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GURDON W. WATTLES



# A Crime Against Labor



*A brief history of the Omaha &  
Council Bluffs Street  
Railway Strike  
1909*



By GURDON W. WATTLES



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# Introductory.

It is the purpose of this narrative to preserve in comprehensive form the history of the industrial crime that, in September, 1909, shook the city of Omaha and adjoining municipalities to their outermost environs; paralyzed for some days the business and social interests of 250,000 people; temporarily withdrew from 500 men and their families the means of livelihood; and ultimately left 150 of them to search elsewhere for new occupation. It is the story of the strike of the union operating carmen in the employ of the Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway Company, the service corporation operating the traction systems of the cities of Omaha, South Omaha, Council Bluffs, and the suburbs of Benson, Florence and Dundee.

The facts herein presented are taken from authentic records. A large portion, relating to conferences held, first with a view of preventing a strike, and later with a view of settling the strike, is reprinted from the transcript of the court reporter who made a stenographic report of the proceedings at the time of their occurrence. A portion is reproduced from the editorial and news columns of the daily newspapers, while statements of some of the public officials and most prominent business men of the city, as well as of several of the striking and non-union employes of the company, are presented in order that the facts may be truthfully set forth without undue prejudice or color.

It has been the effort of the historian to present the case on its attendant merits and demerits, chronicling the things that actually occurred and arranging them in chronological order, that the reader may be informed as to all the phases of the situation that developed, and reach the understanding that comes of accurate knowledge. Such knowledge is a prerequisite, if the blame or responsibility for what occurred is to be unerringly fixed.

That a grave responsibility rests somewhere is evident, but it is for the future to call it to account, either at the bar of public opinion or to those misguided men who were most grievously wronged.

THE AUTHOR.



# Chapter I.

## ADVENT OF THE UNION

In August, 1902, an international union officer by the name of Wilson appeared in Omaha, and started the organization of a street railway union among the employes of the Omaha Street Railway Company. About fifteen men joined the union. They were promptly suspended by the General Superintendent of the company, but soon after they asked for a hearing before the Board of Directors, which was granted.

At this meeting they requested that Mr. Wilson, the international organizer, be allowed to explain to the board the objects and purposes of the union they sought to organize. He was admitted, and in his statement said that in many cities of the country unions existed among the street railway employes, but that in no case did the union attempt to enforce a closed shop; that union men and non-union men worked together on street railways in perfect harmony; that the purpose of the organization in Omaha was for the mutual benefit and advantage of the men who should join the union; that the company would not be asked to treat them in any different manner than it treated its non-union employes, and that no special contract with the union men would be asked or required either at this time or in the future.

On the strength of this statement, which was taken down, the officers of the Street Railway Company withdrew their objections to the organization of the union, and reinstated the men who had been suspended on account of joining it.

For some time thereafter comparatively few of the employes of the Street Railway Company joined the union. The policy of the company and its officers had always been to treat its employes in a liberal and fair manner. For many years the Omaha Street Railway Company had paid a flat wage of twenty cents per hour. All during the panic and depression from 1893 to 1900 the wages of its employes had never been reduced, although the company paid but one dividend to its stockholders during that period. The

story is told that during the darkest days of depression, when it seemed hardly possible to keep the company out of the hands of a receiver, the suggestion was made at a meeting of the Board of Directors that the wages of the men be decreased, but that Mr. Frank Murphy, then president of the company, stated emphatically that even though the company should go into bankruptcy he would not favor a decrease of wages to its employes. So the wages were not decreased, although the Kansas City street railway company was then paying its conductors and motormen fifteen cents per hour, and the street railway company of Minneapolis and St. Paul was paying sixteen cents per hour.

On January 1, 1903, the wages of conductors and motormen were increased as follows: First year 20 cents per hour, second year 21 cents, thereafter 22 cents.

On May 1, 1906, another increase was granted, and the following scale of wages was put in force: First year 20 cents per hour, second year 21 cents, third year 22 cents, fourth, fifth and sixth years 23 cents, seventh to tenth years inclusive 24 cents, thereafter 25 cents per hour.

On May 1, 1907, another increase was made and the following scale of wages was adopted: First year 21 cents per hour, second year 22 cents, third year 23 cents, fourth year 24 cents, fifth to ninth years 25 cents per hour, thereafter 26 cents per hour.

From the date of the organization of the union until the strike was called on September 18, 1909, at no time did a majority of the conductors and motormen of the street railway system belong to the union.

Soon after its organization, a large delegation of the old employes of the company, some of whom had been in the service for twenty years or more, called on the officers of the company and stated that members of the union were urging them to join, and had said that unless they did so they were liable to lose their positions. These old employes stated that they were well satisfied with their treatment; that they had no complaints against the company or its officers; and that they did not wish to belong to a union, for fear that at some future time they might be compelled to lose their positions through a strike or otherwise, if they became members of this organization.

These men were told, as were many others who later inquired, that the company would not at any time jeopardize their interests



by entering into any contract or agreement with the union, and that an agreement had been made when the union was organized that no contract would be required, and that the company would not be asked to treat its union employes in any different or more favorable manner than it did its non-union men.

For some time after the union was formed but few of the employes joined it, but from time to time outside officers of the national organization came among the men. At such times frequent meetings of the union were held, and men were urged and solicited to join it. During these periods there was always more or less friction between the union and non-union men. Heated arguments were frequently held where the men congregated about the barns. Men who would not join were sometimes called "scabs", and in some cases friendships and good feeling of long standing between the men who had worked together were broken up. In one case a conductor and motorman had been partners and good friends for years. When the conductor joined the union he urged his motorman to do the same, and when he declined, the friendship between them became strained, until finally each at different times came to his superior officer with complaints against the other.

There was a continual strife between the two factions. A union conductor would seek in every manner to annoy and harass his motorman. On the other hand the non-union men sought to violate rules of the company and be excused because of the fact that they did not belong to the union. Union men were jealous of their rights, and often complained that they were not as well treated as those who did not belong to their order.

Meanwhile the officers of the company had announced their policy to treat all employes in the same manner, and that they would not discriminate for or against those who belonged to the union.

When the outside agitators had left the city, peace would be again restored. Converts who had joined the union would pay a few months' dues and then drop out. The membership would continue to decrease, until the next agitator came along to revive it.

## Chapter II.

### SECOND VISIT OF THE AGITATOR

In February, 1907, an international officer by the name of A. J. Behner, of the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employes of America, came to Omaha and commenced a revival of the union. Frequent meetings were held, and finally at a public meeting he announced his plans to be to force the Street Railway Company to enter into a signed contract with the union, granting its members certain privileges they did not then enjoy, and stated that unless the Street Railway Company entered into such an agreement, it was his purpose to call a strike and "stop the wheels of progress in the communities which the Street Railway Company served."

He succeeded in securing quite a large addition to the membership of the union, and finally stated his plans publicly in the newspapers. To these statements the then Vice-President of the Street Railway Company made answer in a published statement, which appeared in the newspapers of this city on February 17, 1907, as follows:

"From what has been said I now take it for granted that there will be a strike. The company's position in the matter is thoroughly known to the union men as well as to our employes who are not members of the union. We shall refuse to recognize the union in any way, and shall refuse to recognize any difference in our employes because of membership or non-membership in any union.

"Inasmuch as false and misleading statements have been given publicity by an outside agitator, regarding the attitude of the Street Railway Company and of its employes, and as there seems to be a fixed determination to make trouble with a view to bringing about a strike, I would like to have the people of Omaha fully acquainted with all the facts in the case.

“It should be understood at the outset that there is absolutely no conflict of views between the company and the majority of the men who run its cars. This disturbance is not being stirred up by the men who make their living running cars, but by those who make a living off the men who do run the cars. Fully two-thirds of our men do not want to belong to any union. They are satisfied with their treatment by the company, and they do not want to be compelled to pay over a part of their earnings as dues to support a pretended guardian for whom they have no use. Our men have been in repeatedly to see us, and to ask if it was necessary for them to join the union in order to avoid any discrimination against them. We have invariably told them that it was not. That has all along been our policy, and it will continue to be. We shall keep our word to them in letter and in spirit.

“We would prefer to see no union organization among the men, and we have not hesitated to frankly say so to them. It causes factionalism among them, and brings about a condition where we sometimes have a motorman and conductor on the same car who will not speak to each other, because one belongs to the union and the other does not. It requires no elaboration of argument to make it plain that such a condition does not tend to the betterment of the service, or to the safety or convenience of the traveling public. With such a feeling of antagonism there is increased danger to the lives of the passengers and to the property of the company, as it shows a desire to get the other man into trouble sufficiently to lose his job. We do not want such a feeling among our men. We want the utmost harmony of purpose and of interest, and it is likewise to the interest of every person who rides upon the street cars to have it so.

“It has always been and will continue to be our policy to pay the best wages paid by any street car company in any city of this size in the country. Twice within the past five years we have voluntarily increased our wage scale. We have refused to turn the conduct of our business over to the union, and we shall rigidly adhere to that conclusion. They have demanded that we make a flat scale of  $23\frac{1}{2}$  cents an hour for all men, regardless of their time of service. We have refused and shall continue to refuse it. We have promised our men a graded scale, based on their length of service, and that promise will continue to be made good. It may suit the union to demand that a new man shall be considered

as efficient and as valuable to the company as a thoroughly experienced and more carefully trained man, but we do not so regard it. We desire to offer an inducement to the competent, capable man, who attends conscientiously to his duty and remains faithfully in the service, and we are confident that in this view we will have the cordial support of every thoughtful person of sound judgment.

"In the public prints, this imported representative of the union is quoted as saying that the company made a pretense of paying 25 cents per hour, but that it was based on ten years' service, and that under the present system a man is not retained in the service that long. I have taken pains to look up the figures, and the secretary of the company has just handed me a compilation showing that over 20 per cent of our men are drawing 25 cents an hour. The number is steadily increasing, and it will continue to increase.

"This same imported authority is quoted as saying that the company has discharged men who attended union meetings. The inference is that men were discharged because they attended union meetings. Such a statement is wholly without foundation, and I so stated to that individual when he called on me. I challenged him to produce one man who had been discharged for such a cause, and he produced two discharged motormen. Their cases were investigated, and it developed that one was discharged because he ran his car across the Belt line track just ahead of a rapidly moving train and narrowly missed being run down.

"There are enough accidents that are not due to carelessness without continuing the employment of a man who will thus invite the destruction of the lives of the passengers and the property of the company. The investigation showed further that this man offered to withdraw from the union if permitted to hold his job. He was told that union membership had no bearing on the case in any way whatever, and would not be considered. I am informed that he later claimed that he could have held his job if he would withdraw from the union. The other discharged man was allowed to go because he carelessly ran his car into another on the Q Street curve in South Omaha, where the work of the motorman on the other car was all that prevented a more serious accident.

"Another false statement that has been given publicity is that I had stated to Mayor Dahlman that we wished to crush out the

union. The most complete refutation of that is the statement of Mayor Dahlman, that I did not make any such statement, but that I did say that we had made no discrimination whatever between union and non-union men, and that we do not intend to recognize any rules that would make a discrimination in favor of or against any of our men.

“As to the implied threat of a strike that ‘would tie up traffic and paralyze Omaha industries,’ if such a strike is to be precipitated, I want the citizens of Omaha to understand the situation. It is demanded that the company ‘recognize the union.’ Before I became familiar with just what that meant, I used to think there was no excuse for refusing such an innocent-sounding demand. I supposed that it meant speaking to them and hearing whatever they might have to say. It really means allowing them to run our business for us, and dictating to us whom we shall employ or not employ and whom we shall discharge or not discharge, and be continually embroiled in some kind of controversy. There has never been a time when we have refused to hear any complaints that our men might wish to make, and union men have had the same courtesy and consideration as the non-union men.

“It is from this source that a demand is made for vestibules for the rear end of our cars. I will venture the opinion that nine out of ten people who ride on the cars do not want anything of the kind. The majority of those who ride on the platform do so because they want to be out in the open air, as they are cooped up in shops or offices all day. Many of them want to smoke and spit. A closed vestibule would make an ill-smelling place for passengers to pass through in getting on or off the cars. I do not believe a woman in the city would want it so, and hardly any of the men. That agitation is based wholly on fictitious sentiment as a humane move in behalf of the conductors. As a matter of fact the conductors are inside the car more or less, and it is a wholly different situation from the motormen on the front end. The conductors do not have to undergo severe exposure. The public may not know it, but our rules were modified some time ago so as to allow conductors to remain inside the cars in severe weather, instead of requiring them to stay on the platform except when collecting fares. The union is pushing this measure to make a showing of what it can do with the company, rather than to accomplish some real benefit either to the employes or to the public.

It is a fair illustration of the moves that the paid agitators are constantly making in order to make some kind of a showing, in return for the money that they are taking from the men who really do the work.

"We have been ready and willing at all times to give full hearing and impartial consideration to the just claims of our men, and we do not intend to deviate from that policy in any particular. We insist that each man shall stand on his own merit, and treat with him accordingly. So far as this company is concerned there is no necessity of any organization to back him up or for him to hide behind. If he is derelict, we do not intend that he shall be bolstered up by any organization to keep him in a position where he can be a menace to either life or property. There is altogether too much at stake, and it is not merely a matter of dollars and cents.

"The public is concerned in this situation and will want the course pursued that will insure the safest and most efficient service. We have for years been making this business a study, and have become firmly convinced that the placing of individual responsibility, and with it a proper recognition of long-continued and faithful service, is the surest guaranty of faithful, careful attention to duty.

"This company aims to treat the public fairly and to deal fairly and squarely with the men in its employ. We want their best service, and we propose to treat them in the surest way to get it and to have it continue. We believe that we can keep closer to the men, and have more kindly feeling and results that will be more satisfactory to us mutually, by dealing directly with them than by handing the situation over to a third interest that has been quite as often disposed to promote trouble as it has been to promote peace. For these reasons the demand for such 'recognition of the union' has been declined, and the decision is final."

"(Signed) G. W. WATTLES, Vice-President."

