

# The Great Railroad Strike of 1894 in Southern California

by *Louis A. Di Donato*

Refusing to work for a railroad is no crime, and though such action may incidentally delay the mails or interfere with interstate commerce, it being a lawful act, and not done for the purpose, it is no offense.

*Clarence Darrow, Attorney for the ARU*

Whenever such acts are of a character to prevent and obstruct the carrying of the mails, or interfere with or obstruct any interstate commerce, and are done for the purpose and with the intent to prevent or obstruct the same, a crime is committed...

*Erskine M. Ross, U.S. District Judge*

**I**T WAS EARLY SUMMER 1894; the depression which had been triggered by the stock market crash was into its second year. The ranks of the unemployed continued to grow along with the discontent of the labor force. Coxey's Army had been unceremoniously dismissed by the Washington, D.C. police in April. Southern California's own "Army of the Unemployed," deceived and swindled by its "commanders," fell defeated before the wrath of public opinion. The hot and humid weather of these early days of summer almost seemed to anticipate the tremendous thunderstorm about to burst over the Southland.

Most ordinary people living in southern California tried to get on with life and plan for the future as best they could in what was clearly not the best of times. In Ontario Adam Borthwick and Mary Cavanugh were planning their wedding for July at the Baptist Church in San Bernardino; the plan was for the wedding party to travel to San Bernardino by rail. At Los Angeles High School the twenty-three graduating seniors of the class of '94, although facing a clouded economic future, were anxiously awaiting their big

moment to walk across the stage at the Los Angeles Theater to receive their diplomas. Preparations were already being made to hang floral pieces from the theater's ceiling and to have potted plants decorating the stage. In Cucamonga the white ribbon ladies of the WCTU (Women's Christian Temperance Union) were learning a lesson in the ways of politics as their appeal to ban saloons in their part of San Bernardino County was rejected by the board of supervisors because of ineligible names on their petitions. In the Pomona Valley and the rest of eastern Los Angeles County growers were celebrating a bumper crop of deciduous fruit (i.e., prunes, apples, peaches, pears, and apricots). Most of the fruit would be dried, packed and shipped to markets in the East or in Europe. The Pomona Fruit Growers were estimating they would handle up to 650 tons of dried fruit that season.<sup>1</sup> Across the California desert a train was steaming through the scorching hot emptiness between Needles, or The Needles as it was called in 1894, and Barstow. On board were women, children and several other passengers from the East seeking a healthier climate in southern California. In North Cucamonga the popular station agent at the Santa Fe, W. D. Bucklew, had taken seriously ill; so ill he could not accompany his wife and children to Nebraska on a visit to his in-laws. Bucklew was forced to be relieved of his duties and seek the care of his sister in Los Angeles. Up the line in the hamlet of Etiwanda the Santa Fe had just opened a small station in the charge of Mrs. C.H. Hough. The Santa Fe ran the following ad in the local paper:

Go East on the Santa Fe Route. The short line to all Eastern Points. The only line with its own tracks from California to Chicago and St. Louis. One Day Saved in Time! No Change of Cars to Chicago! The Southern California Railway is the only line running Pullman Palace and Tourist Sleeping Cars from Southern California to Chicago daily without change. Two daily overland trains. Call on the nearest agent of the Southern California Railway or write to...<sup>2</sup>

The ad sounded innocuous enough at the time. However, "Pullman Palace and Tourist Cars" would literally be the vehicles of the great thunderstorm to break over the Southland in those early weeks of summer.

The storm which was to come was not local in origin, but rather had come out of the Mid-West. In Chicago one of the nation's great-

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est struggles between management and organized labor was about to rise up like a great tempest; a struggle which would begin with a boycott of Pullman cars and end with the halting of every major railway across the United States. So great an impact would the strike have that every American would be affected by it to some degree or another.

George M. Pullman saw his relationship with his employees as paternalistic; perhaps he could afford to, having a monopoly on sleeper cars throughout the country. In 1889, he built a model company town around his factory outside of Chicago. Pullman, Illinois, would have no doubt been the envy of the early nineteenth century utopian Robert Owen; Pullman's town had within its confines stores, churches, a school, library, recreational facilities and brick tenements for his employees. The United States Strike Commission would later report: "It is beautified by well-kept open spaces and stretches, flower beds and lakes. The whole is at all times kept in neat order by the company."<sup>3</sup> It would seem all was well and perhaps all was well at Pullman, but this was not the case for the rest of the railroad industry. In the post-Civil War era the railroad magnates had become unbelievably wealthy, arrogantly powerful and almost totally insensitive to the wants and needs of their employees. In 1886, the General Managers' Association was formed by the captains of the industry; it would later "standardize" employer wage policies which amounted to fixing wages so the railroads would not be in competition with each other in the labor market. Defiance of railroad management was strictly not tolerated. On May 4, 1886, police were ordered into Haymarket Square in Chicago to break up the assembled strikers at the behest of management. An anarchist among the strikers hurled a bomb at the police killing seven and injuring sixty-seven officers. This played into the hands of management; the Knights of Labor, who had supported the strike, lost popular support and the strike failed.

