

The U.S. Strike Commission—A Simulation Activity

Prepared by David Vigilante

For use in conjunction with “The Debs Case: Labor, Capital, and the Federal Courts of the 1890s,” by David Ray Papke, available at <http://www.fjc.gov/history/home.nsf>. A unit in the Teaching Judicial History Project, developed by the Federal Judicial Center in partnership with the American Bar Association’s Division for Public Education.

Activity Objectives

By taking various roles associated with the work of the strike commission, students will be able to:

- explain the issues involved in the Pullman strike and the boycott of railroads by the American Railway Union;
- describe the role of the federal government during the Pullman strike;
- assess the effectiveness of the federal court injunction in restricting the American Railway Union; and
- assess the arguments supporting and opposing the rights of unions to engage in strikes and secondary boycotts.

Essential Questions

- Did the employees at the Pullman Palace Car Company have a legal right to strike?
- Did the General Managers’ Association conspire to destroy the American Railway Union (ARU)?
- Was the ARU and its leadership involved in a criminal conspiracy to disrupt the delivery of U.S. mail?
- Should there be limits on the power of unions to shut down key industries, such as the railroads?
- Were federal troops sent to Chicago to prevent violence or to crush the strike?
- How effective was the injunction in restricting organized labor?
- Were the federal courts neutral in dealing with labor–management disputes?

Legal Issues Raised by the Pullman Strike

The essential legal issues in the Pullman strike centered around the question of the federal government’s role in labor–management disputes.

- Did the Pullman strike and secondary boycott present a threat to the free flow of interstate commerce and the delivery of the mails?

- Was the American Railway Union’s support of the Pullman strike a violation of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act?
- Did the U.S. circuit court have the authority to issue an injunction against officers of the American Railway Union?
- Did restrictions imposed on union officers by the injunction benefit business interests to the detriment of labor? Was the federal government thus acting in collusion with business rather than as a neutral arbiter?

Estimated Time Frame

Six to seven days.

Recommended Prep Work

Students should have some understanding of the conflicts between labor and management in the last third of the nineteenth century. Teachers should review David Ray Papke, “The Debs Case: Labor, Capital, and the Federal Courts of the 1890s,” available at <http://www.fjc.gov/history/home.nsf>. Teachers may want to assign “The *Debs* Case: A Short Narrative” (pp. 1–8) as homework.

Prepare copies of the following handouts:

1. “The *Debs* Case: A Short Narrative” (pp. 1–8)
2. Role Cards for Groups One–Six
3. Recommendations of the United States Strike Commission (pp. 57–59)

(*Note:* All page numbers are from the PDF version of “The *Debs* Case: Labor, Capital, and the Federal Courts of the 1890s,” by David Ray Papke, available online at <http://www.fjc.gov/history/home.nsf>.)

Description of the Activity

In response to a request from the Knights of Labor and Populist Senator James Kyle, President Grover Cleveland, on July 24, 1894, appointed a Strike Commission to investigate the origins of the Pullman strike and to recommend ways to avoid comparable labor disputes in the future. An act of 1888 authorized the President to appoint commissions to mediate disputes between interstate railroads and their workers, and the act provided that the U.S. commissioner of labor chair such a commission. Carroll D. Wright, the commissioner of labor, and two attorneys, John Kernan from New York and Nicholas Worthington from Illinois, formed the Strike Commission and held hearings in Chicago and Washington, D.C. The Commission listened to over 100 witnesses, including workers from the Pullman Palace Car Company, officers of the American Railway Union, members of the General Managers’ Association, and others.

Step 1 (1 day)

Before beginning the lesson, distribute Student Handout 1, “The *Debs* Case: A Short Narrative,” for homework reading. Begin the class with a discussion of the homework assignment to ensure that students are aware of the conditions that led to the strike, management’s reaction, and the injunction initiated by government attorneys.

Inform students in the class that they will be participating in a mock fact-finding commission on the Pullman strike. The Strike Commission has been authorized by the President to call witnesses to determine the origins of the Pullman strike and to document the actions taken by management and labor during the strike. The President also requested that the Commission formulate recommendations for the prevention of future labor disputes. Students will assume roles of individuals who were involved, including (1) management and labor leaders; (2) Pullman workers; (3) public officials; and (4) reporters who covered the events for local newspapers and national magazines.

