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### Trouble on the railroads in 1873-1874: Prelude to the 1877 crisis?

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## TROUBLE ON THE RAILROADS IN 1873-1874: PRELUDE TO THE 1877 CRISIS?

by HERBERT G. GUTMAN

"Strikes," complained the *New York Railroad Gazette* in January 1874, "are no longer accidents but are as much a disease of the body politic as the measles or indigestion are of our physical organization."<sup>1</sup> Between November 1873 and July 1874, workers on the Pennsylvania system and at least 17 other railroads struck.<sup>2</sup> Engineers, firemen, brakemen, and track hands as well as shopmen and ordinary laborers resisted wage cuts, demanded salary due them, and opposed such employer practices as blacklisting and the use of iron-clad contracts. None of these disputes was so dramatic or important as the general railroad strike in 1877, but together they prophetically etched the outlines of that violent outburst. The strikes also revealed certain explosive elements in the social structure of post-bellum America. Seemingly pathetic and seldom lasting more than a week or two, the significance of the strikes lay not in their success or failure but rather in the readiness of the strikers to express their grievances in a dramatic, direct, and frequently telling manner. Even though the workers were mostly without trade union organization or experience, they often exerted a kind of raw power that made trouble for their employers. Most of the 1873-1874 disputes, furthermore, took place in small railroad towns and in isolated semi-rural regions where small numbers of workers often could marshal surprising strength. The social structure and ideology in these areas often worked to the advantage of the disaffected workers. Large numbers of non-strikers fre-

<sup>1</sup> "The Strike," *Railroad Gazette*, Jan. 3, 1874, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Between November 1873 and June 1874 workers struck on the following railroads: the East Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia, the Philadelphia and Reading, the Pennsylvania Central, the New Jersey Southern, the New York and Oswego Midland, the various eastern divisions of the Erie Railroad system, the Boston and Worcester, the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western, the Louisville Short Line, the Allegheny Valley, and the Chicago and Alton.

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quently sided with them. Though the railroad operators put down almost all the strikes, they faced difficulties that they were unprepared for and that taxed their imaginations and their energies.

Even though the railroad industry was probably the largest single employer in the country when the 1873 depression started, most railroad workers were without unions of any kind.<sup>3</sup> The track hands, switchmen, firemen, and brakemen had no union. A small number of machinists employed in certain repair shops belonged to the Machinists' and Blacksmiths' International Union, but the large majority of shopmen and stationary hands were not union members. Most conductors also were free of union ties, for the Locomotive Conductors' Brotherhood was a weak union. Founded in 1868, it had only 21 locals five years later.<sup>4</sup> Only the engineers had an effective union in 1873, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. Almost 10,000 engineers, employed on nearly every major trunk line, belonged to the Brotherhood. Led by Grand Chief Engineer Charles Wilson, the Brotherhood enforced written contracts on a number of lines, published a monthly magazine, and maintained a well-managed accident and insurance program.<sup>5</sup> At the same time, the absence of trade unions

<sup>3</sup> The railroad system had grown enormously by 1873. Only 9,201 miles of track were used in 1850, but in the next ten years this figure had more than tripled. By 1873 slightly over 70,000 miles existed. In the four years between 1869 and 1873 more than 24,000 miles were built. Not counting clerks, Pennsylvania had about 18,000 railroad workers in 1870. Nearly 30,000 men worked for the Ohio roads in 1873. See, for examples, American Iron and Steel Association, *Annual Report to December 31, 1874* (Philadelphia: Chandler Printers, 1875), 75-77; Pennsylvania Bureau of Labor Statistics, *First Annual Report, 1872-1873* (Harrisburg: Benjamin Singerly, 1874), 407-408; Ohio Bureau of Labor Statistics, *First Annual Report, 1877* (Columbus; Nevins and Myers, 1878), 281-283.

<sup>4</sup> *Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers' Monthly Journal*, VII (December, 1873), 598. Examples of the strength of the Machinists' and Blacksmiths' International Union in the Indianapolis repair shops appear in the *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, Dec. 27, 1873-Jan. 10, 1874.

<sup>5</sup> Charles Wilson, a conservative trade unionist, rejected labor reform and politics, did not allow union members to cooperate with other non-railroad workers, opposed strikes, stressed matters such as sobriety, and believed that workers and employers shared a common interest. Under Wilson's leadership, the BLE worked closely with the American Railway Association, an organization of employers. Local lodges could not strike without his permission on pain of expulsion. Many engineers, especially in the west and the south, opposed his policies, but in 1873 his position seemed unassailable. See, for examples, *Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers' Monthly Journal*, VII (November, 1873), 508; "List of Sub-divisions," *ibid.*, VII (December, 1873), 612-616. Wilson's views of other labor leaders such as Robert Schilling, John Fehrenbatch, and William Saffin are found in "The Missouri Strike," *ibid.*, VII (September, 1873), 408. See also George McNeil, ed., *The Labor Movement: The Problem of Today* (New York: M. W. Hazen, 1891), 321-332 and John R. Commons and others, *History of Labour in the United States*, II (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1918), 63-66.

among most railroad workers was no proof of their satisfaction with their jobs and their employers, for they voiced numerous grievances.<sup>6</sup>

During the early months of the depression, many railroads hastily adjusted to the drop in freight and passenger traffic. The New York Central Railroad, for example, discharged 1400 shopmen in New York City, and Jersey City, an important eastern rail terminus, listed thousands of unemployed workers by early November 1873. Railroads in every region—the Union Pacific, the Missouri, Kansas and Texas, the Louisville and Nashville, and the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern, to cite only a few examples—cut wages. A number of financially pressed roads also withheld wages.<sup>7</sup> In a number of instances, furthermore, the companies added insult to injury when they instituted their new wage policies. Knoxville officials of the East Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia Railroad told their employees of a 20 per cent wage cut the day before it went into effect.<sup>8</sup> On November 30, the various divisions of the Pennsylvania system announced that the wages of engineers and firemen would fall 10 per cent the next day. The Pennsylvania violated a written agreement drawn up with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers in 1872, for that contract fixed a wage

<sup>6</sup> Railroad workers had numerous grievances. They often complained that employers withheld wages from them for several weeks or even months. Certain Wisconsin roads made them trade in company-owned stores. Pennsylvania workers at the large Susquehanna Depot repair shops of the Erie Railroad said that many of the "best and oldest" workers were discharged "without assigned cause" and that "utterly unskilled" laborers received the same wages as some skilled mechanics. Engineers and firemen on the Pennsylvania system charged that when engines were damaged the workers paid the repair cost regardless of the cause. "If you don't pay the damages," company officials reportedly told complaining engineers, "we'll discharge you." Many engineers lost as much as 3 months of work every year because company officials did not supply them with new engines when their cabs were in repair. After listing a number of grievances, one engineer declared, "If I fall sick and am even absent for an hour from the engine I am docked the time, while the company can throw me off just as many hours as they choose." "We get paid so much a day for every day we are on a run," said another engineer. "They pay us by the 'run' not by the day . . . A day is 12 hours and from our point of view there are 14 days in the week." See *Workingman's Advocate*, Feb. 21, 1874; "Resolutions of the Susquehanna Depot, Pa., Strikers," n.d., printed in *ibid.*, March 14, 1874; "Interviews with unidentified locomotive engineers," n.d., *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 29, 1873 and *Chicago Times*, Dec. 31, 1873. See also the discussion of conditions of work in Robert V. Bruce, *1877: Year of Violence* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959), 42-47.

