
Testimony to the United States Strike Commission of Eugene V. Debs, Chicago — Aug. 20 & 25, 1894

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TESTIMONY OF EUGENE V. DEBS.

August 20, 1894, Eugene V. Debs, being first duly sworn, testified as follows:

Commissioner Wright: State your name, age, residence, and occupation.

Eugene V. Debs: Eugene V. Debs, 38; Terre Haute, Indiana; am at present President of the American Railway Union and editor of the *Locomotive Firemen's Magazine*.

Commissioner Wright: How long have you been President of the American Railway Union?

Debs: Ever since it was instituted, June 20, 1893.

Commissioner Wright: Are you a railroad man or understood so to be?

Debs: Yes, sir. I was actively engaged in the railroad service at the time I became a member of the railway employees' organization.

Commissioner Wright: In what branch of the railway service?

Debs: I served as a painter and locomotive fireman.

Commissioner Wright: How long did you serve in those capacities?

Debs: About four and one-half years.

Commissioner Wright: We would like to have you state, Mr. Debs, in your own way, in narrative form the history of the present strike, so far as you know it from your own knowledge; that is to say, what led to the strike or boycott, and what was done by the American Railway Union, or its directors or members, in their official capacity. In this statement please cover the ground as fully as you can, but as briefly as possible.

Debs: In the early part of May last year I received at my home in Terre Haute, Indiana, a telegram from Vice-President Howard, of the American Railway Union, who is located here, notifying me that there was a probability of a strike on the part of the Pullman employees who were members of the union. I immediately wired him, authorizing him to act as President of the union, assuming the duties of my office on account of my inability to be there, but to do all in his power to prevent a strike.

Commissioner Kernan: Have you got these telegrams, or copies of them?

Debs: There is a clerk in the office now, in the absence of Mr. Howard, looking up the telegram I sent him, and I will introduce it before this commission.

Commissioner Kernan: Does that refer generally to the documents which you are speaking of in the course of your testimony?

Debs: Yes, sir. The American Railway Union had been involved in a strike on the Great Northern road in the latter part of April, and at a meeting of the officers of the union we concluded that many of our members might possibly be flushed with the triumph of that strike, and if we were not extremely careful we would be precipitated into other disturbances. We concluded it would be best, if it was possible, to keep out of any trouble whatever, for the time being at least, and I was particularly anxious at that time to avoid any strike if it was possible to do so. On the morning of May 11 I received a telegram from Mr. Howard informing me that the employees had struck. Shortly after that I came to the city of Chicago. I went to Pullman in person and made a personal investigation of the conditions existing there, in order to satisfy myself as to the justice or injustice of the action taken by the employees. I was obliged to go to St. Paul, and on my return I again stopped at Pullman and continued the investigation. I met the employees in person, both

men and women, and I became satisfied that the conditions under which the employees there were obliged to work fully justified them in the course they had taken.

I found that the wages and the expenses of the employees were so adjusted that every dollar the employees earned found its way back into the Pullman coffers; that they were not only not getting wages enough to live on, but that they were daily getting deeper into the debt of the Pullman Company; that it was impossible for many of them to leave there at all, even if they were disposed to quit to try and better their condition. Many of them told me personally that the conditions were very objectionable to them, but there was no escape for them. Wages had been reduced, but the expenses remained the same, and no matter how offensive the conditions were they were compelled to submit to them. After I heard those statements I satisfied myself that they were true, and I made up my mind, as President of the American Railway Union, of which these employees were members, to do everything in my power that was within law and within justice to right the wrongs of those employees.

In the meantime I found that every effort was being put forth on the part of the employees, as well as the representatives of the organization, to induce the Pullman Company to submit to arbitration. We had succeeded in settling the trouble on the Great Northern by arbitration. We had absolute faith in the justice of our case. We were confident that any fair and impartial board of arbitrators would decide in favor of the employees. The Pullman Company, through its officers, refused positively to entertain any proposition coming from any source looking to the arbitration of the difficulties. They maintained the position that there was nothing to arbitrate. While I am on this subject of arbitration I desire to say that after the trouble broke out we then proposed that they select two representatives and that two representatives be selected by the judges of the court, and they four select the fifth representative, to decide as to whether there was anything to arbitrate.

Commissioner Wright: Was this after the strike of May 11?

Debs: Yes; after the strike was inaugurated. We did not claim the right to name a representative; we waived that right entirely, virtually permitting them to select three out of five representatives. We did not ask them to arbitrate, but we simply asked them to agree to

have the question examined into as to whether there was anything to arbitrate. They refused that proposition.

On June 9 the delegates representing the American Railway Union, 465 local unions and about 150,000 employees, in round numbers, met in first quadrennial convention in the city of Chicago. In due course of the proceedings the matter of the Pullman trouble came up for consideration. The convention resolved itself into a committee of the whole to hear reports of committees and to take such action as in their judgment was deemed best to protect the interests of the suffering employees. And just here I would like to have the gentlemen of the board understand that all of the meetings of the American Railway Union were publicly held, with open doors, the first time in the history of American railway employees' organizations.

Commissioner Worthington: Do you include the delegate meeting, too?

Debs: Yes, all meetings, with but one exception; there was one executive session, in which there were certain financial affairs of the order discussed, that the public were not interested in, but in this session there was absolutely nothing touching the strike discussed. But all the remaining sessions were held with open doors, and representatives of the newspapers of Chicago were present, and they were present when this Pullman matter was heard, considered, and acted upon. Now, very much has been said by the press and by others in regard to the conspiracy against the railroad companies and against the hauling of mails, and a conspiracy for the purpose of committing offenses against the United States. I would like to call the attention of the gentlemen of the board to the fact that every meeting, with this one exception, from first to last, and from the opening to the close of the session, was held with open doors. Now, it is not at all probable, if any conspiracy was intended, if there had been any intention on the part of the delegates or officers to commit any offense against the United States, it is not at all probable that they would have done so with wide-open doors, and with representatives of the press attendant upon the meetings. The result of the consideration of the convention was the appointment of a committee, consisting in part of Pullman employees that were delegates and in part of delegates who were not Pullman employees.

That committee was authorized to call upon Mr. Wickes, the Vice-President of the company, and ask him if he would not agree

to arbitrate the difficulties existing between the company and the employees. Mr. Wickes notified the committee that he would meet no kind of a committee except a committee of his own employees. We then substituted Pullman employees for the remainder of the committee, so that the committee was composed wholly of employees of the Pullman Company. Before the committee left the hall, I, as President, instructed that committee not to go to the Pullman Company as representing the American Railway Union or any other organization. I said, "Waive that question entirely, if the organization is objectionable; we are perfectly willing to waive that and treat with Mr. Wickes as employees of the company and in that capacity." The committee returned with the information that Mr. Wickes absolutely refused to make any concession looking toward the arbitration of the difficulty. The matter was then referred to a special committee, who were authorized to recommend to the convention such action as in their judgment was necessary to be taken. The committee went into session, and recommended that if the Pullman Company refused to concede anything looking to the arbitration of this difficulty within five days, that the delegates resolve that they would refuse to haul trains to which Pullman cars were attached. Under the rules of the—

Commissioner Wright: (interrupting) This was on the 12th day of June?

Debs: No, sir; this was on the 21st. The convention adjourned on the 23rd of June, and this was on the 21st day of June. Under the rules of the American Railway Union the majority rules in all instances and in all things. No strike can be inaugurated except by a majority of the men who are involved, nor could any strike action be taken by delegates except by the majority of the body. The delegates, by instruction from Vice-President Howard and myself, went to the bodies that they were authorized to act for, the several unions; they were authorized to communicate with the unions they represented by telegraph and report the result to the convention. Most of the delegates did so, and in every instance, so far as I know, they were authorized by their several unions, in meeting assembled, to stand by the Pullman employees even to the extent of refusing to haul Pullman cars. After the committee had reported a vote was taken, and the vote was unanimous in favor of the adoption of the report, that providing, as I have said, that after the lapse of five days if the

Pullman Company refused to arbitrate that the members throughout the country refuse to haul Pullman cars.

Commissioner Wright: Five days from the 21st of June?

Debs: Yes, sir. That vote, as I say, was adopted unanimously with not one dissenting voice. Delegates had heard the reports of all the committees. Many of them had gone to Pullman in person, had met the employees, and satisfied themselves of the justice of the position of the employees, and they were so thoroughly imbued with the justice of the claims of the employees, and they felt it, as a sense of duty binding upon them, to stand by those employees in their struggle for their rights, so the voice was unanimous; a very remarkable proceeding in a matter of such great importance as that, involving as it did the situations of all those delegates and their constituents.

I should go back far enough to say that since railroad employees have been very severely criticized, and more especially the officers of the organization, on account of the employees having gone out on a sympathetic strike, that the employees had grievances against the railroad companies themselves, as I shall show. It has been said, stated in the press, and accepted as true by a great many people, that the railroad employees struck wholly through considerations of sympathy. That is not the fact. Last fall, or during last summer, when the railroads, many of them, were taxed to their capacity in handling World's Fair traffic, and especially at the opening of the Fair, there was a great deal of apprehension on the part of the public and on the part of the general managers lest there would be a railroad strike during the time that the World's Fair was held. We appealed to our members throughout the jurisdiction of the order not, under any circumstances, to resort to a strike during the World's Fair. We told them: "It is your duty, your patriotic duty, to bear with patience any grievances you may have until this World's Fair is over."

The gentlemen of the board will doubtless remember a great many wild rumors in the press prior to the Fair about the switchmen combining a strike at the critical time and about all the other employees combining with them for that purpose; we all united in quieting that apprehension by appealing directly to the men under no circumstances to resort to a strike. There was no strike anywhere during the World's Fair, but all worked together in harmony, in the

interests of the railroad companies until the close of the Fair; and the managers, some of them at least, promised, by implication, that when the World's Fair was over they would doubtless feel justified in making increases in the wages of the employees. The files of the papers will show that the employees were led to believe that after the close of the Fair they should receive their compensation for their faithful services during the period of the Fair. In the meantime the general managers of the railroads centering at Chicago, who already had a General Managers' Association, equipped their organization for the purpose of protecting their mutual interests.

I should like to introduce here an article that appeared in the *Chicago Herald* of Friday, May 5, 1893, two months before the American Railway Union was instituted. I am sure no one will charge the *Chicago Herald* with being unduly partial to labor organizations, especially the American Railway Union. The report says that from this time the association, meaning the American Railway Association, "took on a new lease of life, and today there is no more airtight railroad organization on the face of the earth. All the roads have bound themselves to act exactly as if the strike were on their own line. Requisitions for men and equipments to any amount must be honored, and a refusal of employees of other roads to do the work of the strikers will result in their instant discharge. Meantime, outside agents will be hired to ship in new men to take the places of the strikers." If your honors please, I would like to call special attention to this point: "The officials believe it is now an impossibility for any combination of employees to more than temporarily embarrass any road;" that is not the point. The point I want to call your attention to especially is this: "The strongest part of the association agreement is the provision which will practically force sympathetic strikes," and now the American Railway Union has been condemned by the press and by the public for engaging in a sympathetic strike, and yet here we have it by the *Chicago Herald*, that comes as near as any paper could come to being the official organ of the General Managers' Association — here we have it that the general managers have organized in a way to compel or to "force sympathetic strikes," on the part of the employees. This organization was instituted upon this basis in April, and the American Railway Union was not instituted until two months afterwards, in June of the same year.

Commissioner Kernan: What is the date of this?

Debs: Friday, May 5, 1893.

Commissioner Kernan: Is it an editorial article?

Debs: No, sir; a reportorial article.

Commissioner Kernan: Will you file it as a part of your examination?

Debs: Yes, sir. Now, shortly after the General Managers' Association was instituted upon this mutual protective basis, it became apparent to the public and more particularly to the railroad employees what their real purposes were: Instead of increasing the wages of employees, on the 1st day of September, 1893, they began systematically to reduce the wages of railroad employees throughout the country. The first reduction took effect on the Louisville and Nashville system J on the 1st day of September, if my recollection serves me right — a sweeping reduction of 10 percent. Under that reduction section men — and section men are very largely represented in the American Railway Union — were reduced to 67 cents per day. Now the gentlemen of the commission will notice, and it is a very important matter, as I regard it, in connection with this trouble, that in this methodical reduction of the wages, no two railroads reduced wages at the same time. That, to me, is very significant. It goes to show that there was a concert of action on their part to reduce wages throughout the country, but to do it in a way not to arouse opposition of too many railroad employees at the same time.

After the Louisville and Nashville had taken the initial step, other roads followed in their order at intervals of from two to four weeks. The East Tennessee, Virginia & Georgia, the Richmond & Danville, the Mobile & Ohio, the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis, in the South; and then they swung around and they took in some of the Eastern roads, including the Baltimore & Ohio, the Big Four system, the New York, New England & Hartford, and the Wabash. Then they swung around to the Northwest and they took in the Northern Pacific, the Union Pacific, and the Great Northern, and they were ready to reduce the Chicago & Great Western at the time the Great Northern strike broke out. I believe testimony to that effect has already been given by one of the employees of the system.

Now, the American Railway Union viewed this reduction of wages that was gradually taking place in the country with a great deal of apprehension; it created a great deal of unrest in the ranks of

the membership, and more especially after Judge Caldwell denounced the reduction as being in the nature of rapacity, and ordered the reductions that had been made restored to the employees. In making these reductions, the general managers, as a general proposition, did not reduce the wages of the employees simultaneously. In the first place, they reduced on one road after another, gradually falling into line. In the next place, no railroad company reduced the wages of all the employees at the same time. They reduced them by departments. General Manager Dickinson, of the Union Pacific, gave testimony, under oath, in the hearing before Judge Dundy, in April last to that effect.

Now, the railroad companies, in the first instance, reduced all unorganized elements of the service, such as trackmen, who already got the lowest wages, and the common laborers, who constituted, perhaps, one- third of the service. They reduced them because they knew that they could not resist the reduction. Until the American Railway Union was organized they had no organization, and they had to submit to any injustice that was imposed upon them. That is the way the wages went down to nearly starvation point on nearly all the roads in the country. That created a temporary resentment on the part of the employees, but in the course of three or four weeks it quieted down, and then they would reduce the wages of the shop employees, and that would create a stir among those who had been first reduced, and who secretly exulted in the reduction of the wages of the others, since they had not been helped when they were reduced. Then another month was allowed to lapse, and finally the train service was reduced. The history of the matter will show that it usually takes from two to four months to make the reduction.

Now, it would seem to us, that, if retrenchment became necessary on the part of the corporations, that they should have made the reduction so as to fall in a way that all should bear their just share of it, in place of first reducing those who were already getting the lowest wages — only sufficient to make a living. But they reduce wages in that way so as not to arouse the resistance of all the employees at the same time; so as not to unify them. That is the purpose. Because they knew if they had a common grievance they would unify and resist such reduction. When the American Railway Union met in convention in Chicago, it was this condition that confronted them as well as the Pullman trouble. They found that wages of em-

ployees had been reduced on the Mobile & Ohio, the Louisville & Nashville, the East Tennessee, Virginia & Georgia, the Richmond & Danville, the Baltimore & Ohio, the Chicago & Eastern Illinois, the Wabash, the Union Pacific, the Monon, the Northern Pacific, the Great Northern, the Big Four, and other roads.

Commissioner Wright: This convention was called, Mr. Debs, was it, to consider these points, and not specifically to consider the Pullman strike?

Debs: No, sir; it was not called for the purpose of either specifically. It was the time for the holding of the regular biennial convention of the order, as provided for in the constitution.

Commissioner Worthington: In other words, it was a regular meeting and not a special meeting of the convention at that time.

Debs: Yes, sir; that is right. In two instances the reductions that had been made by the railroad companies were restored, one by the power of the American Railway Union on the Great Northern on the 1st day of May, last. A reduction of wages amounting to \$146,500 a month, according to the figures of President Hill, was made there. The American Railway Union organized and combined within its organization all classes of employees, and it made a stand for the restoration of that \$146,500 a month, and the restoration was made on the 1st day of September through arbitration. Practically everything was conceded, and the board of arbitration itself, composed of representative business men of the cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis, say that our disposition was fair. We selected fourteen men, most of whom were millionaires, all of whom were business and commercial men, and we said, "We do not want a representative; we do not ask a representative of labor on the board at all; we will allow you absolutely to arbitrate this trouble." That board, composed of representative men of wealth, commercial and business men, decided absolutely in our favor, and said in addition, that the reduction was not warranted, there was no justification for it, and they restored that large amount of money to the pockets of the employees, from which the reduction had been unjustly taken.

Commissioner Kernan: Was that a written award?

Debs: The award was in writing.

Commissioner Kernan: Have you got that here?

Debs: Yes; I will procure a copy of the findings and furnish it.

The employees on the other roads felt, in view of this fact, that their wages had also been unjustly taken from them. On the Union Pacific, where the men were reduced 10 percent in their wages, Judge Caldwell — the gentlemen of the board will doubtless remember his scathing arraignment of the methods that were in operation there, and the policy of the managers that had made such a reduction under such circumstances. The employees on other roads felt that if upon the Union Pacific, where Judge Caldwell ordered the reductions restored, and upon the Great Northern, where the board of arbitrators agreed that the reduction had been unjustly made, if that was true upon those two systems it was equally true on other systems and lines of railway that were, at least, in as sound a financial condition, and that they made their reductions seemed taking advantage of the unfortunate condition of the times, and not because they were compelled to make them by their financial condition. This created unrest in the ranks of the American Railway Union.