Divide the class into six groups of differing sizes and assign roles or permit students to select their roles within each of the groups. The six groups are:

- Group One The United States Strike Commission (3 students)
- Group Two Representatives of the Pullman Company and the General Managers’ Association (4 students)
- Group Three Representatives of the U.S. government and federal courts (4 students)
- Group Four Representatives of the American Railway Union and Pullman workers (5 students)
- Group Five State and local officials (3 students)
- Group Six Representatives of the press (2 students)

It is important that each member of the class has an active role in the simulation. For larger classes, increase the number of members of the Strike Commission, or have students assume additional roles, such as residents of Pullman; federal troops called to Chicago; Pullman managers or foremen; the U.S. postmaster general; or social reformer Jane Addams, who testified before the Commission on her role urging arbitration.

Step 2 (1–2 days)

Provide class time for research on the Pullman strike in order for students to fully develop testimony of individual characters in the simulation. Schedule library time for students, provided the school library has sufficient resources, or have students conduct research on the Internet using reliable websites. Some recommended print and Internet resources are listed in Appendix 2.

Step 3 (2–3 days)

Set up the classroom to resemble a hearing room. Have the members of the Strike Commission call the session to order and begin hearing testimony. Members called to testify will have two minutes to present an opening statement and up to five minutes to answer questions from the Strike Commission. The Strike Commission may interrupt witnesses at any time for clarification or follow-up questions. On completion of testimony by witnesses representing all parties, members of the Strike Commission will deliberate and prepare a statement of recommendations that should be read to the class on the following day.

Debrief and Wrap-up

Step 4 (1 day)

Members of the Strike Commission reveal their recommendations. Conduct a general class discussion on the findings of the Commission and its recommendations to avoid future labor disputes. Discuss the different perspectives of witnesses and how they justified the actions they took during the strike.

Distribute Document 1, Recommendations of the United States Strike Commission, to each of the original six groups. Provide time for students to read and briefly discuss the recommendations within their respective groups. Conclude by having students compare and/or contrast the recommendations from the simulation to those of the actual Commission.

Assessment

Assessment should include self evaluations and peer evaluations combined with teacher observation of individual performances during the simulation activity. Students should be evaluated on how well they reflect their respective roles. See Appendix 1 for a sample scoring rubric.

In addition to evaluating student performances during the simulation, have students write a short paper evaluating the formal recommendations of the United States Strike Commission from the perspective of the Commission's role during the simulation. Assign the students who served as members of the simulated Strike Commission to write an evaluation of the Commission's official recommendations.

Alternative Modalities and Enrichment Activities

Read Richard Ely, "Pullman: A Social Study." *Harper's Monthly*, Vol. 70 (Feb. 1885) (found at http://condor.depaul.edu/~chicago/primary_sources/REly.htm).

Explain Ely’s perspective on the pros and cons of living in the company town. Why did Ely believe that Pullman towns should not be emulated across America?

Following a “Meeting of the Minds” format, assemble a panel with students assuming the roles of George M. Pullman, Eugene V. Debs, John Peter Altgeld, Richard Olney, and Grover Cleveland. Have each panel member summarize the issues in the Pullman strike according to that individual’s perspective before answering questions posed by the moderator.

Construct a PowerPoint program on labor relations during the Gilded Age and the Progressive Movement, pointing out continuity and change in the position of the federal government in labor conflicts.

If materials are not available in the school or classroom library and students do not have ready access to the Internet, you should use the study time to work with students individually or in groups to assist in developing presentations before the Strike Commission based on information provided in Student Handout 1 on the *Debs* case and the provided role cards.

Alternative Content Areas

Offer specialized courses in American labor history and courses in American government that focus on the federal statutes pertaining to labor–management relations.

Involving a Judge

Invite a judge to speak to the class on the ways in which the judiciary has responded over time to issues involving rights and obligations of labor unions.

Standards Addressed¹

U.S. History Standards (Grades 5–12)

Era 6—The Development of the Industrial United States (1870–1900)

Standard 3B: The student understands the rise of national labor unions and the role of state and federal governments in labor conflicts.

Standards in Historical Thinking

Standard 2: Historical Comprehension

B. Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage by identifying who was involved, what happened, where it happened, what events led to these developments, and what consequences or outcomes followed.

1. National Standards for History, National Center for History in the Schools, University of California Los Angeles, 1996. Available online at <http://nchs.ucla.edu/standards/>.

Standard 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation

- B. Consider multiple perspectives of various peoples in the past by demonstrating their different motives, beliefs, interests, hopes, and fears.

Standard 4: Historical Research Capabilities

- F. Support interpretations with historical evidence in order to construct closely reasoned arguments rather than facile opinions.

