKES" (1877)

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD

PHILADELPHIA AUGUST 13, 1877

Allen Thorndike Rice, Esq.,
Editor of the *North American Review*

My Dear Sir,

On the 16th of July it became known that the firemen and freight brakemen of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad were on a strike at Martinsburg, West Virginia, and that no freight trains were allowed to pass that point in either direction. This proved to be the beginning of a movement which spread with great rapidity from New York to Kansas, and from Michigan to Texas, which placed an embargo on the entire freight traffic of more than twenty thousand miles of railway, put passenger travel and the movement of the United States mails at the mercy of a mob, subjected great commercial centres like Chicago and St. Louis to the violent disturbance of all their business relations, and made the great manufacturing city of Pittsburgh for twenty-four hours such a scene of riot, arson, and bloodshed as can never be erased from the memory of its people. . . .

I do not wish, and happily it is not necessary, to fill your pages with the mere recital of the distressing cases of violence and outrage which marked the course of these riots unexampled in American history. Suffice it to say that the conduct of the rioters is entirely inconsistent with the idea that this movement could have been directed by serious, right-minded men bent on improving the condition of the laboring classes. How wages could be improved by destroying property, the existence of which alone made the payment of any wages at all possible, it is difficult to understand. Nothing but the insanity of passion, played upon by designing and mischievous leaders, can explain the destruction of vast quantities of railroad equipment absolutely necessary to the transaction of its business, by men whose

complaint was that the business done by the full equipment in possession of the railways did not pay them sufficient compensation for their labor. . . .

It must not for a moment, however, be understood that the greatest portion, or, indeed, any considerable portion, of the outrages upon life and property which have disgraced our recent history were actually committed by railway employés. It is not true that the majority, or even any large portion, of these men have been disloyal to the trust reposed in them. Probably ninety per cent of the men on all the important lines of the country where strikes occurred were faithful to their duties, and either remained at work, or stood ready to resume it as soon as they were relieved from the actual intimidation to which they were subjected by the rioters and their leaders. It was the dissatisfied element—which exists in that branch of industry as in all others—which perpetrated or allowed the perpetration of most of the overt acts of violence, such as stopping trains, forcing men therefrom, uncoupling cars, disconnecting engines, and other lawless doings of the kind, and which made itself amenable also to the charge of directly attacking the interests of the government and society at large as well as of the railway companies.

As General Hurlbut of Illinois so forcibly expresses it, in a paper recently published, "they permitted themselves to be the nucleus around which the idle, vicious, and criminal element could gather. Reinforced by these dark and disreputable allies, they destroyed property, stopped commerce, deranged the mails, burned great public buildings, broke up tracks, and thus paralyzed the natural circulation of the Commonwealth." It is in the menace to the general interests of society involved in these disturbances that the real gravity of the situation with which this country is now called to deal exists. "The railroad system is today a supreme necessity to

maintain life, furnish ready markets, and to bring about the enormous interchange of products which makes the country one. Stop it, and in ten days many parts of the country would near the starvation-point, and within a month there would be no hamlet in the vast territory drained by these channels but would feel to the core of its business the effects of the stoppage of this regular and unusual circulation."

The enormous mechanical changes and progress of the past century have brought about a complete revolution, so gradual that perhaps it has not been generally apprehended, in the very condition of things in the United States. The water lines, which, at the date of the framing of the Constitution, were our important channels of internal commerce, have been almost superseded by the new iron highways. Upon these is borne a traffic so essentially national, so closely interwoven with the interests not only of our own but other countries, that it demands the most efficient and speedy protection against all unlawful interference. . . .

It is well known that the government uses the railway lines of the country, both as postal and military highways, in such form as its interests may require. The Constitution of the United States imposes upon the government the duty of thoroughly protecting inter-State commerce. When it is considered that the stock and bond holders of the various railway companies, whenever the interests of the government required it, paid taxes upon their coupons, their dividends, and their gross receipts, that they promptly met every call made by the Federal authorities, and that the entire equipment of the various lines was often placed at the disposal of the government for the prompt movement of the national forces and their supplies, to the exclusion often of other and more profitable traffic, it would seem but a matter of equity that the government should insure such protection to these railways as would preserve their usefulness and keep them always in condition to render similar services when they may be required. But over and beyond such considerations as these, the absolute dependence of the whole community upon this great system of railways for almost its very existence as a civilized body would seem to impose upon the Federal government in the last resort the supreme duty of preventing any lawless and

violent interference with the regular and certain operation of every railway in the United States.