In due time a committee from the union waited on the Board of Directors of the Street Railway Company, and presented a contract between the union and the company and demanded execution thereof. This contract contained the following provisions:

"Section 3. All motormen or conductors who are now or may hereafter become members of the association shall remain in good standing in the association as long as they remain in the service of the company, providing that such continuance of mem-

bership shall not conflict with the laws of the association. All new motormen and conductors hired in the future shall receive their necessary instructions upon the car at the hands of the members of the association, and upon making application for membership in the association, and their membership shall be governed by the same rules as that stated above in regard to present members of the association. The company further agrees that in case the association expels a member for the violation of its laws, that they will dismiss such employe from the service of the company upon receipt of the proof of such violation from the association.

“Section 5. All members of the association in the employ of the company shall be given free transportation over all lines owned or operated by the company.

“Section 7. Any member of the association elected or appointed to office in this division, or in the International Association, shall be given such leave of absence as may be required for him to fulfill his duties in said office, and upon his retirement from said office or appointment, he shall be placed in his former position in the employ of the company.

“Section 10. Motormen and conductors shall be paid a flat scale of 25 cents per hour.”

It contained other provisions for reinstatement of men who had been or might be discharged by the company, and was to be in force until June 1, 1907, at which time either this contract or another was to be entered into for the ensuing year.

The officers of the Street Railway Company absolutely refused to enter into this contract, and a meeting of the employes was called to vote on the question of a strike. The officers of the union appealed to the leading representatives of other labor unions in the city for sympathy and assistance. Before taking decided action on this appeal, it was proposed that the then president of the Central Labor Union and the last two ex-presidents of that body should hear a statement of the grievances from the Street Railway Union representatives, and the vice-president of the Street Railway Company was asked to appear before these labor representatives and state the side of the company.

This invitation was accepted, and on March 7, 1907, the hearing was held. At this meeting the evidence was produced as to the original agreement between the Street Railway Company and the officers of the union, when it was organized, that no contract

should be asked or required of the Street Railway Company, and other evidence on the questions involved. After a full investigation of these matters this committee, composed of Mr. Charles McDonald, Mr. Louis V. Guye and Mr. John Polian, made certain findings, one of which was as follows:

“FIFTH—In the matter of a written contract demanded on the part of your organization, we find that inasmuch as an agreement was entered into at the time of the formation of your local union to the effect that the company would not be required to sign such contract, we therefore recommend that said contract be withdrawn and that grievances therein contained be presented as such.”

At the end of their report they found that no cause for a strike existed, and recommended against it. Mr. Behner left the city, and peace again reigned.



## Chapter III.

### THIRD DEMAND FOR "RECOGNITION"

No further conferences were asked or held between the officers of the Street Railway Company and the representatives of the union for nearly two and a half years. The membership of the union gradually decreased until in August, 1909, there appeared on the scene Mr. Ben Commons, another officer of the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employes of America. A little later Mr. C. O. Pratt, Chairman of the General Executive Board of said association, came to assist Mr. Commons in the revival of the union which he was conducting among the street railway men. Mr. Pratt stated at a meeting before the Executive Committee of the Business Men's Association, at a later date, that only twelve men belonged to the union when Mr. Commons came to Omaha; that both he and Mr. Commons had come at the request of the men; that they came for peaceful purposes, and that they did not seek nor desire a strike.

As a matter of fact, the number that belonged to the union when Mr. Commons came to Omaha in August, 1909, was about forty. Whether or not their mission was one of peace and good will may be better understood by the reader after a recital of events which followed their advent.

During the month of August, 1909, frequent meetings of the Street Railway union were held at Labor Temple and addressed by Mr. Commons and others. The men were urged to secure additional members to the union, and by their diligent proselyting a large number of the first-year men in the service of the company joined the union. The sympathies of some men older in the service were aroused, and some of them were induced to join for the purpose of bettering, if possible, the conditions of these younger employes. Grievances real and imaginary were recited in detail, and promises were freely made by Mr. Commons that the company would be forced to enter into a contract with the union whereby

all grievances would be adjusted by a board of arbitration, and that the wages of the men would be immediately increased.

The revival went on and the proselyting continued, until many non-union men made complaint to the officers of the company that they were being harassed and abused, and even called "scabs" because they would not join the union. These complaints became so numerous that a committee of non-union men asked for a hearing before the Board of Directors.

At about the same time a committee from the union asked for a hearing, and the date for both committees was fixed by the Board of Directors for the same hour,—ten o'clock A. M., September 2nd, 1909. When these two committees appeared before the Board, there was much hesitation as to whether or not the union committee would remain in the same room with the non-union employes. Their objection was finally overcome, and complaints from both sides were heard by the Board of Directors. The union committee had, on September 8, presented to the President of the Company a contract with the union, which they desired to have executed. This contract is quoted in full as follows:

"THIS AGREEMENT made and entered into by and between THE OMAHA & COUNCIL BLUFFS STREET RAILWAY COMPANY, hereinafter called the 'Company', and DIVISION No. 288, of Omaha, of THE AMALGAMATED ASSOCIATION OF STREET AND ELECTRIC RAILWAY EMPLOYES OF AMERICA, hereinafter called the 'Association,'

"WITNESSETH, That the Company hereby agrees to and with the Association, to treat with the Association on all differences arising between the members of the Association and the Company, in the operation of the street railway lines owned by the Company.

"That all such differences shall be reported directly to the officers of the Company and to the properly accredited officers or authorized committees of the Association, for adjudication.

"Whenever a member of the Association is suspended or discharged by the Company, such member shall have the right to appeal to the Association from said order of suspension or discharge issued by the Company, and if the decision of the Association on such suspension or discharge shall differ from, or be antagonistic to the said order of the Company, then both parties hereto shall submit the question of such suspension or discharge to a board of

arbitration consisting of three disinterested persons, one to be chosen by the Company, another to be chosen by the Association, and the two persons so chosen, to select a third; and a finding by a majority of such board shall be final and binding on both parties hereto.

"A failure of either party to this agreement to name its arbitrator within three days after having received written notice that such arbitration is desired, shall be construed as an admission against such party and shall be deemed equal to an adverse decision by such board of arbitration on the question in dispute.

"Each and every member of the Association suspended or discharged by the Company, shall be reinstated by the Company to the position theretofore held by him, in the event the decision of the board of arbitration is in his favor, and full wages shall be paid such member by the Company for the time he was so suspended or discharged.

"All motormen and conductors shall have the right to select their runs; such right shall be based upon the time of continued service with the Company, seniority in such service to prevail in said selections.

"The wages and hours for all motormen, conductors, shop and shed men shall be as follows:

"Wages for motormen and conductors to cover first year's service twenty-six (26) cents per hour.

"For second year's service twenty-seven (27) cents per hour.

"For the third year's service and thereafter, twenty-eight (28) cents per hour.

"Time and one-half shall be allowed to all motormen and conductors for the actual time employed over the regular runs; nine and ten hours shall constitute a day's work, to be completed in twelve consecutive hours, as near as practicable.

"Extra motormen and conductors when called upon to perform work, or take out trippers, shall be paid from the time they are ordered to report for duty by the barn foreman and do report for duty, up to and until the time that they are relieved; pay for such services shall be at the rate hereinbefore mentioned. The same proportionate increase in wages heretofore mentioned and set forth shall apply to all shop and shed men who are members of the Association.

"Whenever any of the officers or members of the Executive Board of the Association desire to be relieved of duty in order to

perform any service or services for the Association, their request in that behalf shall have precedence over that of all other employes.

“ Any member of the Association who may be expelled by the Association for a violation of any of the rules or laws of the Association, or of the rules or regulations of the Company, shall be discharged by the Company on written request of the Association.

“ The Company shall provide each barn with a sufficient number of extra men to permit those having regular duties or regular runs to take a lay-off at least four days in each and every month.

“ The Company shall in no manner interfere with or attempt to prevent any of its old or new employes from becoming members of the Association.

“ This agreement shall be binding on the parties hereto and shall remain in full force and effect for a period of two years from and after the 1st day of September, 1909.

“ IN WITNESS WHEREOF said parties have by their respective officers hereto set their hands this.....day of August, 1909.

“ In presence of

.....  
..... ”

At this meeting the union committee was plainly told that the company would not enter into this or any other contract, and the reasons therefor were given. The numerous matters contained in the contract were fully and freely discussed, however, and assurances were given that if any just cause existed for complaint against the company, such matters would be investigated and immediately corrected.

Both committees were assured that the policy of the company, to treat all of its employes well and in the same manner, would be continued; that, notwithstanding the fact that the company was now paying the highest wages of any city in the country where similar conditions prevail, an increase of pay would be made as soon as the financial condition of the company would justify; that if any changes in the schedules of runs could be made, which would improve the hours or conditions of the men without impairing the service to the public, such changes would be adopted. Many other matters were fully and freely discussed by all of the parties in conference, and the meeting came to an end, after a four hours' session, with apparent good feeling and satisfaction on the part of all concerned.

# Chapter IV.

## THE FINAL CONFERENCE

On September 14, 1909, the following letter was received by the President of the Street Railway Company:

“DIVISION 288  
OF THE  
AMALGAMATED ASSOCIATION OF STREET AND ELECTRIC RAILWAY EMPLOYEES OF AMERICA.

OMAHA, SOUTH OMAHA, COUNCIL BLUFFS.

Omaha, Neb., Sept. 14, 1909.

“MR. GURDON W. WATTLES, President,  
O. & C. B. St. Ry. Co.,  
Omaha, Neb.

DEAR SIR:—

At a special meeting of your employes held yesterday afternoon and evening we were instructed by unanimous vote to seek an immediate conference with you for the purpose of securing a definite understanding in regard to certain matters that are of mutual concernment. In accordance therewith we ask that you meet our committee and representatives prior to Wednesday evening. You can designate the hour and place for meeting. Awaiting an early reply we are,

Respectfully yours,

(Signed) CHAS. H. LEAR, Pres.,

H. P. NELSON,

W. H. PONCELOW,

M. J. KENNEY,

W. GILLAN,

WM. S. BOIEN,

P. J. LENAHAN, Sec.,

4023 N. 25th Ave.”

The date of the conference was fixed for two o'clock P. M., Sept. 15, 1909. Inasmuch as this conference was to be held between several members of the Street Railway Union on the one side and one representative of the Company on the other side, it was deemed proper by the President of the Company to secure the services of a court reporter, in order that what was said on both sides might be taken down. The services of Mr. Frank J. Sutcliffe, a court reporter, were secured for this purpose. He was the same reporter who had been employed by the union committee, two and a half years previous, to take down the proceedings of the meeting before the three labor union leaders.

Some objections to having the proceedings taken down were raised by members of the committee when they called, but these were overruled, and what was said at the meeting was transcribed by the stenographer and at a later date was published in the leading newspapers of Omaha and Council Bluffs, as follows:

Report of meeting between a committee of seven of the union employes of the Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway Company and Gurdon W. Wattles, president of said company, held at the office of Mr. Wattles in the United States National Bank building, on Wednesday afternoon, September 15, 1909.

Committee:

W. GILLAN,  
 W. S. BOIEN,  
 P. J. LENAHAN,  
 W. H. PONCELOW,  
 M. J. KINNEY,  
 H. P. NELSON,  
 C. H. LEAR.

MR. WATTLES: "You have presented an agreement here which you desire to have signed by the street railway company with the union.

"It is not the first time that a similar agreement has been presented to the officers of the company to be signed by them with this union, so that this is not a new question. It has been threshed out several times before, but it seems necessary to thresh it out again and to let you know exactly what the company proposes to do in regard to this or any other agreement with the union employes of this company.

"When the union was first organized in this city, about ten years ago, among the street railroad men, I don't know as any of you were present, but I think some of you were. The men who joined the union, about fifteen in number, were discharged or were suspended by the company. They asked for a hearing before the

board of directors, which was granted, and when they came before the board of directors—Mr. Murphy was then president of the company—they asked that the national organizer, Mr. Wilson I believe his name was, who was here organizing the union, should be admitted to the room and should be allowed to speak on the subject of the union, as the men at that time did not feel fully competent to describe exactly what the union was going to do in connection with the street railroad employes.

“Mr. Wilson came before the board and what he said was taken down and made a matter of record.

“He said that the purpose of organizing the union among the street railroad men in Omaha was not to stir up any strife or conflict either among the employes of the company or with the officers of the company; that they sought to organize a union among the employes of this company for the betterment of the conditions of the employes and for their mutual uplifting; that all over the country, in many of the principal cities, in nearly all of the principal cities where unions existed among the street railway employes, the non-union men and union men worked side by side in perfect harmony; that there was no conflict between union men and non-union men in all these cities where unions existed; that they asked no different treatment of the union men who should join the union—it was the Omaha Street railway at that time—than the other employes received; that they would ask no contract with this company that would require the company in any manner to treat with the union employes in a different or other manner than they treated with all of their employes.

“With that understanding and agreement with the national organizer, Mr. Wilson, the opposition of the company to the organization of the union was withdrawn, and the men who had been discharged or suspended were reinstated and sent back to work, and the union went on with its organization, securing quite a number of men to join it.

“At that time, we were waited on by a large number of our old employes who had been solicited to join the union but who did not desire to do so, and we were asked the question, point blank, as to what the policy of this company was going to be regarding its non-union employes—whether or not we were going to sign a contract with the union; whether or not we were going to treat with the union employes in a different manner than we did with them; whether or not they would ever be placed in jeopardy of losing their positions or losing any of their rights as workmen for this company if they did not join the union.

“We said to these men very frankly that this company had an agreement with the organizer, who was a national officer of the association, that no contract would be required or asked of this company.”

MR. LENAHAN: "Mr. Wattles, that is not one of the questions that the committee have come up here to discuss with you."

MR. WATTLES: "If you will let me get through, Mr. Lenahan, we can get this in better form. I will soon be through with this statement."

MR. LENAHAN: "We have a new contract and you are going to these original questions. We have a new contract that we want to discuss."

MR. WATTLES: "I will get through with this pretty soon and we will come right down to the present time, so that there will not be any misunderstanding about it.

"We can do better if one talks at a time, and I will give you all ample time and full opportunity to talk on any part of this subject you want before we are through. But as you have raised the question yourselves about whether this company was going to sign a contract with the union, why, I want to answer that question, and I am answering it."