Standard 5: Historical Issues-Analysis and Decision-Making

- D. Evaluate alternative courses of action, keeping in mind the information available at the time, in terms of ethical considerations, the interests of those affected by the decision, and the long- and short-term consequences of each.
- F. Evaluate the implementation of a decision by analyzing the interests it served; estimating the position, power, and priority of each player involved; assessing the ethical dimensions of the decision; and evaluating its costs and benefits from a variety of perspectives.

Specialized Concerns

Although students have ample information to participate in the simulation without further research, the activity will be enhanced by providing text and Internet resources for further information. A lack of specialized texts in the school library or access to the Internet may necessitate outside class time at a public library. Assembling a classroom library of materials from a public library, although helpful, would require vigilance to ensure that books are not taken from the classroom.

Glossary

abet	help or support
boycott	joining together to refuse to have any dealings with a company or organization
contempt	disrespect of law; refusal to carry out an order by the court
injunction	an order issued by a court directing someone to do something
interstate commerce	trade or business activity between or among states
pendency	pending or awaiting
restraint of trade	interruption of the free flow of goods and services

Group One Role Card

The United States Strike Commission

- Carroll Davidson Wright, commissioner of the United States Bureau of Statistics of Labor, chairman of the Commission
- John Kernan, lawyer and former railroad commissioner in New York state
- Nicholas Worthington, lawyer and former Democratic Representative from Illinois

You are in charge of the proceedings. You should have witnesses present an opening statement before responding to your questions. Commission members may interrupt at any time during the witness's response. You may permit, at your discretion, other groups to question witnesses or challenge their testimony. You should ask questions such as:

- What was the cause of the strike? Did employees have a legal right to strike?
- How did the economic depression affect the Pullman Company?
- Was it necessary to reduce workers' salaries? Why were rents charged to workers living in company housing not reduced?
- Did the American Railway Union (ARU) have the legal right to refuse to service trains with Pullman cars?
- Did the General Managers' Association conspire to destroy the ARU?
- Did the U.S. government have the legal right to intervene in the dispute between labor and management?
- What was the reason for seeking an injunction against the ARU? Did the leadership of the union violate the injunction?
- Who was responsible for the disruption of interstate commerce?
- Did the ARU violate the Sherman Anti-Trust Act?
- Did the conditions during the strike justify sending federal troops to Chicago? Were troops sent to secure the peace or to break the strike?

After witnesses have testified, confer with colleagues on the Commission and formulate recommendations to avoid future labor-management disputes. Present your recommendations to the class.

Group Two Role Card

Spokespersons for the Railroads

- George M. Pullman, president, Pullman Palace Sleeping Car Company
- Thomas H. Wickes, vice president, Pullman Palace Sleeping Car Company
- Everett St. John, chairman, General Managers' Association
- John Egen, director, anti-boycott campaign of the General Managers' Association

Your roles as president and vice president of the Pullman Company is to convince the Strike Commission that the reduction of salaries was necessary to stay in business during the recession. You work closely with the General Managers' Association (GMA) and are determined to prevent the American Railway Union (ARU) from carrying out a secondary boycott in support of Pullman workers. The Pullman Company and the GMA would also like to restrict if not eliminate the ability of the ARU to organize cross-industry strikes.

* * *

George M. Pullman inherited his father's small upstate New York company that moved buildings. In the 1850s, he transferred the business to Chicago, and the booming city gave him opportunities for enormous success. Pullman used his newfound capital to enter various businesses, including the manufacture of railroad cars. Pullman's earliest railroad cars won praise at the time of the Civil War, and he incorporated his railroad car business in 1867. By 1879, the Pullman Palace Car Company had gross annual earnings of \$2.2 million and annual net earnings of almost \$1 million. The company also built and operated passenger and sleeping cars that set new standards for comfort and luxury.

In 1880, Pullman decided to concentrate his manufacturing operations at a company town he developed south of Chicago. The town of Pullman offered a vision of corporate paternalism under which workers would rent housing and enjoy the civic institutions planned by the company's owner. The town of Pullman, built at a cost of \$8 million, offered workers brick housing, green parks, and social services that were strictly controlled by the company's management.

