
Statement to the American Public from the Jailed Leaders of the American Railway Union, July 22, 1894

As published in *In the Circuit Court of the United States, Northern District of Illinois: United States of America, Complainant, vs. Eugene V. Debs et al., Respondents, Before Honorable William A. Woods, Circuit Judge, etc.: Proceedings on Information for Attachment for Contempt.* Chicago: Bernard & Hornstein, Printers, n.d. [1894], pp. 50-52.

Headquarters, American Railway Union,
Cook County Jail, Chicago,
July 22nd [1894].—

To the American Public:

It is almost universally conceded that the Pullman Company, through oft repeated reductions of wages, excessive rents, and many other causes, has grievously wronged its employees, and, whatever may be said about the great railway strike which resulted in consequence of such grievances, the arbitrary refusal of said Pullman Company to submit to arbitration in any form, (even to decide the question if there was anything to arbitrate) is proof positive that said company had no faith in the justice of its cause and fears the disclosures that are certain to result from an honest investigation, and in view of the heavy loss entailed upon the country, such obstinacy on the part of the Pullman Company is deserving of the severest condemnation.

The Pullman Company makes the plea that it is asked of them that they shall run their works at a loss. The statement is absolutely false. What was asked was arbitration, and this would have resulted in even-handed justice. The Pullman Company has robbed its employees, and an investigation would have disclosed a state of affairs which would have horrified the nation. This is why arbitration was refused. It is notoriously true that the Pullman Company pays its conductors and porters such paltry wages that they are obliged to depend upon

the public to support them. Yes, this rich and powerful corporation virtually compels the public to pay the wages of its sleeping-car employees, and this notwithstanding extortionate rates are charged for sleeping-car accommodations.

We propose that the Pullman Company shall be brought to justice, and this in a way that will not necessitate a strike with its attendant ills. It may be suggested that this should have been thought of before the great strike was inaugurated. In that case little, if any, attention would have been paid to the appeal we are about to make. As one of the results of the strike the company is aroused, and any proper appeal will command attention. The Pullman Company [is] still defiant, and as cruel to its former employees as it is indifferent to the public weal. It is determined to starve its employees into submission. As remorseless as a man-eating tiger, it waits complacently until their last penny is gone, and they are thus forced to crawl back into their heartless, oppressive employ. The spectacle is well calculated to make men and angels shudder.

Shall the Pullman Company have the support of the public in carrying out this hellish policy? Shall the public be a part to the starvation and degradation of the more than 4,000 employees, men and women, whose only crime is that they ask living wages? We believe — indeed, we know — what the answer will be. We have faith in the American people. They uphold justice; they love fair play; and now in the name of justice and fair play we appeal to the great American public, to every good man and every good woman, not to ride in a Pullman car until the Pullman Company does justice to its employees. Let the cars run absolutely empty. No friend of labor, no friend of humanity would occupy a seat or berth in a Pullman car. Let this policy be inaugurated, and we will then see how long the railroad companies will be bound by their contracts, as they have induced the public to believe, to haul Pullman cars.

We propose to continue this strike against the Pullman Company through good and evil report and without regard to consequences until justice shall be done. There will be no surrender. We will use every available and lawful means to press the contest. Dungeons shall not daunt us. The struggle is for humanity and against the most cruel tyranny, and unless we are deaf to every impulse of mercy and fellow-feeling, must be crowned with success.

Think of the Pullman employees as your own sisters, brothers, children. If you have any doubt as to the outrages of which they have

been the victims, we refer you to the Rev. W.H. Carwardine, Pullman, Illinois, a gentleman of the highest character and standing, who has long been a close student of the conditions at Pullman and is able to speak from personal observation and experience.

Persons desiring to contribute money or supplies to Pullman employees will please forward same to David V. Gladman, treasurer, Pullman, Illinois.

It is requested that all papers throughout the land favorable to labor, to justice, to humanity, copy this statement in full and keep it standing as long as possible.

Earnestly appealing to the great public to aid us in this unequal contest between a rich, powerful, arrogant, and defiant corporation and its famishing, half-clad employees, and relying with implicit faith upon the powerful triumph of the right, we subscribe ourselves,

Very respectfully yours,

Eugene V. Debs, *President.*

George W. Howard, *Vice President.*

Sylvester Keliher, *Secretary.*

L.W. Rogers, *Editor, Railway Times.*

Edited by Tim Davenport

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