In the wake of hard economic times brought about by the 1893 Depression, Eugene V. Debs organized the American Railway Union (ARU). His goal was to organize the entire railroad industry into one union. This idea was not embraced by all rail workers; the Brotherhood unions (i.e., Brotherhood of Firemen, Brotherhood of Conductors, etc.) remained separate unions, many affiliated with

the American Federation of Labor (AFL). The depression brought hard economic times. Pullman saw as his salvation cutting the wages of his employees by 25%; even workers in the factory's more profitable divisions had wages cut. Although the company reduced wages, it did not reduce rents in the company town.<sup>4</sup> The company would later try to justify its actions in a statement to the Strike Commission by claiming it was losing money on various contracts all over the country. What makes their statement curious is that their payroll in fiscal 1893 went from \$7,223,219.51 to a payroll in fiscal 1894 of \$4,471,701.39. However, dividends paid to stock holders during the same years went from \$2,520,000 to \$2,880,000.<sup>5</sup> By April 1894, the Pullman workers voted to join the ARU. In May a committee of Pullman workers tried to open negotiations with the company, but the company refused to respond. A few days later three members of the committee lost their jobs for what the company explained was lack of work. The ARU then entered the scene; Pullman chose to lockout his workers rather than having any dealings with the union. On June 26 the ARU ordered its members to boycott any train having Pullman cars. The ARU's initial call for a boycott was well received by other railroad unions; in a show of solidarity the other unions also refused to handle Pullman cars. The Pullman company and the General Managers' Association formulated their own plans for dealing with the boycott; any employee unwilling to handle Pullman cars would be fired. This action moved the unions from a boycott to nationwide strike.

Southern California was serviced by two major railroads, the Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe. Beside the two giants the Southland was also served by a number of small independent roads. Every small town and hamlet had its own railroad station; many no more than flag stops across the chaparral or the citrus groves in the more cultivated, if not more cultured, places. Los Angeles was served by three large depots; River Station on San Fernando Street (now North Spring Street) near Elysian Park; the Arcade Station on Alameda Street below Fourth Street; La Grande Station at Santa Fe below First Street on the banks of the Los Angeles River. River Station was not only the Southern Pacific's main depot, but also its stockyards and machine repair shops.

When orders came from Chicago most southern California

union men expected to carry out quietly the boycott order against Pullman. At 6:15 on the morning of Wednesday, June 27, the switchman at La Grande Station informed Superintendent Beamer that he refused to couple any Pullman cars to an outgoing train; some forty passengers could not depart and had their fares refunded.<sup>6</sup> At 8:30 a.m. at River Station a train in from El Paso was allowed to continue because it had set out before the boycott had gone into effect. However, by 2:30 p.m. no train carrying Pullmans were being allowed through. Superintendent J.A. Muir met with a committee of ARU men and they agreed to allow a train out of the Arcade at 2:15 p.m., but it was stopped just up the line at River Station.<sup>7</sup> These problems did not affect the local trains which carried no Pullmans. News began to filter in from Raton, New Mexico, that ARU members who attempted to carry on the boycott were fired by the Santa Fe and that the company had brought in federal marshals "loaded down with guns." This action changed the whole complexion of the boycott; the ARU and allied unions began a general strike against the Santa Fe until those fired were rehired. As word spread all over town that the boycott had turned into a major confrontation between unions and management large crowds converged on all three Los Angeles depots. That evening a meeting was held by ARU men to discuss the day's developments. Southern Pacific's Superintendent D. Bukhalter, director of the Mojave Division, tried to speak to the gathering, but accomplished nothing. Also attending was "detective" Miles T. Bowler, who was actually a Los Angeles County deputy sheriff. One man, described by the Los Angeles *Times* as a drunk, demanded Bowler leave and began to push him toward the door. Others restrained the man as Bowler left on his own accord.<sup>8</sup> The unwelcome presence of Bowler at the meeting, the *Times* description of him as a "detective," and his involvement in subsequent events leads to speculation he was not there in any official capacity as a deputy sheriff but rather as a spy for railroad management. One of the most immediate effects of the boycott-turned-strike was a disruption of mail service.