The employees had, to a large extent, lost confidence in the other railway brotherhoods, who had failed, in a single instance, to successfully resist these reductions that were gradually being made all over the country, and all of the delegates, therefore, came to the meeting of the railway union with the hope and expectation that the railway union would do something to restore their wages and to protect them in their rights and wages as employees. This is the reason that they were so ripe to espouse the cause of the injured Pullman employees. This prompted their action fully as much as the grievances of the employees. While the injuries and grievances of the Pullman employees appealed to their sense of justice and to their sense of duty for redress, these further grievances of their own made the matter more binding upon them, and wrought them up to that point where they felt it a duty as binding upon them to do everything in their power to protect the Pullman employees, as well as their constituents, who had sent them to the convention. The vote, as I have said, was unanimous. There was not one dissenting voice. In this there was no purpose on the part of the delegates to interfere with traffic, but the primary purpose was, if possible, to cut off the Pullman cars so as to cut off the Pullman revenue, and

thereby compel the Pullman Company to arbitrate its troubles with these employees.

Commissioner Wright: Mr. Debs, you have stated, I think, that your people advised against the Pullman strike which occurred on the 11th of May?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Wright: Yet you have stated that their grievances appealed to your sympathy with such force that you were bound in your brotherhood to protect the Pullman employees?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Wright: Then, why did you advise against the strike which occurred on the 11th of May?

Debs: I advised against the strike, as I stated, in the earlier part of May, before I knew anything about the condition. I was at Terre Haute. Mr. Howard wired me there was a strike probable. As we had just gotten through the Great Northern strike, and as I knew about the condition at Pullman, wired back and said, "Do everything in your power to prevent any strike from being inaugurated at this time."

Commissioner Wright: You were not at Pullman or Kensington, or in the vicinity of the Pullman works prior to the strike, then, personally?

Debs: No, sir; I was not.

Commissioner Wright: Now, inform us what the action of your union would have been at this convention, relative to a general strike, had it not been for the existence of the Pullman strike. In other words, was the policy of the union affected, in your mind, by the Pullman strike, to force an issue peremptorily or otherwise?

Debs: No, sir; I would answer your question in this way. There would have been no trouble with the railway companies had it not been for the Pullman trouble. The delegates regarded it as an inauspicious time for the inauguration of a strike for any purpose on account of the depressed condition of the country, but the grievances the delegates and their constituents had already suffered at the hands of the railway companies aggravated the condition, and

wrought them up to a point to at least espouse the cause of the Pullman employees at the time the convention met.

Commissioner Wright: The general strike or boycott, then, was not contemplated?

Debs: No, sir.

Commissioner Wright: Was a general strike or boycott brought to an issue at that time by the grievances at Pullman?

Debs: Yes; and it was this, the grievances of which they had already suffered, that ripened them or prepared them.

Commissioner Wright: In other words, the strike at Pullman precipitated that?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Kernan: It would be incorrect to say that the cause of the strike was the grievances, of the various kinds, that the railroad employees had?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Wright: Now, another matter. As to the motion which was unanimously passed by your convention, as I understand it, on the 21st day of June, declaring that unless the grievances at Pullman were adjusted within five days a general boycott would be declared against roads hauling Pullman cars; was this resolution served upon anybody officially or otherwise, either in writing or verbally?

Debs: By the convention?

Commissioner Wright: By the convention of its officers?

Debs: No, sir; it was not served on the railroad companies, but it was left with the representatives of each road to serve that notice. There was no action taken on the part of the convention peremptorily, for the reason that the American Railway Union was not regarded with favor by the railway companies. As a general proposition they had done everything to retard its growth; they had refused it recognition and refused to have any dealings with it in any way, shape, or form. It has always been customary for railroad managers, as a general proposition, to accord free transportation to the officers of the various railway brotherhoods for the good they are supposed to do in

the way of improving the condition or efficiency of the men. Such courtesies as other organizations have always received have been denied to the American Railway Union. They have even refused to answer its communications or to recognize it in any way whatsoever; and the convention felt, as I am persuaded, that any notice of this kind would simply be ignored by the railway companies.

Commissioner Wright: Was the notice, so far as you know, of this action of your convention served by the local unions on the Illinois Central road officials or those of the Rock Island and Pacific?

Debs: No, sir; I do not know that of my own knowledge.

Commissioner Wright: The presumption is it was served; they were directed so, were they?

Debs: The presumption is that it was; yes.

Commissioner Worthington: Do you know whether they had any knowledge of the action of the convention in any way?

Debs: The officials? Official knowledge?

Commissioner Worthington: Official or otherwise.

Debs: I do not know of my own knowledge that they had.

Commissioner Worthington: Was there any public notice in the papers given of such action by the convention?

Debs: Yes, sir; in all of the papers.

Commissioner Worthington: And reporters and others were present when the convention took action?

Debs: Yes; at my request as President of the union. Some of the delegates wanted to go into special or executive session. I arose in my place, and I said, "We want to have everything done in the broad, open light of day," and I asked the convention to allow the representatives of the press to remain, and they did so, and they did remain.

Commissioner Worthington: As a matter of fact, every road in Chicago was doubtless informed of this action through the published dailies of this city?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Worthington: It was published?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Wright: That action was on the 21st of June?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Wright: About that time the general managers of the Chicago terminal lines — that is, the General Managers' Association — adopted certain resolutions declaring that they would resist the boycott which you proposed to order on the 21st of June. Do you know when those resolutions were adopted?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Wright: When?

Debs: On the 25th day of June. They were published on the 25th day of June. When they were adopted I Don't know, but presumably the evening before; but they were published on the morning of the 25th day of June.

Commissioner Wright: Four days after your action?

Debs: Yes. I Don't know whether I should state here that in connection with these resolutions it was currently reported that the managers resolved at that meeting, though it is not published, but it is currently reported that they did resolve to exterminate the American Railway Union; that they had seen from the Great Northern victory that it was a menace to the railroad companies of the country, and it was the purpose to crush the American Railway Union in its incipency. That is not published, but it was currently reported, and the information came to us from a source that seemed reliable.

Commissioner Wright: At the same time, in the Railway Union, had the whole matter of a general strike been postponed at this time?

Debs: Yes; had it not been for the Pullman trouble.

Commissioner Wright: If the union had designed so?

Debs: Please repeat that question.

Commissioner Wright: If the American Railway Union had had its own way in regard to its policy would a general strike have been postponed at this time?

Debs: Yes, sir; decidedly.

Commissioner Wright: For what reason? Debs: For the reason, as I have stated a while ago, that the conditions were not considered auspicious on account of the depressed condition of the times, the large number of men that were out of work, etc.

Commissioner Wright: What was the strength of your union at that time — say the 21st of June?

Debs: In round numbers, about 150,000 members.

Commissioner Wright: Did you consider that the union was strong enough for a general strike?

Debs: Yes, sir; we considered that the union was strong enough to meet every expected demand.

Commissioner Wright: Now, Mr. Debs, I ask you these questions in the midst of your narrative for historical reasons. I do not wish to go beyond the 21st day of June until we get through with that. Will you proceed with your narrative relative to the strike and boycott; what occurred afterwards — after the 21st of June; your own observations as to riot, acts of violence, destruction of property, or anything of that kind?

Debs: I forgot to state in connection with this matter of the reduction of wages that fault has been found on account of our resisting reductions of wages, and I would like to state to the committee, as a fact, that the railroad companies have never increased wages of their own accord. I would like to have that put upon record as one of the reasons for any unrest and lack of confidence in the ranks of railway employees, for every concession the railway companies have ever made has been wrung from them by the power of organized effort. There has been such a consolidation during the last three years, as the reports show — even the last report of the Interstate Commerce Commission, the advance sheets of which have just been issued, show that the railroad companies have been consolidated, have been merged, have been getting closer and closer together as far as their employees are concerned, until they are practically united under

one management. It is that that inspired the formation of the American Railway Union.

In connection with this same matter I would like to state that a great deal of fault has been found on account of the action of the employees on the Santa Fe system. They have been often very harshly criticised on account of striking there, the contention being that they struck without any cause; no reduction of wages had been made on the Santa Fe system, and therefore it was grossly unjust that they should strike.

The fact is, and was, that the Santa Fe company had been in arrears to these employees from two to almost four months for their wages. I was over the system myself, and know that a great many employees were on the verge of starvation, because they were not getting their wages from the company. At one time, as the gentlemen of the commission remember, Governor Waite, of Colorado, was called upon to intercede with the Federal authorities to compel the Santa Fe receivers to make at least a partial payment of wages to prevent the employees from suffering, and they were actually on the verge of starvation. That was the condition that prevailed on the Santa Fe system at the time the strike was inaugurated. Many of the employees were actually suffering, simply because their wages were withheld by the company.

Commissioner Kernan: What do you know as to how able the company or the receivers were to pay them at that time?

Debs: Of my own knowledge I know nothing about their ability to pay their wages. I should presume, though, from current reports, if the property had been honestly managed they would have been amply able to pay their employees promptly their wages.

Commissioner Kernan: Take the situation just as it was, with the road in the hands of receivers, with the receipts, as currently reported, coming in, what was the ability of the receivers to pay?

Debs: I do not know as to that. I am not finding any fault, of course, with the receivers; I am not going to make any charge against them. I give it as my opinion, and I know only from my reading, and I am a reader of both sides of the question. I read the *Railway Age* and I read the daily papers and I read the current reports, and from my reading I conclude if the Santa Fe property had been honestly managed by those who have had charge of it—

Commissioner Kernan (interrupting): Prior to the receivers?

Debs: Prior to the receivers, yes.

Commissioner Kernan: Now, isn't it a fact that, owing to either mismanagement or misfortune, the road in the hands of the receiver claimed, on the part of the receivers, that they had not sufficient means from their revenue to pay these wages? You know that to be so?

Debs: Yes, I am aware of that fact.

Commissioner Kernan: I have heard it mentioned.

Debs: I am aware of the fact that that claim has been set up; but even if that claim as set up is true, it was not calculated, as I think, to quiet or pacify the employees, who were rendering faithful service and getting no wages.

Commissioner Kernan: The employees were not in a position to understand things?

Debs: No, sir.

Commissioner Kernan: They only knew they were not getting their wages, and that, of course, created dissatisfaction and unrest. That is the position, is it?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Worthington: Were these arrears in wages for wages accrued before the road went into the hands of the receivers, or for operating expenses while in the hands of the receivers?

Debs: They were for wages earned both prior to and subsequent to the road's going into the hands of the receivers.

Commissioner Wright: It made the men sensitive?

Debs: They were dissatisfied, I think, because in the case of the Union Pacific employees Judge Caldwell had in very scathing terms condemned the management for injustice to the employees, and they felt that they came in the same category. Judge Caldwell said, "If there is any retrenchment necessary, cut off the dividends; labor must be paid before everything." At any rate, as you see, they were not in a position to know anything about the financial affairs of the

company. If the books had been laid before them, of course they are not expert accountants, but they knew that they and their families were in want and that they were working daily and getting nothing for their work, and they were at this disadvantage, as I found from going over the matter, that they were required to buy their goods on credit, all over the Santa Fe system, and the dealers charged them extravagant rates, because they knew they had to wait two or three long months for their money. A man can go into a grocery store and put down a dollar and can demand prices, but if he goes in the attitude or position of a mendicant, and has got to ask two or three or four months' time, the dealer takes advantage of that condition; and that is the condition under which the Santa Fe employees. Mere working at the time we met here in convention. I submit that any class of employees, working under such conditions, are almost right to enter a protest on behalf of labor against the injustice of corporations, when they themselves keenly feel the wrongs as they conceive them to be, of corporate management.

Commissioner Wright: Take up your narrative now from the 21st of June.

Debs: Pursuant to the order of the convention, practically the order of the 150,000 employees composing the union, because it was taken by the delegates by authority of their several unions — and I would like to emphasize this point, for the reason that it has been repeatedly claimed and it has been the source of a great deal of prejudice, I think, to our cause, that the President of the union ordered the strike, that the President of the union was a self-appointed individual and ordered the strike — I would like to have that point understood, that the strike was practically ordered by the rank and file of the membership of the order; that is, the delegates acted by their express authority and instruction. I admit that when the reports came in from these committees, and from what I knew myself, that I was ready, as the President of the union, to sanction such action. I do not wish to shirk any responsibility for my act as the President of the union. I gave my hearty concurrence to the movement. I did not order it, however, nor did I have any voice in ordering it; but if I had had a voice in ordering it, I should have ordered it.

On the 26th day of June, pursuant to the order of the convention, the employees began to refuse to haul Pullman cars. The offi-

cers of the American Railway Union established temporary headquarters at Ulrich's Hall. They were very careful to instruct the men, or to advise the men, rather, in our advisory capacity, not to take this action anywhere unless it was sanctioned by the majority of employees and they felt strong enough to make it effectual. We said, it is not wise for a few men to create trouble, and not to strike unless it is sanctioned by a majority of the employees, and unless it was certain that the employees of the body will stand by you in so doing. The committees came from all yards and from all roads to confer with us. The switchmen, for instance, would send a committee to us, and we would authorize that committee to act for that yard or for that road, and that committee would then go to that yard and take charge of the affairs, serve notice upon the men, and keep them in line, and above everything we advised them to do everything in their power to maintain order and prevent violence.

All of the meetings were held in the city of Chicago, and there were a great many. All of us were addressing from two to six meetings a day, and all the meetings that were held were held with open doors. We did not hold a secret meeting during the entire trouble, not one. We held meetings in close proximity to all of these yards and all of these roads, and all of the employees and the general public were there. We did not hold a meeting but what we admonished employees under all circumstances to maintain order. We said, we want to win as becomes men; we want to win as becomes law-abiding citizens; we have got a right to quit in a body, and our right ends there; the railroad companies have the right to employ men to take our places, and their rights begin there, and we have no right to interfere. We are on record as saying that in our published documents and our public statements that were very widely circulated through the press. The records show that that was the case with all the committees that called upon us and in all the meetings that were held.

Commissioner Kernan: Where is that record that shows those instructions were given to the committee?

Debs: There is no record of that except the record that could be made by the affidavits of the committee themselves, and that could be produced.

Commissioner Kernan: You spoke of a record?

Debs: I spoke of that in a general way.

Commissioner Kernan: Those were oral instructions?

Debs: Yes, oral instructions given to the committees; yes, sir.

Commissioner Wright: You mean it is on record, because it is a fact which can be proven?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Wright: And not because it is existing in any written record?

Debs: No, sir; it is written in this way, Mr. Chairman, when we saw there were grave apprehensions of trouble, we then deemed it our duty to do everything we could to prevent trouble, and so we had a series of documents that have been denominated as manifestos or pronunciamientos that appealed to our members throughout the country under no circumstances to countenance violence, but to keep away from the company's property altogether. In all documents we issued that were published in the newspapers, and were given to the Associated and United Press, we told all members not to countenance violence. As for myself, as President, I have been editor of the *Locomotive Fireman's Magazine* for the past 14 years, and my record as a labor advocate is written there. In all of my writings I have always taken the position that there is nothing to be gained by violence. I have always written against it and always spoken against it, and I emphasize it here.

Commissioner Kernan: It is said some inflammatory telegrams were sent, either by you or by your authority; how is that?

Debs: Yes, I understand it is alleged certain telegrams were sent; but there was no telegram sent by my authority of an inflammatory character.

Commissioner Kernan: Have you not heard of any that were sent by your alleged authority?

Debs: None that were inflammatory, as I understand the term.

Commissioner Wright: A certain "buy a gun" telegram; was that sent by you?

Debs: I can explain that if the gentlemen of the board desire an explanation.

Commissioner Wright: Yes, we do.

Debs: At the time the convention was held there was a young man, a delegate from Butte, Montana, by the name of L.P. Benedict. He was a typewriter and stenographer in the office of the auditor of the Montana Union Railway. He was made assistant secretary during the convention, and he was found to be so competent that he was employed as our regular stenographer and typewriter. When the trouble began there were thousands of telegrams and communications pouring in, and it was impossible for me to see them all personally, because I was at many of the mass meetings, and with committees, and going to different cities and addressing meetings, and things of that sort, so that it really was impossible for all these telegrams that were coming in to receive my personal notice. So then the work was attended to by various members of this board.

This young man Benedict answered by instruction of the board some telegrams, and in other cases, where the board was all absent, he answered the telegrams himself. Telegrams, when he had answered others of a kindred character, he would answer without instructions. This “buy a gun” telegram was sent to his superior, in whose employment he had been at Butte, Montana, who wired him to know something about the conditions. It was an expression that they had used themselves, between themselves, a playful expression, “Save your money and buy a gun.” It was telegraphed to that superior, who understood the expression, and who wrote a letter that I can produce here. This official of the Montana union writes in here and exculpates Mr. Benedict, who sent the telegram. I had no notice of it; did not know anything about it until I saw it published in the papers. It is merely a playful expression they used out in Montana.