This insurrection, which extended through fourteen States, and in many cases successfully defied the local authorities, presents a state of facts almost as serious as that which prevailed at the outbreak of the Civil War. Unless our own experience is to differ entirely from other countries,—and it is not easy to see why it should, with the increasing population of our large cities and business centres, and the inevitable assemblage at such points of the vicious and evil-disposed,—the late troubles may be but the prelude to other manifestations of mob violence, with this added peril, that now, for the first time in American history, has an organized mob learned its power to terrorize the law-abiding citizens of great communities. With our recent experience before us, it is believed that no thoughtful man can argue in favor of delay by the proper authorities in dealing with lawless and riotous assemblages. Delay simply leads to destruction of property, and may lead in the end to the destruction of life. . . .

With the approach of winter, and the loss of outdoor employment which severe weather even in the most prosperous times entails, the country will have to deal not only with the deserving among the unemployed, who can be reached and helped through local organizations, but with vast numbers of idle, dangerous, and in many cases desperate men, who have been allowed unfortunately to catch a glimpse of their possible power for mischief. Such men, unless confronted by a thorough organization in the cities, States, and other communities, backed by the power of the Federal government and an unmistakable public opinion, will need but little urging to renew the scenes which have already brought such disgrace upon the American name. . . .

My own railway experience, extending over a period of thirty years, leads me to believe that the managers of American railways in general may fearlessly appeal to their past relations with the faithful among their employés, to prove that they at least have always endeavored to treat the interests of employers and employed as identical, and have never failed to take into prompt and respectful consideration every grievance which has been fairly and properly presented to them.

I am sure that it has been the purpose of the company with which I am connected to at all times pay its employes the best compensation that the business of the country would warrant; and I have no doubt that this will be the policy of the company for all future time, as

it is founded on sound business principles no less than upon the instincts of humanity.

Very truly yours,
Thomas A. Scott³

INTRODUCTION TO DOCUMENTS 4 AND 5

The next two documents come from Allan Pinkerton and Terence Powderly. Pinkerton became famous as a private detective. During the Civil War, his company provided the federal government with (often incorrect) intelligence reports of Confederate troop strength and movements. After the war, Pinkerton's agency sold its services to private businesses, providing industrial espionage, guards, strikebreakers, and agents provocateurs. Pinkerton assumed that the Great Strike of 1877 was part of a much larger conspiracy, imported to the United States from Europe and designed to destroy the country. The excerpt reprinted here is from a book entitled *Strikers, Communists, Tramps and Detectives* (1878).

Terence Powderly, on the other hand, was an early member of one of the first nationwide unions, the Knights of Labor. Founded in Philadelphia in 1869, it remained a small and secret organization until the convulsions of the 1877 railroad strike broadened its reach and appeal to 800,000 members by 1887. Perhaps more important was the influence the strike had on the goals of the Knights. The violence and failure of the strike led many to embrace a more conciliatory approach to capital and labor. Here Powderly stresses the ideals of solidarity and brotherhood in the Knights, and the persistent hope of reconciliation and arbitration as a way to avoid strikes. How do the principles of the Knights compare to those articulated by the striker in Document 2? How would you characterize the aims of the Knights? Of Pinkerton?

4. FROM STRIKERS, COMMUNISTS, TRAMPS AND DETECTIVES (1878)

ALLAN PINKERTON

It was everywhere; it was nowhere. A condition of sedition which can be located, fixed, or given boundaries, may, by any ordinary community or government, be subdued. This uprising, in its far-reaching extent,

was so alarmingly sudden that it seemed like the hideous growth of a night. It was as if the surrounding seas had swept in upon the land from every quarter, or some sudden central volcano had upraised its

hideous head and belched forth burning rivers that coursed out upon the country in every direction. No general action for safety could be taken. Look where we might, some fresh danger was presented. No one had prophesied it; no one could prevent it; no one was found brave enough or wise enough to stop its pestilential spread. Its birth was spontaneous; its progress like a hurricane; its demise a complete farce.

But, looking over the destruction wrought, the consideration of the now clearly established fact, that our country has arrived at such an age and condition that it contains the dormant elements which require only a certain measure of turbulent handling to at any moment again bring to the surface even a stronger and more concentrated power of violence and outlawry, becomes not only a most wise policy, but an urgent necessity. . . .