The strike split the community, although in the beginning most were in favor of the strikers. The *Times*, taking a cue from the Chicago papers, bashed the strikers in every edition. In an editorial on Friday, July 29, the paper wrote:

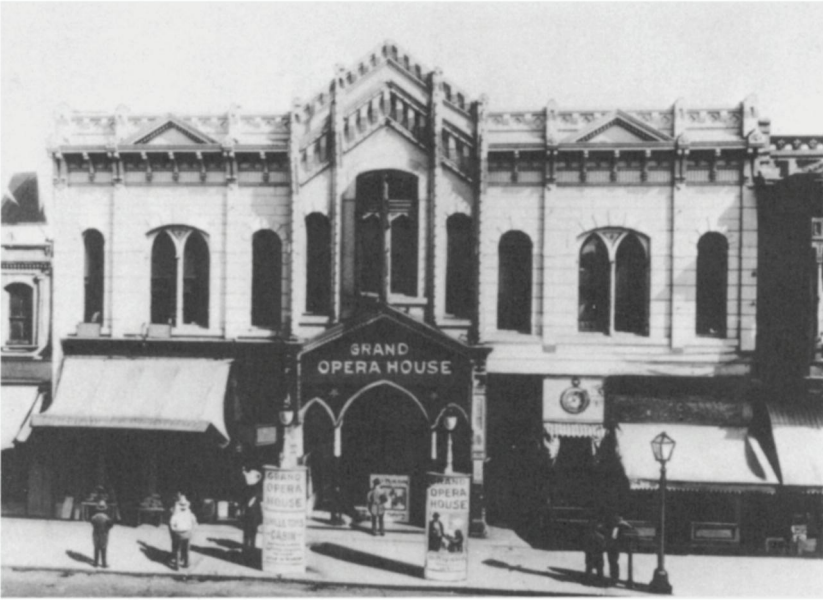
The action of this labor union shows that its leaders are not men of wisdom or they would not seek to antagonize a large portion of the population as they undoubtedly will succeed in doing...If one employer can be coerced—can be forced to do that which his employees dictate—then why not a corporation or a dozen corporations of the nation...If you steal a dime, why not steal a thousand dollars? The principle is the same.<sup>9</sup>

Others could see the sinister hordes of immigrants behind it all. A *Times* reader wrote:

So many many aliens have come into our country that our American people seem to have become alienated from their old ways of thinking and not to frown down on this present condition of affairs. But a few more boycotts and no doubt the true Americans will arouse from their lethargy and make known their utter dislike to such contemptible foreign methods in the old-time American manner.<sup>10</sup>

During the course of the strike newspaper boys refused or were intimidated not to sell copies of the *Times*. The strikers did enjoy some grassroots support. On one of the early canceled departures from La Grande Station the twenty-seven would-be passengers met under the rotunda of the depot, voted to support the strike and took the strikers to dinner.<sup>11</sup> Los Angeles theater people, led by actress Carrie Clark, got behind the strikers by giving a benefit performance of *The Ticket-of-Leave Man* on July 10 at the Grand Opera House and a few nights later giving another benefit performance of *The Long Strike* at the Los Angeles Theater. The Los Angeles *Evening Express* encouraged theatergoers to attend: "there will be a performance that will be worth twice the price of admission. Here is a chance to extend sympathy to the strikers in a substantial way." In San Diego on the evening of June 30 a pro-boycott rally was held in the center of town with over 1,000 in attendance. A resolution was drawn up demanding the voice of labor be heard. The gathering was presided over by no less than Billy Carlson, the town's outspoken and flamboyant mayor.<sup>12</sup> Strikers even received some measured support from the U.S. district attorney; when initially approached by lawyers for the railroads District Attorney George Denis was reported to have told them the Pullman cars were not the concern of the government.<sup>13</sup> Lawyers for the railroads insisted Denis prosecute the strikers under two existing statutes, implying

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The Grand Opera House served as a meeting place for strikers. It was here District Attorney George Denis told the railroad men he would have to enforce the law. *Courtesy Security Pacific Collection/Los Angeles Public Library.*



Although taken in 1897, this Ontario packing house was typical of those of the 1890s. During the strike citrus had to be left to rot in the bins. *Courtesy Model Colony Room Collection, Ontario Public Library.*



**The Los Angeles Theater and next to it the Music Hall. Actors and actresses showed their solidarity with strikers by giving a benefit performance of *The Long Strike*. Courtesy Security Pacific Collection/ Los Angeles Public Library.**



the strike was a conspiracy to obstruct the delivery of the mail. Denis telegraphed Washington arguing he did not believe the laws applied to the boycott and it would not be practical, nor would he have the resources to arrest all of the railroad men involved. However, Denis' dealings with the strikers changed quite swiftly once he received his orders on how to handle the situation. On Thursday evening, June 28, he met with 400 railroad men at the Grand Opera House on Main Street. He spoke at some length, lecturing the men on their responsibility for the mail and urging them to return to work or he would be forced albeit personally unpleasant, to carry out his duty to enforce the law.