<sup>7</sup> Examples of the severe amount of unemployment among railroad workers are found in the *Workingman's Advocate*, Oct. 11, 18, 25, Nov. 22, 29, Dec. 30, 1873; *Chicago Times*, Oct. 31, Nov. 10, Dec. 3, 5, 24, 1873; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Nov. 5, 1873. The New Jersey Southern Railroad, a major link between Philadelphia and New York, in serious financial trouble, withheld \$40,000 of back wages (*New York Times*, Jan. 14, 15, 1874).

<sup>8</sup> Knoxville dispatches, *Cincinnati Commercial*, Nov. 5, 7, 1873; *Chicago Times*, Nov. 6, 7, 1873.

scale that could not be altered by either side without prior notice or joint consultation. After the firm's announcement, therefore, the Union sent a special committee to J. N. McCullough, the system's western superintendent. McCullough brushed the committee aside, fired its members, and issued an order that forbade leaves of absences to other engineers who sought to discuss the matter with him. When angered engineers threatened to strike, McCullough, aware of the thousands of unemployed railroad men, announced, "Let them strike, I can't help it. If it is to be a strike, strike it must be."<sup>9</sup>

Most of the 1873-1874 strikes revealed the power of the railroad workers to disrupt traffic on many roads. Engineers, firemen, and machinists on the East Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia Railroad demanded fewer hours in place of a wage cut in November 1873, but the Knoxville company turned them down. After the men left work, they removed coupling pins from many freight cars so that master mechanics, non-striking engineers, and new hands could not move them. No serious violence occurred, but for several days only mail trains left Knoxville.<sup>10</sup> New Jersey Southern Railroad workers tore up sections of track, disabled locomotives, and cut telegraph wires. Where track was removed, they posted signals to prevent accidents. Anxious to collect \$40,000 of back wages, the men publicly denied responsibility for these depredations. Still, conditions on the New Jersey line remained chaotic and trains did not run in mid-January and early February 1874.<sup>11</sup> Soon after, track hands on the New York and Oswego Midland Railroad, who wanted five months' back pay, spiked switches

<sup>9</sup> J. D. Layng, Assistant General Manager, Pennsylvania Railroad Company, Pittsburgh, to A. J. Poole, Chairman, Committee of Locomotive Engineers, Jan. 20, 1872, and AJP and 19 representatives of the various divisions of the Pennsylvania Central Railroad, "Agreement with the Company," n. d., printed in the *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, Dec. 28, 1873; Richmond, Indiana, dispatch, *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 31, 1873; A. J. Poole, "For the Indianapolis Engineers, Resolutions Unanimously Adopted on Dec. 27, 1873," *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, Dec. 28, 1873; Peter M. Arthur, "Speech . . . at the Atlanta Convention, 1874," *Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers' Monthly Journal*, VIII (November, 1874), 584-585; "Interview with J. N. McCullough," Pittsburgh dispatch, *Chicago Times*, Dec. 28, 1873.

<sup>10</sup> R. A. B., Knoxville correspondent, *Cincinnati Gazette*, n. d., reported in *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 8, 1873; *Cincinnati Commercial*, Nov. 5, 7, 1873; *Chicago Times*, Nov. 6, 7, 1873; Manufacturer to the editor, n. d., *Cincinnati Commercial*, Nov. 7, 1873; P. M. Arthur, "Address . . . to the Citizens of Knoxville . . . Dec. 16, 1874"; *Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers' Monthly Journal*, IX (January, 1875), 33-34.

<sup>11</sup> *New York Times*, Jan. 14, 16, 1874; *Railroad Gazette*, Jan. 24, 1874, p. 31; *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Jan. 16, 1874.

and tore up sections of track near Middletown, New York.<sup>12</sup> In April 1874, 250 section hands struck the Louisville and Nashville Railroad for the same reasons. Freight trains did not run for a time, and the company told of switches tampered with and water tanks ruined.<sup>13</sup> Brakemen, switchmen, and track hands on the western New York division of the Erie Railroad also stopped trains. The strike centered in Hornellsville, where the Erie made important connections with other railroads. The workers allowed Erie trains to enter the town but would not let them leave. Within 24 hours, trains from three lines crowded the area. The strikers let mail trains pass but removed the brakes from passenger and freight cars. According to one report, 75 freight trains and 5 passenger trains with 1000 persons were detained for two days.<sup>14</sup>

The Lehigh Valley Railroad's coal line from Pittston, Pennsylvania, to Waverley, New York, was in similar difficulty in March 1874. On condition that wages would improve when rail traffic picked up, its workers had accepted a 10 per cent wage cut in December 1873. The company, however, reneged, and 250 men, all the employees except the engineers, struck. Congregating in Waverley, they set brakes, removed brake wheels, switched track, and allowed only mail trains to pass. They escorted stranded passengers to the depot and politely carried their baggage, moved into stalled railroad cars and raised an American flag over their new "home," and visited local hotels and taverns to prevent excessive drinking among the workers. For several days, the workers controlled local affairs. An observer noted, "No threats of violence are made—no disorderly conduct is feared—no drinks [are] allowed. . . . The property of the company is being guarded with as much care and zeal as if it were their own." Nevertheless, when officials ran a coal train over the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railroad's tracks, strikers met it, unhooked its cars,

<sup>12</sup> *Railroad Gazette*, Feb. 14, 1874, p. 48.

<sup>13</sup> *Cincinnati Commercial*, April 18-26, 1874.

<sup>14</sup> The brakemen protested after the railroad, in an economy move, dropped one of every four brakemen on a train crew, and the switchmen and track hands complained about a wage cut and a simultaneous order to pay rent "for the shanties in which many of them lived along the railroad line." Details are found in *Railroad Gazette*, March 7, 1874, p. 87; Hornellsville dispatch, *Chicago Tribune*, March 7, 1874; "Strikes—Riot—Revolution," *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*, March 14, 1874, pp. 8-9.

and threw the coupling pins into a canal nearby.<sup>15</sup>

Shop workers and repair mechanics in the large Erie Railroad shops in Susquehanna Depot, a northeastern Pennsylvania town, also struck in late March 1874. They had many grievances against the corporation but especially complained about its failure to pay regular wages. More than 1000 of them left work on March 25, and they attracted nationwide attention. "Susquehanna is the subject of talk the country over," wrote the *Scranton Times*. The *Chicago Times* called the walkout "one of the most startling incidents that ever occurred in Pennsylvania."<sup>16</sup>