The great strike has left everybody poorer. Who has been bettered? Who can point to a single instance where a body of workingmen has been benefited by their participation?

Who shall pay for the enforced idleness of millions; the ruin to vast business interests; the misery brought upon innocent working men and women; and for the hundreds of lives sacrificed upon this altar of human ignorance, blindness, and frenzy?

Looking at the matter from any point of consideration, no good thing can be seen in it, unless it may be judged a good thing to know that we have among us a pernicious communistic spirit which is demoralizing workingmen, continually creating a deeper and more intense antagonism between labor and capital, and so embittering naturally restless elements against the better elements of society, that it must be crushed out completely, or we shall be compelled to submit to greater excesses and more overwhelming disasters in the near future.

The "strike" is essentially an institution of continental Europe, and, like all other good and bad emanations from that part of the world, gradually but surely found its way into England, Scotland, and Ireland, and from thence was transplanted to this country. Riot, which has always existed, has become

the constant companion of the strike everywhere. Through my Scotch and English experiences I have become well acquainted with the characteristics of strikes in those countries. One marked difference in them there is in the fact that women, in almost every instance after the strike is inaugurated, seem the most savage in preventing the breaking of the strike by the employment of "nobs," as the "scabs" are called there, and in both inciting and participating in riots. . . .

A good deal has been written and said regarding the causes of our great strike of '77. To my mind they seem clear and distinct. For years, and without any particular attention on the part of the press or the public, animated by the vicious dictation of the International Society, all manner of labor unions and leagues have been forming. No manufacturing town, nor any city, has escaped this baleful influence. Though many of these organizations have professed opposition to communistic principles, their pernicious influence has unconsciously become powerful among them. Other organizations have openly avowed them. They have become an element in politics. The intelligent workingmen, not being altogether ready for the acceptance of these extreme doctrines, have given them no political support, and their violent propagators have been obliged to fall back upon agitation of subjects which would antagonize labor and capital. For years we have been recovering from the extravagances of the war period. Labor has gradually, but surely, been becoming cheaper, and its demand less. Workingmen have not economized in the proportion that economy became necessary. Want and penury followed. Workingmen consequently have become discontented and embittered. They have been taught steadily, as their needs increased, that they were being enslaved and robbed, and that all that was necessary for bettering their condition was a general uprising against capital. So that when, under the leadership of designing men, that great class of railroad employees—than whom no body of workingmen in America were ever better compensated—began their strike, nearly every other class caught the infection, and by these dangerous communistic leaders were made to believe that the proper time for action had come.⁴

5. "THE THOROUGH UNIFICATION OF LABOR" (1878)

TERENCE POWDERLY

Three years ago it was suggested to the author that he write a book on the labor question. The stirring events of that year, in labor circles attracted the attention of all classes toward the labor problem, and for the first time in the history of America did the industrial question assume such proportions as to become the theme of conversation in public and private. . . .

The necessity for organization among producers becomes clearly discernible when one takes note of the tendencies toward centralization of power in the hands of those who control the wealth of the country. Combinations, monopolies, trusts, and pools, make it easy for a few to absorb the earnings of the workers, and limit their earnings to the lowest sum on which they can sustain life. Combination, in America, is heartless in the extreme, and has reached a point where it hesitates about going still farther only through the fear of crowding the poor to a condition "where the brute takes the place of the man." And yet these combinations and pools are educators; they are teaching the American people that if a few men may successfully corner the results of labor, and the wealth to purchase them, there is no just reason why the many may not do so for the benefit of all, through agents of their own selection. . . .

