Running the Railroad



Rail workers organize and the intersections of race and class









Introduction

- A railroad is not just steel rails, machinery, and locomotives.
- A railroad serves human communities.
- A railroad is operated, maintained and built by people.



In 19th century America, the great subject for editorialist and street corner agitators is:



"The Labor Question."

Work was transformed in the 19th century

- Large enterprises grew
- More impersonal work
- Artisan skills lost
- Workers autonomy threatened



Is capital accumulation compatible with democracy?

- Did great wealth threaten democracy?
- How does a worker express his or her voice?
- Are large businesses controlling politics?
- These were all serious and often-debated questions in the 19th century.

Railroads open Illinois

 1850s railroad development spurred settlement and Illinois industrial development

1852 Illinois Railroad mileage: 971856 Illinois Railroad mileage: 2,7611882 Illinois Railroad mileage: 13,130



Challenges to Railroad building

- Railroads are capital intensive
- Needed materials distant
- Intensive hand labor
- Mass labor force

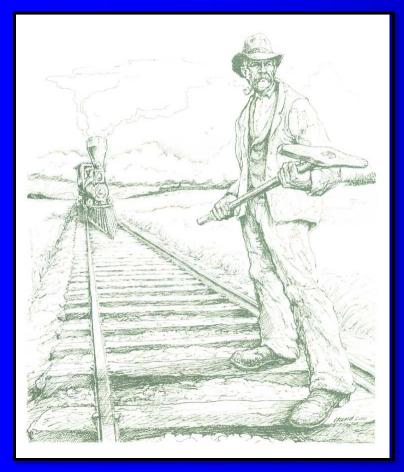


Building the Illinois Central Railroad, 1854



Building the Illinois Central 1968 painting by George Parrish

Finding workers – Irish immigrants



Potato famine exodus Coincided with great labor needs Quick and available jobs Track laying, canal digging required no training An opportune moment: An emerging new industry meant opportunities.

Not always a pleasant story

This Celtic cross honors the memory of more than fifty souls buried here in the early 1850s. These immigrants from Ireland were driven from the land of their birth by famine and disease. They arrived sick and penniless, and took hard and dangerous jobs building the Chicago & Alton Railroad. Known but to God, they rest here in individual anonymity far from the old homes of their hearts - yet forever short of the new homes of their hopes. Their sacrifices opened interior Illinois and made it possible to develop the riches of the land we share today.

Placed by McLean County Historical Society April 28, 2000

Irish Rail Workers Monument, Funk's Grove



Early organizing & resistance

August 1859 petition to the Governor Chicago, Alton & St. Louis Railroad.

CIRCULAR.

At a meeting of the employees of the St. Louis, Alton & Chicago Railroad, held at Bloomington, on Thursday, August 18, 1889, JOHN C. RAGLAND WAS appointed Chairman, and JOHN SCANLAN, Scretary. The following preamble and resolutions were adopted:

WHEREAS, GOV. Matteson makes the following proposition, to-wit: That he will continue to pay for the present year as he has been paying, and to pay one month of back pay in the month of August, and continue to pay one month's back pay in the months of October and November; therefore, be it

Resolved, That we will sustain him in operating the road so long as said Matteson con tinues to act in good faith in bearing out the above mode of payments: Provided, That at any time the road shall not earn money enough to carry out the above, said Matteson is to immediately notify the employees, and ask their further action in reference to the matter-he making the payments as now proposed, up to the time of a call for a meeting of said employ ces. (The above is on condition that in future harmony is observed on the line of said road.) Provided, That any man who has been previously paid on any back month the company may be paying upon, he shall not be paid another back month until others are paid another month. If the arrangement is carried out by the Bondholders, that they have entered into with said Matteson, (to fulfill the January agreement,) at any time to take the road before this year closes, it is to do away with this agreement. Resolved, That in the event of the necessi-

Resolved, That in the event of the necessity arising for Governor Matteson to notify the employees that the receipts are not sufficient to enable him to comply with the terms of the foregoing contract, then that the employees shall have the power to appoint of their number one man in fifty, who, when so appointed, shall convene at Bloomington and conler with Governor Matteson, and shall be empowered by him to examine his statements and necounts and report to the employees; and after consultation with them, and a full exhibit of the receipts and all other facts elicited by them, to adopt such further arrangements for payments as will, in their opinion, be for the best interests of all the employees.