MR. LENAHAN: "That was the instruction we had when we came here, not to go into past history, but to talk on the present troubles. We are not here to discuss old agreements."

MR. WATTLES: "Yes. I am here to tell you whether or not we are going to sign a contract with the union, and in telling you that I am stating some of the past history in order that you may understand the position we take.

"Now, as I was saying, our old employes asked us what our position was going to be and we stated to them what our agreement was with the union, and they were promised that we would never place ourselves in a position where they would not receive exactly the same treatment as any other employes, or where they would be put in jeopardy of losing their positions. Our promise was given them on the strength of the agreement that we had.

"Now, this matter came up, as you know, two years ago last spring and was threshed out. At that time a contract, similar to the one that is now presented, was presented to us—a little different in form, but similar in substance—and the company refused to sign it upon the same grounds that I have stated here, and the question of whether or not the union street railway men were justified in calling a strike at that time was raised, and we were asked to appear before a body of union men and state our case, with the understanding that these union men were going to say, after they had heard the evidence, whether or not the position of the men was justified, or whether or not they were justified in striking at that time.

"My answer to Mr. Yeiser, who came to me with this proposition, was this: That when I knew I was right I had no fear of appearing before any man and stating what my position was, and that I would appear before any body of men and would go before the union itself and state what my position was. And the result



was that these men came here to this very room, and sat here and heard the evidence that was introduced at that time, and one of their findings, when they announced it in writing, reads as follows:

“ ‘Five—In the matter of the written contract demanded on the part of your organization we find that inasmuch as an agreement was entered into at the time of the formation of your local union to the effect that the company would not be required to sign such contract, we therefore recommend that said contract be withdrawn and that the grievances therein contained be presented as such.’

“Signed by McDonald and Guye and Polian.”

MR. LENAHAH: “Can I say a word now?”

MR. WATTLES: “No, not yet; not just yet.”

“The verdict of your own union men is that this company has an agreement with the national officers of this association that you represent that they shall not sign a contract. Yet you are asking us and reasking us not only to violate that agreement, but to violate our solemn obligation and word with our non-union men. Now, I am here to say, first, last and forever, and you can take it back and say to your men as emphatically as I say it, that we are not going to sign this or any other contract with the local union existing among our employes.”

MR. LENAHAH: “May I have a word now?”

MR. WATTLES: “I am not quite through yet, sir. I will be through in a moment, and then will hear you one at a time.”

“So much for the contract part of it.”

MR. GILLAN: “We are glad you have stated your position.”

MR. WATTLES: “Now, regarding the affairs of the men, some of which are touched on in this proposed contract here: I have said to our men, individually and collectively, at all times, and I repeat it to you here now: There is no matter that is so small nor any matter that is so large that concerns the employes of this street railway company of which I am president, that I will not at any and all times talk with you about and consider with you and advise with you; and not only that, but I will do as I have done in the past—I will not only advise with the men in our employ, regardless of whether they are union men or not, but when I find that a just and fair grievance exists of any sort or kind, against this company, if it is within my power I will correct it. Now, that goes to every man in the employ of this company. You men are here today, a committee of you. Some of you have been here as individuals. I have not seen as much of you as I would like to have seen, nor of the other employes of this company. They have come in here and have said to me this, or that, or the other thing, and they have never gone out without a courteous reply and without fair treatment, no matter what their complaint was, whether it was one personal to themselves or whether it was something that pertained to the whole management of this

property—it has always had fair and honest and open treatment from me—and they will always get it, and they have always left here satisfied. And the surprising thing to me, gentlemen, about this whole revival that is going on here, in which the officers of this company are held up to you as bad men, as men who are not inclined to be fair and right, the surprising thing to me is that some of you men who sit and hear that talk do not resent it to the limit.

“I could tell you men of things that have happened in this very room, not only with union men but non-union men, and more union men than non-union men, that would make you blush for shame that you had men in your association who would hear the officers of this company maligned in any way and not stand up and defend them.

“They have come here in their personal troubles and they never went away empty handed—not one of them. They have come to ask favors of all and every kind. Every one of them was granted with pleasure. Why? Because I have been a laboring man myself. I have been a poor man myself. I know every step of the ladder from absolute and abject poverty right all the way up along the line. I have worked by the day. I have worked for smaller pay than you men are getting today. I have done everything that you have done. I have saved and economized and worked Sundays and nights and all the time to better my condition as I have gone through life, and so when you come and I hear the stories of your troubles, they appeal to me; they put me back to the time when I used to go out and have to dig and work along as you men are working, and I sympathize with every one of you; and if you have never tested it—if you have never tested that sympathy, come and test it is my invitation. Instead of holding meetings down here plotting against your employers, trying to see if you can disrupt our relations, you ought to be passing resolutions commending the institution that you are working for.

“Now, I have wandered from the subject a little bit, but I have opened the gate here to you men to talk. I have said to you and I repeat, if there is anything written down here that you want to talk to me about and want to know what the position of the company is going to be regarding it, I am here to tell you; I am here to meet you fairly and honestly and discuss with you as men. I want to know if you have any real troubles among your men, and if you have, to help you adjust them. Now, if you want to meet me on that basis the meeting is open for you to talk as long and as much as you want to.”

MR. LENAHAN: “Mr. Wattles, you have covered one point clearly, and the words that you have used show that you are very obstinate in regard to signing any contract.

“The words that you yourself have used clearly show that. Now, inasmuch as you do not desire to sign a contract such as the employes of this company have asked of you, are you willing to

arbitrate the whole of the grievances before three disinterested persons, the company naming one, the organization which we represent naming the other, and the two thus selected naming the third. Are you willing to do that? Is that not fair?"

MR. WATTLES: "Are you through?"

MR. LENAHAH: "Yes, sir."

MR. WATTLES: "I will answer that question. There are some things in this world that you cannot arbitrate. One of them is, you cannot arbitrate whether you are going to keep your word or not. You cannot arbitrate whether you are going to wipe yourselves out of existence or not. That is another thing that you cannot arbitrate. There are questions that are involved in the whole controversy as you call it, that we cannot and will not under any circumstances arbitrate. Why? Because our solemn word and agreement has been given to certain of our employes; for instance, regarding the signing of a contract, or the execution of a contract, or entering into a contract. Are we going to arbitrate the question of whether or not we will keep our word with these men? Never. There are other questions involved in this contract that we cannot arbitrate. The question of the wages that you propose is raised here. Would it be in your interest supposing a board of arbitration should say that we should pay you men wages that would bankrupt this company? Would it be proper and right for the officers of this company to permit that sort of a condition to come up here? You would destroy the very power to pay you wages at all. And that is a question that we cannot arbitrate. There is no question here that any arbitration is required concerning.

"Let me ask you, Mr. Lenahan, a question."

MR. LENAHAH: "Yes, sir."

MR. WATTLES: "Are you willing to arbitrate the question of whether or not the union should exist in the city of Omaha among your men?"

MR. LENAHAH: "Yes, sir."

MR. WATTLES: "You are?"

MR. LENAHAH: "Yes, sir."

MR. WATTLES: "You are willing to submit that to arbitration?"

MR. LENAHAH: "Yes, sir, if you are willing to submit the other questions, we are willing to submit that question to the arbitration committee."

MR. WATTLES: "As to whether the union shall disband?"

MR. LENAHAH: "That is a question probably over which we would have no control. This committee could not determine what these six hundred men might desire in regard to the union. We have not got the right to say that they would do this. It would be a matter that we would have to bring up before the men. But we have got their ideas and their vote in regard to these griev-

ances, but we have not the right to say that we will arbitrate the matter of existence of the trade union; that is too broad a question for this committee to take up."

MR. WATTLES: "While we are getting things stirred up here, let us have cigars."

MR. LEAR: "I would like to ask a question. You stated that this agreement was signed by Mr. Wilson. That agreement has been violated time and time again in this city. Not by you, I don't say, but by your other officers. It has been violated right today. You agreed that you would not interfere with this union in any way; that you would not put anything in the way of your men organizing. Right the other night you had men down there standing and watching the men and intimidating the men from going up to that meeting; standing there for the purpose of intimidation and nothing else; just to intimidate the men and keep them from attending that meeting of the organization. Now another case: Is there a man that goes down to your office and inquires for a job that is not told that he should not join the union? Is there a man that goes down there to apply for a job that is not told that? Is he not told that? Doesn't he say, 'Well, remember, we have no use for you if you join the union,' or words to that effect? Your job is no good to you if you join the union. He intimidates every man that goes to that place every time. And the man that does that is an understudy of yours."

MR. WATTLES: "Now, let me answer that before we go further. That brings up a real question here. I have said, and repeated time and again, that there should not be any intimidation on the part of the officers of this company toward any of its employes, regarding whether they belonged to the union or not, or whether they were going to join. I have said, however, that you must not deny to the officers of the company the same privileges that you claim for yourselves; that is, an officer of this company has a perfect right to say to an employe of the company, 'I would prefer that you do not join the union,' but at the same time he should say, 'If you do join the union there will be no discrimination against you.' Now, Mr. Lear, you say that officers of our company—"

MR. LEAR: "Yes, sir."

MR. WATTLES: "Have intimidated the men?"

MR. LEAR: "Yes, sir."

MR. WATTLES: "I call for the names of the men."

MR. LEAR: "Right there is a communication."

MR. LENAHAN: "Here is a statement from a young man that was called down to the office yesterday or the day before and matters of this kind only help to make things still worse. Here is what they said to him at the office,—that they would not recognize the union and that every man in case of a strike would be out of a job,—that I was an agitator and that the next time I was called

down to the office I would get my time; that I was agitating around the barns."

MR. WATTLES: "Agitating around the barns?"

MR. LENAHAN: "Yes, sir."

MR. WATTLES: "What is that man's name?"

MR. LENAHAN: "His name is Sheean."

MR. WATTLES: "What is his first name?"

MR. LENAHAN: "M. J. Sheean."

MR. WATTLES: "Who said this to him?"

MR. LENAHAN: "It was said to him down in the office of the superintendent of transportation."

MR. WATTLES: "Was it the superintendent of transportation who was talking with him?"

MR. LENAHAN: "To the best of my knowledge I presume it was either one of the superintendents. I am not in a position to know. I just got this statement that he was called in there."

A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE: "Mr. Nash."

MR. LENAHAN: "And I believe he was sworn at, too."

MR. WATTLES: "Did he say he was sworn at?"

MR. LENAHAN: "He didn't say."

MR. WATTLES: "I will call in Mr. Sheean tomorrow. I will go to the bottom of this matter. There is no excuse for any such thing. And if you find, Mr. Lenahan, that this man was mistaken, and that he has told an untruth in some way about this matter, you would say there was no ground for the complaint, wouldn't you?"

MR. LENAHAN: "I want the man to tell the truth. I don't care who it hurts."

MR. WATTLES: "That is right. That is what I want to get at. The instructions of this company to all of the superintendents and to all of its officers are that no discrimination must be made or shall be made between men in our employ as to whether they are union or not, and if any discrimination is made we will investigate it and stop it.

"Now, regarding the statement that men have been stationed down here in front of the Labor Temple of the union to intimidate the men. What are the names of the men who stood down there?"

MR. LEAR: "It was your road officers. There was a meeting last Monday afternoon, and there was a man named Kelly stood on one corner and Mr. Sheetz stood on the other corner."

MR. LENAHAN: "There was one man stood on Fourteenth street corner and another on Thirteenth street."

MR. WATTLES: "What were they saying to the men?"

MR. LEAR: "Nothing."

MR. WATTLES: "Then they were not intimidating them, were they?"

MR. LEAR: "I suppose not. But they were there. The men would come along on their way to the meeting and see these

two men there and they didn't know whether they would go up to the meeting or not, because they were afraid that it would be reported that they had been to the union meeting."

MR. WATTLES: "Did they say anything to these men?"

MR. LEAR: "Not that I know of. I spoke to Mr. Sheetz, and said 'How are you, Mr. Sheetz, are you going to come up?'"

MR. WATTLES: "Do you object to the officers of the company seeing the men that go to the union meetings?"

MR. LEAR: "No, but we would rather that they came up there."

MR. WATTLES: "Would you object if I would come down there and attend your meetings at the Labor Temple?"

MR. LEAR: "We would be glad to have you come."

MR. BOIEN: "But this idea of your men being placed there was with the idea that the men would be afraid to go up there. That is the way I look at it. And I know lots of the men were afraid to come up there because they were afraid somebody was watching them."

MR. WATTLES: "There is no purpose or intention on the part of any of the officers of the company to keep these men from going there, or to intimidate or prevent any man from going up there. No such purpose at all."

MR. PONCELOW: "How is that, Mr. Wattles?"

MR. WATTLES: "I say there is no intention on the part of the officers of this company to intimidate the men in any way from joining the Methodist church, or the union, or the Baptist church."