The recent alarming development and aggression of aggregated wealth, which, unless checked, will invariably lead to the pauperization and hopeless degradation of the toiling masses, render it imperative, if we desire to enjoy the blessings of life, that a check should be placed upon its power and upon unjust accumulation, and a system adopted which will secure to the laborer the fruits of his toil; and as

this much-desired object can only be accomplished by the thorough unification of labor, and the united efforts of those who obey the divine injunction that "In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread," we have formed the ***** with a view of securing the organization and direction, by co-operative effort, of the power of the industrial classes; and we submit to the world the objects sought to be accomplished by our organization, calling upon all who believe in securing 'the greatest good to the greatest number' to aid and assist us:—

- I. To bring within the folds of organization every department of productive industry, making knowledge a stand-point for action, and industrial and moral worth, not wealth, the true standard of individual and national greatness.
- II. To secure to the toilers a proper share of the wealth that they create; more of the leisure that rightfully belongs to them; more societary advantages; more of the benefits, privileges, and emoluments of the world; in a word, all those rights and privileges necessary to make them capable of enjoying, appreciating, defending, and perpetuating the blessings of good government.
- III. To arrive at the true condition of the producing masses in their educational, moral, and financial condition, by demanding from the various governments the establishment of bureaus of Labor Statistics.
- IV. The establishment of co-operative institutions, productive and distributive.

- V. The reserving of the public lands—the heritage of the people—for the actual settler;—not another acre for railroads or speculators.
- VI. The abrogation of all laws that do not bear equally upon capital and labor, the removal of unjust technicalities, delays, and discriminations in the administration of justice, and the adopting of measures providing for the health and safety of those engaged in mining, manufacturing, or building pursuits.
- VII. The enactment of laws to compel chartered corporations to pay their employes weekly, in full, for labor performed during the preceding week, in the lawful money of the country.
- VIII. The enactment of laws giving mechanics and laborers a first lien on their work for their full wages.
- IX. The abolishment of the contract system on national, State, and municipal work.
- X. The substitution of arbitration for strikes, whenever and wherever employers and employes are willing to meet on equitable grounds.
- XI. The prohibition of the employment of children in workshops, mines and factories before attaining their fourteenth year.
- XII. To abolish the system of letting out by contract the labor of convicts in our prisons and reformatory institutions.
- XIII. To secure for both sexes equal pay for equal work
- XIV. The reduction of the hours of labor to eight per day, so that the laborers may have more time for social enjoyment and intellectual improvement, and be enabled to reap the advantages conferred by the labor-saving machinery which their brains have created.
- XV. To prevail upon governments to establish a purely national circulating medium, based upon the faith and resources of the nation, and issued directly to the people, without the intervention of any system of banking corporations, which money shall be a legal tender in payment of all debts, public or private.⁵

INTRODUCTION TO DOCUMENTS 6 AND 7

Documents 6 and 7 are contemporary commentaries on the conflict between labor and capital. Document 6 is an 1882 cartoon satirizing the growing gulf between the two. Drawn by Joseph Keppler, "The First Annual Picnic of the Knights of Labor" paints a despairing view of the apparent indifference of industrial and financial elites to the plight of workers, who fail to make progress despite their efforts. Note the presence of both the Knights of Labor and sympathizers with the Pittsburgh strikers.

Document 7 comes from a *New York Times* report on the sermons of Reverend Henry Ward Beecher during the strike. Beecher's congregation, Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, was very wealthy, and Beecher was one of the most famous clergymen in America. Beecher's harsh judgment of the strikers grew out of his attachment to the Social Darwinist assumption that the law of living is survival of the fittest, which just happened to flatter his very successful congregants.

6. "THE FIRST ANNUAL PICNIC OF THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR" (1882)

JOSEPH KEPPLER

PUCK.



FIRST ANNUAL PICNIC OF THE "KNIGHTS OF LABOR" -- MORE FUN FOR THE SPECTATORS THAN FOR THE PERFORMERS.

Image 2.5 *Puck* (1882).

Austrian immigrant Joseph Keppler used his satirical magazine to critique the conflict between labor and capital. Here he shows the financial giants Cornelius Vanderbilt and Jay Gould riding past a worker and his impoverished family who try to ascend a "Monopoly Greased" pole to reach better wages, food, and wine. The Knights of Labor had grown significantly in the years since the strike of 1877 to become—briefly—the most powerful labor organization in the country. As the Knights began to embrace and initiate strikes, Keppler became much less sympathetic.

Source: New York: Published by Keppler & Schwarzmann, June 21, 1882. Courtesy Library of Congress.

