

1877 great rail road strike research paper examples

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1877 Great Rail Road Strike

The 1877 Great Railroad Strike, at times called the Great Upheaval, started on 14th July in Martinsburg, West Virginia, and came to an end 45 days later, after it was terminated by state and local militias, as well as federal troops. After the Civil War was over, there resulted a flourish in construction of railroad, with a new track being set between the years 1866 and 1873. The railroads, which used to be the second biggest employer beyond agriculture, needed large capital investment amounts, and, therefore, implied massive monetary risk. Plungers invested in the industry, leading to over expansion and abnormal growth. Jay Cooke's firm, just as a number of other banking institutions, invested disproportional depositors' funds' share in this industry, therefore, creating the way for the resulting collapse.

On top of the Cooke's direct capital infusion in the railroads, Jay Cooke's firm was a government federal agent in the direct funding of construction of railroad for the government. The construction of new railway line in regions where there was no settlement or clearance of land needed land loans and grants. These financial aids could only be provided by the use of Jay Cooke's firm, by the government, as a channel for federal financing aggravated the effects that the bankruptcy of Cooke imposed on the economy of the country (WordPress).

Following the 1873 Panic, a bitter enmity between the industry leaders and workers arose. By 1877, 10% cuts of wage, capitalists distrust as well as poor conditions of work resulted in several strikes, in the railroad that kept the trains from operating. The enmity lingered well following the end of depression in 1878 and 1879, finally bursting into the unrest of labor that

marked the decades that followed and that ultimately caused the establishments of labor unions.

In addition, the presidential election of 1876 between Rutherford B. Hayes and Samuel J. Tilden had been a slight Tilden's success in the popular vote, even though while he got a large number of electoral votes he failed to meet the constitutional majority requirement. This took the poll to the House of Representatives who failed to arrive at an agreement. On 29th January 1877, the Congress authorized a law that created an Electoral Commission consisting of 15 members to make a decision on a winner. The Five members were from each Congress house, with the rest being from the United States Supreme Court. The commission gave the challenged votes to Hayes. Therefore, the nation's mood grew darker since Tilden's supporters felt voiceless.

The 1877 Great Railroad Strike began on 14th July in Martinsburg, in reaction to the second reduction of wages in one year by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. The workers on strike would not permit any operation to go on until the second cut of wage was reversed. Governor Henry M. Mathews sent units of state militia to restore services of the train, but the troops declined to employ force against the strikers, which made the governor call for federal troops.

The strike resulted in large economic losses. For instance, it is recognized that the brotherhoods of engineers and firemen lost about \$600, 000 over the strike's forty-five days while the Burlington Railroad lost at least \$2, 100, 000. In Pittsburgh, the property damage was estimated to reach about \$5, 000, 000, with Chicago, Baltimore as well as other cities experiencing losses

of the same magnitude.

Following the strike, union organizers plotted their next struggles as business leaders and politicians took steps to make sure that such disorder could not occur again. Several states passed conspiracy statutes. States created new units of militia, and National Guard arsenals were built in several cities. For employers and workers alike, the strikes had demonstrated the workers' power in combination to dispute the status quo. They were driven, as a state militiaman of Pittsburgh, who was commanded to break the strike of 1877, pointed out, by one purpose and one spirit among them that they were warranted in falling back to any way to crush the corporations' power.

Therefore, in the strike's wake, unions became more competent as well as better organized, and the strikes' number of raised. In the 1880s, there were almost ten thousand strikes as well as lockouts and in 1886 almost 700, 000 workers struck. The business leaders assumed a stricter stance against the unions. However, and possibly due to the more strict stance, the labor movement proceeded to grow.

The 1877 Great Railroad Strike had a number of impacts. One strike outcome was raised public knowledge of the railroad workers' grievances. In 1880, the B&O railroad that had the lowest rate of wage of any key railroad, set up the Baltimore and Ohio Employees' Relief Association that offered coverage for injury from accidents, sickness, as well as a death benefit. In 1884, the B&O was the first key employer to provide a pension plan (Gillett).

In 1886, there was a nationwide strike directed at lowering the average working day from twelve to eight hours, and 340, 000 workers went on strike at 12, 000 companies nationally. In Chicago, as police were attempting to

disperse a large labor meeting in Haymarket Square, there exploded a bomb leading to the death of a police officer.

In 1893-1894, a serious depression swept the country and America experienced a number of its worst strikes in history, which included the one against the Pullman Palace Car Company. The strike that had been initiated by severe wage cuts stopped traffic of railroad, with conflicts between strikers and troops erupting in twenty-six states.

The overcome of the Pullman Strike fed an intense discussion in the labor movement between the proponents of industrial unionism and of craft unionism, an argument that went on for a number of decades.

Works Cited

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