In spite of support for the strikers southern California was within days beginning to feel the pain of the strike. The *Ontario Record* best described what was happening:

The mail service has been interrupted to the great damage of business interests. Perishable freight has been sidetracked until it was a total loss. Fruits and vegetables have rotted in the orchards and fields because there was no means of transportation, while other communities there has been positive suffering for lack of these communities. Isolated towns in the desert have been threatened with starvation. Some people have been stopped on their journeys and left in remote points to shift for themselves.

Near Glendora one grower lost his entire blackberry crop worth \$450, which was quite a large sum by 1894 standards. The *Ontario Observer* reported half a shipment of oranges were loaded on a train at Riverside but had to be left to rot; the other half remained in a packing house for lack of any means of transporting the goods to market. The *California Fruit Growers and Fruit Trade Review* reported on July 5: "Business is at a standstill owing to the great railroad strike...As for business there is nothing to report, every branch of trade is at a dead standstill."<sup>15</sup> The same journal reported a week later that losses in agriculture exceeded \$100 million. However, not only was agriculture suffering but other trades as well. Construction of a building on Colorado Boulevard in Pasadena came to a halt because lime and cement from Colton could not be delivered. Contractor George Webster was forced to send two four-horse teams to Colton to pick up the needed supplies.<sup>16</sup> In Santa Monica the tourist business fell off sharply; the beach city could



Drying trays filled with deciduous fruit. In spite of the strike, 1894 would still be a banner year for deciduous fruit growers in the Pomona Valley. *Courtesy Colony Room Collection, Ontario Public Library.*



The Chino Station, like others in rural southern California, sat idle during the Great Railroad Strike of 1894. *Courtesy Model Colony Room Collection, Ontario Public Library.*

expect 10,000 to 15,000 visitors on a summer's weekend and the Fourth of July, however, the strike had reduced these numbers to only a few.<sup>17</sup> There were predictions coal and fuel would soon run out and Los Angeles would be in darkness. In some of the outlying communities, such as San Bernardino, sugar had already run out. Rumor had it Los Angeles had only enough flour for a few more weeks. One incident which caught the concern of many was the plight of the passengers stranded in Barstow since the strike was called against the Santa Fe. Aboard were women, children and several passengers who were in poor health. They were reported to be making the most of the situation by sitting on the shady side of the train. Although having little to eat or drink, they were gifted in having a lot of time to reflect on their ordeal.<sup>18</sup> Not even the world of sports was immune. The California Baseball Club of Los Angeles, made up of college-age men, was scheduled to play the Cactus Baseball Club of San Diego on July 4. The outlook wasn't promising for the Los Angeles nine that day, their travel plans were preempted by the strike and they were forced to seek another means of transportation. They managed to arrive in San Diego by way of a private yacht in time to play. In some cases the hardship brought on by the lack of transportation was downright personal. One Azusa man, stranded in Los Angeles, told the *Express* he wanted to go home to attend the Republican rally; he also added: "I can never square this thing with my wife, I promised her faithfully to come home sober and I know she is nearly frantic with grief for fear I have broken my promise." The strike was also throwing a block at love and marriage. In Ontario plans for the Borthwick-Cavanugh wedding seemed to be derailed. The Ontario *Observer* also reported:

About the most pathetic tale which rumor has set afloat lately, is the story of a young man of Cucamonga who left his home, like young Lochmoor, to seek his bride. The iron horse which conveyed him part way on his journey was not as true as the gentleman above named, for upon arriving in Los Angeles he was informed he could go no further unless he walked. In the meantime the bride-elect had left her home and journeyed a short distance toward Los Angeles, but many miles still separate these loving hearts and it is safe to say there is one man from Cucamonga who has no sympathy for strikers.<sup>19</sup>

While some were staggering under the burden of the strike,

others as always seems to happen in the worst of situations, were turning a profit. The Southern Pacific and the Santa Fe, in their efforts to try to turn public opinion against the strike, began to couple Pullman cars to local trains. The smaller local lines, such as the Terminal and Redondo Railroads, had more passengers than they could handle. The steamboat *Santa Rosa*, which routinely sailed up to San Francisco and back, usually had no more than fifty passengers; as a result of the strike 350 were waiting to get on board.<sup>20</sup> The steamer people took full advantage of the situation by charging what the *Times* reported to be "exorbitant prices for carrying the mail." Enterprising teamsters began running wagons and stage-coaches between towns all over the Southland.