The Pullman Company faced several small walkouts in the early 1880s and a strike for an eight-hour day in 1886, but nothing on the scale of the labor dispute in 1894, when workers voted to leave their jobs in protest of the company's unwillingness to lower rents at the same time that it lowered wages. Thomas

Wickes, vice president of the company, met with a grievance committee of workers and, after promising to respond to their concerns, fired members of the grievance committee. Wickes was opposed to Pullman workers joining the recently established ARU. He argued that the ARU had no right to recruit Pullman workers since they worked in the manufacturing of railroad cars and were not technically railway workers. When it appeared the strike might be ended through arbitration, Wickes refused to consider it, saying that the Pullman Company had nothing to arbitrate.

Pullman felt betrayed by his workers for whom, in his mind, he had provided so much, and he met only briefly with workers. When the 1894 strike led to a boycott of Pullman cars by members of the American Railway Union and others, Pullman still refused to negotiate with the workers in his company town. Eventually the strike collapsed and workers who quit the American Railway Union returned to work. Those that remained loyal to the union were not rehired. Pullman thus prevailed in his immediate battle with labor, but during and after the strike, many criticized his inflexibility and insensitivity, and the paternalistic vision of the town of Pullman was irreparably damaged.

* * *

The General Managers' Association represented twenty-four railroad companies with terminals in Chicago. These railroad companies included some of the largest in the country and together constituted a major portion of the American railroad industry. Founded in 1886, the Association attempted to standardize equipment and procedures and to propose wage schedules for its employees. The schedules proved valuable in labor negotiations and began to approximate a national wage scale for railroad employees.

While Pullman was the chief foe of the workers at his plant when they went on strike in 1894, the General Managers' Association became the chief foe of the American Railway Union when the ARU boycotted Pullman cars. On June 26, 1894, Everett St. John, the chairman of the Association, announced that the boycott of Pullman cars would be resisted. The Association chose John M. Egan to lead the anti-boycott campaign, and Egan in turn hired private detectives to collect the names of railroad men who were supporting the boycott. Those men were fired, and the Association replaced them with workers recruited in the East. The country had plunged into a depression, and many unemployed men were only too happy to find work. The Association called them "replacement workers," but the ARU members thought of them as "strike-breakers" or "scabs."

The General Managers' Association also took steps to turn public sentiment against the striking and boycotting workers. The Association urged members to

attach Pullman cars to mail trains, freight trains, and even local commuter trains. When boycotters refused to move these trains because they included Pullman cars, service was halted, and the public grew increasingly hostile toward the strike and boycott. The Association wanted President Cleveland to send federal troops to prevent mob violence and to ensure that the trains would run.

Edwin Walker, special prosecutor for the federal government, met regularly with representatives of the Association to discuss legal actions against the strikers and the American Railway Union. George Peck, chair of the Association's legal committee, advised the government lawyers, and the government lawyers filed motions and requested rulings favorable to the Association.

Group Three Role Card

Representatives of the U.S. Government and Federal Courts

- Richard Olney, Attorney General of the United States
- William Woods, judge, U.S. Circuit Court for the Northern District of Illinois
- Peter Grosscup, judge, U.S. District Court for Northern Illinois
- Edwin Walker, special deputy U.S. attorney

Your roles as Attorney General of the United States and members of the federal judiciary are to explain and defend actions taken by the federal government during the Pullman strike. You believed that the most effective way to halt the boycott by the American Railway Union (ARU) was to issue an injunction against the union's leadership requiring them to immediately cease interfering with trains. You argue that the Sherman Anti-Trust Act gives the courts jurisdiction to issue injunctions against any group or conspiracy in restraint of trade.

* * *

Attorney General Richard Olney directed the government's litigation in the *Debs* case. Olney's frequent work for railroad companies led to his appointment as counsel and member of the board of directors for several railroads, and he worked to limit the effects of recent laws regulating the railroad companies.

When President Grover Cleveland appointed Olney U.S. Attorney General in 1893, Olney asked for and was given assurances that he could continue to provide legal services to his clients while serving in Washington, D.C. Olney had little political experience but he quickly became a trusted adviser to President Cleveland. When the Cleveland administration turned to the federal courts in an effort to stop the Pullman strike and boycott, Olney selected railroad attorney Edwin Walker to be a special assistant U.S. attorney and to lead the efforts in Chicago. Walker, despite the fact that he was special prosecutor for the federal government, met regularly with representatives of the General Managers' Association to discuss legal actions against the strikers and the American Railway Union. The chair of the Association's legal committee advised the government lawyers, and the government lawyers filed motions and requested rulings favorable to the Association.

When Eugene V. Debs's attorneys petitioned the Supreme Court following his citation for violating the lower court injunction, Olney coordinated the briefs and oral arguments for the government and made one of his two appearances before

the Court. When the Supreme Court subsequently ruled in the government's favor, Olney told his secretary that the Supreme Court "took my argument and turned it into an opinion."