Commissioner Wright: Will you file that letter with the commission?

Debs: Yes, sir.¹

Commissioner Wright: This particular telegram was not signed by you?

¹ For copy of letter referred to see testimony of Mr. Debs, recalled, page 175.

Debs: This telegram was sent over my signature, for the reason that all telegrams were sent over my signature on account of my having a half frank.

Commissioner Wright: But not signed by you?

Debs: No, sir; not signed by me. I never saw the telegram and never knew it was sent until I saw it published in the Chicago papers, until after the indictment was found.

Commissioner Kernan: Have you a file of your telegrams sent and received?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Kernan: Are you ready to produce those before the commission?

Debs: Yes, sir. I would be glad to produce them and have them examined by the commission.

Commissioner Wright: Now go on with your narrative.

Debs: The employees, obedient to the order of the convention, at once, on the 26th, refused to haul Pullman cars. The switchmen, in the first place, refused to attach a Pullman car to a train, and that is where the trouble began, and then when a switchman would be discharged for that they would all simultaneously quit, as they had agreed to do. One department after another was involved, until the Illinois Central was practically paralyzed, and the Rock Island and other roads in their turn. Up to the 1st day of July, or after the strike had been in progress five days, the railway managers, as we believe, were completely defeated. Their immediate resources were exhausted, their properties were paralyzed, and they were unable to operate their trains. Our men were intact at every point, firm, quiet, yet determined, and no sign of violence or disorder anywhere. That was the condition on the 30th day of June and the 1st day of July.

Commissioner Kernan: The five day notice expired when?

Debs: The five day notice expired on the 26th day of June. Notice was issued on the 21st day of June. It is at this point that the intervention of the courts was sought. Now, if you gentlemen would like

to have my opinion as to the cause that resulted in our defeat I will be glad to make that statement, but it is merely my opinion.

Commissioner Wright: It is the facts we are after, and then your conclusions by and by.

Debs: Very well. On the 2nd day of July I was served with a very sweeping injunction that restrained me, as President of the union, from sending out any telegram or any letter or issuing any order that would have the effect of inducing or persuading men to withdraw from the service of the company, or that would in any manner whatsoever, according to the language of the injunction, interfere with the operation.

Commissioner Worthington: Will you attach a copy of the injunction to your testimony?

Debs: It is in the hands of my attorney, and I will secure a copy of it and introduce it as part of the testimony.²

That injunction was served simultaneously, or practically so, by all of the courts embracing or having jurisdiction in the territory in which the trouble existed. From Michigan to California there seemed to be concerted action on the part of the courts in restraining us from exercising any of the functions of our offices. That resulted practically in the demoralization of our ranks. Not only this, but we were organized in a way that this was the center, of course, of operations. It is understood that a strike is war; not necessarily a war of blood and bullets, but a war in the sense that it is a conflict between two contending interests or classes of interests. There is more or less strategy resorted to in war, and this was the center in our operations. Orders were issued from here, questions were answered, and our men were kept in line from here.

At the time I was served with this injunction all of the officers at all of the points at the headquarters or terminals of all of these roads were served with a similar injunction restraining them all from sending any telegrams or from discharging the functions attached to their several offices. Following the issuance of that injunction a few days, I have forgotten the exact date, a special grand jury was convened for the purpose of examining into my conduct as President of the American Railway Union in connection with this trouble. The

² Copy of injunction subsequently handed to the commission. See Exhibit 5, at end of Eugene V. Debs' testimony.

grand jury was in session very briefly, but found a bill upon an information that was filed, and I was ordered to be arrested. A warrant was issued and placed in the hands of a United States marshal for that purpose. On the 7th day of July, if I am not mistaken, I was arrested and brought before the court, and my bond was fixed, with my three official associates, Mr. Howard, Vice-President; Mr. Rogers, Editor of the *[Railway] Times*, and Mr. Keliher, our Secretary, we were simultaneously arrested and we were placed under a joint bond of \$10,000. Very shortly after this there was an attachment issued for an alleged contempt of court, upon information that I had, as President, violated the injunction issued by Judges Wood and Grosscup.

Commissioner Wright: That is, the injunction served on you on the 2nd day of July?

Debs: Yes. As soon as the employees found that we were arrested and taken from the scene of action, they became demoralized, and that ended the strike. It was not the soldiers that ended the strike; it was not the old brotherhoods that ended the strike; it was simply the United States courts that ended the strike. Our men were in a position that never would have been shaken under any circumstances if we had been permitted to remain upon the field, remain among them; but once that we were taken from the scene of action and restrained from sending telegrams or issuing the orders necessary, or answering questions; when the minions of the corporations would be put to work at such a place, for instance, as Nickerson, Kansas, where they would go and say to the men that the men at Newton had gone back to work, and Nickerson would wire me to ask if that were true; no answer would come to the message, because I was under arrest, and we were all under arrest. The headquarters were demoralized and abandoned, and we could not answer any telegrams or questions that would come in. Our headquarters were temporarily demoralized and abandoned, and we could not answer any messages. The men went back to work, and the ranks were broken, and the strike was broken up by the Federal courts of the United States, and not by the Army, and not by any other power, but simply and solely by the action of the United States courts in restraining us from discharging our duties as officers and representatives of the employees. At the time that I was arrested certain officers of the law, acting under authority

Commissioner Worthington: What was that date?

Debs: On the 7th of July, as I remember it, representatives of certain officers of the law, acting under the authority of the Federal officials, raided our headquarters and seized our books and papers and my private unopened correspondence. The clerks remonstrated with the authorities, but they listened to nothing, but insisted upon bundling up everything there was about the office and taking it away out of the place to the office of the Federal prosecutor. I want to say, in justice to the court, to Judge Grosscup, that the next morning he sent for me and explained that this action had been taken without authority; and he ordered the papers restored — my personal papers.

Commissioner Kernan: What officers did it?

Debs: I understand officers acting under the instructions and by the authority of the then prosecuting attorney, Mr. Milchrist, and the postal authorities.

Commissioner Worthington: Was your private correspondence opened before it was returned to you?

Debs: No, sir, it was not. I presume, and I am willing to believe, that all of my correspondence was returned. I do not know how many letters were taken, because they were there just as they were delivered by the carrier, but quite an accumulation because I had not been able to get to the office for some time, and they were bundled up and taken away. I am willing to believe they were all returned unopened. I do not believe they were tampered with, but I introduce this statement to show the extent to which the authorities would go to defeat this strike.

Commissioner Wright: When you say strike you mean boycott in this case?

Debs: Well, I do not exactly like the term “boycott.” It is a term I do not often use. There is a deep seated hostility in this country to the term “boycott.”

Commissioner Wright: I mean the action taken on the 21st of June. It was that you refer to when you say a strike?

Debs: Yes, sir. On the 2nd day of July, the day upon which the injunctions were served upon me, as I remember, I am not positive about that date, General Miles came to Chicago in charge of the Federal troops or regular soldiers. It was stated in the press of the city of Chicago on the second day after General Miles's arrival, and especially those papers that were defending the corporations, so I assume the reports were correct, that upon General Miles's arrival in the city of Chicago he repaired to the headquarters of the General Managers' Association. He was in consultation with the general managers, and the next day he was quoted as saying in the press that "he had broken the backbone of the strike." So far as I know, General Miles has never denied either statement.

Now, it seems to me, if I am permitted to make an observation, that General Miles was vulgarly out of place when he made such a statement. In the first place, it was highly improper for him, as an officer of the Federal Government, to go to the general managers, who were a party to this controversy. It would have been just as proper for him, in my judgment, to have visited the headquarters of the American Bail-way Union and gone into confidential consultation with the officers of that organization as it was for him to go to the general managers' headquarters and meet in private confidential consultation with them. On the next day it was reported in an interview that was widely published in the Chicago newspapers defending the corporation that he had said "he had broken the backbone of the strike." It was believed his mission here was to preserve and maintain order, and not to take an active part in the strike, nor to defeat the strike, any more than he was to come here to defeat the railroad corporations. But the fact is, he was in active alliance with the general managers, not only to maintain order, but to suppress the strike. That was his real mission in Chicago.

Commissioner Wright: You state this from reading the newspapers and not of your own knowledge?

Debs: Upon statements made or alleged to have been made by himself, as reported in organs that were defending the corporations at the time. It can be proven that a switchman was put to work at the point of a bayonet, and that a fireman was compelled to perform his duties.

Commissioner Worthington: By whom?

Debs: By the men.

Commissioner Worthington: I mean by whom was the man compelled to work?

Debs: By the Federal soldiers.

Commissioner Wright: By whom can it be proven?

Debs: By the men who were put to work.

Commissioner Wright: Do you know the names of these men?

Debs: I can secure them, I think. I have just arrived here this morning.

Commissioner Wright: Will you produce the names, and give them to the clerk of the commission?

Debs: Yes. I shall try at the adjournment hour to secure their names. At this time we realized that we were not only confronted by the railway managers, but it had resolved itself into a conflict in which the organized forces of society and all the powers of the municipal, State, and Federal governments were arrayed against us. We then said we did not start out to antagonize the Government nor to make a war against the Government, but simply started out in an issue with the railroad corporations, and now that this was assuming such alarming conditions, such grave proportions, and innocent people were suffering, we said, We will declare this strike off upon the simple condition that the railway managers put our men back to work. That was about the 6th day of July, if I am not mistaken, at the time the strike was at its very worst — at its zenith.

Commissioner Wright: Was that notice served on the managers?

Debs: We held a meeting of the board and said, We will declare this strike off, in consideration of the fact that it has assumed such threatening phases; that for the public good, if for no other consideration, we will declare this strike off. The board was unanimous in its conclusion, and a document was prepared, which said substantially this, that we had been appealed to by the citizens, by letter, and by telegram, from every conceivable source; from the West, where fruits and other perishable freights were spoiling, and from men whose private interests were suffering, who were in no way in-

volved in the original controversy, and the pressure became so great that we said, It is our duty to declare the strike off.

Commissioner Kernan: How did you get authority to declare the strike off?

Debs: I will explain that. When the board met we were daily in consultation with the committees representing the various roads centering in the city of Chicago, which was really the strike center. Every day the committees came to receive their instructions and to make their reports. When we became satisfied that things were assuming too serious a phase, and that a point had been reached when, in the interest of peace and to prevent riot and trouble, we must declare the strike off, we advised with those committees. We gave it out as our opinion to the men, through the committees, that the strike had better be declared off, if we could do so honorably. The men agreed, without a dissenting voice that I heard, from every source and from every road, that they were willing to declare the strike off, if they were allowed simply to go back to work. It was in the crisis when everything was at stake, where possibly it might have eventuated in a revolution. We said, "We feel satisfied, from the authority we have already received from all the men we can possibly reach, and from all the roads, we feel justified, in view of this crisis, in making this proposition and speaking for the rest who can not, possibly be reached — who are too remote to be reached." It was a time for action, as we believed, and prompt action at that.

We then prepared a document, in which we proposed that we would declare the strike off on condition that they would take back the employees. We said, We do not ask you to recognize our organization; we do not ask you to recognize us; we simply say that this matter has become so serious that we ought to be patriotic enough to declare it off, and we are willing to meet you half way, by declaring it off, by advising our men to go back to work, at once, if you will simply take them back. We tried to get Mr. Gompers and a committee representing the American Federation of Labor and affiliated trades to present that document to the general managers. Mr. Gompers and his associates, representing their affiliated orders, had been called here, and were holding a meeting at the Briggs House. Mr. Howard, the Vice-President, and I attended the meeting, and laid the entire matter before them, upon which they went into session. They agreed to present the document, but they desired

that in presenting this document, I, as President, should accompany them to the general managers, which I did not feel inclined to do, because I knew I was very offensive to the general managers, and that no good could possibly come from any action in which I would have a part. I did not decline to do so because I hesitated on account of any reception that might be accorded me, but on account of the matter of expediency purely. We then went and called upon Mayor Hopkins.

Commissioner Wright: You had not completed that statement. What did Gompers do?

Debs: I did not accept their proposition to present this statement. They agreed to do it in consideration of my going with them, as President, but we did not see fit to accept that condition. So we declined the proposition, but we considered it best to go to Mr. Hopkins, who was then the chief magistrate of the city and in a neutral position, where he could with propriety serve in that capacity. We called upon Mr. Hopkins, and he said he would very willingly deliver that proposition to the managers. Mayor Hopkins called upon Alderman McGillen, who had been active as an alderman in introducing a resolution looking to the arbitration of the Pullman difficulties, and in giving other valuable aid to the cause. We invited Alderman McGillen, and they two presented this proposition, and met at the headquarters of the general managers to present it. It was currently reported that the general managers received an intimation that such a proposition would be made. The fact of this proposition being contemplated had been published in the press. It was reported that the general managers had received information that it was to be delivered, and they hastily withdrew. This I do not know of my own knowledge, but I give it to you as it was currently reported.

This I have from Mayor Hopkins himself. Mayor Hopkins and Alderman McGillen called, and met Mr. St. John and afterwards Mr. Egan, chairman of the General Managers' Association. They declared that they would accept no proposition whatever signed by Mr. Debs or his associates; that they did not recognize them, and would have nothing whatever to do with them. Mr. Hopkins then said, You can not afford, in such a critical time as this, to ignore as fair a proposition as this. The time has come when this trouble has got to be settled in one way or another. These men make an abso-

lutely fair proposition. They are willing to go back to work, to resume the traffic, and end all this trouble, if you will simply put them back to work. Then Mr. Egan said, "Why, we are getting along all right, and we will operate our roads without these men." His honor, Mayor Hopkins, said, "If that is the case, I will withdraw the soldiers, if you are operating your roads." To which Mr. Egan at once protested, and said, "Oh, no, we have got to have the soldiers." Then Mr. Hopkins said, "You have got to do something." Then Mr. Egan said, "We will call a meeting of the board of managers and see what they will do, but we do not believe they will do anything." The result of their action was that they sent the document back, not with any answer, but simply saying they would not accept any proposition coming from that source. So the document was practically returned unopened.

Commissioner Wright: Did Mayor Hopkins report to you all you have now stated, on his return?

Debs: Yes. All of this was reported to Mr. Howard and myself and Mr. Sovereign, grand master workman of the Knights of Labor, who happened to be here at that time. The document came back to us with the announcement that the officials absolutely would do nothing looking to a settlement of this trouble; not only that they would not reinstate the men, but they would not consider the proposition. They would consider no proposition, and this confirmed the belief I had which was warranted by what had already occurred, that the general managers did not want to settle this trouble, but wanted to exterminate the American Railway Union, in accordance with the resolution they had adopted at their private meeting, as was currently reported at the time. They wanted no kind of a treaty. They wanted to accept no kind of a proposition or any negotiations looking to a settlement of the troubles. They wanted to crush and annihilate the American Railway Union at whatever cost to the public.

Commissioner Wright: You say that from general information?

Debs: Yes.

Commissioner Wright: Not from any statements made by the Railway Managers' Association to you?

Debs: No, sir; we have tried to get documentary evidence verifying this conclusion, but we have not succeeded. Our telegrams were all public property. They were all produced in the courts, published in all the papers. Every telegram we sent that was of any consequence was given to the public, but we have not been able to get a single telegram that passed between the general managers and Attorney-General Olney. If we could get these telegrams there would not be any question about our being able to produce some testimony that would verify the other testimony here — that which is not already substantiated by proof.

Commissioner Worthington: I think you stated the date when this communication was sent to the General Managers' Association, and when the reply was received; if not, will you please state it now?

Debs: The communication or proposition was delivered about 11:30 in the morning, and we received the answer about 4 that afternoon on the same day; I think that was the 7th day of July.

Commissioner Wright: Will you file a certified copy of that communication or proposition, unless your secretary has already done so?

Debs: It has already been filed by the secretary.

Commissioner Worthington: Was the reply in writing?

Debs: No, sir; they would not make any reply in writing. They sent a messenger to Mayor Hopkins and informed him that these men they would have absolutely nothing to do with; but, on account of his being the mayor, and on account of his being able to afford them certain protection that they were very seriously in need of, out of courtesy to him they would deign to tell him that they would have nothing to do with the proposition; but if it had not been for that they would have ignored him as well as the committee.

Now, I would like to make this point just here if it would be in order. I see by the printed account of testimony taken here that the question was asked by this board if there was any punishment provided by our laws or rules for men who engaged in violence. Would it be proper for me to explain that?

Commissioner Wright: We would be very glad to have you state what you know in that regard.

Debs: I have here a copy of the constitution of the American Railway Union in effect at the time the strike was in progress.

Commissioner Wright: Has this been filed with the commission?

Debs: Yes. I would like to read, beginning at the top of page 11, from the “Declaration of Principles” of the American Railway Union:

Corporations will not be permitted to treat the organization better than the organization will treat them. First. The protection of members in all matters relating to wages and their rights as employees is the principal purpose of the organization. Railway employees are entitled to a voice in fixing wages and in determining the conditions of employment.

Fair wages and proper treatment must be the return for efficient service faithfully performed.

Such a policy insures harmonious relations and satisfactory results. The order, while pledged to conservative methods, will protect the humblest of its members in every right he can justly claim; but while the rights of members will be sacredly guarded, no intemperate demand or unreasonable proposition will be entertained.