The one disruption which affected everyone was disruption in mail service; in many cases the mail had come to a complete halt. The mails became the trump card in the hands of railroad management; it was the Attorney General of the United States, Richard Olney, who would assist management in playing out its hand. Olney, years before he had joined President Grover Cleveland's administration, had been a high priced lawyer for several important railroad companies. He was looking for a way to get the government involved in the strike so he could bail out his friends in the General Managers' Association. On Monday, July 2, he ordered all U.S. district attorneys to seek in the federal courts sweeping injunctions against the ARU and their allies. He argued the action was warranted because of interference with the movement of the mails. The injunctions were based on the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1891 which was actually passed by Congress to prosecute big business monopolies that restricted interstate commerce. The reasoning went the ARU had monopolized labor and its actions were restricting interstate commerce. So that the injunctions could be enforced the Justice Department placed in the hands of the federal courts, all U.S. marshals, and by order of President Grover Cleveland, the United States Army.

In southern California moving the mails had never been an issue; ARU had informed the Chief Inspector of the Pacific Coast they were ready to handle mail at any time.<sup>21</sup> Some 300 Southern Pacific employees signed and sent on to management a statement that they were quite willing to move the mail.<sup>22</sup> This did not deter

management from coupling Pullman cars to mail cars. Lawyers for the railroads in Los Angeles had already gone before the federal grand jury to ask that indictments be brought against the ARU and its allies for interfering with the mails. District Attorney George Denis had invited representatives of the unions to give testimony before the grand jury, however, they did not show.<sup>23</sup> The unions reasoned they had already made public statements attesting to their willingness to move the mail. On Monday, July 2, federal officials wasted no time in moving against the strikers. The tough minded, law-and-order judge, Erskine Mayo Ross, would be the first judge in the country to issue an injunction against the unions.<sup>24</sup> Had Ross lived in the previous era he no doubt would have been known as a “hanging judge.” District Attorney Denis began drawing up indictments for contempt of court to present to the grand jury. The U.S. marshal’s office, although in some disarray owing to the serious illness of Chief Marshal Covarrubias, was looking for a few good men to carry out the orders of the court. A detachment of

The Honorable Erskine Mayo  
Ross, Federal Judge, South-  
ern District of California.  
*Courtesy Security Pacific  
Collection/Los Angeles  
Public Library.*



U.S. Army regulars were ordered down to Los Angeles from San Francisco. The Los Angeles Police Department had already begun patrolling all train depots.

With all these forces amassed against them the strikers and their sympathizers held a meeting the same night the injunctions were issued; over 3,000 were in attendance at Hazard's Pavilion.<sup>25</sup> Among the more respectable speakers that night were Lee Fairchild, a union leader from Washington State, and Rev. Dr. W.C. Bowman, Populist candidate for Congress; there were also several union officials present. The most radical speaker was Rev. N.E. Ravlin who spoke for over an hour. He called for government control of the railroads; denounced the *Times* for supporting management; ridiculed Judge Ross and District Attorney Denis; he urged the strikers to resist and "stand in this fight if you die in your tracks." This sort of talk was too radical for the taste of most of the audience, who booed and hissed at Ravlin. The term "anarchistic" was not far from everyone's minds; not only could most remember what had happened at Haymarket Square, but only two days before the start of the boycott the President of France, Sadi Carnot, had been assassinated by an anarchist in Lyons. Another meeting was held by strikers one night later at the Music Hall, in part to denounce the violence advocated by Ravlin.

In spite of southern California's sensitivities, the action taken by the federal government had so radicalized the strike that violence was a sure bet. At the Sacramento depot U.S. Marshal Barry Baldwin and his deputies were assaulted by a mob when they tried to serve the injunction.<sup>26</sup> Baldwin called on Governor Henry H. Markham for assistance. Markham's solution to the problem, a solution suggested by many, including California's U.S. Senator Stephen White, was to settle the strike through arbitration. Management, however, wanted no part of an arbitrated settlement. Markham did place the state militia on alert and they were to prepare to move into action on an hour's notice. Members of Company G of Redlands told the town's newspaper, the *Citrograph*, they would carry out their orders if the time should come, however, they were still sympathetic with the strikers. The militia was called up to deal with problems in Stockton and Sacramento. When ordered to clear the Sacramento depot the troops threw down their guns and

walked away.<sup>27</sup> This brought angry denunciation from many quarters. The *California Fruit Growers and Trade Review* thundered:

The cowards and mutineers of the State militia who showed the white feather at Sacramento last week should be court martialed, dishonorably dismissed from the service and drummed out of camp to the tune of "the coward's march." They should be deprived of the right of suffrage and fined \$100 each.<sup>28</sup>