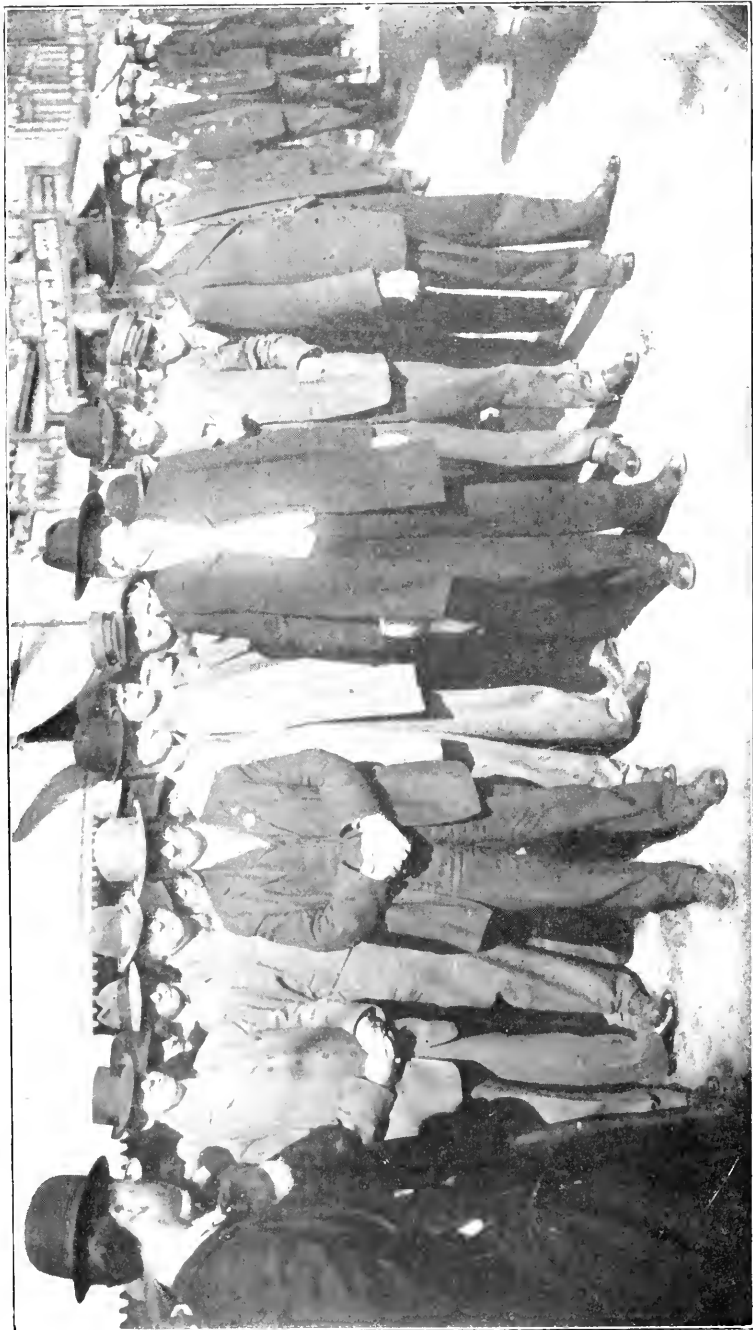
MR. PONCELOW: "You mean there was no intention on the part of the men down on the corners there to intimidate the men from coming up to the meeting?"

MR. WATTLES: "Yes, sir."

MR. GILLAN: "I had quite an experience myself a year ago last August. I had a little accident at Sixteenth and Harney. I was going east. I had one of the little open cars. I was going east and a Park car was going north, and there was a construction car—a work train—ahead of the Park passenger car, and the work train was pretty close to it; and the work train stopped to back in around the curb at Sixteenth and Harney, and the Park car came right upon the crossing, you know."

MR. WATTLES: "Yes, sir."

MR. GILLAN: "And they had on it a couple of loads of this base that they put in asphalt—put in under the asphalt—tar and cement and broken stone—and it was right there, and they had dropped some of it on the rail, and it was just like grease on the broken rail, and they come right up the track with the two loads, and I could not stop my car because I had no sand or anything, and I just barely slid, and I put on the reverse and my fender struck the other trucks. He stopped kind of short right on the crossing, on account of the other train. Well, my car backed right away



MR. C. H. LEAR  
President of the  
Central Body  
Railway Union

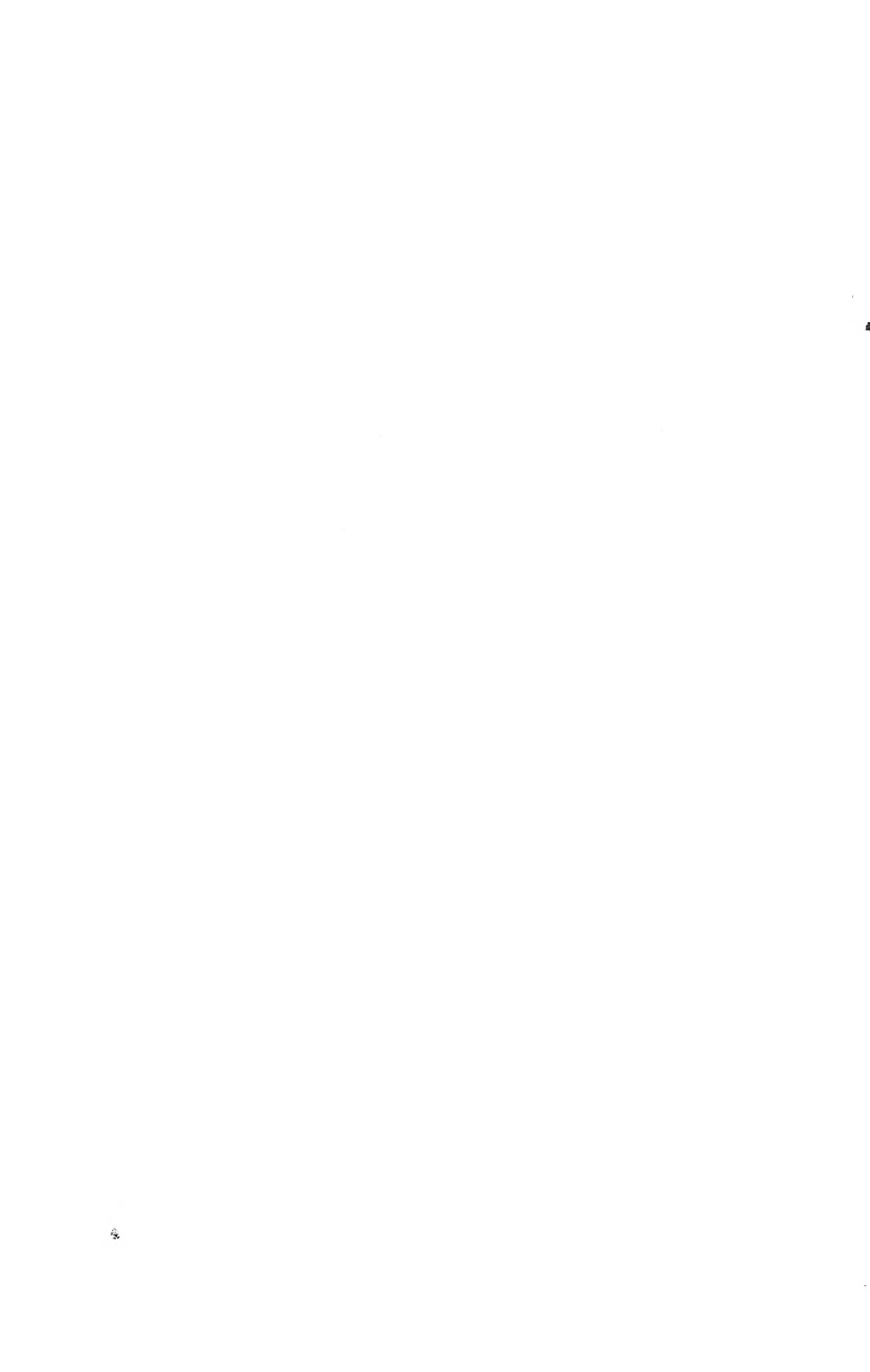
MR. C. G. PRATT  
Chairman Ex. Com.  
Amalgamated  
Association

REV. J. L. FISHER  
A Strike Orator

PATRICK FORD  
Chairman of  
Central Body  
Omaha Unions

BEN COMMONS  
International Officer

LEADERS OF THE UNION MEN





from it, but it bent the fender up and I was suspended that next day and the next day and I lost two days, and the other man was suspended and lost one day, and I was absolutely not to blame; couldn't be possibly to blame, no way."

MR. WATTLES: "When did this happen?"

MR. GILLAN: "It happened in August."

MR. WATTLES: "Last August?"

MR. GILLAN: "Yes, sir."

MR. WATTLES: "A year ago?"

MR. GILLAN: "I think it was a year ago this August."

MR. WATTLES: "Did you bring your matter up to me?"

MR. GILLAN: "No, I did not."

MR. WATTLES: "Did you take it up with Mr. Smith, the general manager?"

MR. GILLAN: "No, I did not take it up with anybody."

MR. WATTLES: "You cannot expect to have your grievances corrected if you do not state them."

MR. GILLAN: "And furthermore, when I went up there before this superintendent of transportation, he says, 'I know you and I have heard the talk that you have been putting up to these men to join the union.' That is the remark that he made. Well, I told him that I always had been a union man and I was not ashamed of it. And so that is all there was to it. The first day after the accident he had me down there and the other man wasn't there, and the next day he had him down there. He talked it over and that is all there was to it, and he let me go back to work, but I lost two days and the other man lost one, and it was an accident that it was impossible for me to avoid. There was no possible way for me to have saved that car from that accident. I had no sand, you know. It was one of those little light open cars and it was a sudden accident and it could not possibly be avoided and there was no way to stop it."

MR. WATTLES: "Now, taking your statement of the facts to be true, just as you have related them; taking that for granted, let me ask you a question: Do you think that if you had come up to me and made that statement, that you would have lost any time or that you would have been inconvenienced in any way?"

A: "Why, I would not suppose so. I would not suppose that I ought to have done that. They are the men we are supposed to go before."

MR. WATTLES: "If any injustice is done to you, you have always the privilege of going to any officer of the company, all the way up the line, to have it corrected."

MR. GILLAN: "I will remember that."

MR. LEAR: "That is very clear what you say, but you must remember it is not very easy to catch you at all times, and we would have to lose our time to do it; we would have to lay off; we would

lose at least a day. If we came up here to see you we would have to lose our time."

MR. WATTLES: "You are not working all the time?"

MR. LEAR: "There is mighty little time that we are not working. There was two months this summer when I could not possibly have gotten off to see anybody."

MR. WATTLES: "There must be quite a good deal of time when you are not at work?"

MR. LEAR: "I work from a quarter past eleven to a quarter past one and then I lay off for dinner and then I go on again a little after five at night."

MR. WATTLES: "You can always get me between those hours."

MR. LEAR: "Well, now, you have to consider another thing: If I came up here there would be at least two hours gone."

MR. WATTLES: "Let me tell you a better way."

MR. LEAR: "Yes, sir."

MR. WATTLES: "You can write, can't you? Why can't you write me a letter?"

MR. LEAR: "Well, I might do that."

MR. WATTLES: "If you come to me and state a case that shows the company is in the wrong and that you are in the right you will get just treatment; there would not be any question about that."

MR. LEAR: "And if you did not think the company was in the wrong?"

MR. WATTLES: "As long as you did not state a just cause of complaint then you would have no cause of complaint."

MR. LEAR: "Well, sir, don't you know we never understood it that way. I never understood that until we came up here a few days ago. When we had any grievance I always supposed we had to go to the superintendent, and that was as far as we were able to go to have it corrected. My understanding has always been that way; that what we got from the superintendent we had to take whether it was right or wrong. We always have understood that there was no use in carrying it up further."

MR. WATTLES: "That is not the case."

MR. LEAR: "It may not be the case, but that has always been the understanding of the men."

MR. WATTLES: "It is a misunderstanding."

MR. LEAR: "I don't know whether it is a misunderstanding or not. The other day a man was sent for from over in Iowa. I don't know what his name is, I think his name is Albertson. This friend of his went to the foreman; he knew they were short of men, and he said he knew of a good, honest, sober young fellow living in some little town here over in Iowa that he would like to get a position for him, and Mr. Knapp says, 'Why send for him by all means;' he says, 'We are short;' and he came here and went down to

Mr. Nash, I think it was, if I am not mistaken; and Mr. Knapp telephoned the foreman that he was to put this man on and the foreman went down with him and Mr. Nash says, 'No; he says, 'I don't want him at all; I don't want any of your kind; you are nothing but a labor agitator.' I don't know as the man belonged to a union at the time, and I don't know whether he was an agitator or not."

MR. WATTLES: "What is his name?"

MR. LEAR: "Albertson."

MR. WATTLES: "You don't know his first name?"

MR. LEAR: "No, sir; he works at Twenty-fourth and Vinton."

MR. WATTLES: "Now, let me get these names down before we go any further. Mr. Lenahan, you gave me the name of Mr. Sheean?"

MR. LENAHAAN: "Yes, sir."

MR. WATTLES: "What are his initials?"

MR. LENAHAAN: "M. J."

MR. WATTLES: "And at what barn is he?"

MR. LENAHAAN: "Twenty-fourth and Vinton."

MR. WATTLES: "And this other man is Mr. Albertson."

MR. LEAR: "Albertson."

MR. WATTLES: "Twenty-fourth and Vinton?"

MR. LEAR: "Yes, sir."

MR. BOIEN: "There is another case I want to bring up about this Mr. Sisnick, who used to work for this company, and wants to work for them again. He went down there and had been a few years at work for the company. He belonged to the union before, and was no agitator nor anything else. He is a man that attends to his own business, and he wanted to get back and get a job. Mr. Nash looked him up one side and down the other, and he says, 'Mr. Johnson will fix you out.' Mr. Johnson fixed him up, and when he was walking out of there—out of the room—Mr. Nash patted him on the back and said 'No more union for you.'"

MR. WATTLES: "Where is that?"

MR. BOIEN: "Twenty-fourth and Vinton."

MR. LENAHAAN: "Mr. Wattles, we could recite so many of these cases it would be surprising—many other cases. But, really, we are not here today for the purpose of discussing those matters. Our instructions were to come up here and try and discuss the grievances as we have presented them to you in writing, and as I see that you have declined to arbitrate any of the grievances or to concede any of the grievances as written—to practically ignore them all—if we cannot change your mind, I presume that this committee, according to their instructions, have pretty near fulfilled the instructions from your employes; and we regret very much that you cannot see the wisdom of taking hold of this thing in what we conceive to be the proper light, and coming to a better understanding with your employes, getting closer to them; and, as

individuals, you can never get close to them, because, regardless of what you may think in your own heart, and, really, I think that you are a good, kind-hearted gentleman—”

MR. WATTLES: “Thank you.”

MR. LENAHAN: “But the subordinate official—regardless of what you think or what you may do—has got the inspiration in his heart to knock and tear and undermine to the very foundation the man who is in any way connected with an organization which is trying to help his fellow man. That has been the disposition, and we regret it very much; we regret to have to say to you here this afternoon that we have proofs, and plenty of them, that discriminations without number are being carried on against the members of Division 288 of this city. Now, we regret that very much. And if there was any way of bringing about a good understanding, I want to say this, that there is nobody would be more desirous of doing so than this committee. But taking the position that you have taken, and ignoring all the demands your men have made—that you cannot see your way clear to signing any statement to them, and that you cannot grant an arbitration of any of their demands, really this committee would be in no position to do anything but go back and tell the true facts.