After electing a Workingmen's Committee to manage their affairs, the workers seized control of the repair shops. "Bells were rung" and "a mammoth steam whistle was blown." The men forced company officials from the shops, and within 20 minutes the entire works was cleared and "under the complete control of the men." Temperance committees visited tavern owners and asked them to close. For the moment, the strikers allowed trains through the city but warned Erie officials that they would halt traffic unless they were paid within 24 hours and the firm introduced a regular pay day, time and a half for overtime work, and a decent apprenticeship system. Instead of paying the men, the managers fired the strike leaders and said wages would be offered at a future unspecified time. On March 27, therefore, the workers made good their threat. "As fast as trains arrived," an Erie official wrote, strikers "proceeded to disable the locomotive by removing portions of the machinery." At least 45 engines were switched into a roundhouse. Passenger and freight cars were left on track nearby, but mail cars were let through the town. For a few days, rail business remained stalled in Susquehanna Depot. Although a number of prominent citizens found the strikers "quiet and orderly,"

<sup>15</sup> *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Jan. 14, March 6, 1874; *Philadelphia Bulletin*, Jan. 14, 1874; *Scranton Times*, March 5, 11, 1874; *Chicago Tribune*, March 5, 1874; *Railroad Gazette*, March 14, 1874, p. 94.

<sup>16</sup> The Erie Railroad frequently waited six or eight weeks before paying its employees. Most of the shopmen had worked three-quarters time during the early months of the depression, and in early March they struck and demanded a regular pay date. The company agreed to pay them on the fifteenth of each month, and the strike quickly ended. When March 15 came, the men were put off until March 25, and on that day the Erie managers again announced a postponement. See *Workingman's Advocate*, March 14, 1874; *Scranton Republican*, March 30, 1874; *Scranton Times*, March 28, 1874; *Chicago Times*, April 2, 1874; Pennsylvania Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Ninth Annual Report, 1880-1881*, III (Harrisburg: Lane S. Hart, 1882), 309-310.



the agitated shopmen indisputably controlled the Erie Railroad's valuable properties.<sup>17</sup>

Disgruntled engineers and firemen on the western divisions of the Pennsylvania Central Railroad also stopped trains. Acting without the permission of Charles Wilson, western members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers secretly planned a general strike and invited the firemen to join them in December 1873. A surprise walk-out started at noon on December 26. About 3000 engineers and firemen simultaneously quit in many western cities. They struck in large cities such as Chicago, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Louisville, Columbus, and Indianapolis as well as smaller Ohio and Indiana towns such as Dennison, Alliance, Crestline, Logansport, and Richmond and affected almost the entire western division of Pennsylvania system, including the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne, and Chicago Railroad, the Little Miami Railroad, the Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and St. Louis Railroad, and the Jeffersonville, Madison, and Indianapolis Railroad. Ohio's *Portsmouth Tribune* called the dispute "the greatest railroad strike" in the nation's history.<sup>18</sup>

The suddenness of the strike paralyzed traffic on most of the Pennsylvania's divisions for several days. Stranded passengers filled the Pittsburgh Union Depot and loaded freight cars piled up in yards

<sup>17</sup> The behavior of the strikers was quite revealing. When Erie officials refused to allow mail cars through alone, the strikers telegraphed postal authorities in Washington and lodged a complaint against the firm. The Assistant Postmaster-General thanked the strikers for "facilitating the transportation of the United States' mails." Another time, as an express train drew up toward the city, the Erie Division Superintendent met it and ordered the engineer to drive through Susquehanna Depot at full speed and "in spite of hell." Filled with 300 passengers, the train dashed into the city at an excessive speed and stopped at the rail depot. Beyond the city to the west was a loose rail that could have derailed the entire train. "The Workingmen's Committee knew this," explained the *Scranton Republican*, "and . . . two of their (*sic*) number boarded the engine at the depot and in spite of the engineer and (Supperintendent) Thomas stopped the train." Thomas drew a revolver on the strikers, but he was seized and disarmed, and a warrant was issued for his arrest. See *Scranton Republican*, March 30, 1874; "Statement of James C. Clarke," Third Vice-President, Erie Railroad, *New York Tribune*, April 9, 1874; Adjutant General of Pennsylvania, *Annual Report*, 1874 (Harrisburg: Benjamin Singerly, 1875), 18-20, 23.

<sup>18</sup> The Indianapolis branch of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, for example, publicly criticized the Pennsylvania Railroad for its "oppressive and tyrannical" practices toward men who had "exerted themselves to work for the interest of the company." Though the engineers and firemen openly attacked the company, none publicly mentioned the strike before it actually began. See *Portsmouth Tribune*, Dec. 27, 1873; *Cincinnati Commercial*, Dec. 26-29, 1873; *Chicago Times*, Dec. 26-29, 1873; *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, Dec. 26-31, 1873; Charles Wilson, "To All Members of the Brotherhood," n. d., *Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers' Monthly Journal*, VIII (January, 1874), 28-30.

nearby. Huge crowds gathered in depot yards in all the affected cities and, egged on by strikers, hooted at workers and company officials who tried to run the trains. In Indianapolis, for example, a noisy crowd jeered loudly as a superintendent manned the locomotive of a Vincennes-bound train. Cincinnati supervisory personnel found it hard to hire new engineers and firemen. Repair shops in many of these cities also closed.<sup>19</sup>

The most serious trouble occurred in Logansport, Indiana, a small rail terminal north of Indianapolis, where 200 engineers, firemen, and train hostlers halted the traffic on the Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, and St. Louis Railroad. The men gathered in the depot yards, uncoupled coaches and freight cars, pulled non-strikers from their cabs, and tampered with engines and boilers. They fixed one engine so that it could run only backwards. A non-striking engineer was hit with a stone. Even though the sheriff swore in special deputies and arrested 15 men and the mayor pleaded with the strikers to allow the trains through, company officials found it impossible to conduct their business. When an excited non-striker drove an express train through the city at a hazardous speed and in violation of state and local law, furthermore, he was arrested. Crowds continued to jam the depot yards, and trains remained still.<sup>20</sup>

In most cities, the strike was less effective than in Logansport. Still, for at least two or three days only mail trains regularly traveled the 3000 miles of struck road. Passenger trains manned by non-strikers, company officials, and master mechanics occasionally left one or another of the struck depot yards but few freight trains moved. The engineers and firemen, however, had uneven strength. In some cities, such as Pittsburgh and Chicago, they were quickly put down. In Cincinnati, Louisville, and Columbus, they held out for a week or two. Indianapolis engineers appealed to the traveling public, "We are not ready to sell our labor . . . for a price that would virtually close the doors of our educational institutions against our children and com-

<sup>19</sup> See, for many details on the early effects of the strike, *Pittsburgh Post*, Dec. 27, 1873; *Cincinnati Commercial*, Dec. 27, 28, 1873; *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 27, 28, 30, 1873; *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, Dec. 26-31, 1873; *Chicago Times*, Dec. 27, 28, 1873.