Some marshals avoided confrontation by employing more deceptive means in serving the injunctions. Deputy Marshal Fredrich B. Goodrich, working out of the marshal's office in Los Angeles, sent a dispatch to union men in San Diego calling for a meeting to make an urgent announcement by the Southern Pacific management; strikers were assured no papers would be served. When the 150 ARU members assembled at National City, a deputy, acting on behalf of Goodrich, handed all of them injunctions and some subpoenas to appear before Judge Ross and the grand jury in Los Angeles. These tactics did not win any friends. The deputies were refused service in restaurants and saloons. Employees of the National City and Otay Railroad threatened to strike if they tried to take the line back to San Diego. After having to walk back, the deputies tried to board the steamboat *Mexico* to Los Angeles; the crew of the *Mexico* threatened to walk off the job if the deputies boarded.<sup>29</sup> George T. Insley, one of the deputies involved, told the San Diego *Union* that the whole story about their alleged mistreatment was a hoax spread about town by unhappy railroad men. Joseph Bachman, the president of San Diego's local ARU, however, when interviewed by the same newspaper, stood by the story. This sort of treatment, or alleged treatment, did nothing to deter many from signing on to be deputies; the government was paying \$2.50 a day, which was a very attractive wage for many who were unemployed. The character and commitment to duty of some of these newly sworn officers of the court was questionable. Some complained the marshal's office was playing politics; Democrats were readily employed while Republicans had to wait.<sup>30</sup> Deputies did play a positive role in the "rescue" of the passengers stranded in the desert heat at Barstow, although the events surrounding the story are somewhat clouded. Deputy marshals accompanied union men to Barstow, but interestingly the two Pullman cars which were part

of the original train were left behind. The passengers were indignant they had been made to suffer. The *Times* reported one passenger, Mrs. Mary Barnett of Toronto, Canada, was taken off the train "quite sick." Passenger G.L. Dean blamed the Santa Fe for not bringing them out sooner; he reported to the *Express* that the sheriff of San Bernardino County, James Booth, had guaranteed the safety of all parties involved but the railroad company refused to act any sooner.<sup>31</sup>

In Los Angeles the government began its crackdown on union leadership. Conductor Charles Heart, who had been an outspoken leader of the strike at La Grande Station, was cited for contempt and arrested; his subsequent trial was covered in the greatest detail by the *Times*. By Wednesday, July 4, the president of the ARU local, Philip Stanwood, and five of its officers were arrested and charged



The Los Angeles Federal Building at the corner of Main and Winston. It housed the Federal District Court where the Grand Jury prepared indictments against the local ARU leadership. *Courtesy Security Pacific Collection/ Los Angeles Public Library.*



with obstruction and incitement of other to obstruction of a court order; bail was set at \$3,000 for each man. On Saturday, July 7, Rev. Ravlin was arrested on the charge of "willfully, unlawfully and feloniously inciting a large number of people to rebellion and insurrection against the authority of the United States and laws thereof."<sup>32</sup> Ravlin's bail was set at \$7,000, a sum he could not raise. Large crowds gathered daily at the Federal Building to take in the proceedings, but there were no reports of any violence. Judge Ross suggested to members of the striking unions to go back to work or quit their jobs; some chose to do the former. Support for the strike began to waver among the Brotherhood unions; this was true not only in southern California but the rest of the country as well. At 5 a.m. on July 4 a detachment of 250 federal troops arrived at River Station; by that afternoon all three Los Angeles depots were secured. Much to the surprise of the soldiers they met no resistance, although as the day grew on large crowds of the curious gathered at all three locations. With federal troops patrolling the stations, ARU leaders jailed, deputy marshals arresting others, the allied unions began to desert the strike. On Saturday, July 6, the Order of Railway Conductors and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers both held meetings to discuss the situation with delegates of their northern California co-workers. Although neither meeting produced a course of action, shortly thereafter both unions voted to go back to work.

With the assistance of troops and marshals the returning rail workers were able to get the trains running again. This was greeted with hostility, indignation and defiance all over the Southland. On July 7 in San Bernardino, the first train coming from the East since the beginning of the strike came through with Pullman and mail cars guarded by federal soldiers. Several hundred gathered at the Santa Fe depot; some jeered the engineer and conductor, calling them scabs. In Santa Anna a man named Joe Williams was hustled off by police after making "incendiary remarks" on a downtown street against the Santa Fe.<sup>33</sup> ARU members who continued the struggle defiantly took up wearing white ribbons as the badge of their cause. This brought protests from the ladies of the WCTU who used the white ribbon as their badge.

What explicitly brought the shift in popular opinion against the

strike was the bloodshed and destruction which was soon to follow. What the pro-management newspapers failed to tell their readers was there had been relatively little violence until federal troops arrived on the scene. By July 4 rioting and vandalism had broken out in Chicago; over the next few days the situation became progressively worse. Troops were sent in to protect property and restore order using whatever force was necessary. When it was all over the Strike Commission reported twelve had died; 515 had been arrested by police; another 190 were arrested by federal authorities. By July 11 there were 14,186 federal and militia troops, federal marshals, sheriff deputies and police on the streets of Chicago.<sup>34</sup> So appalled was attorney Clarence Darrow at the treatment of the strikers he resigned his position with the Chicago and Northwest Railroad and sought out Debs to offer his assistance. Debs, along with the entire union leadership, had been jailed. Another blow to the ARU's cause which tilted popular opinion against the strike was its failure to win support from the American Federation of Labor. For the AFL to support the ARU went contrary to Samuel Gompers' philosophy of organizing craft unions as opposed to industrial unions. Gompers had steadfastly refused to get the AFL involved, although it did contribute to the ARU's defense fund.