Corporations will not be permitted to treat the organization better than the organization will treat them. A high sense of honor must be the animating spirit, and even-handed justice the end sought to be obtained.

Thoroughly organized in every department, with a due regard for the right wherever found, it is confidently believed that all differences may be satisfactorily adjusted, that harmonious relations may be established and maintained; that the service may be incalculably improved, and that the necessity for strike and lockout, boycott and blacklist, alike disastrous to employer and employee, and a perpetual menace to the welfare of the public, will forever disappear.

That is from the “Declaration of Principles” of the American Railway Union.

In connection with that I will read section 45 of the constitution then in force, found on page 29, which provides that—

Any member violating any of the laws or principles of this order may be suspended or expelled, provided he has been found guilty of charges preferred against him, in writing, by a member in good standing, and provided further that the penalty

shall be fixed by a committee of not less than three members, appointed by the President to try the case and approved by a majority vote of the union.

In this "Declaration of Principles" we pledge ourselves to conservative methods, harmonious relations as against violence and disorder. And then we provide a law under which local unions may expel any member who transgresses that rule or violates any of the principles of the organization.

Commissioner Wright: Have you ever had occasion to enforce that rule?

Debs: I do not know as to that, as we do not keep all records of the local unions; they are kept by the local unions themselves. But in our public documents, you will notice, we advise the men everywhere to enforce the law in regard to disorder, themselves to become the informants, and not only expel the offenders from the union, but have them punished by the civil law as well.

Commissioner Kernan: Is there any specific rule in its constitution or in the constitution of the different unions providing that a man shall be expelled who participates in any violence?

Debs: That would probably be found in the bylaws of the local unions themselves. There is no specific provision in the general constitution. The general constitution does not regulate the conduct of the members; that is done by local enactment.

Commissioner Kernan: What you have stated is an inference from the constitution requiring them to follow lawful methods. My question was direct as to whether there was any specific provision either in the bylaws or constitution by which a member should be expelled by the order for participating in any violence?

Debs: No, sir; in the general constitution there is not.

Commissioner Kernan: Don't you think that ought to be a provision?

Debs: Yes; I am willing to admit that should be.

Commissioner Kernan: Knowing the liability of your members, or some of them, to lose their self-control in these times of excitement, and to be more or less concerned with some violence, do you not

consider that there ought to be on the part of the union itself, some system of detecting violence, and of watching for it on the part of members?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Kernan: Now, is there anything of that kind that has been in practical operation in the union or in any of the local unions so far as you know?

Debs: No, sir; for two reasons I think — well, one main reason is that we are a new organization, a mere infant, and we have to learn this by experience.

Commissioner Kernan: The necessity for some provision, such as I have suggested, has been largely suggested by the recent occurrences in Chicago, has it not?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Kernan: And at the time of the formation of the union it had not been demonstrated that there was such necessity as now exists for some such measures?

Debs: Yes, sir. Let me further say that, at the time this constitution was drawn, we had no actual experience such as we have had during the late trouble; and as a matter of course we could not incorporate a law covering every possible offense, such as for murder, or the 10,000 other crimes against society. We could not make a specific law and enactment for each case, so we did it in this general way, by saying that if any member violated any of the laws or principles of the order, if any man conducted himself in a way unbecoming an American citizen or employee, he shall be expelled from the organization. As a matter of course we depended upon amending the constitution from time to time as might be suggested by experience and the demonstrated necessity for it.

Commissioner Wright: Your policy was to enact a broad, organic law to start with?

Debs: Yes, sir; I am satisfied if we had had such experience before this trouble occurred as we have had since a specific provision would have been made in regard to violence, although I must admit, in connection with this statement, that so far as the members of the American Railway Union are concerned there was no necessity for

it, because our members did not participate in any riot, disorder, or trouble. They uniformly conducted themselves like men.

Commissioner Kernan: That is the extent of your observation?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Kernan: You would hardly tell us that you saw all of them at all times, so you could scarcely testify to that?

Debs: No, sir; but it seems to me it is proved positively, for of all the men that have been arrested and tried there are none members of the American Railway Union; that is, none against whom there are well-defined charges of riot and disorder. They have been arrested for various alleged offenses, but not one ever committed or instigated any act of violence.

Commissioner Kernan: What, if anything, did you do to ascertain whether your men were concerned in violence, and have them report it to you?

Debs: We did that through our committees; our committees called at headquarters every morning, and the advice was renewed for them to guard the company's property, if they went near it at all, and to apprehend anyone that might be caught destroying property. That instruction was given again and again to the several committees that called at headquarters. We knew that if there was trouble, if there was disorder and riot, we would lose, because we knew enough by experience in the past that we had everything to lose by riot and nothing to gain. We said the man who incites riot, or who engages in disorder is our enemy, and we have got to be the first to apprehend and bring him to justice; so we called upon our men and advised them, urged them to do everything in their power to maintain order, because we felt and knew if there was perfect order there would be no pretext upon which they could call out the soldiers, or appeal for the intervention of the court, and we would win without a question of a doubt; that it was only by disorder that we could possibly lose, and that disorder was not a part of the policy of the American Railway Union any more than if there was a Fourth of July celebration here tomorrow and some drunken riot should occur and somebody got killed, no more than that would be a reflection upon the patriotic participants in that celebration.

The American Railway Union stands by its suffering members, as every fair-minded man will admit is commendable. They knew that public sympathy was with them up to that point, and they knew how likely it was that something might be done by the rabble to destroy that sympathy. I admit that on account of the natural excitement that prevailed there was turbulence and disorder, and perhaps riots, although never to the extent that was represented by the press. No one sought harder or with more persistency to curb it and stop it than did the officers of the American Railway Union. I state that as a positive fact, susceptible of overwhelming proof.

Commissioner Wright: Did the officers of the American Railway Union protest against the employment of military forces to prevent rioting and violence?

Debs: They protested against the introduction of Federal troops before the local and state authorities had been appealed to. Mayor Hopkins himself admitted, and it is a matter of record, that there was nothing here warranting the introduction of Federal troops. It was that that aroused, aggravated, and angered the men and caused the trouble that subsequently ensued.

Commissioner Wright: But you did not protest against the employment of local troops?

Debs: No, sir; not in the least.

Commissioner Worthington: In that connection, Mr. Debs, I would like to ask you whether, so far as you know, the first acts of violence or destruction of property occurred before or after Federal troops were brought here?

Debs: My best recollection is they occurred after the Federal troops were brought here. The real serious trouble that occurred, occurred afterwards. There might have been some minor disturbances before, but nothing that would not have occurred in the ordinary course of affairs.

Commissioner Worthington: How long after the Federal troops were brought here was it before the State troops were ordered?

Debs: I am not certain, but very shortly after the Federal troops were brought here the State troops were ordered out. The police force had already been enlarged. I do not know whether it would be

proper to say it, because the police will say it for themselves, but they reported to me in person, a great many of them, that the men were perfectly law abiding, that they had not the slightest trouble with them.

Commissioner Wright: What action did your union take during the trouble here concerning the employment of men not members of your union?

Debs: We treated them as if they were members, in so far as we were able to control them; assured them we would give them the same degree of protection that we gave our own members in the event of our succeeding, and what we expected to do if we succeeded was simply to restore the men to their positions. We assured these non-union members that we would protect them, so far as restoring them to situations, the same as we did our own members. But, of course, we had no control over them. We could not expel them or punish them.

Commissioner Wright: Did you attempt to intimidate them to prevent them from working?

Debs: No, sir.

Commissioner Wright: Is that the policy of your union to do so?

Debs: No, sir; never.

Commissioner Wright: Is it the policy of the union to avoid that?

Debs: Yes; it is the express policy of the union, as has been expressly stated in one document I issued, a copy of which has been filed with the board, in which I declared, as President of the union, that it was the policy of the organization that there should be no intimidation. That our men had a right to quit, and there their right absolutely ceased. The other men had a right to take their places, and they had no right to interfere, and if they did they must expect to be punished, both by the union and the civil authority.

Commissioner Wright: Mr. Debs, has the action of the 21st of June ever been officially annulled?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Wright: When?

Debs: A convention of delegates was called on the 2nd of August, representing unions in the strike territory. The purpose of that meeting was to have the delegates thoroughly understand the situation. There was no longer any confidence in telegraphic reports, or even in letters, because it is alleged that a great many letters that were written — whether the charge was properly made or not, I do not know — but it was the belief among many of our members, and it was declared by them, they had written letters that never reached their destination; that they could not rely upon the telegraph. We knew all our telegrams were given to the authorities and general managers, and so the convention was called for the 2nd of August, and that was in session two days. We heard reports from each delegation in regard to the trouble in his section, and then it was decided inasmuch as the strike had been inaugurated by a vote of delegates, predicated upon the vote of the members themselves, that the strike could only be declared off in the same way. It was then agreed that each system should be authorized to declare the strike off by a majority vote of that system. We then adjourned and the delegates returned to their respective homes and held a meeting.

In almost all places except certain points on the Santa Fe system the strike has been declared off, annulling this action of the 21st day of June.

Commissioner Wright: What is the policy of your union relative to the older brotherhoods and your relations to them? Debs: The relations are not, from an official standpoint, friendly, unfortunately. I have been and am now connected with one of the old organizations, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, which I joined the 27th of February, 1875. I became Grand Secretary of that organization and editor of their magazine on the 18th day of July, 1880, and I still edit their magazine. In the 14 years I have served in that organization I never had a candidate nominated against me, or a vote cast against me. In September 1892, I was unanimously reelected and I resigned; but by the unanimous voice of the delegates they refused to accept my resignation. I then got up in my place and stated I was no longer in harmony with their methods, with their purposes.

Commissioner Kernan: Did you state why?

Debs: I said the railroad companies, and in order to show I was not animated by any selfish consideration, the convention offered me,

by a unanimous vote, the right to fix my own salary. They voted me, by the unanimous voice of the delegates, \$2,000 to go to Europe on a vacation, and that is lying in the treasury yet, as I have never touched it and never intend to. They offered me anything within their gift to remain a member of their organization, and I said I could not consistently remain an officer of that organization, for the reason I was not in harmony with their methods and purposes, under the existing conditions, and those conditions were that the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen embrace both engineers and firemen. That organization has a membership of about 26,000 members, and there are about 12,000 engineers in that number. A man joins the organization as a fireman; in the course of time he becomes an engineer. By his association among the firemen he feels a natural friendliness for his early associations. Some others, promptly upon becoming engineers, join the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, and so there is a spirit of rivalry between those two organizations, on account of the engineers being divided, part of the order being locomotive firemen and part of them locomotive engineers. That has resulted to the detriment of those two organizations on a number of roads I could cite, where the firemen demanded a certain schedule and the engineers insisted they did not want that, and it would reach a point where they would threaten to take each other's places.

I knew we could never develop any strength or power with such a condition of affairs as that, and I saw no hopes for a better condition. The same condition precisely exists between the Order of Railway Conductors and the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen. The trainmen do everything they can to retain conductors in their own ranks and keep them from going into the conductors' organization, and that results in friction between the Order of Railway Conductors and Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen; that same friction existed between the Brotherhood of Trainmen and the Switchmen's Mutual Aid Association. On the Chicago and Northwestern road in May 1892, the Brotherhood of Trainmen, through their officials, went into partnership, so to speak, with the officials of the Northwestern road, and they discharged every switchman, about 400 in number, from their service so as to destroy the Switchmen's Mutual Aid Association, and the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen filled their places. That work was going on all over the country. The members of one organization conspiring against

the members of another organization, simply because of their being members of rival organizations.

Conditions were becoming worse every day. I was the first to speak in favor of the project of federation. Immediately after the Burlington strike, in 1880, I said, "We have been defeated because we are not strong enough; I have always believed we ought to unify the entire service; we are without the power the officials exhibit; when we so unify we can strike," and we succeeded in organizing such a federation, composed of representatives of these various organizations, with the exception of the engineers and the Order of Railway Conductors, when the trainmen conspired with the Northwestern officials to displace the switchmen because they belonged to a rival organization. I then at once took my stand with the switchmen and it resulted in disrupting the federation. At the next associated convention held at Cincinnati, I stated my reasons for refusing to remain in the locomotive brotherhood. I said, "It is not a question of salary, but a question of conviction." I am in this position; this class organization is simply perpetuating what I conceive to be a mistake, as Professor Ely said the other day, the strict trade organizations have served their purpose, the conditions have changed; there used to be hundreds of small railroads in operation, but they have been merged with and absorbed by the great corporations; there has been a consolidation of the interests of corporation, whereas the employees, on the other hand, have been dividing their forces in rival organizations.

I said, "I want to entirely give up my official connection with this organization in order that I may be in a position to do what little I can towards unifying all the railroad employees and harmonizing them for their mutual good. I have no feeling against the railway brotherhoods; I have no cause to have any. I founded the Brotherhood of Railroad Brakemen, now the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen; organized the first union, paid its first expenses, and did much toward making it a national organization. I did very much to make the Switchmen's Mutual Aid Association a national organization, as the records will show. I have no personal feeling against these different organizations, but simply believe they have served their purposes and are no longer adapted to the conditions now existing. While the railroad corporations have been consolidating their interests, getting closer together, we have been getting further and further apart and have been so busily engaged in making war

upon each other that we have lost sight of the real purpose of consolidation, and we will all in time become victims of the corporation; they can reduce wages or take any advantage they desire and we have to submit." It was because I could not get consolidated action

Commissioner Wright: Your policy, then, is to consolidate, absorb, all railroad interests so far as employees are concerned?

Debs: Not to consolidate, the purpose is unification; we declare that we do not insist it shall come through the American Railway Union; we declare we are willing to resign our official positions at once.

Commissioner Wright: That is, you will abandon your association for the sake of a unified one that will comprehend them all?

Debs: Yes; we will resign our positions. The railroad employees in this country are ready to unify now and work together, instead of being used to work against each other, but the hostility of the leaders of these various organizations makes unification impossible. Now, we have said, and say now, we will resign our official positions at once, sever forever our relations with labor organizations if other leaders will do the same, and let these employees come together and select their own leaders.

Commissioner Wright: Have you taken the initiative steps toward such an organization yourself?

Debs: Within the next three days we are going to make a proposition positive, absolute, and official to them direct.

Commissioner Worthington: I will ask you if the idea of a unification of all railway employees, or the strength of the position of the American Railway Union, as helping a unification of all these different organizations, had anything to do with this strike? Was it one of the motives of the strike?

Debs: No, sir; it was not.

Commissioner Worthington: I have heard it so charged—

Debs: No, sir; it was not.

Commissioner Wright: Come back to the conference at the Briggs House and relate briefly how that originated, at whose instigation, etc.?

Debs: During the progress of the strike we were in receipt almost daily of assurances, written and oral, from the members of other trades organizations that they were in hearty sympathy with the American Railway Union in its struggles. Several of them, notably Thomas I. Kidd, general secretary of the Machine Woodworkers, proposed that they call a meeting of the representatives of the various trades unions for the purpose of devising ways and means to aid us in our struggles.

This meeting was not called at our suggestion or at our solicitation, but was a voluntary act on the part of sympathizing trades unionist representatives. A preliminary meeting was held and the matter of coming to the aid of the American Railway Union was discussed, and then it was agreed to set a meeting for the following Sunday — the date of this meeting I have forgotten, but it was on the day President Cleveland issued his first proclamation — and to invite the representatives of all other organizations to attend that meeting to see what could be done. The officials of the American Railway Union attended that meeting by invitation, but took no part in the meeting except to give their views. I was called upon as the President of the railway union by the meeting to state my views as to what should be done. I said, in substance: "Gentlemen, it would be presumptuous for me to offer this body any advice; you are all representative labor men; you have all had experience in such troubles as this; you understand your relations to the American Railway Union; you understand your duty, if you have a duty to yourself, to your constituents, and the cause you represent; do what you believe to be your duty. I have no advice to offer." The tenor of the remarks made by my colleagues was the same. We neither encouraged nor discouraged them from taking part in the trouble.

Previous to this, however, I had conceived the idea of inviting to a conference all of the officials of all the labor organizations in the country. I invited the chief officers of each of the railway brotherhoods, Mr. Arthur of the engineers, Mr. Sargent of the firemen, Mr. Wilkinson of the trainmen, Mr. Barrett of the switchmen, Mr. Powell of the telegraphers, Mr. Clark of the conductors, Mr. Gompers of the American Federation of Labor, Mr. Sovereign of the Knights of Labor, and others. All of them believed that it would

be well to have a conference of labor representatives. The invitation was ignored by all of the railway brotherhoods, except in the case of Mr. Sargent, who sent as his representative the Grand Secretary and Treasurer and the Vice Grand Master. Mr. Sovereign, of the Knights of Labor, came of his own accord. Mr. Clark, of the conductors' organization, said he had business in Chicago and would probably be here; if so, he would call, but he never called. Mr. Arthur, Mr. Wilkinson, and the rest ignored the request to meet in conference. Mr. Gompers wired, in substance, that he was with us in sympathy, but he could not possibly come to Chicago at that time. At the meeting held on Sunday evening, which was composed very largely of representatives of organizations affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, of which Mr. Gompers was the head, the representatives passed a resolution not only inviting Mr. Gompers to come to the city of Chicago, but insisting upon his coming — those who were members of his own organization.