<sup>20</sup> *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, Dec. 27, 28, 29, 1873; *Cincinnati Commercial*, Dec. 27, 29, 1873; *Chicago Times*, Dec. 27, 1873; *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 29, 1873. The stoned engineer told a reporter that his assailant, a fireman named J. Hogan, "had no companionship with the Logansport strikers. (Interview with Charley Miller, *Chicago Times*, Dec. 31, 1874).

pel them to begin a life of drudgery without the first rudiments of a common school education." Striking Cincinnati engineers explained, "We assure you that we intend to fight it out on this line if it takes all winter and summer, too."<sup>21</sup>

The strike was not without a number of violent incidents. Railroad officials everywhere accused the men of throwing switches, cutting telegraph lines, derailing trains, threatening and stoning non-strikers, disengaging engines, and putting "soap or oil in water tanks to explode engines." In Cincinnati, they blamed the strikers after an express train jumped the track a few miles east of the city. After a former official of the Indianapolis branch of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers shot a non-striking engineer in the arm as latter drove a train out of the city, the companies charged the union with fomenting violence. Company spokesmen also reported numerous threats against working engineers and said non-strikers feared to return to work.<sup>22</sup>

Publicly counseling against violence, the striking engineers and firemen rejected the charges of the railroad companies. The Cincinnati strikers offered a reward for information concerning the derailment and then blamed it on a cowardly non-striker, who jumped from the express engine after he erroneously threw an air brake. The strikers accused the railroads of hiring "immoral, drunken, rowdy, and incompetent" engineers, who had been discharged previously by the same firms, as strikebreakers. Indianapolis engineers offered a reward for the arrest of those who caused violence and even asked the permission of their employers to guard railroad property against possible destruction. The managers refused and instead armed those men who remained loyal. The strikers then offered to "stand or fall by the verdict of an impartial tribunal" and insisted that certain persons committed "unlawful depredations and charge the same to the engi-

<sup>21</sup> Division 11, B. L. E., "To the Public," n. d., *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, Dec. 31, 1873; Little Miami Railroad Division Engineers, "To the Commuters on the Little Miami Division of the Pennsylvania Central Railroad and the Public in General," n. d., *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Jan. 1, 1874. See also E. Price, First Assistant Engineer, Little Miami Division, B. L. E., Lodge 34, to Brother Committeemen, n. d., *loc. cit.* Price gave the *Enquirer* the names of "scab" engineers in his letter and urged his fellow-strikers to hang posters everywhere so that the public would learn of the incompetent skills of these "scabs."

<sup>22</sup> See, for examples, *Chicago Times*, Dec. 27, 1873; *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 30, 1873; *Cincinnati Commercial*, Dec. 28, 29, 1873; *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, Dec. 28, 29, 30, 1873.

neers and firemen in the hope of turning public opinion against us and in favor of the railroad companies."<sup>23</sup>

In each of these strikes, the workers disrupted traffic and made other kinds of trouble. The character of their behavior closely paralleled events that would take place in the summer of 1877. Commenting on the seizure of railroad property and the halting of trains in 1873-1874, *Railroad Gazette* insisted that the workers were in "flat rebellion, not simply against the companies . . . but against the law of the land." Such behavior was "a defiance to every law-abiding citizen." The trade journal explained:

Imagine a servant girl disconnecting the water and gas, putting the range out of order . . . locking up the kitchen, and coolly declaring that there shall be no cooking in the kitchen till she gets her pay and the right to two "afternoons out" weekly.

Charging the strikers with criminal and violent acts, most urban newspapers supported the *Railroad Gazette* and advised "swift, decided, and exemplary" punishment.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The scant and often contradictory nature of the evidence makes it impossible to establish responsibility for the acts of violence. The *Cincinnati Enquirer*, no friend to strikers, said that "a large amount of terrorism existed in the minds of [railroad] managers." (*Cincinnati Enquirer*, Jan. 16, 1874. See also *Coopers' New Monthly*, I [January, 1874], 13-14) Jerry Bush, who shot the non-union engineer in Indianapolis, was held in \$3000 bail, but no trial record has been found. (Indianapolis dispatch, *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 30, 1873). Samuel Marchbanks was arrested for cutting down telegraph wires near Dennison, Ohio, but no information has been located about his occupation or his motive. (Cadiz, Ohio, dispatch, *Cincinnati Commercial*, Feb. 23, 1874). There is suggestive but incomplete data concerning the Cincinnati derailment. In mid-January 1874, the Cincinnati railroad companies announced that several private detectives had studied the incident and that 7 firemen and an engineer from Zenia, Columbus, and Cincinnati were partners to the "crime." Accused of "conspiracy," planning to pour soap and lye into boilers and engines, and throwing the switch that derailed the express, the men faced jail sentences of from 7 to 21 years if convicted. One of them, Daniel Harvey, a fireman, confessed and implicated the other six. Henry Lewis, the supposed ringleader, was defended by a prominent Ohio State Senator, W. P. Reed. The railroad officials pleaded in Harvey's behalf and said the others had misled him. No record has been found of the outcome of the trial. (*Ibid.*, Jan. 16, 1874; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Jan. 16, 21, March 14, 1874).

<sup>24</sup> "Railroads Seized by Strikers," *Railroad Gazette*, April 4, 1874, p. 122; "The Railroad Strike," *Philadelphia Bulletin*, Dec. 27, 1873. See also the editorials in *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Dec. 27, 1873; *Cincinnati Commercial*, Dec. 28, 1873; *Chicago Times*, Dec. 30, 31, 1873; *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 28, 1873; extracts from editorials in *Louisville Courier and Journal*, n. d., *Chicago Inter-Ocean*, n. d., *Cincinnati Times*, n. d., and other western and southern newspapers reprinted in the *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, Dec. 30 and 31, 1873. Certain newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *Chicago Tribune*, however, took a more conciliatory approach and especially criticized those roads that failed to pay their workers on time. "Men who are starving for the want of wages," observed the *Times*, ". . . cannot be expected to be always reasonable." "They are dependent on their wages for bread," wrote the

Evidence of community support for the 1873-1874 railroad strikers also suggested a parallel with the later 1877 events.<sup>25</sup> Engineers and firemen from the Alabama and Chattanooga Railroad refused to run idle Knoxville trains during the East Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia Railroad strike.<sup>26</sup> The strikers on the New Jersey Southern Railroad found local support in and near Manchester, New Jersey, and even though the railroad pleaded for state and even federal intervention in its behalf, the New Jersey legislature made back wages a first lien on the receipts of railroads in receivership.<sup>27</sup> During the Lehigh Valley Railroad dispute, Erie Railroad workers brought the strikers provisions, and many Waverley citizens also supported them.<sup>28</sup> When 400 freight depot hands in New York City demanded pre-depression wages and special overtime rates from the Erie Railroad, a Catholic priest encouraged them.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, striking brakemen on the Chicago and Alton Railroad were aided by Bloomington, Illinois, citizens in June 1874.<sup>30</sup>

During the Pennsylvania Central dispute, the disaffected engineers and firemen also found a good deal of sympathy from non-strikers. An Indianapolis militia officer complained that the Logansport authorities were helpless because the "public" actively sided with the railroad workers. He also found that the Indianapolis troops sent

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*Chicago Tribune* of the Susquehanna Depot strikers. "The remedy of a law-suit is a mockery to a starving man or, in this case, a starving community." While critical of the Erie Railroad, these same newspapers and others still supported the Pennsylvania governor when he sent militia to allow the trains to run again. See, for examples of this moderately critical attitude, *New York Times*, March 29, 31, 1874; *Chicago Tribune*, March 30, 1874. See also *Cleveland Leader*, March 31, 1874; *Philadelphia Bulletin*, March 30, 1874.

