
Telegram to the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers from Eugene V. Debs, President of the American Railway Union, June 26, 1894

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The convention of the ARU convened at Chicago on June 9th [1894], and the delegates from the Pullman unions laid their troubles before the convention, and the full power of the ARU was put in force in their interest.

On June 21, the delegates, under instructions from their local unions, unanimously voted that *the members of the Union* should stop handling Pullman cars on June 26, unless the Pullman Company would consent to arbitrate. Up to this time, the ARU, who claimed 150,000 members, was conducting the business in its own way, and asking no favors from any of the old organizations. If they could succeed without, they evidently believed it would mean flocking to their standard and the disintegration of the old organizations. But when the day arrive which had been fixed by the ARU convention to boycott Pullman cars, the first intimation that they desired or needed any cooperation came in the form of the following dispatch, received at 2:30 pm when the strike was already on:

A boycott against the Pullman Co., to take effect at noon to-day, has been declared by the American Railway Union. We earnestly request your aid and cooperation in this fight of organization of labor against a powerful and oppressive monopoly.

E. V. Debs, Pres.

A compliance with this request at this time, and rendering assistance such as contemplated in this dispatch, and without compliance with the law governing the B of LE, would have been a great assumption of authority on the part of any Grand Officer. The law expels any member who violates the conditions of a contract. Contracts must be abrogated by due process of conference by committees and a majority vote of all concerned. But one answer could be given to such a request, under such circumstances, and when it was given, then commenced the rule or ruin policy of the ARU... Death even was not beyond the scope of heir hatred for members of other labor organizations who would not believe and act as they dictated. Had the old organizations done otherwise than they did, every contract held by them, which represents years of constant effort, would have been nullified because of broken faith; public opinion would surely have veered to the side of the railroads on an issue based entirely upon sympathy, and the result of the strike would not have been changed, only in the magnitude of harm done to organized labor.

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Edited by Tim Davenport

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