“And if there was any way that you could see your way clear to arbitrate this matter, it would be to the benefit of the employes, it would be to the benefit of the company, and it would be to the benefit of the public at large. For I want to say to you, sir, that this matter has got to a serious stage, and if diplomacy and good judgment is not used, that it will throw us into a place where probably we can never get to the same relations that we had. Now, I regret that very much; but I see that it is the disposition, taking it from the superintendent of transportation to the president of the road, that it is the desire to ignore the organization completely. Well, it is the position of the men at this time that they are going to insist upon recognition, and that they are not going to be ignored. That is the position they take at this time, and I am stating the true feelings of the men.

“In the vote taken on Friday or Monday evening it was the unanimous consent that this committee must bring back something substantial, and what results may follow our failure to do so God only knows.”

MR. WATTLES: “Now, Mr. Lenahan, you assume a lot of things in your statement that are not true. Let me correct you.”

MR. LENAHAN: “Well, I would like to have you show me.”

MR. WATTLES: “You say that you came up here and I refused to hear any of the grievances that you have to submit, and that I refuse to say what the company will do in regard to any of them. Now, that is not so.”

“The matter, pertaining to the operation of this company, as outlined in this contract are, first:

"All motormen and conductors shall have the right to select their runs; such right shall be based upon the time of continuous service with the company, seniority in such service to prevail in such selections. That is one of the things you want, is it?"

MR. GILLAN: "We have that now."

MR. WATTLES: "That is as I understand it. Now, the next question in your contract:

"The wages and hours for all motormen and conductors and shopmen shall be as follows: Wages for motormen and conductors for the first year's service, 26 cents an hour; for the second year's service, 27 cents an hour; and for the third year's service and thereafter, 28 cents per hour."

"That is one of the things you want, is it?"

MR. LENAHAN: "Yes, sir; that is one of the things we want."

MR. WATTLES: "Do you think that is a just demand?"

MR. LENAHAN: "Well, if you can, show us it is not a just demand."

MR. WATTLES: "You show me that it is, will you? Let us hear your side of it. Now, let us hear what the men have to say on the subject."

MR. LENAHAN: "Well, in the first place, the newer men in the service—which is a great many—only receive 21 cents an hour for the first year, and the hours of time are limited for them so that they cannot make any amount of money—any reasonable amount of money to support themselves and their families."

MR. WATTLES: "Do you know how much they do make?"

MR. LENAHAN: "Well, I have got an idea."

MR. WATTLES: "Well, how much do they make?"

MR. LENAHAN: "Well, I presume they will average from \$45 to \$50, running up to \$55 a month. I think they will."

MR. WATTLES: "Fifty-four to \$55 is what they average."

MR. LENAHAN: "Of course, I do not say that they will all average that. That is a question upon which I have no certain knowledge. I do not know just what the average would be the year around; but I know that they will average that during the summer months, but in the winter time, when the traffic is less, they will not do so well."

MR. WATTLES: "Let me refresh your memory on what was presented here the other day. We got the figures from the general manager. He had the books. Do you remember what it was?"

MR. LEAR: "We did not get them."

MR. GILLAN: "I believe the conductors made \$48 to \$49 and the motormen, \$50; a little over \$50."

MR. WATTLES: "About \$54."

MR. GILLAN: "Fifty-one dollars, I believe."

MR. LENAHAN: "Now, Mr. Wattles, you understand that the cost of living is very high. The cost of living in Omaha now is considerably higher than it has been. Everything is higher."

House rents are higher, and you can easily understand yourself from the way the men are quitting every day that they cannot make a decent living any more under the present conditions in the street railway service. They are quitting, as the records will show, at the rate of 25 to 30 every month, and, of course, that puts the older men in a bad place; for the simple reason that there is a shortage of help most of the time and as a result he is overworked, and those are the conditions that we are trying to eliminate. We are trying to get a class of men that will appreciate their job and stay with it and be good employes, and if they had better remuneration from the company, the company would have better men and they would stay with their positions and everything would go more satisfactorily for the company and for the men."

"Now, I do not think that is an unfair position to assume, and if these men's wages could be raised up to a fair standard, why, I think that the feeling would be better.

"The discrimination between the old and the new men at the present time is too great. Where the old man is getting ten to ten and a half hours at 26 cents an hour, he makes a pretty fair living, but there is no protection for the newer men. Another thing that takes place to a certain extent is the fact that for very trivial causes sometimes the higher priced men are discharged."

MR. WATTLES: "Who has been?"

MR. LENAHAN: "Well, I have not got a record of the men that have been discharged, but some of the boys will call your attention to that, and they have been reinstated at the lower wage scale. Now there was one man (I cannot recall his name) who happened to back over the end of the car track on one of the lines, and he was discharged and sent for in two or three weeks again and put back at the lower wage scale. And the objections we have to the present wage scale is this, that there is a disposition on the part of the company to completely let out the old employes and supplant them with the newer, inexperienced men. That is another of the objections we have to it. Those are some of the reasons that we have for thinking that the wage scale ought to be brought more closely together, and also for the reason that it will make men better men and they will give better service to the company. That is the reason that we ask a slight advance in wages. We know that these new men are not getting near enough, and the records of the company will show that they are not retaining the new men in their service, and the reason for that is that they are not paid a proper and sufficient amount for their services. Rent and provisions and everything is so high that they cannot exist at the wages paid. Now this is not like other jobs in many respects. We have got to have a good deal of clothing; we have got to have a good many shoes; we have got a good deal of washing to be done, and these things all cost money. We have got to present a neat and clean appearance to the public at all times, and it

takes a little money to do those things, if the men keep up their personal appearance and do as they are required to do by our book of rules. And the only way that we see in regard to the wage scale is to come before the company and tell them that the men are not sufficiently taken care of financially, and ask them for a fair and substantial increase in wage."

MR. WATTLES: "That is a good talk. That is the way I like to hear men talk. Has anyone else got anything to say on this wage scale?"

MR. GILLAN: "Well, I believe the company is able to pay more wages. I came here twelve years ago and you were paying 20 cents then, and I am sure from what I have observed that they could afford to pay what we are asking now just as well or better than they could afford to pay the 20 cents then. That is my idea. The city has grown a great deal in the last ten years. There are many thousands more people here now than there was ten years ago, and the receipts, according to my observation, are very much more than they were ten or twelve years ago.

"And also the discrimination in the wage scale. I do not think it is right at all. The difference in the wage scale ought not to extend over a period of more than two or three years. That is as long as there ought to be any difference, if there should be any at all. I am in favor of a flat rate myself. But the time certainly hadn't ought to be over the third year. After a man has been two or three years on the road he certainly is as good as he ever will be, and he ain't getting nothing but a living anyhow and one ought to have as much as the other. I have always thought that one man was as good as another if he is doing his duty to the public and to the company. We cannot all be president of the street car company, and we cannot all be one thing or another, but it takes a man to run a car just as much as it takes a man to be president of the company."

MR. WATTLES: "That is right."

MR. GILLAN: "And it takes his time and all of his time from daylight until dark. I have had a run for seven years, and I get up every morning at a quarter after four and I don't get home until a quarter after seven. I have little time with my family, and what little time I have I spend with my family. I can't go out in the evening; it is too late. I get my supper and roll into bed. I get up and eat my breakfast and go to work. And that is all there is to it."

MR. WATTLES: "That is about all there is for any of us."

MR. GILLAN: "A man that has to get up early has to go to bed early, and there is no getting around that. You have got to put in twelve to fourteen hours to get in ten hours, and ten hours is as much as any man can work. When I go home in the evening I do not even eat supper with my family. They eat supper now before I am home, because I get home too late. I do not get home

now until a quarter past seven, and then whatever work I have to do around the house has to be done afterwards. I do not think it is necessary that it should be that way, at all. I think that when a man has to go to work early it should be arranged so that he can get home at the time that the ordinary working man does.

"And another thing, talking about the union—"

MR. WATTLES: "Now, let us get through with this wage matter. I want to hear what all of you have to say, because that is the whole thing."

MR. GILLAN: "I honestly believe we have not asked anything that the company would not be justified in granting. I believe the scale we present here is a just one."

MR. PONCELOW: "Isn't it a fact that the men's earning capacity has been doubled in the last seven years?"

MR. WATTLES: "No, that is not a fact."

MR. PONCELOW: "Well, eight years ago we made so many round trips for a day's work, for ten hours, and now we make one more round trip than we did at that time, in the same length of time. Eight to ten minutes is taken off each trip, each round trip. The city has grown. Lots of people have come to the city since that time, and settled here. We carry a great many more people."

MR. PONCELOW (continuing): "It seems to me like the earning capacity has been increased quite a bit."

MR. LEAR: "I think about that pretty much the same as Mr. Poncelow. When we first started to run to South Omaha, we ran from the barn to N street in South Omaha, and we made five trips in eleven hours, and now we run to Thirty-sixth and Ames avenue, and we go around the loop at Twenty-sixth in South Omaha, and they have cut us down to one hour and fifty-five minutes for the round trip and added about two miles more of road. So I think that our earning capacity has increased a good deal. We got that many more miles to run than we used to run in eleven hours, and now we run it in less than ten. Nine hours and thirty-five minutes, I think it is. And the line has been extended from 36th and Ames to Forty-second and Ames; and now we make the five round trips in ten hours; or two hours to the trip; and on Sunday morning we go to Forth-sixth and Q streets, and I make it in the same time, in two hours, making a distance of four or five miles. So I think, that considering the time occupied in the running of the cars and the rest of it, we ought to be entitled to some substantial increase. Of course, if the company think they cannot do it, cannot give us an increase, they ought to be willing to arbitrate the question and show the reason why they cannot do it. So I think the question ought to be submitted to a fair arbitration; the company could appoint one arbitrator and the union another, and these two select a third; and if that could be done, I think it would be more satisfactory to all concerned."



MR. PONCELOW: "Don't you appreciate the fact that you have got some pretty good men running your cars, taking the whole system?"

MR. WATTLES: "We have the best lot of men there is in any city."

MR. PONCELOW: "Then they ought to be paid according to their ability."

MR. WATTLES: "Now, men, you have stated your reasons fairly; and, after all, this matter of pay is the principal thing and the most important thing to everybody who works."

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE: "Yes, sir."

MR. WATTLES: "I don't care what they work at or what they do, other conditions are wiped away when they talk about the pay. That is a matter that I like to talk to you about and like to get your ideas on, because—why? Because it has been my pride, ever since I have been connected with this company, to better the conditions of the men in every way possible, and every motion that has been made for increase of pay, and there have been three of them in the last six years, has met with my hearty support and approval, and while the motions have been made by others I have always been heartily in favor of them."

"Now, I want to talk with you right square down into the bottom of your hearts, and tell you some things that you probably do not know.

"You think that the man who sits up here as president has a nice time, draws big pay, don't have to work much, and has a good time. You are awfully mistaken if you have that idea in your heads. There are all kinds of troubles that come to me and come every day, that concern you, that I am up here fighting over. to preserve, if possible, the ability of this company to pay its men not only good wages, but better wages than any other city of her kind can pay and does pay.

"A few weeks ago the question of levying an occupation tax against this company was brought up here in the city council, and an ordinance calling for a levy of five per cent of our gross receipts for an occupation tax was proposed. It would have taken \$100,000 a year from the company. I went before the city council and pleaded for you men. I said: 'Don't levy this tax against this company and cripple it so that it cannot increase the pay of its men—because that is what I want to do, and that is what I will do, if you will let this thing go by.' But the politicians were there, and they got on their feet and said, 'Oh, well, that is all rot; it is all foolish talk.' I know it was not foolish talk.

"Last night there was introduced in the city council an ordinance to require this company to reduce its fares to 3½ or 4 cents. That ordinance is pending before the city council today. If that ordinance passes and becomes a law, what are you men up against? An increase? No. Positively a reduction of pay, or quit the

job. That is all. Why? Simply because you cannot carry passengers from Benson to Albright, as you do every day, or from Florence to South Omaha, for the fare we get now. It costs more to carry them than we get for carrying them—actual cost. Now, it seems like a big thing to go out on the road and gather up a pile of nickels and turn in a big day's work, and it is a big thing. But when you come to distribute that money and see how little is left after the year is over, it looks like thirty cents.

"Now, what are the troubles that I have to look after? You say that the earning capacity of the company has been increased. It has."

MR. PONCELOW: "I say the earning capacity of the men."

MR. WATTLES: "The earning capacity of the men has been increased, but the expenses of the company have been more than proportionately increased all the time. We have twice as many men working for the company today as we had five years ago. Twice as many men. Not only that, but look at all these additions and extensions that the company has built! Look at the fact that we have had to throw away a power station up here that cost us \$750,000, and go down there on the river front and build a modern new one to furnish the power with which to operate this system. We had to throw that away, and go east and raise money to build a new one that has cost a million dollars, and we will have to spend another million before we get it completed, and big enough to take care of this whole thing. We have to sell bonds with which to get that money to make these extensions and improvements.

"A few years ago we had to throw away a cable system here. We had a cable with a barn and everything down here that cost this company \$2,000,000. We had to throw it away. Why? Because the public wouldn't stand for it. We have to keep up with the growth of the city and keep our power and other conveniences up to the demands of the city in order to keep the city satisfied. Now, I am up against that proposition all the time. I go to New York time and again during the year. What for? To have a good time? Not on your life. I go down there to those money men who have the money that we have got to have, and I sell them bonds and stock of this company and get their money and bring it out here—seven or eight million dollars of it in the last six or eight years, to spend in the development of this system. If I go down there to those fellows and say, 'Well, we had to enlarge our expenses a good deal this year, our revenues were cut off, and we cannot pay the interest on the bonds, or we cannot pay you any dividend on your stock this year because we had to increase our expenses, but we want some more money for next year'—what are they going to say? Why, they are going to say, 'I guess we will put our money where we can get some returns on it.' That

is what they naturally would say. And that is a problem I am right against here most of the time.