Mr. Gompers answered he would come as requested, and he came, together with all the chief officers of all the organizations affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. Mr. Gompers called on me in person the afternoon that he arrived, and invited Mr. Howard, our Vice-President, and myself to appear before their meeting that evening. We attended that meeting and found, I think, twenty-eight representatives there of the various trades unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, some not affiliated with that organization. Upon our entering the hall I was introduced by Mr. Gompers and asked to make a statement to the meeting of all the causes that led up to this strike, and I did so as briefly as I could. At the close of my statement a number of questions were asked by Mr. Gompers and others, which I answered; and at the close of the examination Mr. Howard and myself withdrew from the conference, they remaining in session in secret conference, as I am informed, until the next morning. What took place at that conference I do not know of my own knowledge. I only know from what Mr. Gompers said to me in a personal interview the next day. Does the commission wish to hear that?

Commissioner Wright: Not now.

Debs: Is there anything in connection with the Briggs House meeting the commission would like to know?

Commissioner Wright: You stated the result of it in the early part of your testimony.

Debs: Yes; in my statement to the commission I said that I had stated at the Sunday evening meeting of the affiliated trades that we had no request to make or any advice to offer; that we had simply come there as fellow unionists engaged in a common cause.

Commissioner Wright: State what Mr. Gompers told you if you desire.

Debs: I was going to make this statement. I had said to the conference, "We have no request to make or advice to offer; do what you believe you should do under the circumstances." Then Mr. Gompers asked me what I would do if I were in his place. I said, "Now, understand, I am speaking for no one but myself, but I would make an injury to one in the cause of labor the concern of all. My theory has always been and is now that labor ought to stand by labor, and if I were you, in your place and you in mine, I would muster all the forces of labor in a peaceable effort to secure a satisfactory adjustment of our grievances, even if we had to involve all the industrial industries of the country."

The next day Mr. Gompers called on me in person, accompanied by P. J. McGuire, Vice-President of the American Federation of Labor, and we had a personal interview lasting 30 or 35 minutes, and Mr. Gompers said the conference was thoroughly in accord with us; that there was no opposition whatever, except on the part of two representatives of the old brotherhoods who were there, and so far as I was concerned they spoke of me in the highest terms, but they were opposed to the American Railway Union, believing it was designed to absorb their organization, but that the conference was wholly in sympathy with the American Railway Union, believing it was right in its struggles, but had reached the conclusion, after long and serious deliberations, that it was not advisable at this time to take an active part in the trouble, informing me, however, they had voted \$500 as a contribution to our legal-defense fund, and were going to open subscriptions and receive money to provide a legal defense for us; that each and every member felt we were right in this contest; that we ought to be supported; that we ought to win, but did not believe that it was advisable for them to involve themselves in the trouble at that time. Mr. Gompers' assurances to me were in the highest degree assuring so far as our methods, our policy, our purposes, and our attitude were concerned, and he assured

us the full measure of sympathy and support that his organization could give.

Commissioner Wright: Has the American Railway Union affiliated with the American Federation of Labor?

Debs: No, sir.

Commissioner Wright: But the other older brotherhoods have, have they not?

Debs: No, sir; none of them are affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, nor did they meet in this convention with them, except they saw an opportunity to stab the American Railway Union. They are not affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, nor can they be under their present rules.

Commissioner Wright: Can the American Railway Union?

Debs: Yes, sir; the American Railway Union is free to act upon a majority of its members in any way that may seem proper.

Commissioner Wright: Has the American Railway Union any alliance with the Knights of Labor for offensive or defensive purposes?

Debs: Yes, sir; an alliance which may, perhaps, be properly defined as a nominal rather than as a definite, positive, absolute alliance.

Commissioner Wright: I have more particular reference to the late trouble.

Debs: Let me say that when our convention met in June, Mr. Sovereign, general master workman of Knights of Labor, met with us by invitation; he had just left the meeting of the executive board of the Knights of Labor, who had charge of the affairs of that organization, and they had passed a resolution expressing a desire for a closer affiliation with the American Railway Union; that document was accepted by the American Railway Union and by unanimous vote it was agreed by the delegates that we affiliate in all things with the Knights where mutual union became necessary.

Commissioner Wright: The overture came from the Knights of Labor?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Wright: As I understand it, the American Railway Union and Knights of Labor have for their fundamental principle a like basis?

Debs: Yes.

Commissioner Wright: As against what we understand as a trades union?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Wright: Have you any further statements to make with reference to the narrative of events occurring here in Chicago during the recent troubles? I ask that before going on to another subject.

Debs: Yes, sir: I would like to say something with reference to the treatment of this matter by the press. I want to say that from the very beginning of this trouble the American Railway Union in its purposes and all its acts has been very grossly misrepresented by some of the leading newspapers of the city of Chicago. Interviews were printed which were not had at all. I want to relate one instance that came under my personal observation which was published here at the time, but may not have been noticed, to show to what extent we were made the victims of a capitalistic press. I think it is a matter the people ought to understand. We have had no way of contradicting falsehoods that have been told about us in the way of counteracting the vicious impression created by false reports.

At the time of the Briggs House meeting a reporter on the *Chicago Tribune* named Legwig came to me, in the presence of two witnesses, and said, "I have just been discharged." I said, "What for?" He said, "They had me before the grand jury and wanted me to swear to an interview I had with you, and because I would not commit perjury they discharged me." He then showed me an interview — I had had an interview with him, but it was so perverted and distorted in the paper that I did not recognize it as the same interview. He and several other reporters came to me in confidence, and two other member sin confidence, and asked us not to have any feeling against them, because after the copy passed from their hands it went into the hopper and came out in a way that made us say things that never were said, and which they were not at all responsible for. We were made to say the most ridiculous and vicious things imaginable that went through the Associated Press, and then

the press of the country generally made editorial attacks upon us predicated upon those alleged interviews. The press of Chicago had hired falsifiers, and I can prove it, men to manufacture reports calculated to bring us into bad repute in this community and throughout the country.

Commissioner Wright: Was this confined to papers representing the side of the railroad, or to both sides of the controversy?

Debs: I think in the main they were inclined to papers representing the railroads. There were other papers that were fair, such papers as the *Chicago News* and the *Chicago Record*; they did not favor either side, they were absolutely impartial, they told the truth. Interviews we had with reporters on those papers were correctly reported. The *Chicago Dispatch*, the *Chicago Mail*, the *Chicago Times*, espoused the cause of the strikers and took our side of the case. I am speaking of such papers as the *Herald*, *Inter Ocean*, *Tribune*, *Journal*, and *Post*. Now, for instance, when I left here to go home it was reported and it went over the Associated Press wires, and I found over 300 letters at my home in Terre Haute in regard to it, that I left here in a Pullman car and waved my adieus from a Pullman car. Then all the press in the country said, "When will you fellows stop following that humbug who appeals to the public not to patronize Pullman cars and then rides away in one himself." Now I did not do that. I have not set foot on a Pullman car since the 11th day of May, 1894. The press all over the country published that I was riding about in Pullman cars. What was the purpose? It was to arouse the prejudice of the public against me because I happened to stand for labor, to destroy the confidence of labor in me, to set me up as a huge fraud and humbug. Then they published that when the train that I was in arrived at Danville an angry railroad striker accused me of being responsible for the loss of his job and struck me. There was not a word of truth in that statement. These are two instances of thousands of statements published all over this country, for no other reason except to prejudice the minds of the public against the officers of the American Railway Union.

Commissioner Wright: Can you name the dates of the papers containing interviews with you falsely reported?

Debs: I can go to the files and find many interviews in which I am grossly misquoted. I want to say there is an editorial — which I can

easily find by reference to the files of the *Chicago Inter Ocean* — a column in length, or about that, in relation to my connection with the strike on the Great Northern road, and I can prove to you by testimony that there is not one word of truth in that editorial, but that it is the most vicious and malignant attack that can possibly be conceived of. It starts out with a proposition that I ordered the strike on the Great Northern road, when I was not within 600 miles of there, and knew nothing at all about it, and follows it up by saying I refused to arbitrate, when, in fact, we settled by arbitration. It consisted of vicious falsehoods, written for no other purpose than to arouse the people of Chicago to a belief that we were outlaws, anarchists, humbugs, and frauds, and the whole populace ought to arise against us.

Commissioner Wright: That is your theory of the basis of the editorial?

Debs: I can not attach any other purpose to such an editorial as that, that belies all history, that stands as a lying contradiction to every fact. I can go over the files and make affidavit to numerous interviews about me that are unqualifiedly false, and the same is true of all my colleagues. Nobody knows it is true better than the newspapers themselves, and the vicious press is largely responsible for all this trouble and uproar, and if there had been a revolution in Chicago it would have been chargeable more directly to the press of Chicago than any other force. Mayor Hopkins said that when Mayor Pingree, of Detroit, came here his first exclamation was, "I am amazed; from the reports which come out of here I expected to see half of Chicago in flames and the other half in possession of a mad mob."

Commissioner Wright: Did you hear this said?

Debs: Mayor Hopkins told me this in person. I think it due to the people to know that the press of Chicago persistently misrepresented the facts, perverted the testimony, and put us in an attitude to invite and receive not only the rebuke and criticism but the condemnation of a large number of excellent fair people who were misled by such reports. They persisted in the statement that we were lawbreakers and advocated violence. Everything we said was distorted, and we were made to say exactly the opposite of what we intended to say, and then repeatedly they intimated we ought to be mobbed, and that we were not mobbed and lawlessly put to death

is not the fault of the Chicago press. They, on more than one occasion, charged that I created more trouble than my rascally neck was worth, and intimating that somebody ought to break it. Over and over again they charged me with being "Debs, the murderer." Methods that would disgrace the *Police Gazette* were resorted to by what is recognized as the reputable press of the city of Chicago, and in this connection I stand prepared to prove every statement I make. It was done solely for the purpose of manufacturing a sentiment against this strike and against the men connected with it. I am impressed with the conviction that if the people of America had understood the truth, if the press had given them the truth and the facts, the people of this country would have been overwhelmingly with us from beginning to end. I feel that this statement should be made injustice to the American Railway Union.

Commissioner Wright: You are reported to have said in a speech at Terre Haute something about the inhuman cruelties at Pullman — did you use those words? If so, what did you mean by them?

Debs: No, sir; I did not. I should think that would be rather a contradiction, a cruelty is hardly human; I never used that expression; I spoke of the cruelty but said nothing about inhuman cruelty. I spoke about the cruelty with which the employees at Pullman were treated, and I regarded it as cruel to have Miss Jennie Curtis — I had the testimony from her own lips — after her father had worked fifteen years for the Pullman company and died in debt to the company, that scarcely was he buried when she received a letter notifying her that if she continued in the service of the Pullman Company she would have to obligate herself to pay the arrearages due from her father at his death. I regard that as cruel without a redeeming feature.

Commissioner Worthington: One other question bearing on the incident of the strike, if I comprehend your statement as to the extent of the strike. It was only to the non-handling of Pullman cars?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Worthington: Suppose that on one of the roads that were using Pullman cars a train was made up that did not have a Pullman car on it, did it extend to not working on that train?

Debs: No, sir; the trouble did not extend to that, but a little statement is necessary on that point. Where they were not hauling Pullman cars it was not intended to inaugurate the strike. There was a definite understanding on that point, but at cities, for instance, like St. Louis, Indianapolis, and other large points, the switching is done by associations; the switching facilities are so arranged that they form a kind of a combination and their relations are so intimately interwoven that when you involve one company you necessarily involve all the rest. At Indianapolis the switchmen struck, including those upon roads where Pullman cars were not handled, but they were involved because they worked in the same yard, used the same track, and it was almost impossible to avoid it; then when it came to putting new men in the Switchmen's places the men said they would not work, which involved other roads where Pullman cars were not hauled. One notable instance of that was the Big Four system, where no cars were involved. I do not believe that road would have been involved in the strike at all if it had not been for the fact they had reduced the wages of their employees 10 percent and there was universal dissatisfaction on that system on that account. There was no intention of involving any company that did not haul Pullman cars.

Commissioner Worthington: For interference with any train that did not have Pullman cars attached?

Debs: Yes; that is right. We shall prove on our hearing in court that we agreed to haul mails upon certain roads, agreed to supply men to haul the mails, but that the company refused their services unless the Pullman cars were attached. There are many cases where the railroad companies absolutely refused to haul the mails and were responsible for the delay of the mails because they had formed an alliance with the Pullman company and would not haul the mails or anything else unless the Pullman cars were attached. They alleged they had a contract with the Pullman company that made it obligatory upon them to haul those cars, but they published everything else and never published those contracts.

Commissioner Wright: It has been said in evidence that the General Managers' Association was responsible for the strike or boycott ordered June 21, instead of the American Railway Union. What are your views upon that point?

Debs: I would not like to go so far as to confirm that statement; that is not my view of it. My view of it is this, the American Railway Union declared the strike and is responsible for it to the extent of declaring a strike, but it was done under provocation which ought to militate against any responsibility that might attach to them for doing so. The situation was aggravated by the reductions that had taken place.

Commissioner Wright: I am not referring to that; you have testified to that; but because the General Managers' Association did not comply with or obey the action of your convention of the 21st of June, they thereby became responsible for the boycott or strike, you think?

Debs: No, I would not take that view of it; I do not think that I ought to say that. They were given five days' time to cut off the Pullman cars and if they did not do so we would refuse to handle the trains; that was really a declaration of a purpose to cut off cars. They took the position that their trains had to run intact, or not at all. That was practically their position; so I Don't believe that view of charging them with being responsible for it would be right, except in a pacific way, but not in a direct, positive way.

Commissioner Wright: The union has made no declaration on that point?

Debs: No, sir.

Commissioner Wright: Then, whatever you say is your individual view?

Debs: The union has not made any declaration on that point. I have taken this view: We organized for the purpose of resisting the reduction of wages; that was a primary purpose of all these organizations; for the purpose of maintaining wages; that is the central, pivotal purpose of all of them, they would not hold together were it not for that. The General Managers' Association was instituted for the declared purpose of cooperating together in reducing wages. Now, then, we take the view that if they have a right to combine to reduce wages we have a right to combine to resist the reduction. If a strike ensues and the mail is stopped in violation of the laws of the country that they are as much responsible as we are. If they make a reduction that results in a strike they are at least as culpable as are the employees who strike to resist the reduction. Are there any

questions you would like to ask me? I Don't know of anything more in connection with the trouble unless there is information of a special character you desire. I was asked to state the causes as briefly as I could that led up to the strike and the more salient features of the strike. I think I have done that.

Commissioner Worthington: You believe generally in the enforcement of law?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Worthington: And in the enforcement of proper authority supported by sufficient force to make the law operative?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Worthington: It is no part of the object of the American Railway Union in any way to unlawfully resist the authorities, either State, municipal, or Federal?

Debs: No, sir.

Commissioner Worthington: You have given considerable thought to this labor question and the best means of preventing Strikes or settling difficulties?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Worthington: State in a general way what you think is the best to be done in order to avoid strikes and settle the differences that occur between employees and employers, especially where quasi-public corporations are employers.

Debs: Well, there are two ways. One way, of course, of averting a strike is by submitting, by adopting the policy of the old railway brotherhoods that are now existing. Their policy is a submissive one and has been for some time. Nowadays, under their regime, when a railroad manager reduces wages — for instance, he proposes a 20 percent reduction when he only intends a 10 percent reduction, and then compromises on a 10 percent reduction — and submitting in that way averts the strike.

As long as the brotherhood or organizations are non-resisting — that is to say, as long as they submit to whatever may be imposed upon them in the way of reduction — as a matter of course, there will be no strike, but the tendency of wages will be down con-

stantly. That is the mystery of all these organizations. They have gradually succeeded in getting certain schedules under conditions, however, that no longer exist, but whatever they secured in the line of concessions was secured by the power of organized effort. There have been some strikes which have always and everywhere been disastrous to the organizations that participated in them. They have lost thousands of members; men have lost their places, and they have been taxed millions of dollars to keep up strike machinery that never did protect the members. It was this that brought us to the conclusion that if we could unify all the railroad men of the country, or practically do it, we would represent a power that, prudently directed, would be a means of averting strikes. We said, even if the railroad companies could defeat us it would be such an expense and such a disastrous undertaking for them that if we were organized upon that basis they would agree to settle troubles amicably rather than allow us to go on a strike. That was the hope. If that had not been the hope and belief of the founders of the American Railway Union that institution would never have been born. We find under the present condition that even if we should be able to unify all of the railroad men of the country it would be impossible to win a strike, because, in the first place, all of the organized orders of society are against the strike.

All of the powers of government are against a strike. For instance, as long as a strike does not inconvenience anybody and bears no indications of succeeding no one cares anything about it, and as a general proposition they just dwindle out to nothing, and except the men who lose their places nobody knows or cares anything about it; but when a strike causes public inconvenience — and a railroad strike inevitably does that — as soon as a strike reaches that point where it gives evidence of being successful other forces are brought into operation that are, and properly so, impregnable. Since the trouble on the Ann Arbor road — that was the starting point — where Judge Ricks and Judge Taft rendered the first decision in this new field of jurisprudence, from that time until this, whenever there has been a strike, as soon as the point is reached where inconvenience is being caused then the courts are appealed to and injunctions are served that practically paralyze the organization. Under the existing conditions, if all the railroad men in the country were organized within one brotherhood and acted together it would be impossible for them to succeed.