7. "THERE IS NO RICH CLASS AND NO WORKING CLASS UNDER THE LAW" (1877)

HENRY WARD BEECHER

THE PULPIT ON THE SITUATION

REV. HENRY WARD BEECHER CONDEMNS THE STRIKE AND DECLARES THAT A FAMILY CAN LIVE ON A DOLLAR A DAY

What right had the working men, the members of those great organizations, to say to any one, 'You shall not work for wages which we refuse.' They had a perfect right to say to the employers, 'We shall not work for you,' but they had no right to tyrannize over their fellow-men. They had put themselves in an attitude of tyrannical opposition to all law and order and they could not be defended. The necessities of the great railroad companies demanded that there should be a reduction of wages. There must be continual shrinkage until things come back to the gold standard, and wages, as well as greenbacks, provisions, and property, must share in it. It was true that \$1 a day was not enough to support a man and five children, if a man would insist on smoking and drinking beer. Was not a dollar a day enough to buy bread! Water costs nothing. [Laughter.] Man cannot live by bread, it is true; but the man who cannot live on bread and water is not fit to live. [Laughter.] When a man is educated away from the power of self-denial, he is falsely educated. A family may live on good bread and water in the morning, water and bread at midday, and good water and bread at night. [Continued laughter.] Such may be called the bread of affliction, but it was fit that man should eat of the bread of affliction. Thousands would be glad of a dollar a day, and it added to the sin of the men on strike for them to turn round and say to those men, 'You can do so, but you shall not.' There might be special cases of hardship, but the great laws of political economy could not be set at defiance.

COMMUNISM DENOUNCED

HENRY WARD BEECHER'S OPINION ON THE LABOR QUESTION

We look upon the importation of the communistic and like European notions as abominations. Their notions and theories that the Government should be paternal and take care of the welfare of its subjects and provide them with labor, is un-American. It is the form in which oppression has had its most disastrous scope in the world. The American doctrine is that it is the duty of the Government merely to protect the people while they are taking care of themselves—nothing more than that. "Hands off," we say to the Government; "see to it that we are protected in our rights and our individuality. No more than that." The theories of Europe in regard to the community of property we reject because they are against natural law and will never be practicable. God has intended the great to be great, and the little to be little. No equalization process can ever take place until men are made equal as productive forces. It is a wild vision, not a practicable theory. The European theories of combinations between workmen and trades-unions and communes destroy the individuality of the person, and there is no possible way of preserving the liberty of the people except by the maintenance of individual liberty, intact from Government and intact from individual meddling. Persons have the right to work when or where they please, as long as they please, and for what they please, and any attempt to infringe on this right, and to put good workmen on a level with poor workmen—any such attempt to regiment labor is preposterous. . . .

Our theory is that the Government protects men in their rights, and not Government, but God, gave

them those rights. The Government gave me no right of liberty, but God did. The Government protects me in that right. All that the Government protects me to say is, you shall use your rights so as not to injure another's; to secure to every man the liberty that God gave him. Clear the arena! Let each man go into it for what he is! Let him reap what he can sow! Let the Government see that there is fair play between man and man and citizen and citizen! When I hear men say that the Government shall take charge of the railroads, of the telegraphs, and of other forms of industry, and that the proceeds shall be distributed equally among the working men, I say that if all citizens were angels this would be folly. But as men

are, only a theorist insane by nature and thrown by meditation into delirium tremens could have invented such a theory. No human being on earth has any rights resulting from the fact that he belongs to a class. In the eye of the law we have rights, but simply of men. The law rubs out all the European distinctions of class and says all men are born equal. We hear of the rich class being arrayed against the working class. There is no rich class and no working class before the law. The way in which these terms are coming now to be used is undemocratic, unphilosophical, and false in fact. It is an American doctrine that every man is to have the full ownership of himself, and the right to develop himself if he can do it.⁶

INTRODUCTION TO DOCUMENTS 8 AND 9

Unlike the prior selections in this chapter, Documents 8 and 9 come from two individuals remembering the strike many decades later. Samuel Gompers worked as a cigar maker in New York City during the strike. He eventually rose from worker to local union leader and finally to president of the American Federation of Labor, a coalition of craft unions founded in 1886. In his later life, Gompers always insisted that organized labor must stay out of politics, must eschew socialism, and must not question owners' rights to hold property and manage it; unions existed to improve wages and working conditions, not to make workers co-owners or managers. Gompers's passage was written fifty years after the Great Strike and published in his memoirs.