"I am telling you these things because you are intelligent men, and you can see some of these things are up to me all the time. Here is a pressure from the stockholders of this company for an increase of the dividend on their stock. Do you know the reply I gave these stockholders? I said, 'Gentlemen, before I will ever vote or consent to an increase of the return on your stock, I am going to pay our men more wages.'

"Now, that is my position exactly. To pay you men the best wages that any men get in similar employment in the country, and not stop there, either. To pay you the very best wages the company can afford to pay you right along all the time. We have done it in the past. All through the time of panic and depression, when you had your twenty cents an hour, what were Kausas City and Minneapolis, and all these other cities around us paying? Fifteen. You were getting twenty. What are they paying today? Are any of them paying what we are paying? I guess you have looked it up. We are paying the top. We are ahead of any of them. There is not a city in the union of the size and importance of Omaha that pays the wages we pay here."

MR. NELSON: "What about Denver?"

MR. WATTLES: "Denver. Yes. But those conditions do not prevail in Denver that prevail here. A common laborer in Denver gets four dollars a day. Why? Because everything he eats, and everything he wears, and everything he buys has to be shipped in there for thousands of miles; and everything costs more, a good deal more; living is a great deal higher in Denver than it is here, and wages are higher there than they are here. But taking those things into consideration, the wages we pay are higher than in Denver.

"Now, I am not going to stop there. I have something further to tell you men. I have these problems working out for you, and I am working on them just as hard as I can work, and all the time it is my policy to do the best by you possible. And I am going to say to you, 'Just as soon as this company can see its way clear to increase your pay you are going to get an increase.' Now, I cannot do it under pressure.

"Supposing you men come here from the union and say, 'We are going to have a strike next week if we do not get an increase of pay.' If you were in my place what would you say? What could you say? There is one thing you could say; that you could not do it under this sort of talk.

"I do not go to Mr. Lenahan and say: 'Here, unless you do so and so you are going to lose your job;' but I go to him like a friend. I say: 'You are a good man; you are doing the best you can, and I am going to stand by you as long as you are, and protect you.' Now, that is the sort of feeling I want the employes

of this company to have. I want them to know that they have a man right here who will protect them, and you are going to get an increase of pay. You are not going to get it today or next week, but you are going to get it just as soon as I can see the way clear, without putting this road in jeopardy or losing its credit, to give it to you. And I want to get your ideas, and I have drawn them out here today, about the question of how wide you want this strip to be. I see you fellows want to narrow it up. It was not my idea. Now, I will tell you honestly, men, that that is not my idea. At the same time, I am always open to conviction; I am always open to argument. I am going to see a whole lot of our men before the next increase comes along—and God speed the time when it can come. I am going to see a whole lot of you and see what you all think about that, and I am going to try and strike an average, and hit as many of you as near right as I can. Now, my idea is this: If there is not any hope ahead for a man, why, it is a pretty dull world. If he can see that next year he is going to do a little bit better than he is doing this year; going to go along up the scale a little, he has more incentive to be a good workman; and I don't believe that a man the first year that he goes into the employment of this company can earn for this company anything like the amount that he can earn after an experience like you men here have had. Why? Because he cannot get the fares, if he is a conductor. He don't get them. He loses sight of a lot of them. They get away from him. In the next place, if he is a motorman, he cannot avoid accidents like you men do. Why, we have it every day. We pay forty to fifty thousand dollars, sometimes as high as sixty thousand dollars a year for damage suits, through the carelessness of the new men that we have to take on here. We don't pay it as a rule for the old men."

MR. LEAR: "There is a point I would like—"

MR. WATTLES: "We don't pay it for the old men. The records will bear me out in what I say."

MR. LENAHAN: "What reply will—"

MR. WATTLES: "I am saying things to you now, and if you will listen you will hear something. I say that the new men have more accidents; they have more trouble; they are not as loyal to the company; they are not as good employees."

"Now, this question has been raised here. It is not really pertinent here, but I bring it in because it has been said here that the older men have been discharged for trivial causes and discriminated against sometimes. Why, there are 140 of our employes today who are drawing top wages. And do you know this? Let me tell you a fact: I have given orders to the superintendent never to discharge an old man without consulting me about it. Now, then, the old men are not discharged. Why? Because we do not want to lose them. We will overlook a whole lot of things from an old man that we could not afford to overlook from a new

man at all; and it don't make any difference to me whether the old man is a union man or whether he is not; he is going to stay in the employ of this company if I can find a possible excuse for keeping him there; and it is not the desire of this company to get rid of its old men because it has to pay them more wages. It is the desire of the company to keep the old men and get as many of your experience as possible. I wish they were all drawing twenty-six cents an hour, because they would be earning it.

"Now, that has been my idea in having the scale as it is, because a man cannot in one or two years become as proficient as he will be after eight or ten; he cannot become as experienced or as valuable to the company, and it has been my notion that he should not receive as much pay. But I am open to conviction, and I am going, as I say, to consult a lot of you men before the next raise of pay comes along, and when that comes I am going to try and adjust it in accordance with the ideas of the most of you, if I can. If you say you want the thing crowded up and the new man to get more pay, regardless of whether the old ones do or not, why, if we cannot afford to advance them all, we will advance the younger ones and crowd the scale up a little; but if you want the scale, say, at a five-year limit or leave a bigger limit still for the men who have been here ten years, why, that would be my idea about it. But I am getting information here from you men, and it will all count when we come up to that question.

"Now, so much about that wage clause in your contract, because that is the principal clause that is in there. There isn't another thing in that contract there, when you get right down to brass tacks, that amounts to a snap of your finger, excepting the question of wages.

"Don't get off on any tangent. Don't get to thinking that you are abused, or that any member of your union is abused or discriminated against in a manner that is going to require any fight between this company and the union to straighten it out—because it will not. Why? Because I am going to do what I say I will do. If any union man is receiving mistreatment from any of the officers of this company, all that he has got to do is to come to me. It don't need any arbitration board. I will straighten it out for him. And if I don't—if I don't straighten it out, then it is time enough for you men to come to me and say, 'Here, we want to talk about some other manner of straightening things out.' But have any of you men come to me with any complaints? Not one of you. I have not heard about these cases that you mention here.

"I have often heard from non-union men, from a large number of them. They have been to me with complaints about being annoyed and harassed and insulted by union men.

"A few days ago, this came to me. I am going to state it just as it came to me, so that you can see that I have quite a little trouble here. A non-union man came up here and he made this

statement. He said: 'I have been working for the company for about eleven years. I have been running with a motorman. He and I have been partners for a long time.' I forget how long he said. 'We have always been good friends until this union matter came up. He joined the union and I did not.' Or a conductor I should say. This was a motorman talking to me. He said: 'He joined the union and I did not. We had a good many hot arguments at first about it, and finally I said we would disagree about it, and we quit. It has gone along that way until recently this agitation has been on here, and a good deal of talk going, and that fellow has got mad at me and he won't treat me decent at all; he tries to put me in the hole all the time.' He said: 'The other evening he came up to a friend, a labor union man, and right in my hearing, he stood right there and the friend stood right there where I heard him; he said, "You see that d——d scab running this car; he is a d——d scab; he won't join the union; he won't help himself or help anybody else." He said it right in the hearing of this man. Now I think that man is the man you say the superintendent talked to. I think he is the man that the superintendent called down to his office and said: 'Why John,' or 'Peter,' or whatever his name is, 'did you say this to your motorman?' And he said, 'I never talked to my motorman about that. I never said any such thing as that to him.' 'Well, did you say it right in his hearing?' And the fellow flushed up, and he had to admit that he had."

MR. LENAHAN: "I beg your pardon, Mr. Wattles, that gentleman is a motorman himself."

MR. WATTLES: "Well, maybe he is. But that is an illustration of some of the troubles I have in connection with this whole affair. You boys are not the only ones having troubles. The non-union fellows are having troubles, and bring them in here. I have these complaints coming in here all the time."

MR. LENAHAN: "There are not any union men making complaints."

MR. WATTLES: "There are a good many of them."

MR. GILLAN: "There won't be many very long."

MR. LEAR: "You spoke of the new men having accidents. There is a reason for that, and of course my judgment may be wrong about it, and I have not had a student for several years; it must be four or five years since I broke in a new man, and I don't know but what I am glad that I have not had to do it."

MR. WATTLES: "It is a nuisance."

MR. LEAR: "It is a nuisance when you have tried to break in a new man, and he is no good and you turn him down and then you find that the company keeps him, puts him on with somebody else and keeps him here thirty days or more breaking him in. One of those fellows, that I had turned down for the reason that he was no good, slid into a Dodge street car through pure negligence."

I think the company is negligent when they keep a man that is negligent. When the company puts a man of that kind in charge of a car, they stand a big chance of having to pay for an accident. Now, when they put a new man on with an old and experienced man that is competent to break him in, that man ought to be a competent judge whether that new man is going to make a motor-man or not, and after he has been turned down by that man as incompetent he should not be turned over to four or five others to try to make something out of him. But that is just what has been done on this road lots of times. I think it was the last man I had, I would tell him something and he would say, 'I have forgotten.' I says, 'My God, man, you have got to remember these things.' He didn't seem to be able to remember anything and I turned him down. And then he was turned over to another man, and he didn't find anything wrong with him; and that man was given a car and he had all kinds of accidents, and finally he had to be fired.

"If you put a new man on with a man who is undertaking to break him in, he ought to be the judge of whether that man is competent to run a car or not. I have known of men who had been turned down five or six times, and finally some one passed him and he was put on and the first thing he did was to run into something. I don't think a student, who has been given a trial and been turned down by a competent man, should be turned over to several others until he finally gets through and then allowed to run a car. It is just this class of men who are responsible for a good many of the accidents, that would not have occurred if a competent man had been in charge of the car. The company ought not to keep men who have been turned down."

MR. WATTLES: "That is right. I agree with you. The company ought not to do anything of that sort. Let us stop a minute and smoke up, and give the stenographer a rest."

(NOTE—Mr. Wattles passes cigars and a short recess is taken.)

MR. WATTLES: "Now, if anybody wants to ask any more questions about the wage business, let us thresh that out before we take up anything further."

MR. GILLAN: "Well, I have nothing further to say on the wage question, but you brought up some things in your talk here that we ought to say something on, if we have the right to. It is concerning the union. You were speaking about the city council introducing an ordinance to reduce the fare. Well, now, I do not think that any street car man would be in favor of anything of that kind, and there is where I think that you will find a great benefit in having your employes in an organization, where they could help you a great deal better than they can as individuals; and, furthermore, I cannot see any reason why you should not treat with your employes as a body. It seems to me that

you should and I cannot see any reason—any good reason at all why you should not do it.”

MR. WATTLES: “I will tell you in a moment.”

MR. GILLAN: “The committee can come up and talk with you, and tell you what the men want and how they feel, and you can state your side better than you can to a thousand individuals running up here with one complaint and another. That is all I have got to say.”

MR. WATTLES: “Let me ask you this one question: Did I ever refuse to receive your committee here and talk with you?”

MR. GILLAN: “Well, no, not that I know of. But you refused to make any agreement with us or recognize us as a body. Of course we could not bring any non-union men in with us; we cannot force them to come in.”

MR. WATTLES: “Let me tell you about that. There are a lot of men in this company who do not belong to the union, and do not want to belong to it and never will join it. They have rights that are just as sacred and just as binding on this company as your rights are, and they have a right to be treated just as you men are treated.”

MR. GILLAN: “Sure.”

MR. WATTLES: “You have a right to be treated just the same way as they are, and you all have a right to be treated square. And the only way in God’s world that I know about treating a situation of this sort is just the way I am treating you. I say now to all of you we are going to treat you all fair; going to do what is right to you.

“I will tell you men—and I have said as much before—that I would rather there would not be any union here, and am sorry the union has come here. Because we have had a whole lot of trouble that we never had before it came, and it brings up conflict all the time between motorman and conductor and between the men themselves, and controversies all the time between these men, because some of them belong to an organization and some of them do not.

“Now, when you say to a free man in these United States that he has got to belong to a union in order to get a day’s pay, you are going an awful long ways; you are saying something that you have no right to say. You have no right to bring about a condition where a man, who does not want to belong to a union, must either belong to your union or starve because he does not see as you do. That is the thing that the old revolutionary fathers fought for; that is the thing that is written in the constitution of the United States, and it is the thing that I am going to hold sacred as long as I live, in any capacity whatever. I am not going to treat a man any different who does not belong to a union than I treat the man who does. And that is the principal reason about the union end of it. But I think we are getting away from the real



matters that are grievances—if they are grievances. The principal one is the matter of wages that we have talked about. Now, if anybody has anything further to say on the question of wages, let us have that, and then let us take up the next question.”

MR. LEAR: “In bringing up the question of the council reducing the fares I have one thing I want to say: I think every man in this hall would be opposed to anything of the kind, and that we will do all in our power in every way to head that off, because I do not think that it is fair and just, and I think that the five-cent fare is little enough, and ought to be retained as the standard and should not be reduced from that figure; and I think we should go on record as saying that we will oppose anything of the kind which will come up; we will oppose it as a body, and we will bring it up before the body. We can oppose the measure as a body, and go before the council as a body and say that we do not want it. There are five or six members of the council that belong to the unions, and as union men I am sure we could get the committee of the whole to call it off. We could go up there and make a decided stand against anything of the kind being done.”

MR. WATTLES: “Don’t you think it is in your interest to do that?”

MR. LEAR: “Yes, sir.”

MR. WATTLES: “Why don’t you do it?”

MR. LEAR: “Well, it is our interest. I say it is our interest. I don’t say that it is not our interest.”

MR. WATTLES: “Can you afford to sit here and permit the council to pass such an ordinance, knowing that after it had passed it, it would not only shut off any possibility of an increase, but create a condition where you must have a decrease?”