Resolced, That in future any man or men who shall be discharged for a just cause, except in a case of insubordination, he shall be entitled to and receive all money due him forthwith; and that men discharged for insubordination shall be paid the same time and in the same proportion as the men who remain on the Road: *Provided*, however, that if any man shall be discharged who feels himself aggrieved, he shall have the privilege of appealing his case to the next officer superior to his

JOHN SCANLAN, Secretary.

Compliments of R.C. Roger's. march 2. 1908.

The start was in the start of the

foreman; and if his decision should not be satifactory, then to the Superintendent of the Road, whose decision shall be final, and who shall have power, if he finds the case an unjust one, to order the full payment to the man discharged, or replace him at some other point than the one from which he was discharged. "Resolted, That the payments to be made shall be for the following months: The most have it from the monthe of June, 1859, and November, 1858; that the September payment, shall be for the month of July, 1859; that the October payment shall be for August, 1859, and October, 1858; that the November payment shall be for September, 1850, and September, 1858; that payment be made from the stat out the 20th of easid months; that months that back pay are paid on, be paid form the 20th of easid months.

JOEL A. MATTESON.

The following delegates were reported to be in attendance:

ALTON. David Meagher. Patrick Hooley, James Mann. Bernard O'Connor-John Russells R.*P. Tansey, Davis Flinn. Henry Larkin. W. Heiskinson. SPRINGFIELD TO BLOOMINGTON. John Quigley, Richard Breed L. R. Kimball, Daniel Carmody, John O'Neill, A. Flinn. John Bushell, Henry Cooper, Patrick McCabe, R. T. Williams, John Tansen. William Bushell Felix McManus, J. Leahy, Cornelius Burns, James Burns, George Judd, T. Carmody, John Whelan, T. R. Armstrong. D. S. Ives, John C. Ragland, Mathew Cummings BLOOMINGTON TO JOLIET. John Lee, William Cotter, James Cotton, P. Sullivan. Joseph Haines, J. Murray, W. Rowley, J. Mooney, James Smithe Robert Park, Robert Westwater, Thomas Little, J. W. Chappell, William Condon. P. Markey, E. Dodwell. J. F. Miller. A. A. Brackett, H. Osborne, J. Quinn.

en, William Shirland. th, JOLIET TO CHICAGO.