Similarly, Mary Harris "Mother" Jones was a labor organizer and, in the following excerpt from her autobiography, also remembers the strike from a distance of fifty years. Unlike Gompers, Jones was not a political moderate but a socialist known for her militant oratory. She was over forty years old when the strike broke out, and it was her first direct involvement in a labor action. She would be at the eye of the storm as an organizer for another half century. Like Gompers, she accused company agents of fomenting the violence and destruction. Note also her point that local businessmen as well as laborers resented big national corporations like the Pennsylvania Railroad.

8. "A DECLARATION OF PROTEST IN THE NAME OF AMERICAN MANHOOD" (1925)

SAMUEL GOMPERS

During the summer of 1876 the unemployment situation grew steadily worse. A feeling of desperation was growing as week after week slipped by

and still the unemployed had no dependable means of earning a livelihood. The city authorities selected that time to suspend improvements on public works.

The workingmen protested against this course as a harmful, cruel policy. Our next effort was in the form of demonstrations. First, we called a mass meeting in Tompkins Square early in August. Crowds met quietly on the appointed day. We had police protection instead of police aggression. . . .

Mass meetings for organization and as unemployment demonstrations continued. We tried to organize discontent for constructive purposes. Mayor Ely paid no more attention to our needs than other Mayors had done, but wage earners did heed our gospel of organization and solidarity. I am recounting in some detail a picture of cumulative misery in order to bring out why revolt brought a whisper of hope. The crash that broke the months of strain came in the revolt of the railroad workers in July, 1877. That was in the pioneer period of railroading. The Union Pacific had been completed but a short time before, uniting the eastern and western coasts in a new effort to conquer distance. The railway unions were but fledglings. In fierce competitive fights, railroad managements cut passenger and freight rates far below the maintenance level. They were preparing to shift the resulting losses upon their employes by wage cuts. In 1873, wages of railroad workers had been reduced ten per cent; a similar wage reduction was announced for June 1, 1877. Railroad officials had organized and united upon a uniform policy. They did not even consider consultation with their employes. They handed down an order that meant another ten-per-cent reduction in the standards of living of their employes. Although both employment and pay on the railroads were irregular, unemployment was general in all other lines of work, and railroad workers were obliged either to accept conditions, bad as they were, or join the already large ranks of tramps. In addition to cutting wages, the railroads announced employes were to be required to use company hotels which still further reduced real wages.

Made desperate by this accumulation of miseries, without organizations strong enough to conduct a

successful strike, the railway workers rebelled. Their rebellion was a declaration of protest in the name of American manhood against conditions that nullified the rights of American citizens. The railroad strike of 1877 was the tocsin that sounded a ringing message of hope to us all.

The railroad rebellion was spontaneous. In those days before the establishment of collective bargaining as an orderly system for presenting grievances to employers as the preliminary to securing an adjustment based on mutuality, the only way the workers could secure the attention of employers was through some demonstration of protest in the form of a strike. The strike grew steadily until it surpassed in numbers and importance all previous industrial movements. Strikers and sympathetic workmen crowded into the streets. The New York papers said at the time that so far as the arguments were concerned, the workers had the best of the situation, but that they could not win because of the weakness of the unions. The authorities grew apprehensive and asked for military protection. Then the fight was on. Long pent-up resentment found vent in destruction. The primitive weapons, fire and violence, were labor's response to arbitrary force. . . .

When the co-operative factory was abandoned with the close of the strike, I could have continued to work there, but, of course, I had neither the desire nor the willingness to act as superintendent or foreman for the factory although requested by them to do so, so I applied to Hirsch for my old job. That had been filled and there was really no opportunity for work with him. The Cigar Manufacturers' Association had declared that under no circumstances would any leaders of the strike be employed for at least six months. As a consequence, for nearly four months I was out of employment. I had parted with everything of any value in the house, and my wife and I were every day expecting a newcomer in addition to the five children we already had. . . .⁷

9. THE GREAT UPRISING (1925)

MARY HARRIS "MOTHER" JONES

One of the first strikes that I remember occurred in the Seventies. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad employees went on strike and they sent for me to come help them. I went. The mayor of Pittsburgh swore in as deputy sheriffs a lawless, reckless bunch of fellows who had drifted into that city during the panic of 1873. They pillaged and burned and rioted and looted. Their acts were charged up to the striking workingmen. The governor sent the militia.

The Railroads had succeeded in getting a law passed that in case of a strike, the train-crew should bring in the locomotive to the roundhouse before striking. This law the strikers faithfully obeyed. Scores of locomotives were housed in Pittsburgh.