William A. Woods served as the presiding judge of the U.S. Circuit Court for the Northern District of Illinois in July 1894, and with fellow judge Peter Grosscup issued the injunction ordering Eugene Debs and other officers of the ARU to cease any efforts to disrupt interstate commerce and the transportation of the mails through their coordination of the boycott of Pullman railroad cars. Woods also presided at hearings regarding the criminal contempt citation issued by another federal judge against Debs and the other officers for allegedly ignoring the injunction. On December 14, 1894, Judge Woods ruled that the injunction and contempt citation were legal.

Grosscup also presided at the ill-fated criminal prosecution of Debs, which ended in February 1895 when a juror became ill and Grosscup declared a mistrial. As he had on the district court, Grosscup continued to speak out on public affairs as a circuit judge. In the midst of the Pullman strike proceedings in July 1894, Grosscup had delivered a speech on "Labor and Property." Although Grosscup was critical of the strikers and big labor unions, he also supported regulation of big trusts. In 1912, he backed Theodore Roosevelt's presidential candidacy for the Progressive Party.

Group Four Role Card

American Railway Union and Pullman Workers

- Eugene V. Debs, president, American Railway Union
- Clarence Darrow, attorney, American Railway Union
- Thomas Heathcoate, Pullman worker and member of the grievance committee discharged by the Pullman vice president
- Jennie Curtis, seamstress, striking Pullman employee
- Richard Ely, professor of economics, author of article on the town of Pullman

Your role is to convince the Strike Commission that Pullman workers were treated unfairly by the company and had the legal right to join unions to better their wages and working conditions. You should argue that conditions in the company town of Pullman were far from ideal. If your salary was reduced because of the depression, the cost of rent at company housing should also be reduced.

* * *

Eugene V. Debs quit school at the age of fourteen and worked as a railroad laborer, painter, and fireman. He became active in the local chapter of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and rose to leadership in the organization. After a series of labor disputes and strikes in the 1880s, Debs became disenchanted with labor organizations based on a single trade or craft. He helped to establish the American Railway Union (ARU), an “industrial union” that organized railroad workers across crafts for more effective advocacy of workers’ needs. Debs became president of the American Railway Union upon its founding in 1893.

Less than a year after its founding, the ARU had 465 local chapters and over 150,000 members. A small number of the workers at the Pullman Palace Car Company were members, and they joined their fellow Pullman workers in the strike of 1894. Debs worried about the chances for success of a strike in the midst of a national depression, but he went to Pullman soon after the strike began and quickly concluded that the workers needed some organized action against the company. When the ARU held its convention in Chicago a few weeks after the start of the strike, the delegates voted not only to support the strikers but also to refuse to move any Pullman railroad cars. This boycott disrupted rail service, and government lawyers obtained from a federal court an injunction ordering Debs and other officers of the ARU from taking any action that might encourage strikers.

When Debs and the officers continued to communicate with local union chapters and the disruption of rail traffic spread, the U.S. circuit court ordered the arrest of Debs and the officers for violation of the injunction. The district court also indicted Debs and his fellow officers on charges of criminal conspiracy to disrupt interstate commerce. He petitioned for a writ of habeas corpus from the Supreme Court of the United States, but the Court ruled that the actions of the U.S. Circuit Court in the Northern District of Illinois were proper and constitutional. As a result, Debs served a six-month jail term.

* * *

Clarence Darrow, one of the most famous defense lawyers in U.S. history, represented many unpopular and controversial clients throughout his career. In addition to practicing law, Darrow became involved in Illinois politics and became a close friend of John Altgeld, serving as an adviser in Altgeld's race for governor in 1892. In 1891, Darrow became an attorney for the Chicago and North-Western Railway and served on the General Managers' Association legal committee, but he withdrew from the committee when the Pullman strike began, and he took leave from his job so he could defend Debs and the other union officers. Darrow represented the union officers in the hearings on the contempt citation, in the criminal conspiracy trial, and in the appeal of the contempt order to the Supreme Court. "I really wanted the men to win, and believed they should," Darrow wrote later in his autobiography. "I knew that like all other men they were often selfish and unreasonable, but I believed that the distribution of wealth was grossly unjust, and I sympathized with almost all efforts to get higher wages and to improve general conditions for the masses."

During the conspiracy trial, Darrow obtained and released embarrassing minutes from meetings of the General Managers' Association. The minutes made clear the Association's determination not merely to counter the boycott but also to determine wages and eliminate the American Railway Union.