Patrick Meehan, S. W. Arnold, Martin Meyers, Thomas Donahoe,

2

* JOHN C. RAGLAND, Chairman

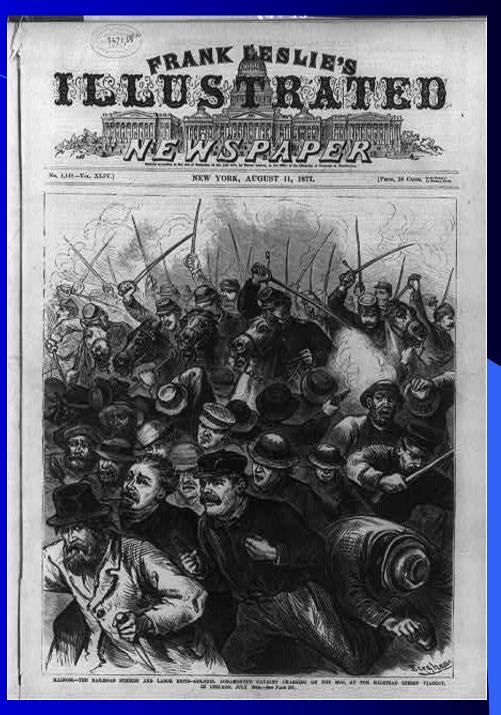
Swaringen,

J. Holsworth,

1877 – the Great Uprising

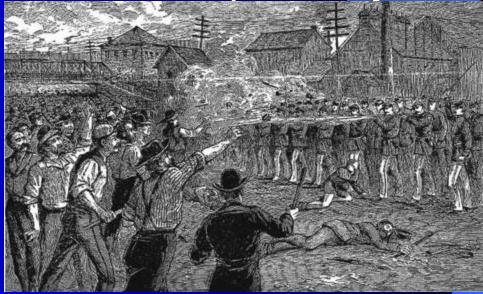
- Spontaneous strikes throughout the Eastern U.S.
- Began July 14 on the B&O railroad in Martinsburg, W.Va., with worker anger over longer trains & reduced pay; spreads to Pittsburgh, Chicago, St. Louis and East St. Louis.

Illinois actions in Chicago, Aurora, **Bloomington**, Decatur, Peoria, **Urbana and East** St. Louis. Sympathy strikers by miners in LaSalle, Braidwood, Springfield and Carbondale.



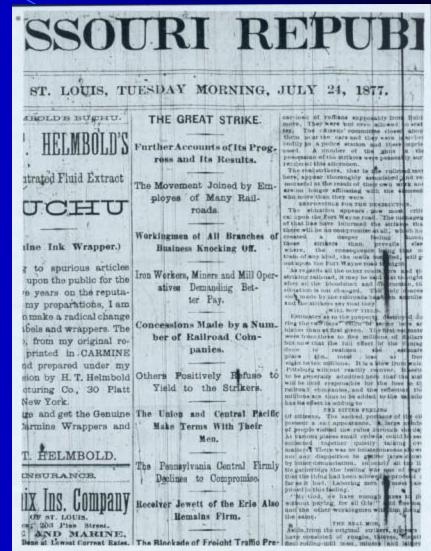
Chicago – July 1877

- Spontaneous actions by the unemployed attack railroad yards, July 24.
- 5000 vigilantes summoned by the Mayor
- Confrontations between federal troops and city police leave 20 dead.



East St. Louis

July 21-28 A workers' government or "Commune" is established in East St. Louis. 3,000 federal troops <u>& 5,000 deputies</u> battle strikers, 18 killed.



Which track to take? 19th century labor and its choices

- Workers organize for self-protection
- Safety concerns
- Falling wages
- Spontaneous strikes ineffective





Craft union tradition

- Organize workers according to their trade.
- Worker must meet craft standards.
- Internal, not external, solidarity.
- Accepting, not challenging to capitalism.
- Partner with management.
- Political neutrality.
- A "white man's club."

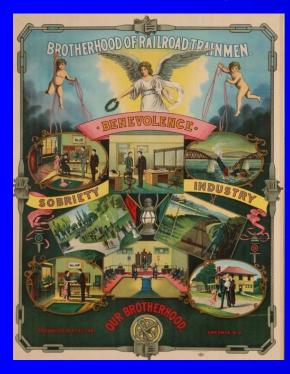
Industrial Unionism

- "An injury to one is an injury to all."
- Unite all workers.
- Seeks allies outside of the workplace.
- Political activism.
- Less concerned with race and gender divides.
- Distrustful of capitalism, socialist or utopian in its vision.



High accident rates pushed workers to organize

• *"Yearly railroad casualties exceed the losses by Wellington at Waterloo*

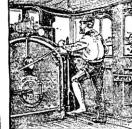


and Meade

at Gettysburg."

--Congressman Henry Cabot Lodge.

ARTIFICIAL LIMBS } WITH RUBBER FEE AND HANDS.



It is not unusual to see an engineer with hand on the throttle.or a condoctor, brakeman, firstor, brakeman, firsmason, unior, if fact men of every vocation, wearing legs with rubber feet. of Mark's Patents performing as much labor as men in por session of all their manning the sam wares; in fact ere perioding little on no inconvenience.

Over 13,000 arti-Patents in daily use. Purchased by the United States and many foreign gov ernments. One-half of the limbs furnished by us are made from measurements and profiles without our seeing the wear Fit guaran teed. A treatise o 430 pages, with 256 illustrations and formula for measur ing sent free.



