

# The pullman case

Business



In 1894 a strike known as ‘ the Pullman strike’ took place. It was destructive and revolutionary, involving both the employees who protested and their employer, George Pullman. The employees felt that Pullman was taking advantage of them, so they joined the American Railroad Union (ARU). This caused a lot of mixed feelings and many people had different perspectives on the event. Several different views can be observed when analyzing this case and its consequences.

All of these views can be analyzed by interpreting first-hand accounts and documents from the time of the incident. Wade Hampton was a former senator and governor of South Carolina. He wrote an article entitled, “ Lessons of the Pullman Boycott from a Business Perspective. ” Since he was apart of the American government, he was concernered with the labor force breaking what was stated in judicial law during the railroad boycott. His famous article opens with the statement that, “ There can be no possible excuse for conduct such as that which has characterized the acts of the lawless mobs, which, in defiance of all laws, divine and human, blindly and madly struck at the very foundation of all organized society, seemingly only intent on involving the whole country in common ruin.

(Hampton pg. 15). His statements clearly reflect a businessman’s opposition to employees joining a labor union. He believes that by them revolting against Pullman and his company they are being unfaithful as employees and are causing destruction in the country. Mr.

Hampton makes a good point – there where better ways that existed for the employees to boycott against Pullman; ways in which they wouldn’t be

destructive to railroads and other property than those that Pullman himself owned. Hampton's own ties to the railroad make his reasons behind his views very obvious - monetarily and in reference to his retaining his reliable labour source. In addition, the audience for his article is the middle and upperclass American public - an audience who are likely to listen to and sympathize with his cause. The same newspaper that published Hampton published an article by Samuel Gompers entitled: "Lessons of the Pullman Boycott from a Union Perspective." Samuel Gompers was President of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), which was a union of skilled workers - unlike the ARU.

Gompers' argument showed insight, as he said in the article, "It is readily appreciated that these men have been wholly misled by false promises and covert threats." (Gompers pg. 11). His main concern was with the way that the protesters were handling the union's riot. Gompers was against violence and destruction - a problem because those were the very values for which the ARU stood for.

Unlike Hampton, he believed that the employees had "the right to organize, the right to think, to act; to protect ourselves, our homes, and our liberties, and work out our emancipation," (Gompers pg. 4) but to do so in an organized, non-violent fashion. In his article, "For the Further Benefit of Our People", George Pullman, the owner of the company in question, addresses the public stating the reasons he had to lower the workers' wages. He makes a good point on why he can't lower the prices of rent for the housing.

Although he owns both companies, they don't go hand in hand. He has to have competitive housing prices to remain profitable in his own.

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A struggle in the Pullman Car Company shouldn't have had an effect on his housing business, but, due to the way he ran his town, the situation was completely different. The town was one business in itself, run completely by Pullman. Employees were not forced to live in town, but are told that if they don't live in town, when workers need to be cut, they are the first to go. No one has any input on how the town is run, or what goes on in the town. They are not able to own land, or a house. The employees made a very good point, " the wages he pays out with one hand- the Pullman Palace Car Company, he takes back with the other- the Pullman Land Association," (Father Knows Best? , pg 2).

Pullman never lost any money. One would think that he would be more understanding seeing as his ascent as a businessman was due to Darwinism; but the way his town was set up it kept the laborers from ever being able to move up and becoming anything better than basic laborers. As one can clearly see, everyone in the community that related to the Pullman case had different perspectives on how the strike should have happened; if they believed it should have happened at all. The entire situation was dependent on monetary gain and/or loss. Pullman and Hampton were both against the strike because they (obviously) didn't want to lose their money. Grompers however was concerned with the labor unions and right and reasons to stand up to Pullman and his company - their right to their own personal freedoms.

The case proved monumental in the dispute between big business and labour, with arguments from both sides being offered with passion, emotion, and dedication. It is a case that's precedent and implications will survive for

years and years to come. Bibliography " THE PULLMAN STRIKE. " Ohio Farmer (1856-1906) 12 Jul 1894: 30. APS Online. ProQuest.

<http://www.proquest.com/>.