<sup>25</sup> Evidence of the character of community support for workers during other industrial disputes at the start of the 1873 depression can be found in Herbert G. Gutman, "Two Lockouts in Pennsylvania, 1873-1874," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXXIII (July, 1959), 322-325 and "An Iron Workers' Strike in the Ohio Valley," *The Ohio Historical Quarterly*, LXVIII (October, 1959), 357-358, 361, 363, 365-369.

<sup>26</sup> Knoxville dispatches, *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 8, 1873; *Chicago Times*, Nov. 6, 7, 1873; *Cincinnati Commercial*, Nov. 6, 7, 1873.

<sup>27</sup> *New York Times*, Jan. 24, Feb. 20, 1874; *Railroad Gazette*, Jan. 31, Feb. 21, 1874, pp. 40, 66. The strike finally ended when the workers signed an agreement under which the road's receivers would lease the road so that the net earnings of the line could be applied to the payment of back wages as a first lien.

<sup>28</sup> *Scranton Times*, March 11, 1874.

<sup>29</sup> *New York Times*, March 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 29, 1874; *Chicago Tribune*, March 24, 1874.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, June 3-6, 1874; *Chicago Times*, June 3-6, 1874.

to Logansport had no heart in their work and wanted to go home. A Dennison, Ohio, resident repudiated charges that local strikers behaved like "drunken rioters" and insisted that the Steubenville militia, sent to put down "violence" in Dennison, was embittered over its task. Cincinnati socialists demonstrated in support of the strikers, and in Columbus, non-striking engineers promised the strikers half of their wages. Enthusiastic numbers of Indianapolis workers defended and even aided the strikers. Local trade unions, such as the Iron Molders' Union, the Carpenters' and Joiners' Union, and the Indianapolis Trades' Assembly, commended their "pluck against acts of tyranny," and the Indianapolis Typographical Union, after urging the strikers "to resist the unjust demands of this [railroad] monopoly to the bitter end," voted them \$300. Members of the Machinists' and Blacksmiths' International Union in the Indianapolis repair shops refused to fix damaged Pennsylvania engines, and John Fehrenbatch, the union's national president, visited the city and defended the engineers and firemen.<sup>31</sup>

The Indianapolis strikers also attracted substantial backing from the non-laboring population. The mayor, a prominent local judge, and several members of the city council attacked the Pennsylvania Railroad. General Daniel Macauley, who had just returned from Logansport where he headed the Indianapolis militia and restored order, joined other local dignitaries who "extended their sympathies to the engineers" and encouraged "them in their efforts to break up the monopoly which has been oppressing them." Letters in the local press generally favored the strikers: one asked if the railroad officials were "gods that mortal men dare not speak to?" The *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, a Democratic newspaper, called the railroads an "oligarchy . . . more powerful . . . than the absolutism of the Napoleons." Hark-

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Macauley, Logansport, to Gov. Thomas A. Hendricks, Indianapolis, Dec. 29, 1873; DM, Logansport, to the Mayor and Sheriff, Logansport, n. d.; Mayor S. L. McFadden, "A Proclamation," n. d.; and other details printed in the *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, Dec. 29, 30, 31, 1873; Resolutions of the Printers' Union, the Carpenters' and Joiners' Union, the Iron Molders' Union, the Machinists' and Blacksmiths' International Union, and the Indianapolis, Trades' Assembly, printed in *ibid.*, Jan. 2, 4, 7, 1874; John Fehrenbatch's visit is described in *ibid.*, Jan. 3, 1874; and the *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 31, 1874; the Dennison details are revealed in H. B. Keffer, Dennison, to the editor, Dec. 30, 1873, *Cincinnati Commercial*, Jan. 3, 1874. See also *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, Dec. 29, 1873 and Jan. 11, 1874; *Chicago Times*, Dec. 30, 1873; *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 29, 30, 1873.

ing back to Jacksonian concepts, the *Sentinel* blamed the strike on "the great interests" and "the grasping and imbecile management of the great corporations."<sup>32</sup>

Many of Susquehanna Depot's 8000 inhabitants, although dependent on the Erie Railroad whose shops dominated the local economy, also supported and aided the strikers. When railroad officials announced the dismissal of the strike leaders and demanded that M. B. Helme, the Lackawanna County sheriff, organize a posse and drive the shopmen from the railroad's properties, Helme refused to act until the strikers received all the wages due them. Soon after, when Helme and a 35-man posse arrived near the shops, the strikers refused to talk with them unless they came disarmed. Helme surrendered their arms to the strikers, who then allowed the police to stay in the shops and "preserve order." Local law enforcement authorities also thwarted the company's importation of 200 "special police" from New York and New Jersey. Scranton reporters called these 200 men "a gang of ruffians of the no-profession-in-particular class." Together with a number of strikers, Sheriff Helme intercepted the strangers outside of the town, disarmed them of their "billies and revolvers," and, after threatening their arrest, shipped them back home.<sup>33</sup>

At the same time, other local citizens supported the strikers. A prominent officer in the state militia told Governor John Hartranft that the shopmen had "the sympathy of nearly if not all the citizens of the town." As a result, a friend of the Erie company exploded, "The Commune could do no more." "Public sympathy is with the men," wrote the *Scranton Times*, "and '*vox populi vox dei*' is a fairer law than many of our statutes embody." When Governor Hartranft agreed to send troops, leading local citizens, including a justice of the peace, a town burgess, an assistant postmaster, and a physician, assailed his decision. Why, asked one critic, were troops needed if the strikers were "quiet [and] orderly and the mails... allowed to run?" A petition signed by a majority of the city's prominent residents charged Hartranft with "supporting the interests of a corporation against our own citizens, who ask nothing but their hard-earned

<sup>32</sup> *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, Jan. 3, 4, 5, 8, 1874.

<sup>33</sup> *Scranton Times*, March 29, 1874; *Scranton Republican*, March 30, 1874; "Statement of J. C. Clarke," *New York Tribune*, April 9, 1874.

wages." "In the name of humanity," the petitioners asked him to withdraw the soldiers.<sup>34</sup>

In neighboring Scranton, the *Times* and the *Republican* backed the shopmen, too. Admitting that their seizure of property was illegal, the *Times* still defended the workers:

The law is an uncertain, tedious, and expensive means of reaching a powerful corporation. It was an insult to these men to retain their wages upon which most of them were dependent for their bread—bread for their families. "The laborer is worthy of his hire" and he should have it.