One night a riot occurred. Hundreds of box cars standing on the tracks were soaked with oil and set on fire and sent down the tracks to the roundhouse. The roundhouse caught fire. Over one hundred locomotives, belonging to the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, were destroyed. It was a wild night. The flames lighted the sky and turned to fiery flames the steel bayonettes of the soldiers.

The strikers were charged with the crimes of arson and rioting, although it was common knowledge that it was not they who instigated the fire; that it was started by hoodlums backed by the business men of Pittsburgh who for a long time had felt that the Railroad Company discriminated against their city in the matter of rates.

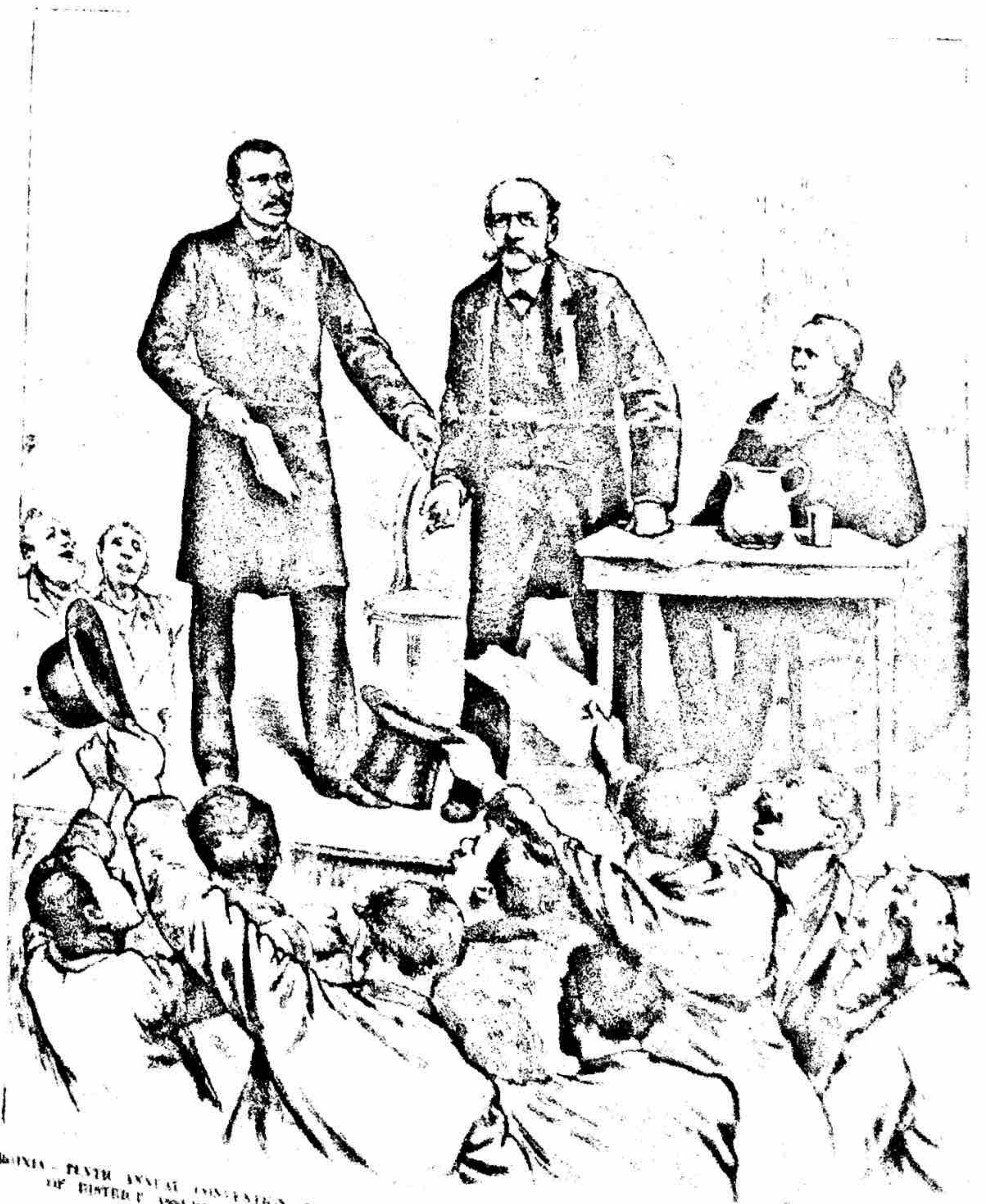
I knew the strikers personally. I knew that it was they who had tried to enforce orderly law. I knew they disciplined their members when they did violence.

