

# What was the historical significance of the great railroad strike of 1877

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The Importance of the Great Railroad Strike of 1877 The great railroad strike of 1877 was the first major strike by an integral industry in the US. The whole railroad industry came to a standstill for a period of about 45 days because of wage cuts, underpaid workers and harsh economic conditions in general. An important differentiating factor between this clash between labourers and their employers was the magnitude and speed at which the 'revolt' spread from coast to coast.

The US army and state militia were required to restore order and the strike was over after hundreds were temporarily jailed and wage cuts were restored. If we look at this event from a historical perspective, it was the forerunner modern labour laws and unions (" Ohio History Central").

The working class began to realize that they were not just puppets of their employers and they could voice their rights. They also started thinking on the lines that they had a greater chance of having their demands met if they stood up collectively. More and more organized strikes were witnessed in succeeding years and it was not long before labour unions started to form. Even at the time, the most charismatic labourers of the lot started to take control of small groups of fellow labourers marking the first instances of present day union leaders (O. Stowell 128-137).

And although proper labour laws were not adapted until after the great depression of the 30's; the framework for such laws had already been devised due to excessive pressure. This was done by the labour unions via organized strikes, on President Roosevelt (Rhea Dulles and Dubofsky 319-388).

The railroad workers of 1877 might just have seen their wage cuts restored,

but this marked the beginning of a flurry of strikes across industries which evolved into more coordinated and structured ones over time.

#### Works Cited

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