* * *

Thomas Heathcoate and Jennie Curtis were employed by the Pullman Palace Car Company and lived in the company town. Heathcoate had joined the ARU and encouraged other Pullman workers to follow suit. He was selected as a member of the grievance committee that attempted to present complaints about the reduction of wages and the failure of the company to reduce rents and costs of services for those living in Pullman. Although the grievance committee had assurances from Thomas Wickes, vice president of the Pullman Company, that there would be no reprisals, Heathcoate was fired.

Curtis, a seamstress for the company, resented the high-handed methods George Pullman and the company managers used to control the workers who lived in Pullman. She was outspoken in her opposition to the company's arbitrary reduction in wages and joined the strike. During the ARU convention in Chicago, Curtis told conventioners of the abuses workers suffered and urged the union to support their strike.

* * *

Richard Ely, a professor of economics at Johns Hopkins University, visited the town of Pullman and published a critical article in the February 1885 issue of *Harper's Monthly*. Ely acknowledged that the buildings and streets were pleasant and appealing, but he emphasized the way George Pullman and his company controlled everything. None of the workers felt like the town was really a home; workers felt like they were living in a giant hotel. Ely likened Pullman himself to the German Kaiser or Russian Czar. What the town of Pullman truly represented, Ely complained, was the "establishment of the most absolute power of capital, and the repression of all freedom."

Group Five Role Card

State and Local Officials

- John Peter Altgeld, governor of Illinois
- John P. Hopkins, mayor of Chicago
- Michael Brennan, Chicago superintendent of police

Your role is to argue that state and local officials were able to maintain order and did not need federal troops to be sent to Chicago. Although there had been some outbreaks of violence, Chicago police were capable of securing order.

* * *

John Peter Altgeld was governor of Illinois during the Pullman strike and boycott. After immigrating to the United States from his native Germany, Altgeld served as a private in the Union Army and worked as a teacher and then as a lawyer in Missouri. He moved to Chicago in 1875, became active in the Democratic Party, and served as a judge of the Cook County Superior Court from 1886 to 1891. He was elected governor in 1892 with strong support from farm and labor groups.

During the Pullman strike and boycott, Altgeld ordered companies of the state militia to Danville and Decatur with directions to quell rioting and to clear the way for rail traffic. This initiative seemed to produce calm, but President Grover Cleveland appeared unmindful of Altgeld's efforts and ordered federal troops into Illinois. Altgeld was outraged and complained to the President. The railroads, Altgeld thought, were disrupted not because men had blocked the traffic but rather because strikers and their sympathizers would not work for railroads carrying Pullman cars. Altgeld also protested when U.S. Attorney General Richard Olney and his assistants sought and obtained an injunction against Eugene V. Debs and the leadership of the American Railway Union.

Altgeld's opposition to the use of troops and the injunction made him a great hero to many reform-minded Democrats, but it also contributed to his defeat when he sought reelection in 1896. Altgeld, however, did not change his opinion. Before his death in 1902, he said the decision in *In re Debs* "marks a turning point in our history, for it established a new form of government never before heard of among men, that is, government by injunction." "The Constitution declares that our government has three departments," he said, "the legislative, judicial and executive, and that no one shall tread on the other, but under this new order of things a federal judge becomes at once a legislator, court and executioner."

* * *

John P. Hopkins, mayor of Chicago, and Michael Brennan, Chicago superintendent of police, worked to keep the peace in the city during the Pullman strike. Neither believed it was necessary to send federal troops to Chicago. The mayor offered protection to officials of railroads operating through Chicago. Brennan complied with the mayor's order to preserve the peace, protect property, and prevent violence. The police were constantly called upon by the railroads for protection. There were over 3,000 men in service and all engaged in preventing violence. The police superintendent argued that prior to the arrival of federal troops no serious violence had occurred. Much of the violence erupted after the troops arrived.

Group Six Role Card

Media Coverage and Public Debates

- J. Henry Harper, editor of *Harper's Weekly Magazine*
- Editor, *Chicago Tribune*

Your role is to marshal public opinion against the strikers and especially Eugene Debs and the American Railway Union. You support President Cleveland's decision to send federal troops to Chicago.

* * *

The Pullman strike and boycott were important national news, and periodicals as well as major daily newspapers devoted significant attention to the strike and boycott that spread from the Chicago area to the western half of the country. In an editorial of July 7, 1894, the influential *Harper's Weekly* said the nation was "fighting for its own existence just as truly as in suppressing the great rebellion."