A. A. MARKS,

701 Broadway, N. Y

Craft union goals

- Railroad brotherhoods first founded for mutual insurance purposes.
- Sought to elevate their professional status.
- Concern for injuries & death.
- Sought dialogue with management, but not necessarily confrontation.





The Big Four



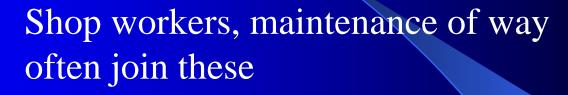
- Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, 1863
- Order of Railway Conductors, 1868
- Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, 1873
- Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, 1883



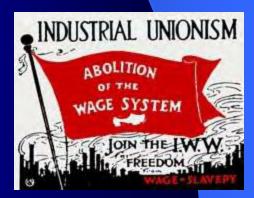


These organizations were soon known as the "Big Four."

Industrial Unionism on the Railroads



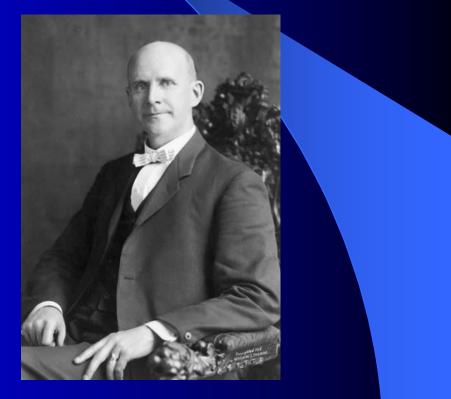
- The Noble Order of the Knights of Labor
- American Railway Union
- Industrial Workers of the World



American Railway Union

- Founded in Chicago in 1893, led by Debs.
- For all rail workers.
- After first victory, had more members
 than the "Big Four" 150,000/90,000.

Eugene V. Debs



The Pullman Strike & Boycott

- The model town –
- 1880 George Pullman buys 4000 acres
- Establishes model city
- Complete control by Pullman



1893 Recession

U.S. in an economic downturn Pullman cuts workers' wages Pullman refuses to lower rents Worker delegation rebuffed Workers strike



1893 strikers outside Pullman works

Pullman boycott & strike

1894 – ARU first convention in Chicago
Pullman workers appeal for support
Delegates vote to boycott Pullman cars
Rail companies, through the General Managers Association, put Pullman cars on mail trains

Workers accused of stopping U.S. Mail

U.S. intervention

- Federal troops & marshals sent to move trains
- Huge protests, 30 killed
 Debs & other leaders sentenced on conspiracy charges



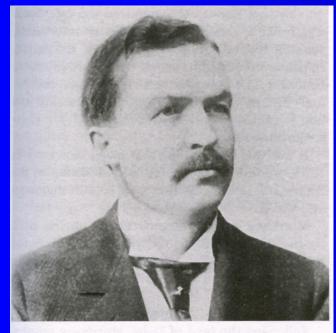


Who won the Pullman strike? Craft unions.

- Railroad companies recognized the "Big Four."
- Rail Brotherhoods as "mature partners" to industry.
- BLE contracts: 1902 (118), 1912 (243), 1916 (348).



P.H. Morrissey BRT



Patrick H. Morrissey (1862-1916)



Father an Irish immigrant track worker in Bloomington Grand Lodge Chairman, **Brotherhood** of Railroad Trainman, 1895-1909; When he assumed leadership, the BRT was \$105,000 in debt and under 10,000 members; when he left, the union had 120,000 members and \$3.2M

Federal government intervenes



- 1888 first federal rail arbitration law (non-binding).
- 1898 Erdman Act, mediation & arbitration.
- 1913 Newlands Act replaces Erdman Act, establishes permanent Board of Mediation & Conciliation.

Laws protect workers



1893 – Safety Appliances Act.
1906 - Employers Liability Act.
1907 - Hours of Duty Law (16 hours maximum work).
1911 - Illinois Workers' Compensation law.