To withhold his wages was "an insult . . . to his dignity as a citizen and to his worth as a workman." "An insulted man," the *Times* concluded, "don't [*sic*] think about law and legal redress . . . Erie has wronged its labor grossly and got its blow."<sup>35</sup>

The popular support afforded the strikers expressed itself in many ways. Citizens housed marooned Erie passengers. A local minister preached a severe Sunday sermon against the Erie company. After the state troops arrived, many merchants refused to sell them provi-

<sup>34</sup> *Scranton Republican*, March 30, 1874; S. H. Daddow, Scranton, to the editor, March 30, 1874, *ibid.*, March 31, 1874; *Scranton Times*, March 31, 1874. General E. S. Osbourne, Susquehanna Depot, to Gov. J. F. Hartranft, Harrisburg, March 29, 1874, printed in Adjutant General of Pennsylvania, *Annual Report*, 1874 (Harrisburg: Benjamin Singerly, 1875), 20; ESO, Wilkes-barre, to Major-General James Latta, Harrisburg, Oct. 1, 1874, *ibid.*, 23-24; W. H. Telford Susquehanna Depot, to Gov. JFH, Harrisburg, March 28, 1874; WHT, S. Mitchell, A. M. Falkenberg, C. Ovidor, and Dr. Leslie, Susquehanna Depot, to JFH, Harrisburg, March 29, 1874; petition enclosed in Burgess William J. Falkenburg, Susquehanna Depot, to JFH, Harrisburg, March 29, 1874; *ibid.*, 18-20. A copy of the petition also appeared in the *Scranton Republican*, March 30, 1874. The petitioners told the governor: "The peace of this community is not disturbed, and the sheriff has been assured by the strikers that if any arrests are to be made, they will assist him if called upon." The petitioners also protested "against the employment of troops under the command of the paid counsel of the company," William Jessup, "in whose interests they are to be used." Hartranft, however, insisted that troops were necessary. He accused the shopmen of trying to "obtain their rights by violence" and not respecting "the laws of the country." "As an individual," Hartranft explained, "I may sympathize with your people in their misfortune in not receiving prompt payment of their dues, but as the chief Executive of this State, I can not allow creditors . . . to forcibly seize [the] property of their debtors and hold it without due process of law. . . . Whenever the laws of this Commonwealth shall provide that the employees of a railroad company may suspend all traffic upon it, until their wages are paid, I will acquiesce, but I cannot do so while the law refuses to contemplate any such remedy. . . ." (Gov. JFH, Harrisburg, to WHT, Susquehanna Depot, March 28, 1874; JFH, Harrisburg, to WHT, Susquehanna Depot, March 29, 1874; and JFH, Harrisburg, to WJF, Susquehanna Depot, March 29, 1874 printed in Adjutant General of Pennsylvania, *op. cit.*, 20-21.)

<sup>35</sup> *Scranton Times*, March 31, 1874. See also editorials in *Scranton Republican*, March 30, 31, 1874.



sions, and some soldiers suffered "for want of food." The *Susquehanna Depot Gazette* accused the troops of stealing cigarettes and liquor and called them "Molly Maguires," who insulted citizens and created "forty times more disturbance than the strikers." Among the militia itself, a large majority were reported in sympathy with the shopmen. In light of all this hostility toward the Erie Railroad, it was not surprising that company officials bitterly complained of the "bad advice . . . certain citizens of this place" gave the workers.<sup>36</sup>

The railroad strikes in 1873-1874 created a number of difficulties for management. In many of the strikes, the employers learned that they had a rather tenuous hold on the loyalties of their men. Something was radically wrong if workers could successfully stop trains for from two or three days to as much as a week, destroy property, and even "manage" it as if it were their own. The law itself seemed insufficient. *Iron Age* called for new legislation modeled after the English Master's and Servant's Act and prohibiting "surprise" strikes. *Railroad Gazette* suggested an even harsher remedy: the strikers were "ignorant and violent," had no respect for "law," and deserved only "bayonets."<sup>37</sup>

Except in the Hornellsville strike, the railroad companies declined to compromise with the strikers.<sup>38</sup> Unemployment was especially severe in the industry during the early months of the depression. In many instances, therefore, the companies brought in new workers. When 500 Buffalo freight handlers, brakemen, carpenters, painters, and track hands struck for back wages as well as a regular pay day, Erie Railroad officials simply fired more than half of them.<sup>39</sup> Disaffected Chicago and Alton Railroad brakemen also lost their jobs.<sup>40</sup> In New York City, after 400 freight depot hands struck against the Erie Railroad, the company hired Italian and German workers. Hun-

<sup>36</sup> *Scranton Times*, March 30, 31, 1874; *Scranton Republican*, March 30, 31, 1874; *Susquehanna Depot Gazette*, n. d., reprinted in *ibid.*, April 8, 1874; J. C. Clarke, *Susquehanna Depot*, to President Lucius D. Robinson, New York, March 30, 1874, printed in *Scranton Times*, April 1, 1874.

<sup>37</sup> *Iron Age*, Jan. 8, 1874, pp. 16-17, "Railroad's Seized by Strikers," *Railroad Gazette*, April 4, 1874, p. 122.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, March 7, 1874, p. 87; *Chicago Tribune*, March 7, 1874; *Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly*, March 14, 1874, pp. 8-9.

<sup>39</sup> *Railroad Gazette*, March 14, 21, 1874, pp. 94, 100; *Chicago Tribune*, March 4, 5, 6, 1874; *New York Times*, March 6, 1874; *Scranton Times*, March 6, 1874; *Locomotive Engineer's Advocate*, March 14, 1874 reprinted in *Workingman's Advocate*, March 21, 1874.

<sup>40</sup> *Chicago Times*, June 3-7, 1874; *Chicago Tribune*, June 3-7, 1874.

gry unemployed Italians also replaced discontented tunnel builders on a Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railroad project near Hoboken, New Jersey. Most of them had been "unemployed for a long time because of hard times" and "manifested great eagerness to begin work."<sup>41</sup> New engineers and firemen also took the jobs of many strikers on the Pennsylvania Railroad system. In Crestline, Ohio, a small railroad town where many workers lived, company officials ordered them "to surrender unconditionally to the company's order or . . . leave the services of the road for all time." The *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel* found that widespread unemployment dealt a "death blow" to the engineers and firemen.<sup>42</sup>

If it proved difficult to bring in new workers, the railroad managers used other techniques to defeat the strikers. In one instance, according to the engineers, the Pennsylvania Central tried to halt mail trains so as to force federal intervention against the strikers.<sup>43</sup> More common employer instruments were the blacklist and the iron-clad contract. Before striking New York City freight depot workers could return, they had to pledge never to join a union or strike.<sup>44</sup> During the East Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia Railroad strike, the company fired all workers belonging to "... any league, body, organization, or combination which instigates . . . acts of disorder, violence, and wrong." At the same time, representatives of 20 southern roads met in Chattanooga and unanimously decided not to hire workers discharged for "insubordination or combination to stop the operations on any road by intimidation or interference with others willing to work." These companies also drew up a list of proscribed workers and circulated it throughout the region.<sup>45</sup> When the strikers, led by the engineers, sought a compromise, they were ordered to surrender their union charter. Twenty-two of them, who signed an iron-clad contract, publicly declared:

We now acknowledge that we have been beaten, and that we were in

<sup>41</sup> William Jessup, New York, to the editor, April 1, 1874, *Workingman's Advocate*, April 11, 1874; *New York Times*, March 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 29, 1874; *Chicago Tribune*, March 24 1874.