MR. LEAR: “Well, I hadn’t seen it and didn’t know of it until you told us about it. I did not know anything about this being before the council. I have never read about it or heard of anything of the kind until you spoke of it here, and would not like to say what they have done or have not done; and if they should go on record with reference to an ordinance such as is contemplated, to the effect that it would be a detriment to the men in the employ of the street railway company, and would result in a decrease of their wages and that we would be opposed to such an ordinance, and if we passed it as a body I think it would have considerable weight with the council. And I am sure the committee will agree with me that we would be glad to do that at any time.”

MR. GILLAN: “In some cities reduction of fare has not reduced the income of the company; there has been more riding done and the income was increased. Of course, I do not know that it would result that way in this city.”

MR. LENAHAN: “Naturally, Mr. Wattles, we would oppose such a movement on the part of the city council as that. Yet you leave us in a very peculiar and embarrassing position to go and

defend the rights of the company in that respect, and use our influence with our fellow workmen that are in the city council at the present time, owing to the view that you take of the trade union movement.

"You say that you have not seen any good results come from organization. There are very few cities in the country, as you know, today, of any importance, that are not organized, and the workers certainly must realize that these organizations are beneficial to them or they would not be kept up as they are; and away down in the bottom of your heart, Mr. Wattles, you know that organization is a benefit to the workman; and you know that an appeal from an individual working for a corporation—no matter how fair-minded you may be—an appeal made to you under the same conditions from a single individual, would not have the same force with you as would an appeal or representations coming from an organized body, represented by a committee of level-headed, well-balanced men. You agree with me in that. You agree with me that you would not take notice of me or any other man, if I come here and say, as an individual: 'Mr. Wattles, the street car boys are not paid enough.'

"I am not coming here on my own hook today. I am not talking to you simply because I want to talk to you. I am talking to you, sir, because I was selected from your employes to tell you the situation, and I know that what I say to you has more weight and bearing with you than if I came up here to speak to you as an individual.

"Now I hope that you will not take too pessimistic a view of this affair, because it is so serious, and it will only throw us into a position where we cannot straighten it out with the men, no matter how we talk to them when we go back to make our report. We may go back with all the determination in the world to say to the men, 'Have patience and hold back a little while, and Mr. Wattles will do everything in his power for us that he possibly can do.' But they will say, 'We instructed you to bring back to us a business proposition and to deal with this company along trade union lines, along the lines of the constitution and bylaws of the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employes of America.' That is what they will say to us. And if we do not do our duty, they will turn us to one side and they will appoint another committee, or they will probably order a strike and go out in the street.

"I am stating the truth—I am telling the truth when I say—I speak the truth and speak from the very bottom of my heart, and am telling the honest truth just as is presented to me—that this will be their response when we go back to them and tell them what you have said—the kind words you have said. We may state all of them just as you have stated them. But I say now that I know—I feel that I know the temper of the men, and we cannot keep them within our control with the promises that you have

made, without you are willing to arbitrate or get down to some specific means whereby they will know in future under what conditions they are working. And that is the reason that we are appealing to you. I am telling the truth when I say that this is a serious situation, and I do assure you that it is most serious; and if there is anything that you can give to us in writing that you think would satisfy the employes of this company, with your signature to it, I wish that you would consider it and take it up and have it prepared so that we may present it at our meeting; and you won't say then that this committee misrepresented your views or your ideas, and you cannot say that some of them were radicals, were hotheaded and misunderstood and misconstrued your words. Because I know these gentlemen well, and I know there is not one of them will misconstrue your words, but he will tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth; and so far as we have gone in this wage scale and the other questions that we have touched upon, I believe if we go back and relate the situation, that we may bring upon ourselves troubles that we will have an awful time to untangle; and a stitch in time saves nine, as the old woman said. There is nothing like coming out fair and plain and telling you the exact situation, and probably you will reconsider and give us something in writing that will satisfy the employes of your company."

MR. WATTLES: "Now, Mr. Lenahan and gentlemen: I have tried to show you that my heart is in the right place, that I am open to receive employes at any time that they have grievances, to consider them, to give a hearing to our men at all times and to correct grievances that may exist. That is the position I take. When you come to me and ask me to violate my word of honor, and to go back on agreements that I have made with men whom I respect just as highly as I do you, you are asking me something that you may cut my arm off but you never can get me to grant.

"Now, I am not a timid man either. I will do exactly what is just and fair; at the same time I will be firm in what I know is right. These men, if they quit the service of this company and go out on a strike, will have to appeal to this community for the justice of their cause. If they cannot appeal to the community for the justice of their cause and be sustained by the great bulk of our people, they have lost before they start. That is one thing they should think of, and think of seriously. Because, I have said before, and I repeat now, while I am going to be absolutely fair and just to every union man in the employ of this company and protect him in his rights, and see that he is not discriminated against in any way, at the same time I am going to be equally fair to the other side; and if the union men in our employ do call a strike under the conditions that I know exist, and that I am positive that this community will say exists when they see the evidence before them, I say to the union men, 'If they quit the employ of

this company, there never will be another union man employed by this company.' Now you may think that is idle talk, men. Nobody will regret a strike worse than I. And don't think that I am sitting here with my hands folded believing there is not going to be a strike. Every time one of those agitators comes among you, and works you up to this high pitch of temper that I find you in when you come here, looking at me as if I were your enemy when I am your best friend, every time they commence upon you the men get beside themselves, and they are ready to do anything. So I have prepared this company for a strike, and I have men employed waiting to take the place of every man who quits."

A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE: "That is right."

MR. WATTLES: "And this company will go right along and operate its cars; if necessary, under the protection of the government itself.

"Don't think for a moment now that we are going to consider this lightly. We have not considered it lightly. We have considered it seriously. We have believed all the time that you men—I will not say you men, because I believe that you are good, level-headed men, but, as Mr. Lenahan says, there are a lot of men there who demand impossible things and say to you, 'You go up and you just say we have to have so and so, or there is going to be a strike.' Now, that don't scare me. I have been in all kinds of situations."

MR. LENAHAN: "I did not say that there were hot-headed men in our union."

MR. WATTLES: "You said there were men there whom it was hard to control. That you could not keep them within your control."

MR. LENAHAN: "What I said was that what you were offering would not satisfy the men."

MR. WATTLES: "Maybe it will not. I would be very sorry if it did not. If any of them have any real grievance—real, not imaginary—if any man has been discharged wrongfully by this company, I want him to come to me and show me, and if I do not reinstate him, then it is time to talk about calling a strike. If any man comes to me and says, 'I ought to have more pay,' and if he can show me that he ought to have more pay and I will not grant it to him when I am able to, then is the time to talk about the strike. I am telling you men the truth about this thing. I am giving you the honest facts as they exist. I have told you my troubles in order that you may see where I stand on this proposition. Now, then, I say this, and you can take it back to your men: That if anybody has a real complaint—not something that happened when Mr. Tucker was alive, or something that happened five years ago, or something that happened so long ago that we have forgotten it—but if there are real things happening here against you men or any one of you, bring it up here and we will straighten it out. Don't you be alarmed about it. It will



PARADE OF UNION STRIKERS ON SEPTEMBER 29TH



be straightened out fairly, too. But don't get led away now, men. Don't get excited. Don't feel that you have not good jobs, or that you can go and get others next week, or that if you quit this company you can come back again in a few days. That is not the way the thing is going to happen here. You may think it is, but that is not the way it is going to be.

"Look up the record of street car strikes and you will see what has happened. I will furnish you with copies of the history of the strike led by this very man who is among you here, but a short time ago, down at Louisville, Kentucky, if you want to see it. What was the result? This man left town. He had business at Minneapolis. Didn't make any difference to him. He left twenty-five of these honest workingmen in jail with criminal charges against them and under \$5,000 bonds, and warrants out for 120 more of them. They were in trouble. Was he? Oh, no. He had business somewhere else. It is your trouble. It is not his. It is you—you men who are going to suffer—and your families—if you bring this strike on yourselves.

"There may be times that men ought to strike, when their employers are not fair—when they don't talk fair or will not do what is right. But that is not the case here. Don't think that you can make a case out of imaginary things, because the facts are going to come up. If a street car strike is called here, the public will know why it is called and what the reason for its being called is, and all about it before we get through with it; and when they hear the evidence and see it, they are going to judge whether it is just and fair or not; and the judgment is rendered before you start in case the facts are against you."

MR. LENAHAN: "Gentlemen, those are the facts, that Mr. Wattles has prepared for a strike, and there is nothing that we can concede or agree upon; and his statement to you is frank that he has prepared for a strike, and that he is not willing to treat with us except as individuals. You are only treated as individuals here today, and the instructions received from your association is that you were to come here representing the employes of the company, or the union men, and get an agreement, or to take back to the organization something substantial and satisfactory. Mr. Wattles denies you that right and treats you as individuals. On these grounds we have nothing to do but retire."

MR. PONCELOW: "Well, I think the conference is over. I don't see that there is anything we can do."

MR. WATTLES: "If any of you men have anything else to say, let us hear it now, because it is the time."

MR. LENAHAN: "Your position is very clear."

The committee thereupon retired from Mr. Wattles' office and the meeting was ended.

State of Nebraska, County of Douglas, ss.

This is to certify that on Wednesday, the Fifteenth day of September, 1909, I attended a meeting held at the office of Mr. Gurdon W. Wattles, in the United States National Bank building, in the city of Omaha, Douglas county, state of Nebraska, which said meeting was commenced at the hour of two in the afternoon of said day, and was a meeting between a committee of seven of the union employes of the Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway Company, whose names are set forth on page one of this transcript, and Mr. Gurdon W. Wattles, the president of said company; this is to further certify that I reported in shorthand writing all of the statements made at said meeting by any and all of the persons present at and participating in said meeting; I further certify that the foregoing transcript, containing pages numbered one (1) to fifty-two (52), both inclusive, is a full, true and complete transcript of all shorthand notes taken by me at said meeting and contains each and all of the statements made by the persons participating in said meeting.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto signed my name, at Omaha, Nebraska, this 17th day of September, A. D., 1909.

FRANK J. SUTCLIFFE, Shorthand Reporter.



## Chapter V.

### ENDORSEMENT OF COMPANY'S POSITION

The next day after this meeting, the president of the company was waited upon by Mr. T. W. McCullough, Managing Editor of the Omaha Bee and a leader in union matters in the city of Omaha, who requested an interview between Mr. C. O. Pratt, of the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees of America, and the President of the company. To this request, the following reply by letter was made:

“Omaha, Nebraska, Sept. 16, 1909.

“T. W. McCULLOUGH, Esq.,  
Care Omaha Bee,  
Omaha, Neb.

MY DEAR MR. McCULLOUGH:

“After a careful consideration of your request that I should meet Mr. Pratt, an officer of the National Association of Street Railway Employees, I cannot see that such a meeting would accomplish any practical results. The position of our company has always been that its officers will at all times confer with its employes, either individually or by committees, and hear any complaints they may have to make and correct any wrongs, so far as lies within their power, but that they will not negotiate with men not in their employ. If I am correctly informed, the purpose of Mr. Pratt is to secure the execution of a written contract between the Street Railway Company and the union. This would be impossible for the following reasons:

“When the union was first organized, the men who joined it were suspended by the company. At a conference with these men the national organizer, Mr. Wilson, asked for a hearing, which was granted. He then stated to the officers and directors in the presence of the men, that in many cities where unions existed among street railway employes, a part of the men belonged to the union and others did not, that they always worked in perfect harmony together, that it was not the purpose of street railway unions to secure a closed shop, and that if a union should be organized in Omaha, no contract would be asked or required either

at that time or in the future, but that the purpose of organizing a union here was to promote the general welfare of those who joined it.

"With this understanding and agreement with Mr. Wilson, the opposition to the organization of the union was withdrawn, and the men who had been suspended were reinstated. While the union was being organized, the officers of the Street Railway Company were waited on by a large number of the old employes, and we were asked to state to these men whether or not the company would at any time enter into any contract with the union whereby they, who did not want to join the union, would in any way be liable to lose their rights or positions. They were positively assured that no contract would be entered into by this company with the union, and that every employe of the company, regardless of whether he belonged to the union or not, would receive the same treatment and would be dealt with in the same manner as every other employe.

"Two years ago last March, when a strike was threatened, because of the refusal of the officers of the company to violate their solemn agreement with their non-union men and sign an agreement with the union, I was requested to appear before the then president of the Central Labor Union, Mr. Charles McDonald, and the two last ex-presidents of that body, Mr. Louis V. Guye and Mr. John Polian, and state the position of the company and submit evidence, that they might judge for the union men as to whether or not a strike was justified. One of the findings of this committee reads as follows:

" 'In the matter of a written contract demanded on the part of your organization, we find that inasmuch as an agreement was entered into at the time of the formation of your local union, to the effect that the company would not be required to sign a contract, we therefore recommend that said contract be withdrawn.'

"The decision of our company on this matter is final. We do not expect to violate this understanding we had with the union and non-union men, nor will we permit the union to violate it.

"Regarding the matter contained in the contract submitted to us, we have freely and frankly discussed these and other matters with our employes. The principal provision, for an increase of pay, we have declined to consider at this time and have explained the reasons therefor. An occupation tax was recently levied against this company, which will require the payment to the City of Omaha of about \$60,000 per annum. Last year, after paying the expenses of operation, taxes, interest and reasonable dividends, and setting aside only a moderate sum for replacement, we had left about \$22,000. It is as important to our employes as it is to our stockholders that we maintain the high financial credit of our company. To increase its expenses beyond its ability to pay would bring disaster to all.

“But there is a further reason why we should not increase our wage scale at present. Our company has at all times paid the highest wages of any company in any city of our importance, where similar conditions prevail to those in Omaha. At present our scale of wages is higher than such cities as Boston, Washington, Philadelphia, New Orleans, Minneapolis, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Louisville, Cincinnati, Kansas City, Baltimore, Toledo, Columbus, Sioux City, St. Joseph and Des Moines. In but one city in the United States in the class of Omaha are the wages to street railway employes higher than here. That city is Denver, where all wages are much higher and living expenses accordingly. It is the policy of our company, however, to at all times pay its employes as good or better wages than similar employes receive in any city in our class, and this will be our future policy.