Government regulations

- After the Pullman strike, the railroad industry is heavily regulated, both in its business activities(Interstate Commerce Commission) and its labor relations.
- Railroad workers enjoy federal protections unavailable to other workers.



Rail labor gains in WWI



- 1913 U.S. Department of Labor, active mediator.
- 1916 Adamson Act, 8 hour day on the railroads.
- 1918 U.S. Railroad Administration.
- 100,000 women join the railroad labor force.
- Wages & hours set by the Railway Labor Board.

Labor's wartime gains

- 60% of the nation's rail shops unionized.
- Brotherhood of Railway Clerks jumps from 51,000 to 186,000 members.
- Order of Railway Telegraphers, 25,000 to 48,700 workers.

Post-war reaction

- 1921: Railway Labor Board cuts wages, overtime benefits.
- June 1, 1922, 400,000 railroad shop workers strike nationally.
- Strike broken by federal action - 251 U.S. Marshals
- Troops in Clinton & Bloomington



Illinois National Guard C&A Shops, • Bloomington, July 1922.

1920s-30s Rail Labor Politically organizes

- Bi-partisan effort
- Encourages voter registration and political activism
- Members run for office
- Legislation Becomes the prototype for Social Security and the National Labor Relations Board

Federal law protects



- 1926 Railway Labor Act.
 - 1934 National Mediation Board.
 - National Railroad Adjustment Board.
- Railroad Retirement Act, 1934

Workers elected

1937 - Old Rail telegraphers now members of Congress. Washington, D.C., Jan. 9. Not so many years ago these two gents were both "pounding brass" on the **Burlington.** Now they are both members of Congress but still carry union cards in the Order of Railroad **Telegraphers.** Senator Ed Johnson, (left) new **Democratic member from** Colorado, and Rep. Lewis M. Long, new Democratic member of House from Illinois.



Railroad Brotherhoods
With legal protection, emphasis shifts to grievances and contract enforcement.

West Chicago, Illinois. **Officers of Albert Keep** Lodge, Number 364, **International Brotherhood** of Railway Trainmen. Left to right: vice-president E.H. Schlueter, a vard engine foreman; treasury and local chairman, F.C. **Ehredt, ticket collector** and assistant conductor; legislative representative **Carl Berkes**, passenger brakeman and W.M. Hoag, president, a yard engine foreman. Jack **Delano photograph**, 1942



African-Americans organize

- Porters only rail operating workers not unionized.
- Excluded by craft unions.
- "A million men named George."
- Subservient relationship.



African-Americans organize – Sleeping Car Porters

- August 25, 1925 Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters founded.
- Non-porter Asa Phillip Randolph leads.
- Milton Price Webster Chicago porter supporter
- 1927 ill-fated strike call.
- Supported by AFL and Socialist groups.



A. Phillip Randolph

Porters win a contract

- 1935 Railway Labor Act election.
- BSCP wins against the company
- union, 75% of the vote
- August 25, 1937, Pullman & BSCP contract signed.



Porters gain

- Hours reduced, 400 monthly to 240.
- Wages from \$60 to \$72 monthly
- Grievance procedure, rules against discrimination, rest time.
- "A fighting, militant piece of machinery" for the Civil Rights movement.



The rails hum - WWII



Roundhouse Workers, C&NW Jack Delano photo The nation travels on the rails.

- Women again enter the rail workforce.
- Beginning of dieselization.

Post-war decline



- Railroad traffic decreases Steve Smedley competition from highways & airlines.
- Dieselization, mergers & bankruptcies cuts jobs.
- "Featherbedding" public issue.
- Racial discrimination clauses broken.

"One Big Union" again



- 1969 United Transportation Union –
 Firemen, Trainmen & Conductors merge.
- 1980s Transportation Communications Union – clerks, telegraphers, porters, carmen, supervisor, yardmasters.
- 2004 BLE joins IBT.
- 2011 UTU joins Sheet Metal







Today's issues

- Fatigue.
- Automation/new technology.
- Training.
- Crew size.
- More mature labor-management relations.



Michael G. Matejka & Stephanie Seawell

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