Commissioner Wright: Do you believe it to be justifiable for a great labor organization or any other organization to discommode the public for the sake of carrying a specific point?

Debs: Yes, sir; I believe, with Admiral Porter, that a pin is worth fighting for if a principle is involved.

Commissioner Wright: You mean that it is justifiable to discommode the traffic of the general public for a local issue?

Debs: I should say, Mr. Chairman, that depends upon the local issue — well, that depends upon circumstances. In the case we are now discussing there is a local issue and a national issue — a joint issue — and the wages, comforts, homes, and firesides of thousands of men are involved, which makes it a very decided issue, of far-reaching effect and consequences. As a general proposition, I am opposed to these strikes and always have been, and in twenty years of writing I can show I always tried to devise some way and means of overcoming a strike — never have been in favor of a strike; but there are times when a strike, in my judgment, is justifiable, no matter what the consequences may be. I believe a strike justifiable when necessary to resist degrading or enslaving conditions, no matter who is involved or what the consequences may be. It seems to me if it were not for that resistance to degrading conditions, the tendency of our whole civilization would be downward; after awhile we would reach the point where there would be no resistance, and slavery would ensue.

Commissioner Kernan: What is your conclusion as to the best way of avoiding strikes, either by legislation or otherwise?

Debs: I was going to make this point first. If railroad corporations and other corporations and employers of labor generally had treated their employees fairly and justly I doubt if there would today be a labor organization in existence. I think the conclusion is inevitable that every labor organization is traceable to the injustice, the oppression, the tyranny of the employing classes. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers was founded in 1863, on the Michigan Central road, because of the imposition practiced on the engineers. They were not even allowed to meet. They met in secret, a few of them, and drew the curtain, because if it had been known they met for any such purpose they would have been discharged; they were

working for small wages; they had no right to voice a complaint. They were treated as so many serfs, I might say. I had a statement directly from the lips of W.D. Robinson, the founder of that organization. The brotherhood of engineers was born on account of the tyranny of the Michigan Central road, and the same, I think, is true of all other organizations. Now, then, here are the organizations, combining for the purpose of resisting certain treatment, certain reductions. Here are the railroad corporations that propose to maintain a certain discipline or certain rules and methods, and, in my judgment, it will be absolutely impossible with the aid of any legislation to reconcile railroad employers and railroad employees in a way to prevent strikes. It will not be possible as long as our human nature is as it is.

On the one hand you find the managers, who are themselves but employees, and who are there to carry out the orders of the powers above them. When an order comes to reduce wages they are not consulted, I apprehend, but they receive the order and execute it. I am satisfied there are many general managers who very reluctantly enforce reductions, who are men and feel that kindly feeling for their employees, yet they are compelled to execute an order that arouses opposition of the service. I admit there are times when reductions are justifiable; but there have been so many reductions made that are not that the railroad employees have become suspicious; they lack confidence, and when a reduction is made they have a doubt in their minds whether a reduction is right, or whether they should accept it.

Just before this trouble I had a conversation with the President of one of the roads, and he said to me: "Now is the time when you can make yourself, in the estimation of the railroad employers, and the railroad employees as well." I said, "In what way?" He said, "You have a certain influence with railroad employees. I advise you to go before them and advise them to voluntarily take a reduction; in fact, to ask for it in view of the hard times. Advise them to come to the front of their own accord; then you put the company under obligation to restore those reduced wages as soon as business revives." I said, "That is a very nice proposition. Only a few months ago your road was doing an overwhelming business, and within my own knowledge your road has been making a great deal of money. Did it ever occur to you in your prosperous times to go to your employees and say: 'Here, men, we are making a good deal of

money; we believe you ought to share our prosperity with us and we are going to increase your wages on and after the 1st of June 5 percent.' Did you ever do that? Do you know of any manager that ever did that?" He said he could not recall any case of that kind. I said, "Neither can I." I said, "In your prosperous times it never occurred to you to voluntarily give to your employees what they were entitled to, and you have no right to expect that they will voluntarily come to you and ask to have their wages reduced. If you had set an example in that way and inspired their confidence and a necessary reduction was made they would bear it like men, because you had treated them fairly when prosperous. But the railroad companies never did that; they only make concessions when compelled to, and that is a fact that is easily proved."

All of the old brotherhoods have their schedules to show it required weeks of pleading and protests, and the expenditure of thousands of dollars, to secure the schedule they now have. There is not that mutual confidence between the railroad managers and railroad employees there should be to insure harmonious relations. The conditions since the great strike, if possible, are worse than they were before. The usual persecution will now be visited upon those who participated in the strike. They will be told there is no employment for them; they will apply for work elsewhere and will be told there is no work for them. That, of course, is not calculated to produce pleasant feelings on the part of the employee. If the present conditions continue it is only a question of time until there will be other strikes. There are some people, and many good people, who felicitate themselves upon the fact that this strike has been suppressed and general quiet has been restored, but they are very much mistaken; they have simply screwed down the safety valve; the men have submitted because they were compelled to, but they are no more satisfied than they were at the time the strike was inaugurated. A good many of them are out of work and will find it very hard, I have no doubt, to find other employment. But they will pay all the penalty by enforced idleness; they will find work after awhile; some of them under other names will get back to work again, but they will not be content by any means.

In the meantime the managers will do everything they can to squelch the American Railway Union, but it will be impossible; they might as well try to stop Niagara with a feather as to crush the spirit of organization in this country. It can not be done. It may not

come up in the form of the American Railway Union, but this spirit of resistance to wrong is there, it is growing stronger constantly, and it finds its outlet in labor disturbances, in strikes of various kinds. Even if the men know in advance that they are going to meet with defeat they are so impressed with a sense of wrong under which they are suffering that they strike and take the penalty. You ask what I would do, or what my ideas are about what should be done to avert strikes. To avert railroad strikes I would propose this: "That Government ownership of railroads is decidedly better for the people than railroad ownership of Government. [*Applause.*] I have reached that point in my investigation of these questions and I believe it is only a question of time when the people must, in their own interest, own the railroads of the country. I believe that if the people owned and operated the railroads in the interest of the people instead of for private gain and profit, that the service would be greatly improved, the condition of the men infinitely better, and another strike would never come. I do not believe it is possible to avert railroad strikes any other way.

Commissioner Worthington: Do you think there could be government supervision of railroads without government ownership that would accomplish the same result?

Debs: I fear not.

Commissioner Worthington: Don't you think that if arbitration in the form of conciliation before a strike occurred was compulsory that, in a great many instances, strikes would be averted?

Debs: No, sir.

Commissioner Worthington: Do you think if an arbitration had been had with the Pullman Company, for instance, and a certain decision arrived at, that the Pullman employees would have been disposed to accept it, or, in other words, not have struck after a fair arbitration?

Debs: Yes, sir; I believe that.

Commissioner Worthington: Could not there be legislation that would have compelled the Pullman Company to arbitrate and would not such an arbitration have averted that strike?

Debs: In answer to that proposition let me say, I do not believe any good could possibly come from compulsory arbitration; that seems to me to be a contradiction of terms; arbitration to have the desired effect should be mutual and voluntary. If a railroad company is compelled by law to submit to arbitration it is safe to say that a verdict or result, whatever it may be, and more especially if it is adverse to the railroad company, will not be very agreeable to them, and they will not feel any kinder toward their employee. My idea is to secure harmonious relations, there must be kindness and mutual confidence as a basis. In compulsory arbitration that is the relation that will bind an employer and employee together; force them to maintain that relation and it will not be either pleasant or satisfactory. I really think on the whole the condition of the employee would become worse instead of better, and I believe more harm than good would come out of compulsory arbitration.

Commissioner Worthington: You think, then, that compulsory attempts at conciliation would have bad results rather than good?

Debs: In certain cases. In such an enterprise as the Pullman Company I believe compulsory arbitration, and it might be a state arbitration, would be very efficacious. There is always more or less trouble in finding a board satisfactory to both sides. Where two men are appointed, one upon each side, and they select a third, the final decision is generally given by one man, no matter how many witnesses you have on each side. I believe a court might be established, for instance, a state court, with such power and functions as are necessary, the same as any other state court is instituted, before which parties might be summoned to appear, complaints lodged, and testimony taken in the presence of a jury. Establish the court the same as our other courts of law are established and maintained for the purpose of meting out justice to litigants. It seems to me where there is trouble of a local character between an employer and employees in a factory or mill a State court established of that kind that would necessarily have the confidence of the people, would be a proper tribunal to try such differences before; that would be compulsory arbitration, as I view it; but in matters relating to transportation, to interstate commerce, I doubt if even a court could be established that would maintain harmonious relations between railroad corporations and their thousands of employees scattered all over the country.

Commissioner Worthington: Your reason for thinking compulsory arbitration with reference to interstate roads would not be successful is because it might tend to interrupt harmonious relations between the employer and employee?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Worthington: Those are interrupted always, are they not, prior to a strike?

Debs: Yes; but I Don't believe present conditions would be much improved by any system of compulsory arbitration. Where there is simply local difficulty you can see it before you, and it is not difficult to reach the right and wrong of a proposition in a case of that kind; but where you have railroad interests scattered out over thousands of miles of territory, subject to totally different conditions, different surroundings, and all that, it is impossible to enforce any kind of a decree or finding, it seems to me, that would be satisfactory. Then, again, I do not see how it would be possible to compel employees to abide by a verdict without striking down their constitutional rights.

Commissioner Worthington: That brings me to a point I want to ask you about. What do you think about the propriety of a national law requiring certain grades of employees, say conductors, engineers, and brakemen, perhaps, to be licensed as engineers and pilots are on our rivers?

Debs: On the whole, I think it would be a good idea if a system of licensing could be established under which favoritism would be impossible. That is the danger of it; the men would have to pass examinations before certain boards, and there is a possibility of its being partial to certain men and impartial in other cases, but bar the doors against all men who might be objectionable to the company.

Commissioner Worthington: In all human proceedings you recognize you can not eliminate this agency that men are partial and impartial. We have to work with men as they are.

Debs: I concede the correctness of the principle. I believe the principle of licensing men in the railroad service is right; the objection I make is merely in the nature of the administration of it.

Commissioner Worthington: If there was a system of licensing of that kind and then there was this legislation in order to secure or attempt to secure conciliation, would not that system of licensing be very valuable in enforcing the decision of a board as against employees?

Debs: No, sir; I am afraid not.

Commissioner Worthington: I do not mean in the direction of compelling them to work if they do not wish to, but in other directions.

Debs: I see the point. I Don't believe so. If the law were to be impartially enforced and the people were confident it would be I believe the solution would lie in proper legislation; but we have an interstate commerce law that was designed ostensibly to prohibit railroad corporations from pooling and combining for the purpose of discrimination, and there is not an interstate railroad in the United States that has not repeatedly violated that law in every essential provision. The secretary of the Santa Fe reorganization committee made the statement a few days ago in relation to the Santa Fe road, and in extenuation said that all the roads in the country were doing the same thing.

Commissioner Kernan: Do you know of any law that is not violated?

Debs: No, sir; I do not.

Commissioner Kernan: Then how can any provision of law be made binding?

Debs: I am objecting to cases where violation is the rule instead of the exception, and that is the case with the interstate commerce law.

Commissioner Worthington: Is not that on account of some deficiency of the law?

Debs: Possibly so; but it is not deficient in its provisions, so far as its provisions are concerned.

Commissioner Kernan: The interstate commerce law was designed, was it not, to remedy the wrongs of shippers?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Kernan: Before its enactment the complaint was that shippers were in the same position labor is now, to wit, that they had no appeal against in justice except to those who were interested in the question on the opposite side?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Kernan: And the design of the law was to afford a tribunal which would permit the presentation of a question and render an impartial decision?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Kernan: Are you not aware of the fact that since the interstate commerce law went into effect that the complaints on the part of shippers such as used to continually disturb the community have substantially ceased?

Debs: They have ceased because they have not been aware of these violations of the law; they will not cease on the Santa Fe system.

Commissioner Kernan: If violation of the law is the general rule instead of the exception, how is it possible that all shippers are not aware of it sufficiently to make complaint?

Debs: In the case of the Santa Fe system, according to Expert Little's report, rebates to the amount of \$7 million, \$2 million of which could not be placed, were made to a large favored class of shippers as against the smaller patrons of the road, a discrimination in direct violation of the interstate commerce law. That has been going on steadily for the last three or four years, but by a false set of book-keeping that has sent many a man to the penitentiary they have made the public believe they were living up to the law, and hence the shippers have not complained, because they had no knowledge of the fact they were being discriminated against.

Commissioner Kernan: Mr. Little's statement does not afford us very much light does it, unless it be accompanied by a statement of what the rebates were during a similar period before the interstate commerce law went into effect? Suppose that during a similar period that class of rebates had been twenty or thirty times as great, would not that show the interstate commerce law had to some extent remedied the difficulty?

Debs: That ought not to be any excuse; if, for instance, there was a law enacted today making stealing a crime and I stole \$20 before the law went into effect and I only stole \$2 or \$3 afterwards, now, I have violated the principle of the law and am as guilty as though I had taken a larger amount.

Commissioner Kernan: Still, it would show the law against stealing had had some effect in diminishing the amount stolen, but had not cured the evil. You are looking after a cure?

Debs: Yes sir.

Commissioner Kernan: Don't you think it is rather impracticable for us to look for a complete cure of these things at once? Have we not to abolish the evil step by step instead of at once?

Debs: Yes, sir; I agree with you perfectly. If the government would be as lenient with the employees in their first offense, and do that step by step, I should have no fault to find.

Commissioner Kernan: With reference to that your position, I infer, would be you think there is too much severity on the part of the law against those who were engaged in this so-called strike?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Kernan: Doesn't the constitution of labor organizations and the necessities of the situation require that violence and destruction be suppressed by the public authorities?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Kernan: And to the extent the public authorities interfere for that purpose, nobody can fairly object?

Debs: No, sir; not in the least.

Commissioner Kernan: I will ask you if really the great difficulty you, as a representative of labor, have experienced is not this, that when there were grievances which your constituents considered were well founded and desired to present to railroad managers that you have not found them accessible; that you have not been able to get a hearing; that you have been repulsed, and that has aggravated the situation; and that upon many of these occasions if you could have had a fair hearing before some public body, where all the facts

would have been developed and both sides presented, the trouble would have been averted?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Kernan: Is it not worth while to try something of that kind rather than instantly to take this extreme step of Government ownership and approach that through the medium I suggest?

Debs: I think that would be a temporary expedient; it would, perhaps, result in some good. I have had very serious doubt about it. I admit I favor the principle very much, but the more I have studied it the more I have concluded it is impracticable; that after all it will be a failure in its operation.

Commissioner Kernan: Don't you know that during a great many years the railroad commission of Massachusetts was without any power to enforce decisions against railroads, but that no decision was ever appealed from or refused obedience to by the railroads in that state after the court had made its recommendations?

Debs: Yea, sir; I know something about the workings of that board.

Commissioner Kernan: It did operate in that way for a time, did it not?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Kernan: Don't that seem to point to us that perhaps by some effort in that direction, just what it may be we do not know, we may at least alleviate the present disturbed condition as to labor and capital?

Debs: If that can be done I am in favor of it. But if the laws we already have on the subject are enforced without merit against the employees and are ignored with reference to their application to the companies, what right have we to expect that the same discrimination will not be carried into this matter of arbitration or any other law that may be enacted hereafter? If there was a disposition on the part of the authorities to impartially enforce the law against all violators of the law — that is a proposition to which I subscribe. I think men ought to be punished that violate law, whether rich or poor, capitalist or tramp. If that were true in the administration of our law I would look for some relief, at least.

Commissioner Kernan: Would not you get this relief in the measure we suggest? You have stated that the position of your organization in this strike was persistently misrepresented by the press, or some portion of it, which led all through the United States to the formation of public opinion against you?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Kernan: Have you any doubt that if public opinion had been directly informed as to the entire situation the strike would probably have been averted and that you would have succeeded in your just demands?

Debs: I believe that is true.

Commissioner Kernan: Don't you think that if before a strike was inaugurated there was a law requiring a tribunal to sit as this one is now doing, and investigate all the facts and hear all the parties that that would be a very efficient means of enlisting public opinion and enlisting its sympathies upon the side of right?

Debs: Yes, sir; but everything depends upon the board. If it were this board I would unhesitatingly say yes.

Commissioner Kernan: After giving the answers you have, why is it you take the position that nothing can be done as a relief worth trying, except Government ownership of railroads?

Debs: I believe that is the logical conclusion. My idea is to make a reform positive and complete at once; in place of traveling along slowly inch by inch to reach the same destination.

Commissioner Kernan: Is it not a very seriously debated question whether Government ownership of railroads is in the end beneficial to the companies that have it?

Debs: I confess it is a very serious question. There is no doubt in my mind, though I do not claim, of course, to have fathomed it in all its details and effects.

Commissioner Kernan: Assuming that the fact is that Government ownership of railroads results in poor service and higher rates than ownership by individuals or private corporations, what effect would that have upon your views?