The *Harper's Weekly* comparison of the Pullman disorders to the Civil War, equating the strikers and boycotters with southern rebels, was typical of the press's negative characterization of the strikers and boycotters. Congress supported President Cleveland's use of federal soldiers, ministers rose in their pulpits to deplore the disorder, and the press for the most part took the side of the railroads. Stopping rail traffic, the argument went, interfered with commerce, stopped the delivery of the mails, and generally harmed the nation.

Harper's Weekly's criticism of the strikers and boycotters included not only editorials and reporting but also sketches and illustrations. Especially noteworthy were the drawings *Harper's Weekly* commissioned from the famous artist Frederic Remington. Remington had made his name with dramatic renderings of heroic soldiers and mysterious Indians from the American West. In *Harper's Weekly* of July 21, July 28, and August 11, 1894, he portrayed the federal troops in Chicago every bit as heroically as he had portrayed them on the frontier. And lest there be any doubt of what he meant his drawings to convey, Remington's accompanying commentaries described the troops as halting "a malodorous crowd of anarchist foreign trash." The citizens of Chicago, he added, were pleased to see the federal troops arrive because they could keep "social scum from rising to the top."

The covers of *Harper's Weekly* also made clear the periodical's pronounced hostility toward the boycotters, Eugene V. Debs, and those who would sympathize with the boycott. The cover of July 14, 1894, featured a drawing of a bigger-than-life Debs wearing a crown, casually attired, and apparently blocking inter-

state commerce. In the background grain elevators, factories, and terminals are closed, and trains carrying mail, flour, vegetables, and dressed beef are stopped dead on the tracks. One week later, another cover, featuring the “Vanguard of Anarchy,” again portrayed Debs wearing a crown and now seated on a throne, carried by Illinois Governor Altgeld and assorted clowns and followed by a monstrous group of men wielding guns and waving torches.

Daily newspapers did not match *Harper’s Weekly’s* graphic excesses, but they too presented the strikers, boycotters, and Debs in a sensational and negative manner. A headline in the *Washington Post* of July 7, 1894, warned, “Fired by the Mob, Chicago at the Mercy of the Incendiary’s Torch.” The *New York Times* on July 9, 1894, condemned Debs for his purportedly excessive consumption of liquor. Using terms of the era, the newspaper said Debs suffered from “dipsomania” and urged him to seek treatment for his “liquor habit.”

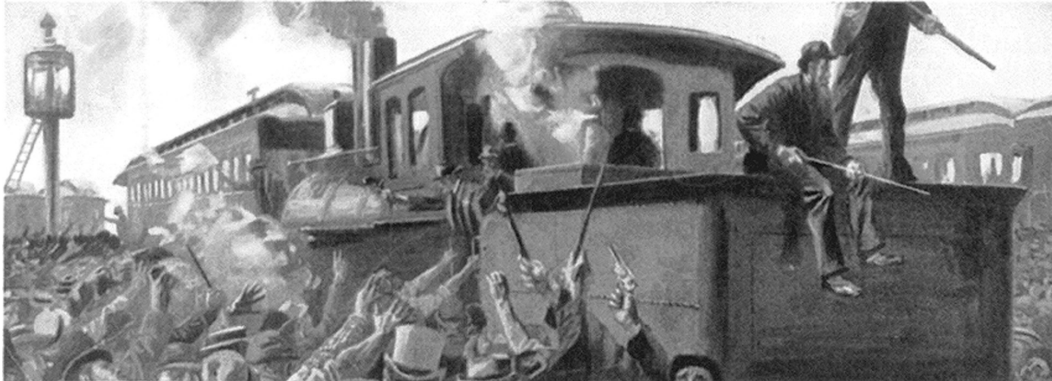
The half dozen daily newspapers in Chicago gave the strike and boycott extensive coverage, and the coverage in the *Chicago Tribune* was the most extensive and critical. The newspaper’s editorial of May 16, 1894, entitled “Wild Demands of the Pullman Men,” suggested the workers’ demands were “the work of some Populist-Socialist who has strayed here from the West or the South . . .” A front-page article on June 30, 1894, reported, “With the coming of darkness last night Dictator Debs’ strikers threw off the mask of law and order and began the commission of acts of lawlessness and violence.” An editorial on the same date accused Debs and the other officers of the American Railway Union of wanting “to show that they could wield a colossal power over the American people and their interstate commerce and would hesitate at no measures which they do not suppose to bring the penitentiary or gallows in their train.”