I knew, as everybody knew, who really perpetrated the crime of burning the railroad's property. Then and there I learned in the early part of my career that labor must bear the cross for others' sins, must be the vicarious sufferer for the wrongs that others do.

These early years saw the beginning of America's industrial life. Hand and hand with the growth of factories and the expansion of railroads, with the accumulation of capital and the rise of banks, came anti-labor legislation. Came strikes. Came violence. Came the belief in the hearts and minds of the workers that legislatures but carry out the will of the industrialists.⁸

FRANK LESLIE'S ILLUSTRATED NEWSPAPER

NO. 1234—Vol. LXXXI NEW YORK—FOR THE WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 16, 1886. PRICE, 10 CENTS.



VIRGINIA. FIFTH ANNUAL CONVENTION OF THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR AT ROANOKE, VIRGINIA. (SEE PAGE 100) THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR AT ROANOKE, VIRGINIA. (SEE PAGE 100) THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR AT ROANOKE, VIRGINIA. (SEE PAGE 100)

Image 2.6 Convention of the Knights of Labor (1886)
By the time of the 1886 convention the Knights of Labor had achieved national stature and a membership of 800,000. This breadth of membership included Frank Farrell, an African-American delegate, pictured here introducing Grand Master Workman Terence Powderly, who led the Knights.
Source: Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, October 16, 1886. Courtesy Library of Congress.

QUESTIONS

1. Who were the strikers? What were their goals? How do accounts differ? Whom do you believe?
2. How did the law and government react to the crisis? Were they consistent? Evenhanded?
3. What did Gompers mean by "American manhood"? Why did he use that phrase? Did Powderly share Gompers's outlook on the future of American labor?
4. If they could argue with Powderly, Gompers, Jones, and the anonymous striker, what do you think Scott, Pinkerton, and Beecher would say? How would Gompers, Jones, and the striker respond? Do you see any shared values between these camps?
5. What patriotic appeals did each side make? How did they differ?
6. Do you view the uprisings of 1877 as a strike? A riot? A rally? A terrorist attack? How did you decide?

ADDITIONAL READING

On the 1877 strike, see Philip Foner, *The Great Labor Uprising of 1877* (1977); David O. Stowell, *Street Railroads and the Great Strike of 1877* (1999); and Robert V. Bruce, *1877: Year of Violence* (1959). For discussions of particular aspects of labor in this era, see Melvyn Dubofsky, *Industrialism and the American Worker, 1865–1920* (1985); Herbert Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America* (1976); Gutman, *Power and Culture: Essays on the American Working Class* (1987); David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865–1925* (1987); and James Greene, *Death in the Haymarket* (2007). An international perspective is provided by Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital, 1848–1875* (1975) and *The Age of Empire* (1987). On the poor, see Jacqueline Jones, *The Dispossessed: America's Underclass from the Civil War to the Present* (1992). For politics in the era of rapid economic growth, see Richard Franklin Bensel, *The Political Economy of American Industrialization* (2000). For a discussion on workers in American fiction, see Laura Hapke, *Labors Text* (2001). For an overview of the era, see Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America* (2007); H. W. Brands, *American Colossus* (2011), and Rebecca Edwards, *New Spirits: Americans in the Gilded Age* (2005).

ENDNOTES

1. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, *Legislative Documents Comprising the Department and other Reports, made to the Senate and House of Representatives of Pennsylvania*. V. 5 (Harrisburg: Lane S. Hart, State Printer, 1878), testimony pp. 646–647, proclamation p. 839.
2. *The North American Review*, v.124(257), pp. 332–326.
3. *The North American Review*, v.125(258), pp. 351–362.
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5. Terence Powderly, *Thirty Years of Labor* (Columbus, Ohio: Excelsior Publishing House, 1889), pp. 243–245.
6. *The New York Times*, July 23 and July 30, 1877.
7. Samuel Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1925), pp. 134–135, 137–141, 155–157.
8. Mary Harris Jones, *The Autobiography of Mother Jones*, ed., Mary Field Parton (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1925), pp. 14–16.