Debs: It does not have that effect where it has been tried.

Commissioner Kernan: But assuming it does, that an examination of the history of the question shows that result, how would that affect your judgment?

Debs: I should not favor it if the conditions were to be worse than they are now. I only favor it on condition it might be reasonably demonstrated that the conditions were to be decidedly improved.

Commissioner Kernan: You think it ought not to be adopted unless it would not only benefit labor, but also give the public better service and at more reasonable rates?

Debs: Yes, sir. I believe that is the only way discrimination will ever be abolished.

Commissioner Kernan: Do you not see that the acquirement of railroads by the government would involve very great friction, and unless it was actual confiscation upon terms laid down by the government, would require a long time to adjust?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Kernan: In the interim, therefore, what are your views as to how we had better meet the situation and attempt to assuage the present condition?

Debs: Leaving aside the question of ultimate government ownership?

Commissioner Kernan: Yes; as one that is, under the circumstances, so far remote and difficult to bring about that it will take some time, at least, to deal with that question. Without that remedy, what would be your views in that aspect of it?

Debs: My views are, that if the administrative department of the Government were right, there would be no further legislation required than that we already have to prevent such outbreaks as we have had here. It is the perfect confidence with which the railroads depend upon the powers of society and of the Government to come to their rescue that prompts them to trample under foot the rights of their employees with impunity and do many other things which, if they were left to fight their own battles, they would not do. But they know when they are in conflict with their employees they can with perfect confidence rely upon the strong arm of the State government and National Government to come to their rescue, and

this is what inspires them to do many things that result in trouble which they would not. We, as the American Railway Union, have always said at every step we have taken that we wanted the public to know what we were doing. We have not a secret connected with our organization. We do not hold a secret meeting; we have not a grip, sign, or password, for the reason we have said such mysteries destroyed the confidence of the people in our work, and we want to do everything and let the whole world know we will not do anything that is wrong or that we are ashamed of.

We have always said we were in favor of arbitrating every difficulty. Every proposal we have made in that direction has been rejected with scorn. We have nothing to look forward to to defend us in times of trouble. We have only got a number, and a limited number, of poorly paid men in our organization, and when their income ceases they are starving. We have no power of the Government behind us. We have no recognized influence in society on our side. We have absolutely nothing but the men who begin to starve when they quit work. On the other side the corporations are in perfect alliance; they have all of the things that money can command, and that means a subsidized press, that they are able to control the newspapers, and means a false or vitiated public opinion. The clergy almost steadily united in thundering their denunciations; then the courts, then the State militia, then the Federal troops; everything and all things on the side of corporations. When the authorities are called upon to intercede in troubles of this kind do they ever ask labor a question? Never. They always go to where capital sits in council and there receive their orders as I view it — do what they command shall be done.

We have had a great many conflicts in this country between capital and labor. We know by experience and by the truth of history that in a great many of those conflicts the workingmen were right. We know that their wages were unjustly reduced and their rights trampled down. When and where did the militia ever come out and take its stand on the side of labor, to prevent the workingmen's being robbed and degraded? Never. Whenever and wherever they have been called out it was always to take their place on the side of the capitalist. They have gone into partnership with the oppressors of labor to crush labor. If there was a perfect sense of duty and justice prevailing at the proper places they would not have to exercise their powers as they now do, always with the one purpose of crushing the

workingmen. They could enforce the demands of justice without any additional legislation on the subject, in my opinion; but the moneyed power, it seems to me, is potential enough to control all this machinery, and will be able to do it with the additional legislation that you propose, in my opinion.

Commissioner Worthington: Would it not be able to do it to a still greater extent if the government owned the railroads, because it would have more employees under the government to be reached politically?

Debs: Not to the same extent, in my opinion, for the reason if the government owned the railroads the people would have a citizen interest in those railroads.

Commissioner Kernan: How about the poor man that was laboring in some outside employment or unable to get any labor at all; would he not necessarily grow to regard the railroad employees as members of a favored class?

Debs: That carries me several steps further. He also is a victim of a wage system which I believe in abolishing entirely.

Commissioner Wright: Do you believe there is no solution of any of these troubles under the present industrial system?

Debs: No, sir; that is my candid conviction.

Commissioner Kernan: Then Government ownership of railroads is only an expedient; it is not a final solution after all?

Debs: It would be a final solution so far as the railroads are concerned, but not of other matters.

Commissioner Kernan: Then would Government ownership of all trades and property follow as a solution of the other?

Debs: I believe in a cooperative commonwealth as a substitute for the wage system.

Commissioner Wright: Another name for state socialism?

Debs: No, sir; I do not call myself a socialist. There is a wide difference in the interpretation or definition of the term. I believe in a cooperative commonwealth upon the principles laid down by Laurence Gronlund. You may have read his works. I believe that is the

rational solution of the whole question. We recognize the main features of State socialism. I can say in relation to the wage system that in my judgment — I am studying this question and I want much more light than I have got; I am in need of much more, and speak for nobody but myself— but I am impressed with the conviction that the social and industrial conditions will grow worse instead of better, so long as the wage system remains in vogue. If a man is obliged to depend upon another man as to whether he shall work or not he is a slave.

Now, with the introduction of labor-saving machinery — and that is a misnomer, in my judgment, of labor displacing machinery — and unrestricted foreign immigration, we now have the spectacle of ten wage workers who have families depending upon their support competing for the same job of work. There are not jobs enough to go around, and the result is a great many men out of work. They are bidding against each other — as a matter of course we all believe, as we say we do, in the freedom of contracts, and during this late trouble all of the papers, or the principal papers, in the country, said, “We have to maintain that principle if we have to do it with shot and shell, Army and Navy — that a man can work for anybody he chooses to work for and for any figure that may be agreeable between them.” I deny any such proposition as that

Commissioner Wright: Just there, do you mean to say that nine men out of every ten are out of employment?

Debs: No, sir; not on the whole. I meant to say that was the case in many parts of the country.

Commissioner Wright: I understood you to say that ten men were bidding against each other for one job, which but one could get.

Debs: I meant to apply that locally. I was out in Colorado and saw that condition there I did not mean that that is the condition in the whole country. Professor Ely says that we have 3 million able-bodied paupers in this country, and I regard him as good authority on that subject. We have men bidding and compelled to bid by their necessities, having families dependent upon them, and they have to work and they bid against each other, and the man who bids the least gets the work, and the others are out of work. Now, I have said, I deny men have a right to do that; no matter what may be said about the freedom of contract under our Constitution, no

man has a right to sell himself into slavery; no man has a right to do that; and yet that is what it amounts to if a man agrees to work at unliving wages, and that is precisely what they do — what the wage system compels them to do.

I am not opposed to immigration; on the contrary, I think under proper restrictions there is room for millions of people to come to this country to be good citizens, but that undesirable element of immigration of which this country has been made the dumping ground, brought here at the behest of corporations in the State of Pennsylvania, for instance. As an example, a few years ago in the State of Pennsylvania miners were getting from \$4 to \$6 per day and were enabled to live as becomes American citizens. Then the operators combined, sent their agent to Europe and imported the most vicious element of European countries, men who are working today at from 40 to 65 cents per day; men who did not live in huts or in hovels, but in holes in the ground, like animals, displacing the miners who lived as becomes American citizens, and educated their children so they might be in a condition of intelligence to perpetuate free institutions. And then a great many people wonder where the Coxey Army comes from. Now, with all this element that comes in here to compete against our own labor, displacing as they have done a vast number of workingmen, together with the improved machinery that has done away with the services of thousands of men, competition is bound, in my judgment, inevitably to degenerate into perfect slavery, if it does not already exist.

Commissioner Kernan: Then, I understand, you favor some restriction of immigration, so as to prevent an undesirable element from coming in and competing in the way you suggest?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Kernan: Isn't it the result of your reading that concentrated power made sufficiently strong to control the situation is always oppressive to the weaker party?

Debs: Yes, sir; that is true.

Commissioner Kernan: You said that Mr. Gompers reported to you and asked your judgment as to what all of the workingmen of the country represented by the trade unions ought to do, and you said, substantially, "If you had the power that you would have them all

go out on this strike.” Assuming that had been carried out, would it not have combined the entire labor interests in this country in the strike, and have stopped all business?

Debs: I did not mean it in the sense in which you understand it.

Commissioner Kernan: I want to be corrected if I am wrong.

Debs: I meant to say that if I could control the conditions I would have all workingmen stand together, but that would not have involved all of them; there were thousands of railroad men that remained with the different companies and did not go out. Before I would have thought it necessary to involve them all we were entitled first to the united support of all the railroad men in the country, but a number of representatives of local unions came to me and asked me what to do. I told them to remain at work. I never advised in a single instance that they go out, and I could bring the men here to testify to the truth of that statement. I said in every instance, “There is no use of you sacrificing yourselves and not help us.” I meant by that that every man in the railroad service, primarily — that is, that labor should be as loyal to labor as capital is to capital. When you attack a railroad corporation you find them all against you all over the country; they believe in sympathetic strikes. They all secretly in every way in their power help the company in trouble; the very thing I want labor to do. Not only do the corporations control newspapers — how quickly the newspapers came to the rescue of these railroad companies — we had no trouble with the *Chicago Herald*; there was no strike in its office, yet it fought us as fiercely as if it had been a railroad corporation — not only that, but all other influence capital commands instinctively rushed to the rescue. Capital is very sensitive; touch it at one point and you attack the whole combination.

Commissioner Kernan: Is it not your position that not only railroad employees, but all employees who work for hire, ought in a strike of the kind we have just passed through stand and support the striking organizations?

Debs: Yes, sir; I will give you my reason for that.

Commissioner Kernan: I want to ask one question that is in my mind. If a condition existed in the country like that, would it not be exceedingly dangerous to the peace and welfare of the country?

Debs: I do not believe it would be as dangerous as it is now, for the reason if labor was as thoroughly organized as we contemplate the men who control capital would be more considerate of the rights of labor.

Commissioner Kernan: Look at the question from your standpoint and see what the result would be if carried out in that direction; would not the result be that the men must reach the conclusion that we must try to devise some way of at least providing temporary expedients and remedies rather than permit things to go to such an extreme?

Debs: I don't know; that depends upon circumstances some. I think where there is an ill, it is well in place of applying expedients..., and out of that will come a better condition.³ It seems to me if we were so thoroughly organized we could very promptly stop the whole machinery. It would stop on the very spot by abolishing the wage system, and that is what I desire.

Commissioner Kernan: Is it not quite likely that the human nature of such an organization would lead it to become tyrannical and as unjust as those resisting it?

Debs: Yes; I believe human nature is about alike on each side.

Commissioner Kernan: That is an objection, then, in the direction which you suggest?

Debs: I think not, for the reason that impelled us to organize the American Railway Union. I believe a little power is dangerous. I believe that organized labor is much more tyrannical, much more dangerous to society and to itself with a little power than it had more power. For instance, take one hundred switchmen — I only refer to the switchmen to illustrate the point, because all railroad men are practically alike — and organize ten or twelve of them, and you will have a strike in fifteen minutes. They want to demonstrate their power, and the probabilities are that the company will do something to provoke them to strike, or encourage them at least; but suppose all of those switchmen are organized, suppose the great body of railroad men were organized, and more prudent counsel

³ There appears to be a garbling of the transcription of this line, fixed with ellipses.

will prevail; the organization will be more conservative, and the chances for strike largely reduced.

Commissioner Kernan: Instead of permitting this unification to go forward in the present way, what would you say in regard to having it done in the same way unification of capital is permitted — by incorporate charters, where legal restrictions could be asserted for the protection of the members?

Debs: There would be this difficulty: Railroad companies are managed by a board of directors. The board can meet in a small room and transact their business expeditiously; they can do as they please, and there is more or less business of a private character connected with all large enterprises. Nine men on a board of directors may control thousands of miles of roads and thousands of employees. There are no police to interfere with them, nobody disturbs them; they meet in secret and do their work, transact their agreements. On the other hand, the interests of labor are not committed to the hands of three or four men; thousands of them who have not had the early advantage of an education, who are ignorant and suspicious, some of whom are vicious, and they are more difficult to control; everything they do has to be done in public. If they hold meetings to prepare to strike, instantly the police stand ready to pounce down on them and disperse them. It is a force that can not be controlled. The force of capital is controlled by educated, trained men, experienced men; they handle interests of a much greater magnitude, and in that way can do it much more effectually and expeditiously.

Commissioner Kernan: Why could not all the provisions that you refer to be preserved in a charter and sufficient elasticity be given to it to preserve the features you now have and get provisions added by which the organization would be recognized as a legal body and act as such?

Debs: I Don't know but that would be a good idea. But the trouble is to get the railroad men to harmonize. They are in rival organizations now that is the misfortune of it, and what one favors the other blindly opposes.

Commissioner Kernan: Looking at it fairly, is it not true that after all; in the present condition of labor, its disadvantages you speak of are

caused not only by the antagonism of corporations and capital, but also by the inability it has heretofore displayed to organize itself and unite upon wise and temperate lines?

Debs: Yes, sir; I admit that.

Commissioner Kernan: It is not fair to charge all of the troubles to the Government and to the corporations and to the opposing influences, is it? Ought we not rather to seek some way by which they could be united so as fairly to represent and protect their rights?

Debs: I do not wish to be understood as placing all of the responsibility upon the authorities or upon the capitalists. I am willing to admit that there is something in the point you make, about the inability of labor to organize for any given purpose; but it seems to me that that very condition that makes it impossible for them to organize on account of ignorance, or on any other account that you please to assign, is brought about by the opposing forces.

Commissioner Kernan: That is, they foment the strike?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Kernan: Do you not think that some public body, such as Commissioner Worthington suggested, to hear these grievances and recommend a remedy would tend to remedy that defect?

Debs: Yes, sir; I am willing to admit that. When we had this trouble at St. Paul that was the only railroad strike in the history of America that was won by a railroad organization. There never was before that time and never has been since that time a strike won by a railroad organization.

Commissioner Worthington: I receive the impression from the statement you made that if labor was unified as we have been speaking of it here this afternoon, it would be followed by the abolition of the wage system, in your judgment. Did you intend to be understood in that way?

Debs: I do not know that I intended to be understood just that way. I meant, in the first place, that these troubles could be reduced, as it seems to me, to a minimum, if the forces are unified; and then it was suggested that there would be something popping all the time if we were to go to each other's rescue. Then I said if it brought on a

condition under which we were to be continually in turmoil that would result in the abolishment of the wage system.

Commissioner Worthington: The state of turmoil in consequence of labor would abolish the wage system, not the unification of labor.

Debs: That is what I meant to say. If labor were thoroughly unified and able to secure what it believes to be its due it might be well enough satisfied with the wage system, but I do not believe that is possible with our present human nature.

Commissioner Wright: In another answer which you made I drew this impression : A small amount of power is dangerous to labor unions. Do you mean to say that with sufficient power or with a large amount of power growing out of unification, labor organizations representing that power would by it command the respect of the other side of the controversy?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Wright: And thus lead to proper treatment?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Wright: That is what you wish to be understood as your view?

Debs: Yes, sir. That is one of the important advantages of a thorough organization. Management, for instance, that is confronted with an organization representing practically all of its employees will treat more considerately a complaint than if confronted by a mere fragment.

Commissioner Wright: In another answer you spoke of militia being called out always to protect the employer as against the striking employee, or words to that effect. Is it not a fact that the militia is always called out to protect property, whether it belongs to the employer or to the employee, and not to take sides with either party?

Debs: I should not think that were the fact, after General Miles' statement that he had broken the backbone of the strike.

Commissioner Wright: That is an individual matter. I refer to the calling out of the militia.

Debs: Let me recite this as a statement of fact: In 1892, if I remember rightly, the state of New York passed a law that provided that 10 hours should constitute a day's work. That had been passed for some time, and the switchmen who were working at Buffalo were compelled to work from 12 to 14 hours a day, notwithstanding the legislature of New York had passed a law providing that ten hours should constitute a day's work. The switchmen appointed committees, who called on the officials of the several roads centering at Buffalo — the New York Central, the Erie, the Lehigh Valley, and the rest of them. Those officials would not treat with the committee at all, and as a last resort the switchmen, about 600 in number, struck. Mr. Theodore Voorhees, then superintendent and latterly general manager of the Lehigh Valley, wrote a paper on that strike, which appeared in the *North American Review* of August, I believe, of that year, in which he practically admitted that the railroad corporations had combined for the purpose of disregarding that 10-hour law.

When the switchmen struck they paralyzed ail of the roads centering at Buffalo. There was no riot, no disorder, and no trouble, but the roads could not get men to handle the work. There were some cars on the hospital track — old and disabled cars — and they were set on fire. That looked very suspicious, to say the least, and it was currently reported at that time, and I believe it to be the fact, that those cars were fired by the emissaries of the corporations, because what interest could the switchmen possibly have had in firing those decrepit, disabled cars? The very instant those cars were fired the mayor of Buffalo called on the governor of New York and says, "Buffalo is in flames." Six thousand soldiers promptly responded, and there was no cause for them — not the slightest — but 6,000 soldiers responded, the courts responded, and those 600 switchmen were squelched. The 600 switchmen were asking for nothing except that the corporations live up to the law passed by the legislature. Yet they were suppressed by the soldiers. The soldiers were used to suppress switchmen who were simply contending for the enforcement of law. The soldiers came out and stood by the corporations, which were violating the law, and crushed the switchmen, who were contending for the enforcement of the law.