News spread across the country about the turn of events in Chicago; violence and destruction or rumor of the like also began to spread. Outside of Sacramento a train was derailed; a clear case of sabotage which cost the lives of four men, three of them soldiers. The Southern Pacific put up a reward of \$5,000 for information or evidence leading to the arrest and conviction of those responsible. A few days later Harry Knox, the leader of Sacramento's ARU local, was arrested and charged with the crime.<sup>35</sup> The *California Fruit Growers and Trade Review* commented:

The wrecking of a train near Sacramento, last week, where were killed the engineer and a number of U.S. soldiers sent to guard the train was a monstrous crime, revolting to all men who have human instincts...The blood thirsty recklessness of these proceedings is almost unparalleled in a time of peace, and it may be well to inquire how much longer society will patiently endure...<sup>36</sup>

At The Needles a railroad bridge was burned down. Near San

Bernardino railroad cars were overturned where the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe tracks cross. The *Times* reported an "intimidatory committee" had been appointed by the more radical strikers to keep other union members in line. On Tuesday evening, July 10, about thirty men overturned several cars, blocking the exit of a sidetracked train near River Station. When police arrived they found a crowd of about 100 milling around, but not one of them could identify the men who carried out the deed.<sup>37</sup> Very early the next morning a few more cars were found overturned on the Southern Pacific tracks near East Side Park. On Thursday night, July 12, there was an attempt on the life of engineer Jesse Martin. Martin brought a train down from Santa Barbara; at about 9 p.m. he slowed to take on some soldiers who had been guarding the Buena Vista Street Bridge just up the line from River Station. As the train came to a halt shotgun blasts riddled the cab, however, none of the shots hit their mark. A deputy marshal posted on a nearby water tower saw where the shots had come from, a clump of eucalyptus trees near the tracks. This led authorities to the apprehension of a man named Henry Patterson who was found in the nearby vicinity. Patterson and Martin had been friends before the strike. Apparently Patterson, a longtime employee of the Southern Pacific and radical supporter of the strike, was one of the band who was using intimidation on those who chose to return to work. He claimed he and a friend, a man he identified as Cadwell, went out that night to go bird hunting in Burbank and that it was Cadwell who fired on the train.<sup>38</sup> All of the evidence indicated Patterson was alone that night.

With regard to armed resistance on behalf of the strikers, a bizarre development took place on July 4, the day federal troops arrived in Los Angeles. Later that day a group of pro-strike laborers met at the Council of Labor Hall and formed what they called the "Los Angeles Independent Military Company," enlisting fifty men.<sup>39</sup> By the time this story had reached San Diego the *Union* was reporting they had enlisted 5,000! Did they plan to take on the U.S. Army to save the strike? Was this some type of misguided patriotic bravado orchestrated for Independence Day and the state of current events? Just what were the intentions of the militia of the proletariat will never be known; they disappeared from the scene as quickly as they appeared.

On Monday, July 9, a last effort was made by ARU members in Los Angeles to get the Merchants Association, a group that had acted as go-between for union and management, to use their influence on Congress to end government support of management. The ARU wanted all members reinstated in their old jobs, but they still refused to handle any Pullman cars and rejected arbitration.<sup>40</sup> By this time, however, the violent acts of a few caused popular sentiment to turn against the strikers. The Brotherhood unions returned to work. Friends of the strike were distancing themselves from it. The *Citrograph* seems to have most correctly put into words the thoughts of many:

Obedience to law and order are fundamental principles in every American breast. The government is not to be overturned by any small minority of people; and armed interference with law will never succeed and ought not. We are sorry the strike—as originally planned—failed. Our sympathies are ever and always with the working men, as it is only through organization that any stand can be made against the grinding down of wages by organized capital.<sup>41</sup>