<sup>42</sup> *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, Jan. 5, 14, 1874; *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 31, 1873; *Chicago Times*, Dec. 30, 1873; *Cincinnati Commercial*, Dec. 31, 1873.

<sup>43</sup> *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, Dec. 31, 1873 and Jan. 1, 1874; *Chicago Times*, Dec. 29, 1873.

<sup>44</sup> *New York Times*, March 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, and 29, 1874; *Chicago Tribune*, March 24, 1874.

<sup>45</sup> Knoxville dispatches, *Chicago Times*, Nov. 7, 8, 1873.

error. . . . We have withdrawn from the organization known as the "Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers," and if you think proper to employ us again, we will work for you as faithfully as we ever did before, notwithstanding the reduction in wages. . . .<sup>46</sup>

Leaders of the strike against the Pennsylvania system also were black-listed. The *Chicago Times* found men returning to work after they learned that the company had "marked some of the bell-wethers . . . of this strike for the shambles." Some strikers, such as the Columbus men, held out in the hope of "forcing the employment of even the leaders," but the company's threats proved effective. The company sent the names of the strike leaders "through the length and breadth of the country." Although the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers warned of a bitter "conflict," the workers on the Pennsylvania Railroad remained quiet until the violent uprisings of 1877.<sup>47</sup>

State militia put down some of the more truculent strikers. Troops went to Dennison, Ohio, and Logansport, Indiana, during the Pennsylvania Railroad dispute. On the second day of the strike, Indiana Governor Thomas A. Hendricks answered an appeal for aid from the Logansport sheriff and sent two companies of militia. Led by General Daniel Macauley and armed with breech-loading repeater rifles, the soldiers guarded the depot, tracks, and trains. They accompanied trains leaving the city and quieted "large crowds of excited men." Though some railroad workers "proffered their sympathy" to Macauley, he arrested a number of strikers, swore in special deputies, had Hendricks send a detachment of Indianapolis city police, and convinced the Logansport mayor to issue a riot proclamation that ordered citizens "to their several homes or places of business in order that peace . . . be preserved." Within a few days, the militia and police restored normal traffic and left Logansport.<sup>48</sup>

In Susquehanna Depot, state troops also were used. After Sheriff M. B. Helme refused to ask Governor John Hartranft for militia,

<sup>46</sup> The entire correspondence between the engineers and the railroad officials is found in the *Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers' Monthly Journal*, VII (December, 1873), 579-580 and *ibid.*, IX (January 1875), 33-34.

<sup>47</sup> *Chicago Times*, Dec. 29, 30, 31, 1873; *Cincinnati Commercial*, Jan. 3, 1874; *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, Jan. 3, 1874; *Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers' Monthly Journal*, n. d., reprinted in the *Coopers' New Monthly*, I (July, 1874), 14.

<sup>48</sup> The correspondence between the Logansport sheriff and mayor, General Macauley, and Governor Hendricks is found in the *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, Dec. 28, 29, 30, 31, 1873 and Jan. 4, 1874. For other details see *ibid.*, Dec. 27, 1873-Jan. 5, 1874; *Chicago Times*, Dec. 30, 1873; *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 30, 1873.

William H. Jessup, the Erie's lawyer in Susquehanna Depot and a ranking officer in the Pennsylvania National Guard, telegraphed the governor that "a mob of 1000 have seized the railroad trains, stopped the mails, and are causing terror." Jessup asked for 700 soldiers. Hartranft reminded Jessup that only the sheriff could ask for militia and rejected his plea. A day later, amid unsubstantiated "rumors" that Sheriff Helme had been "bribed" by the railroad firm to "betray" the shopmen, Helme publicly ordered the strikers to let the passenger trains through. He advised them that the road would pay them back wages and then discharge them. The shopmen agreed to allow the trains to move. Yet, when it *appeared* that they were stalling, Helme wired Hartranft to send 1500 soldiers armed with "plenty of ammunition." Dispatching the Wilkes-Barre militia, Hartranft told its commanding officer, "Use every effort to restore order without bloodshed. Suppress the riot, disperse the rioters, and afford security and protection to the owners of property in its lawful use."<sup>49</sup>

Even though prominent citizens protested, Susquehanna Depot soon became an armed camp. Major-General E. S. Osbourne, the head of the Wilkes-Barre militia, admitted that the shopmen were "not disposed to commit violence," but he asked Hartranft for more troops, and the Governor sent the Philadelphia First Regiment. Special trains supplied by the region's coal railroads brought the Philadelphia soldiers, and Susquehanna Depot, a town of 8000, was patrolled by 1800 soldiers and an artillery group with 30 pieces of cannon. The militia took over the railroad properties and worked closely with company officials. Martial law was proclaimed, and no one could walk on company property without a special pass. Erie Vice-President James C. Clarke fired all the workers and promised them their wages after the trains left town. The shopmen let several loaded passenger trains through, but hesitated about the freight trains. At the same time, they overwhelmingly rejected the company's terms of settlement and asked it to rehire them all. "I shall run the road," Clarke telegraphed

<sup>49</sup> The correspondence between Jessup, Helme, and Hartranft, as well as the communications to the militia leaders, is printed in Adjutant General of Pennsylvania, *Annual Report*, 1874 (Harrisburg: Benjamin Singerly, 1875), 17-18, 22. See also *Scranton Republican*, March 30, 1874. The Erie Railroad took a false public position regarding its request for state troops. According to James Clarke, who issued a statement that appeared in the *New York Tribune* of April 9, the company did not ask for troops until Saturday, March 28, after the strikers had reneged on their promise to let all trains through the city. Jessup's telegrams, however, are dated March 27, 1874.