Commissioner Wright: Then your idea is, and you wish to be so understood, do you, that the militia is called out in such emergencies on

the pretense of protecting property, when the real issue is the protection of non-union men or others who are employed to take the place of strikers?

Debs: Yes, sir; and that was true in this very strike, where the managers claimed that they had plenty of men to operate their roads, but they had to have protection. They did not have to have protection against the strikers. We shall show at the right time that we even offered men to handle their mail trains, but they did not want their mail trains to run.

Commissioner Wright: That is, in the trials to come?

Debs: Yes, sir.

Commissioner Wright: What has been the effect of the recent troubles on the membership of the American Railway Union?

Debs: I believe the American Railway Union is stronger today, numerically and in every other way, than it ever was since its organization. We are adding to our membership every day.

Commissioner Worthington: Is it not a fact that the men constituting the volunteer militia as a general thing are workingmen — wage earners?

Debs: Yes; very many of them.

Commissioner Worthington: Is there anything further you desire to state?

Debs: I believe nothing now.

Commissioner Wright: If there are any representatives present of the Rock Island or Illinois Central Railroad companies who desire to cross-examine Mr. Debs they have the opportunity now.

(No response. Witness excused.)

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August 25, 1894, Eugene V. Debs, recalled, testified as follows:

Commissioner Wright: In your testimony the other day you referred to a letter from Montana which you stated you would get, if possible, and furnish to the commission; have you secured that letter?

Debs: Yes, sir; I have the letter with me.

Commissioner Wright: Will you please read it?

Debs: I was in error in saying it was an official; it was a fellow clerk.

South Bend, July 19, 1894.

Eugene V. Debs, Esq., Chicago, Ill.

My Dear Sir:—

I see by the paper that one of the messages for the sending of which you are indicted is the one sent me which contained the words, "Save your money and buy a gun." I desire to say your present stenographer, L. P. Benedict, was a fellow clerk with me here for the past two or three years, and that phrase as above quoted was a by-word in the office for some time, and when the telegram was received I understood from the phrase nothing more than was suggested by the use of the same language in the office here. I certainly understood by that sentence and the one following that the telegram was sent by my friend, Mr. Benedict. The fact that the expression, "Save your money and buy a gun," was a byword can be substantiated by every clerk in the office.

Yours, very truly,

J. H. Calderhead.

Commissioner Wright: Do you consider it justifiable for organized labor to paralyze in any degree the commerce and business of the country, that the grievances which affect a few only may be redressed?

Debs: It would depend largely upon the nature and the extent of the grievances. I do not believe if it is purely a local trouble that it would be justifiable to paralyze the general interests of the country in order to reach or remedy a local trouble.

Commissioner Wright: Would you consider it justifiable for railroads in combination to paralyze in any degree the commerce and industry

of the country, to resist what they considered an unjust demand upon some one road?

Debs: Yes, sir. They can operate in that way through their organization, and unless they were obligated to support each other during times of trouble their organization would practically fail to serve the purpose for which it was designed — that of mutual protection.

Commissioner Wright: I omitted to ask you the other day what you know, of your own knowledge, concerning the practice of blacklisting on railroads, and especially on the two roads involved in this investigation?

Debs: Of my own knowledge, I know nothing. I only know what I hear by getting reports.

Commissioner Wright: It is so generally understood among the men on different railroads that a blacklist exists on each?

Debs: Yes, sir; in this way. I am told by the ex-employees that when they apply for employment they are asked what road they were formerly connected with, and then they are obliged to present a letter of recommendation, and in every case where they were engaged in the strike the letter specifies, if it is granted at all, "Dismissed on account of strike," and that bars the door on employment. It is generally understood if a man has been connected with this trouble he is not to be employed on any other road. I have that statement from the employees.

Commissioner Wright: Going back to the question of arbitration, I want to read to you what a very warm friend of railroad labor has suggested as an amendment to the present law of the United States providing for boards of arbitration to be selected, one by each party and the third by the two already selected, known as the "O'Neil Act":

That before such arbitrators proceed to act each party to the arbitration shall file with the arbitrators a bond in an amount and with securities approved by the arbitrators, payable to the other party and conditioned to abide by the result of the award: Provided further , That the place of any employee or employees in such arbitration may be assumed by the national trades union, or other incorporated society, if any, of which said employee may be a member, and the bond referred to may be given by or to such national trades union or other

incorporated society, and refusal to arbitrate as provided in the act shall subject the party refusing to a penalty to be decided.

What would you say to a provision of that kind relative to a national board of arbitration?

Debs: I am opposed to the principle or the theory, rather, of compulsory arbitration.

Commissioner Wright: That is, not compulsory except so far as making a penalty for nonperformance?

Debs: Yes, sir; that measure provides, as I understand it, for giving the organization a legal status.

Commissioner Wright: Yes; it must be incorporated.

Debs: Then holds it by a bond; that is, it commits itself, or binds itself, with such sureties, and who would decide them?

Commissioner Wright: That would have to be a matter of agreement.

Debs: Yes. Would not there be some difficulty about the organization or employees filing a bond binding them to certain conditions? It seems to me that would be a difficult thing to do.

Commissioner Wright: The chief suggestion here is that a bond be filed providing for certain forfeitures in case a party does not submit to arbitration, not relative to the decree of the court.

Debs: The question arises, how would the average organization, or employee, rather, proceed to file this bond? I should think they would find that a rather difficult thing to do.

Commissioner Wright: That is what I want to get from you, an opinion as to this provision.

Debs: Of course they could not supply a bond from their own members, for the bond doubtless would be in a pretty large amount.

Commissioner Wright: It would only be a matter of assessment; I suppose cash would furnish the bond.

Debs: It would practically make it compulsory arbitration.

Commissioner Wright: That would be your idea of this suggestion?

Debs: Yes; I think that is what it would amount to; I think this clause providing for a bond binding the organization or company as well involves that principle of compulsory arbitration.

Commissioner Wright: This telegram has been put into the hands of the commission. Chicago, 111., July 4, I think is the date.

U. J. Murphy, Secretary:

You are hereby requested to assist me in the present strike by having all employees withdrawn from the service, elect good committees, and wire the name of chairman for each road. Be particular to state what road he represents. Commit no violence. All employees of all roads will stand together. None will return until all return. We are gaining ground rapidly. Pledge full protection to all, whether members or not.

E. V. Debs.

Is that one of your own telegrams, or one of those to which you referred in your former testimony?

Debs: It is very likely this telegram went out over my name. I have no recollection of this particular telegram. There were thousands of them went out, a good many that I never saw, because there was so much telegraphing necessary that I could not supervise it or attend to it personally. A great many telegrams were sent by other officers of the board of directors. It is very likely that telegram was sent from here over my name, but I do not identify that particular telegram.

Commissioner Worthington: If I understand your answer to Commissioner Wright your objections to what is termed compulsory arbitration, so far as the organization is concerned, is as to the difficulty of securing a bond?

Debs: I think that would be the main difficulty in that proposition. I don't know how an average body of men would proceed to file a bond.

Commissioner Worthington: Suppose that instead of a bond, or leaving it to the option of the organization that insisted on a bond, a sum of money to be indicated by the court should be deposited. Is it not

true that almost any one of these labor organizations could deposit a reasonable amount of money, say \$500 or \$1,000?

Debs: Yes; I think that might be done, but there are a number of organizations in the field, unfortunately, and some of them are in conflict with each other, and I doubt whether proposing this would not aggravate the trouble, as there are now two or three organizations that claim jurisdiction over the same classes of men. For instance, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen has a large number of engineers in its ranks; the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen has a large number of conductors as well as brakemen, while there is a separate organization of conductors. Now, the question would arise under this proposition. What organization would be entitled to serve, or would properly have jurisdiction. If they all bound themselves by a forfeiture, as you suggest, I think they might deposit a sum of money without difficulty, but it seems to me it would give rise to other and more serious complications than now exist.

Commissioner Worthington: But would it not have this good influence; if Congress should pass such laws as would secure to railroad men through the courts, by means of a board of arbitration, a public hearing of their grievances, and then, as you say, that should be interfered with or made comparatively useless on account of the dissensions among railroad employees themselves — would not the very fact that a remedy was provided and it was defeated by dissensions have a good effect on wage earners in their own ranks?

Debs: I think it would have a quieting or harmonious effect.

Commissioner Worthington: My opinion is it would show that the representatives of the Government were endeavoring to do something to relieve the trouble they complain of with the corporations?

Debs: Yes; I think it would have that effect, that an effort at least was being made to provide remedies by law for the grievances of which they complain.

Commissioner Wright: What knowledge have you, if any, of any labor troubles on the Rock Island road with labor organizations prior to the late strike?

Debs: I have a personal recollection of a strike of the railroad telegraphers on the Rock Island road, and I have here their official journal, and on page 555 there is a statement of the strike:

The Great Rock Island Strike.

The order refused recognition. Systematic oppression on the part of the railway officials. Despotism and underhanded work leads to retaliation. Must be a fight to the finish. Every railway employee in North America interested in this great struggle for liberty and justice.

Commissioner Wright: When was that?

Debs: In December, 1892. Mr. St. John issued a report at the close of the strike in which he set up his side of the controversy. I have that statement at home. I didn't think about this matter coming up or I would have brought it with me.

Commissioner Wright: We do not care to go into the details. Have you anything else to say about which we have not asked you?

Debs: I believe Mr. St. John said in his testimony that there were only 200 members of the American Railway Union on the Rock Island system at the time the strike was inaugurated. It seems to me that statement contradicts itself, because the Rock Island was completely tied up from end to end, as everybody knows, and that certainly would not have been possible if there was only 200 members on the system. The organization had a much larger membership than 200 on that system or it would not have been possible for them to have influenced the employees to the extent they did of tying up the entire system.

Commissioner Worthington: Are you prepared to say what the membership was on that system?

Debs: No; I have no means of knowing even approximately what the membership was, but it stands to reason it must have been over 200. We had a number of unions on the system. I know I organized one at Trenton with 95 members; so we had a much larger membership than St. John is willing to admit, but I could not state how large it was on that road.

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UNITED STATES CIRCUIT COURT, DISTRICT OF INDIANA.

The President of the United States of America to Eugene V. Debs, George Howard Charles C. Clark, J.W. Mann, Denis J. Wren, W. Carroll, Judson Lamphier, T.S. Gritty, J.R. Church, Orey W. Fishback, A.C. McKelvey, C.C. Arnold, Peter Hughes, J. M. Jackson, L.R. Kirkpatrick, R.A. Robuck, Albert Rachwitz, W.P. Shackle, R.W. Underhill, W.H. Whitaker, J.H. Walters, W.H. Lesorr, Charles T. Fate, Leo S. Harding, L.N. Mellon, D. Mitchell, John Buck, — Moriarty, L.F. Hawkins, H.B. Shaler, R.W. Sproston, W. H. Hamilton, J.K. Smith, F.P. Baily, H. Pence, Charles W. Shaw, William Mack, Joseph Mullinix, Harry Webber, D.J. Mett, Elmer Stoddard, W.C. Middaugh, T.H. Middaugh, Joseph Tobler, William Myers, William Ostermeyer, A. Wilkerson, William Young, J.T. Brennan, J.L. Vancamp, and the American Railway Union. And all other persons combining and conspiring with them, and to all other persons whomsoever:

You are hereby restrained, commanded, and enjoined absolutely to desist and refrain from in any way or manner interfering with, hindering, obstructing, or stopping any of the business of any of the following-named railroads:

The Pittsburg, Cincinnati, Chicago and St. Louis Railway,
The Pennsylvania Company,
The Terre Haute and Indianapolis Railway,
The Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago and St. Louis Railway,
The Lake Erie and Western Railway,
The Louisville, New Albany and Chicago Railway,
The Cincinnati, Hamilton and Indianapolis Railway,
The Evansville and Terre Haute Railway,
The Terre Haute and Logansport Railway,
The Wabash Railway,
The Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway,
The Michigan Central Railway,
The Chicago and Erie Railway,
The Baltimore and Ohio Southwestern Railway,
The Indianapolis Union Railway,
The Belt Railroad and Stock Yards Company,
The Grand Rapids and Indiana Railroad,
The New York, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad,
The Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad,
The Indianapolis, Decatur and Western Railway,
The Baltimore and Ohio and Chicago Railway,
The Chicago and Grand Trunk Railway,

The Louisville and Nashville Railroad,

As common carriers of passengers and freight between or among any States of the United States, and from in any way interfering with, hindering, obstructing, or stopping any mail trains, express trains, whether freight or passenger, engaged in interstate commerce, or carrying passengers or freight between or among the States; and from in any manner interfering with, hindering, or stopping any trains carrying the mail, and from in any manner interfering with, hindering, obstructing, or stopping any engines, cars, or rolling stock of any of said companies engaged in interstate commerce, or in connection with the carriage of passengers or freight between or among the States; and from in any manner interfering with, injuring, or destroying any of the property of any of said railroads engaged in or for the purposes of, or in connection with, interstate commerce, or the carriage of the mails of the United States or the transportation of passengers or freight between or among the States; and from entering upon the grounds or premises of any of said railroads for the purpose of interfering with, hindering, obstructing, or stopping any of said mail trains, passenger or freight trains engaged in interstate commerce, or in the transportation of passengers or freight between or among the States; or for the purpose of interfering with, injuring, or destroying any of said property so engaged in or used in connection with interstate commerce, or the transportation of passengers or property between or among the States; and from injuring or destroying any part of the tracks, roadbed or road, or permanent structures of said railroads; and from injuring, destroying, or in any way interfering with any of the signals or switches of any of said railroads; and from displacing or extinguishing any of the signals of any of said railroads, and from spiking, locking, or in any manner fastening any of the switches of any of said railroads, and from uncoupling or in any way hampering or obstructing the control by any of said railroads of any of the cars, engines, or parts of trains of any of said railroads engaged in interstate commerce or in the transportation of passengers or freight between or among the States, or engaged in carrying any of the mails of the United States; and from compelling or inducing, or attempting to compel or induce, by threats, intimidation, persuasion, force, or violence, any of the employees of any of said railroads to refuse or fail to perform any of their duties as employees of any of said railroads in connection with the interstate business or commerce of such railroads, or the carriage of the United States mail by such railroads, or the transportation of passengers or property between or among the States; and from compelling or inducing, or attempting to compel or induce, by threats, intimidation, force, or violence, any of the employees of said railroads who are employed by such railroads

and engaged in its service in the conduct of interstate business, or in the operation of any of its trains carrying the mail of the United States, or doing interstate business, or the transportation of passengers and freight between and among the States, to leave the service of such railroads, and from preventing any persons whatever, by threats, intimidation, force, or violence from entering the service of any of said railroads and doing the work thereof, in the carrying of the mails of the United States or the transportation of passengers and freight between or among the States; and from doing any act whatever in furtherance of any conspiracy or combination to restrain either of said railroad companies in the free and unhindered control and handling of interstate commerce over the lines of said railroads, and of transportation of persons and freight between and among the States; and from ordering, directing, aiding, assisting, or abetting, in any manner whatever, any person or persons to commit any or either of the acts aforesaid.

And Eugene V. Debs and all other persons are hereby enjoined and restrained from sending out any letters, messages, or communications directing, inciting, encouraging, or instructing any persons whatsoever to interfere with the business or affairs, directly or indirectly, of any of the railway companies hereinabove named, or from persuading any of the employees of said railway companies while in the employment of their respective companies to fail or refuse to perform the duties of their employment.

And it is further ordered, that the aforesaid injunction and writ of injunction shall be in force and binding upon such of said defendants as are named in said bill from and after the service upon them severally of said writ by delivering to them severally a copy of said writ, or by reading the same to them, and the service upon them respectively of the writ of subpoena herein, and shall be binding upon said defendants whose names are alleged to be unknown, from and after the service of such writ upon them respectively, by the reading of the same to them, or by the publication thereof by posting or printing, and after service of subpoena on any of said defendants herein named shall be binding upon said defendants and upon all other persons whatsoever who are not named herein from and after the time when they shall severally have knowledge of the entry of such order and the existence of said injunction.

Witness Honorable Melville W. Fuller, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, and the seal of the circuit court of the United States for the district of Indiana, this 3d day of July, A.D. 1894, and the one hundred and eighteenth year of the Independence of the United States of America.

[I.s.]

Noble C. Butler, Clerk.

United States of America,
District of Indiana , ss:

I, Noble C. Butler, clerk of the circuit court of the United States within and for the district aforesaid, do hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a full and true copy of the writ of injunction in the cause of the United States against Eugene V. Debs and others, issued by order of said court, on the 3d day of July, 1894.

Witness my hand and the seal of said court, at Indianapolis, in said district, this 5th day of July, 1894.

[seal.]

Noble C. Butler, Clerk.

[A hearing in this matter is appointed by the court for the 18th day of July, A. D. 1894, at 10 o'clock a. in., at the city of Indianapolis.]

Edited by Tim Davenport

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