The magnitude of such an event as the Great Railroad Strike of 1894 was bound to change the lives of the great as well as the ordinary. His handling of the strike and the depression that proceeded it did nothing to enhance Grover Cleveland's standing with organized labor. In the mid-term elections of 1894 the Democrats were swept out of Congress in a Republican landslide. Eugene V. Debs took his cause all the way to the Supreme Court only to lose. He would emerge from his prison cell totally alienated by capitalism and a committed socialist. He ran as the socialist candidate for president in 1904, 1908, 1912, and 1920. Clarence Darrow never returned to working for the railroads, but became the champion of civil liberties and one of the founders of the American Civil Liberties Union. Miles T. Bowler would leave the sheriff's office and be employed as a detective by the Southern Pacific. After the strike W. D. Bucklew, his wife and children, returned home to North Cucamonga; he returned to work only to be fired by the Santa Fe. Although he had taken no part in the strike, having spent the entire time recovering from illness at his sister's, being a member of the ARU was reason enough for the company to dismiss him.<sup>42</sup> In the Pomona Valley, although the strike had caused delays in the ship-

ment of deciduous fruit, once shipments had resumed 1894 went down as a banner year. Even though the strike had caused some inconvenience, the Borthwicks were wed on Saturday, July 14. For the newly married couple it would always be an easy time to recall; they were married near the end of the Great Railroad Strike of 1894.

NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>“Town Topics,” *Pomona Progress*, July 3, 1894, p. 1.
- <sup>2</sup>*Ontario Record*, June 20, 1894, p. 5.
- <sup>3</sup>*U.S. Strike Commission Report*, Senate Executive Document No. 7, 53rd Cong., 3rd Sess., p. 21.
- <sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 33.
- <sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 21.
- <sup>6</sup>“Trains Tied Up,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, June 27, 1894, p. 1.
- <sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*
- <sup>8</sup>“In This City,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 28, 1894, p. 2.
- <sup>9</sup>“An Issue that Must be Met,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 29, 1894, p. 4.
- <sup>10</sup>“The Un-American and Vicious Boycott,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 6, 1894, p. 5. This was a letter to the editor written by Joseph Jennings.
- <sup>11</sup>“All Tied Up,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, June 28, 1894, p. 1.
- <sup>12</sup>“The Plaza Meeting,” *San Diego Union*, July 1, 1894, p. 2.
- <sup>13</sup>“All Tied Up,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, June 28, 1894, p. 1.
- <sup>14</sup>“The Strike,” *Ontario Record*, July 11, 1894, p. 5.
- <sup>15</sup>*California Fruit Growers and Trade Review*, 25 (July 5, 1894): 17.
- <sup>16</sup>*Colton Chronicle*, July 14, 1894, p. 4.
- <sup>17</sup>“Local Notes on the Strike,” *Pomona Progress*, July 5, 1894, p. 1.
- <sup>18</sup>“Men are Firm,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, June 30, 1894, p. 1.
- <sup>19</sup>“Cucamonga,” *Ontario Observer*, July 7, 1894, p. 8.
- <sup>20</sup>“The U.S. Army,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, July 2, 1894, p. 1.
- <sup>21</sup>“All Tied Up,” *ibid.*, June 28, 1894, p. 1.
- <sup>22</sup>“Wheels Stop,” *ibid.*, June 29, 1894, p. 1.
- <sup>23</sup>“Men are Firm,” *ibid.*, June 30, 1894, p. 1.
- <sup>24</sup>“The U.S. Army,” *ibid.*, July 2, 1894, p. 1.
- <sup>25</sup>“Mass Meeting,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 3, 1894, p. 8.
- <sup>26</sup>“Law is Defied,” *ibid.*, July 4, 1894, p. 1.
- <sup>27</sup>“They Flunked,” *ibid.*, July 5, 1894, p. 1.
- <sup>28</sup>*California Fruit Growers and Trade Review*, 25 (July 5, 1894): 17.
- <sup>29</sup>“How He Caught ‘Em,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 3, 1894, p. 3.
- <sup>30</sup>“Notes,” *ibid.*, July 10, 1894, p. 5.
- <sup>31</sup>“The Barstow Train,” *Los Angeles Evening Express*, July 5, 1894, p. 5. This was a letter written to the editor by G.L. Dean.
- <sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, July 7, 1894, p. 3.

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<sup>33</sup>"At Santa Anna," *Los Angeles Times*, July 8, 1894, p. 3.

<sup>34</sup>*U.S. Strike Commission Report*, Senate Executive Document No. 7, 53rd Cong., 3rd Sess., pp. 28-29.

<sup>35</sup>*California Fruit Growers and Trade Review*, 25 (July 21, 1894): 1.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup>"First Act of Violence," *Los Angeles Times*, July 11, 1894, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup>"Held in \$5,000 Bail," *ibid.*, July 14, 1894, p. 8.

<sup>39</sup>"A Military Organization," *Los Angeles Evening Express*, July 4, 1894, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup>"Striker's Meeting," *ibid.*, July 10, 1894, p. 5.

<sup>41</sup>*Citrograph*, July 14, 1894, p. 5.

<sup>42</sup>"Cucamonga," *Ontario Record*, July 18, 1894, p. 5.