President Lucius Robinson in New York. "I am through [with] compromise. I have offered everything but the right of the company to operate its own property subject to the laws which created it."<sup>50</sup>

The strikers remained firm for a few more days, but it was to no avail. Twelve hundred shopmen paraded the streets and demanded to be rehired. But the company paid and discharged all of them. The militia formed "a cordon of bayonets on both sides of the depot and track for half a mile" while the men were paid off. Clarke announced that 400 new workers were needed. No strike leader was to be taken back, and only family men with suitable references were advised to apply for jobs. At first, the strikers held off, "determined to stick to their resolution of 'work for all or none'." The company thereupon announced that unless some of the old hands accepted its terms the shops would move to Elmira. A number of business people and other residents, undoubtedly fearing that the local economy would collapse without the repair shops, turned against the shopmen and formed a committee of 60 to protect the railroad's interests. "They see," wrote the *Scranton Republican*, "that unless they keep the shops running their businesses will be ruined." The leader of these businessmen was a local politician, who a few days before had protested to Governor Hartranft when he sent the militia. Now, he furnished the Erie Railroad's counsel with the names of leading strikers for possible criminal prosecution. When the shops reopened on April 1, 406 old hands showed up. In the end, the company took back all but 150 of the strikers. It denied work to the leaders of the strike, who left the town in search of jobs. Clarke insisted that only those men "interested in the success and welfare of the community in which they lived" were rehired. By effectively combining military power (which cost the Pennsylvania taxpayers \$25,000 because the soldiers received salary for half a month although they served only five or six days) with economic coercion, the Erie restored its position in Susquehanna Depot.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> The vote by which shopmen rejected the company offer was either 476-11 or 478-48. Details on the events after the troops arrived are found in Adjutant General of Pennsylvania, *op. cit.*, 20, 23-24; *Scranton Republican*, March 30, 31, 1874; *Scranton Times*, March 30, 1874; J. C. Clarke, Susquehanna Depot, to L. Robinson, New York, March 30, 1874, printed in *ibid.*, April 1, 1874.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, April 1, 2, 1874; *Scranton Republican*, April 2, 1874; "Statement of J. C. Clarke," *New York Tribune*, April 9, 1874; *Chicago Times*, April 1, 1874; Adjutant General of Pennsylvania, *op. cit.*, 24-27; Pennsylvania Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Ninth Annual Report, 1880-1881*, III (Harrisburg: Lane S. Hart, 1882), 309-310; *Army and Navy Journal*, May 2, 1874, p. 653.

Several brief but pertinent observations may be made about the 1873-1874 railroad strikes. First, local discontent sparked the strikes; they were neither centrally directed nor national in scope. Two of the strikes involving engineers, in fact, were condemned by the head of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, who publicly assailed the strikers and advised other workers to replace them.<sup>52</sup> Secondly, the ability of workers in so many different towns and regions to stop trains and "take over" railroad properties as well as the degree of public support tendered these men indicates that certain institutional and ideological factors added to the strength of the workers and temporarily, at least, weakened the power of the employers and created additional obstacles for them to surmount. The sympathy the workers found in Waverley, Manchester, Indianapolis, Logansport, and Susquehanna Depot often came from property owners, who supported the strikers even though their spontaneous protests (the response to

<sup>52</sup> Wilson ran into difficulty after he attacked the striking engineers on the East Tennessee, Virginia, and Georgia Railroad and on the Pennsylvania Railroad. The leaders of other national unions called him a friend of "scabs" and "unjust employers," and they blamed him for the defeat of the workers. The *Iron Molders' Journal* labeled him "a grand corporosity." During the Pennsylvania Railroad strike, Wilson publicly announced: "No dishonor will be attached to any man who accepts a situation from Pennsylvania Railroad during the present strike." Engineers in Columbus, Louisville, and other cities denounced him, but the urban press and business weeklies said he was a model labor leader and not "molded . . . on the European plan." After the Pennsylvania strike ended, Wilson continued his attack on the strikers and argued that "strife between labor and capital" could but be ended by "civil war." Enraged Pittsburgh engineers published an eight-page monthly, the *Locomotive Engineers' Advocate*, which sharply attacked his policies, and, finally, in February 1874, he was removed from office by the nearly unanimous vote of delegates to a special convention of the B. L. E. Peter M. Arthur, who was to dominate the union for the next quarter of a century and give it a distinctly conservative flavor, replaced him as the "reform" candidate. Wilson's behavior in the two strikes is found in *Chicago Times*, Nov. 9, 1873; CW, "Remarks," *Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers' Monthly Journal*, VII (December, 1873), 379-380; "Law and Order," *Iron Molders' Journal* (December, 1873), pp. 165-166; CW to the Public, *Cleveland Herald*, n. d., reprinted in the *Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 29, 1873; CW to the Associated Press, *Cincinnati Commercial*, Dec. 29, 1873; *Chicago Times*, Dec. 31, 1873; *Indianapolis Daily Sentinel*, Jan. 6, 1874; "The Strike and the Brotherhood," *Railroad Gazette*, Jan. 3, 1874, pp. 4-5; *Cleveland Leader*, Jan. 12, 1874. Criticism of Wilson is found in *Workingman's Advocate*, Dec. 27, 1873-Jan. 3, 1874; *Machinists' and Blacksmiths' Journal*, n. d., reprinted in *ibid.*, Feb. 7, 1874; *Coopers' New Monthly*, I (January, 1874), 13-14; *Iron Molders' Journal* (January, 1874), p. 200. Wilson's defense is presented in CW, "General Statement," *Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers' Monthly Journal*, VII (January, 1874), 29-30; CW to the editor, *Cleveland Leader*, Jan. 5, 1874; CW and E. S. Ingram to the Members and Officers of the BLE, *Railroad Gazette*, Feb. 21, 1874, pp. 59-60. The later attack on Wilson is found in L. B. Greene, "To the Brotherhood," *Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers' Monthly Journal*, VIII (February, 1874), 86; "The Locomotive Engineers," *Iron Molders' Journal* (February 1874), 243-244 and *ibid.* (March, 1874), 273. Wilson's removal is described in *Cleveland Leader*, Feb. 21-28, 1874 and *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 21-28, 1874.

deeply felt grievances and the absence of experienced trade union leadership) were extreme and often violent. Not unusual, for example, was the attitude reflected in an editorial in the *Scranton Times* during the strike on the Pennsylvania system:

Labor is the great moving power of the world and has the same right to unite for its own advancement that capital has to mass itself for the aggrandizement of the few who control it. . . . [If the railroads] have the right to reduce the wages of workmen, the workmen themselves have the right to dissolve the partnership and take their labor out of the firm. Capital and labor together earn a certain profit which should be equitably divided.<sup>53</sup>

In many small towns in the 1870's, and in sharp contrast to the larger cities of that time, the discontented worker still was viewed by his fellow citizens as an individual and was not yet the stereotyped "labor agitator," who so often stirred an automatically negative reflex from his more fortunate observer. The support tendered these railroad workers in 1873-1874, furthermore, was not unique to the structure and reputation of that industry. Similar attitudes shaped the behavior of non-industrial property owners during conflicts that involved coal miners and iron, textile, and glass workers in the 1870's.<sup>54</sup>

Finally, even though the troubles that railroad operators faced in 1873-1874 were small and insignificant compared with those that developed in July 1877, the same essential patterns of behavior that were widespread in 1877 were found in the 1873-1874 strikes. Three and a half years of severe depression ignited a series of local brush fires into a national conflagration that seared the conscience as well as the confidence of the entire nation. The 1877 railroad strikes are put into their proper historical context only when measured against the events that took place in 1873-1874.

<sup>53</sup> *Scranton Times*, Dec. 31, 1873.

<sup>54</sup> Supporting data is found in the articles by the author cited in footnote 25. See also Herbert G. Gutman, "Social And Economic Structure and Depression: American Labor in 1873 and 1874," unpublished Ph.D., University of Wisconsin, 1959, v-xvii, 1-203.