Between July 3 and 5, 1894, the *Chicago Tribune* published a series of front-page cartoons ridiculing Debs. In the first, Debs wears a lion’s suit, stands on top of a book titled “Law,” and brays rudely at Uncle Sam. In the second, Debs smokes a cigar and wears a crown, and he props his feet on a table thereby soiling the Declaration of Independence. In the third and most curious, Uncle Sam squats to light a firecracker with Debs’ face and name on it. The wand used for ignition reads “U.S. Troops,” and the caption says, “Uncle Sam Takes a Hand In It.”

Press coverage of the legal proceedings in the Chicago courts was limited in the national publications, but the Chicago newspapers not surprisingly covered the proceedings and commented upon them in detail. Most of the coverage was supportive of the arguments of the railroads and the federal government. The *Chicago Tribune*, for example, ran a front-page article titled “Uncle Sam Will Use the Law Backed by Riot Guns” on July 2, 1894, the very day the federal government sought the injunction. The article praised the breadth of the injunction. The injunction, the newspaper said, will be “of so broad and sweeping a character that

interference with the railroads, even of the remotest kind, will be practically impossible without incurring penalties for contempt of court.” Eagerly anticipating developments once the injunction was issued, the newspaper added, “It is said without reserve the arrest of these men [Debs and the American Railway Union officers] is inevitable”

Source: David Ray Papke, “The *Debs* Case: Labor Capital, and the Federal Courts of the 1890s,” pp. 34–37.



“Scenes in and About Chicago” excerpt: “Deputies Trying to Move an Engine and Car on the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad, July 2, 1894”

Harper’s Weekly, 1894.

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ62-75202]



“The Great Railway Strikes—The First Meat Train Leaving the Chicago Stock-Yards under escort of United States Cavalry, July 10, 1894”

Reproduction in Harper’s Weekly, July 28, 1894, of drawing by G. W. Peters after G. A. Coffin. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ62-3526]



KING DEBS.

"King Debs"

Caricature of Debs, by W.A. Rogers

Harper's Weekly, July 14, 1894.

Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ62-106100]

Appendix 1

Sample Scoring Rubric*

Strike Commission Simulation



Simulation Components	Poor (incomplete and/or significant errors)	Satisfactory (complete with 1–2 significant errors)	Excellent (complete with no significant errors)
1. Content (includes specific references to major dates, people, and/or events)	1	3	5
2. Comprehension (understands issues through testimony and questioning)	1	3	5
3. Role (prepared and incorporated something additional in their performance —costume or props)	1	3	5

Total Score: _____

Comments:

*This is adapted from a scoring rubric by Marc Turner.

Appendix 2

Selected Resources on the Pullman Strike

Print

- Carwardine, William H. *The Pullman Strike*. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1894 (Reprint edition by Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969).
- Lindsey, Almont. *The Pullman Strike: The Story of a Unique Experiment and of a Great Labor Upheaval*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942.
- Manning, Thomas G. *The Chicago Strike of 1894: Industrial Labor in the Nineteenth Century*. New York: Henry Holt, 1960 (Select Problems in Historical Interpretation Series).
- Papke, David Ray. *The Pullman Case: The Clash of Labor and Capital in Industrial America*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1999.
- Schneirov, Richard, Shelton Stormquist, and Nick Salvatore (eds). *The Pullman Strike and the Crisis of the 1890s: Essays on Labor and Politics*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999.
- Smith, Carl. *Urban Disorder and the Shape of Belief: The Great Chicago Fire, the Harymarket Bomb, and the Model Town of Pullman*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.
- The United States Strike Commission. *Report on the Chicago Strike of June–July, 1894*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1895.
- Warne, Colson E. (ed.). *The Pullman Boycott of 1894: The Problem of Federal Intervention*. Boston: D.C. Heath, 1955 (Problems in American Civilization Series).

Websites

- Bassett, Jonathan, "The Pullman Strike of 1894," *OAH Magazine of History* (Winter 1997) <http://www.oah.org/pubs/magazine/labor/bassett.pdf>
- Chicago: City of the Century*, PBS American Experience, "George Pullman" http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/chicago/peopleevents/p_pullman.html
- Ely, Richard, "Pullman: A Social Study." *Harper's Monthly*, Vol. 70 (Feb. 1885) http://condor.depaul.edu/~chicago/primary_sources/REly.htm
- History Files, "The Pullman Era," <http://www.chicagohs.org/history/pullman.html>