“Three increases in our scale of wages have been made during the past six years, and other increases will be made at the earliest date prudent to do so. In past adjustments of the wage scale our employes have been consulted, and we have endeavored to make this adjustment in accordance with the value of the service rendered and in a manner so as to retain in our employ all of our older and more experienced men. In future adjustments we shall consult with the men, and endeavor to adopt such a scale as will be most satisfactory to our employes, and which will produce the best service to the public.

“Regarding the provision to insure fair treatment to union employes, I will say that the policy of our company toward the union has been so often announced and published, that there should be no misunderstanding regarding it. We have stated that so long as union men remain in our employ, they shall be treated in every way as fairly and justly as non-union employes, and there shall be no discrimination made by the officers of the company for or against them. If, at any time, any such discrimination can be shown to exist, it will be immediately corrected. We have always reserved the right of the officers and superintendents to say to our men that we prefer that they do not join the union, but no pledge is required from any man entering our employ on this subject. We cannot permit union men to annoy or harass non-union men. We must at all times maintain discipline and good service on the part of all employes, to the end that the public shall continue to receive the best service possible.

“Regarding the schedule of runs, we have at all times stated to the men that it was the purpose of the company to so adjust the runs as to be most satisfactory to them, keeping in mind the fact that the service must not be impaired, and that we have to provide this service during about twenty hours of each day. We have repeatedly stated that if any suggested changes in runs could be made, that would not impair the service and would be more

convenient to our employes, we would be glad to receive such suggestions.

"It is the purpose of the company at all times to provide each man with a sufficient number of extra men, to the end that regular men may lay off on frequent occasions, if they so desire. To be fair, however, with the extra men employed, we cannot maintain such a large number as will not provide a reasonable wage for all who are employed.

"I have stated at length in this letter the position of our company on all of the material questions that are embodied in the contract recently submitted to us by our union employes. We do not desire any disruption of the pleasant relations that have existed between the officers of our company and the men in its employ. We shall, however, pursue the policies herein outlined, believing that they are for the best interest of all the men in our employ.

"You are at liberty to use this letter in any manner you see fit to promote the general welfare of our employes.

Very respectfully,

(Signed) G. W. WATTLES, Pres."

In delivering this letter, the President of the company stated verbally that he would meet Mr. Pratt, if he so desired, before the Executive Committee of the Business Men's Association of Omaha, at their meeting at one o'clock P. M. the following day. Mr. Pratt appeared at this meeting and stated the complaints of the union men against the Street Railway Company, and presented at that time a modified contract which he stated would be satisfactory to the union employes of the company. On being questioned by a member of the Business Men's Association as to who was to execute this contract in behalf of the street railway employes, he admitted that it was to be executed by the officers of the union.

The President of the company thereupon agreed to issue a statement to all the employes of the Street Railway Company, and place a copy in the hands of each employe, which would cover the principal points raised in the contract, but this was not satisfactory to Mr. Pratt. At a later date the business men present at this meeting published the following statement as to what occurred at this meeting, as follows:

"The undersigned, having been present at the meeting of the executive committee of the Business Men's Association on September 17, take this means of giving to the public an accurate statement of what occurred before the executive committee relative to the impending street railway strike.

"Mr. Wattles, representing the Street Railway Company, and Mr. Pratt, representing the union, appeared before the committee. Mr. Pratt informed the committee that what he was demanding of the Street Railway Company was a document in the form of a contract, to be signed by the officials of the Street Railway Company on the one side and certain officers of the union on the other. He produced a proposed draft of such contract, which he said had never been presented to Mr. Wattles or to the Street Railway Company. This was the same form of contract which was subsequently published in the papers of Sunday morning, September 19. Mr. Pratt stated that an increase in wages was asked, but that, if the figures named in the proposed contract were not fair, he was disposed to negotiate further on that subject. He also stated that they wanted a contract covering the question of schedules of runs and hours of work.

"Mr. Wattles then informed the committee that when the union was organized here about seven years ago, those who joined it were at first suspended from their employment but were afterwards reinstated upon the express promise that the union would not, at any time, demand of the company any contract with the union, as such, or other contract or agreement making a distinction between union and non-union men; that at the same time the company promised its non-union employes that it would not, at any time, make any contract with the union, the effect of which would be to discriminate in its manner of treating with its union employes and its treatment of its non-union men.

"Mr. Wattles said that the question whether the company should keep its word with its non-union employes was not a matter that he could submit to arbitration. He further stated that within the past six years the company had made three voluntary advances in wages, and is now paying its conductors and motormen the highest wages paid in any city of the class of Omaha where conditions are at all similar, and that it had paid, during the periods of depression, as high wages as any other city under similar conditions, notwithstanding that for many years the stockholders received no dividends whatever. He said that the present condition of business and income would not permit an increase of wages at the present time and enable the company to make necessary replacements, preserve its credit and keep the service up to the required standard; but that it is the purpose and policy of the company to make further advances in wages whenever conditions of business will warrant the same. He then offered to give to every employe, whether union or non-union man, a written statement over his signature as president of the company, containing the following specific promises and pledges:

"1. Whenever the condition of business will warrant an increase of pay, such increase will be made.

"2. That in their treatment of employes there shall be no discrimination whatever between union and non-union men.

"3. That every specific complaint respecting treatment, schedule of runs, hours of work or other matters relating to the working conditions, which shall be brought to the attention of the company shall receive consideration, and the cause of complaint shall be removed, if possible, with due regard to the efficiency of the service."

"Mr. Pratt then said that, while he and Mr. Wattles were not far apart on matters of substance, what he wanted was a contract rather than a statement from the company. His proposed contract was then examined in detail, and he stated that if it were entered into it would be signed by certain officers of the union.

"He was then asked to point out any promise or agreement contained in the proposed contract to be performed by any one except the Street Railway Company, and he admitted that there were no such promises in the proposed agreement.

"The controversy thus narrowed down, for immediate purposes, to whether, all of the promises and agreements being on one side, the document to be signed should be in the form of a written declaration by the company to all of its employes, or in the form of a contract with the union, thereby ignoring the non-union workman. As the making of such a contract would be a breach of faith on the part of the Street Railway Company toward its non-union employes, and as the demand for it was a breach of the promises of the union made at the time the union employes were reinstated in their employment, it was unanimously resolved by the executive committee of the Business Men's Association that the association approve the attitude of the Street Railway Company, and would give that company its support in the event that a strike should be precipitated. The action of the committee was afterwards unanimously endorsed by a general meeting of the association on Sunday afternoon.

"Upon the conclusion of the executive committee being made known, Mr. Pratt left the meeting, saying that he would read to the men then assembled at the Labor Temple, without comment, the letter which Mr. Wattles had on the day previous addressed to a certain prominent union labor man of this city, which contained, in substance, the same assurances which Mr. Wattles had made to the executive committee.

"Signed this 20th day of September, 1909.

SAMUEL REES,

President Business Men's Association.

D. J. O'BRIEN,  
FRANK W. JUDSON.  
E. J. MCVANN,  
A. J. VIERLING,  
W. S. JARDINE,  
E. E. BRUCE,  
THOMAS A. FRY,  
J. A. SUNDERLAND.  
W. S. WRIGHT.

T. J. MAHONEY,  
GEORGE H. LEE,  
G. W. JOHNSTON,  
DAVID COLE,  
GEORGE H. KELLY,  
JOHN H. HARTE,  
ANDREW MURPHY.  
A. C. SMITH.

CHARLES C. BELDEN.  
G. W. CLABAUGH,  
FRANK B. JOHNSON,  
FRANK COLPETZER,  
W. C. BULLARD,  
J. B. RAHM,  
THOMAS C. BYRNE,  
F. A. NASH."

## Chapter VI.

### STAMPEDING THE MEN

Mr. Pratt left this meeting and went directly to the meeting of the union employes, which was then in session at Labor Temple. What occurred at that meeting before, and after Mr. Pratt's arrival, is told in the following affidavit by a witness who was present:

STATE OF NEBRASKA, }  
COUNTY OF DOUGLAS. } ss.

The undersigned, G. W. Adams, being first duly sworn, deposes and says as follows:

"My name is G. W. Adams. I live at 1423 Avenue D, Council Bluffs. I have been in the employ of the Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway Company for three and a half years as motorman on the Council Bluffs Division. I do not belong to the Street Railway union and never have joined it. My regular conductor, E. E. Moore, invited me to go to the union meeting to be held at Labor Temple on Friday afternoon, September 17, 1909. He said it was to be an open meeting to which everybody was invited. I went to the hall alone and found him there when I got there, which was about two o'clock in the afternoon. I went upstairs and met him and he came and shook hands with me. I went in the hall with him. On the platform were Mr. Ben Commons and two other men. I knew it was Mr. Commons because he gave his name when he started to speak to the men. There were about one hundred and sixty men in the hall at the time.

"First there was a speech by a small man with a light mustache; I did not hear his name, but I believe he was one of the union committeemen. Then Mr. Commons spoke. He said: 'We cannot do very much, because we have got to wait for Mr. Pratt, who is having a talk with Mr. Wattles at this time.' He then talked for a short time about street railroad matters, and then he said that they had some secret work to do and all non-union men must leave the hall, if there were any in there. Five or six men

got up and went out. Then after they went out Mr. Commons sent a committee around to look at every man's card, to know that there was no non-union man left in the hall. My conductor came over to me and said, 'Now you go and make out your application to join the union, and you can stay in and hear all the secret work.' I said to him, 'What do you call this, a forced game?' He said, 'Why, no,' and I said, 'It looks like it.' And I said, 'I would not have come here if I had known it was to be this kind of a meeting.' I did not want to go out and let them hoot at me. He took a hold of my shoulder and pinched it and said, 'You are all right anyway, say nothing about it,' and went over and sat down in a row over by the platform. I think he was one of the committee on the Council Bluffs side.

"They then shut all the doors and put a man in the ante-room, and then one man in the lodge room at the door. When the committee came around to look at the cards Mr. Moore was talking to me, and they passed by me and never asked me for any card. Then Ben Commons gave the lodge signs. \* \* \* He explained the union grip. \* \* \* Then he commenced to talk about the street car strike, and he wanted to know if there was anyone in the hall that would put a motion before the house, and one man got up and said, 'I make a motion that the company pay once a week in place of twice a month.' Mr. Commons said, 'We don't want anything to do with that kind of a motion.' Mr. Commons then said to the men, 'When Mr. Pratt comes back from waiting on Mr. Wattles, if he does not get any satisfaction, the question is, will you call a strike or not?' He said that Mr. Wattles was one of the biggest liars on earth; that he had never kept any of his words with the men, or anything that he had told them when they went to him with grievances. He said that Mr. Wattles positively refused to talk to him at all, and that before they got through he would have to talk to him.

"He then commenced to tell the men what strikes he had won. I forget the names of the towns, but there was one town that he claimed there were fifty-four strikers, and they called out six hundred militia and they won the strike. Then he told about a town where he had been put in jail for ninety days, and how his wife had fetched him good grub and good stuff to drink while he was in jail, and he was ready to go in jail again if necessary. Then he said those that were in favor of a strike should stand up, and



about everyone in the house stood up, and I stood up with them too. I thought if I did not they might see me sitting there and somebody might knock my head off. Mr. Commons said if Mr. Wattles did not come to the agreement they would go out on Saturday night at twelve o'clock. Then he said, 'Who is in favor of it?' and pulled his hat out and swung it around, and that put everyone in the house hollering 'Strike, strike, strike.' The men acted like they were very much excited. Commons then said, 'Now, boys, I will tell you, if we go out at twelve o'clock Saturday night, you will all meet here at twelve o'clock, and we will appoint our committees and pickets to go to each car barn,' and he said, 'You have got to be brave and put on a brave face.' He then told the men the means they were to use in preventing the cars from being operated, and how to treat those who attempted to operate them. Every time he would make a statement of that kind he would take his hat off and wave it and get them very much excited.

"It was getting late. I went to work at 5:18 and I had not had my supper, and it was after four o'clock, but I was afraid to get up and give any sign to get out for fear they would not leave 'a grease spot of me,' as I had had experience with people as wild as they were then. Before I left the hall, Mr. Pratt came back, and he had a letter which Mr. Wattles had written to some man in Omaha about what he would do. Then Pratt said that Mr. Wattles had gone back on everything he had agreed to do; that he would not sign anything at all; that he would cut his right hand off first. He then said something about a strike. Ben Commons then said, 'Strike right away, the quicker the better, and give them no notice.'

"Then Ben Commons said to the men again that all who were in favor of a strike should stand up. Nearly every man in the house stood up. He then pounded the table and told them that stood up to sit down. Then he said for those that were not in favor of a strike to stand up, and no one stood up. They did not take any ballot on the question. Then Mr. Pratt made a speech in which he called Mr. Wattles a liar, and urged the men to stand firm and told them they would win the strike and no question about it. After he had made his speech they adjourned the meeting till the evening meeting.

"Then I went on my run and had my same conductor, Mr. Moore. Later Mr. Moore came to me at Manawa and said to me,

'What are you going to do, are you going out with us?' I said, 'I am not.' He said, 'You will be scabbing if you don't.' I said, 'I am not going out.' He said, 'I thought all the time you would go out.' I said, 'I had you guessing, didn't I?' Then that night at the 12:40 trip out of Omaha, the union men that belonged in Council Bluffs caught my car over to the Bluffs going home from the meeting. I could notice through the back of the car that Poncelow was a kind of whispering to my conductor; I could see through the car. Then after they got home and off the car, my conductor came to me and said, 'Now this is between you and me, I want you to keep quiet, and I will tell you something. They are going out in the morning at four o'clock, in place of Saturday night.'

(Signed) G. W. ADAMS."

Subscribed in my presence and sworn to before me by the said G. W. Adams this 14th day of October, A. D., 1909.

[SEAL]

(Signed) J. T. HILLQUIST,  
Notary Public.

Another meeting of the union men, to accommodate those who were not present at the afternoon meeting, was held at eight o'clock on the same evening. From reliable information obtained from those who were present, but who are not at liberty to disclose their identity, on account of their oath to the union, it was learned that about the same action was taken at the evening meeting as at the afternoon meeting, and that the vote on the strike was not by ballot, as is provided by the by-laws of the Amalgamated Association of Street & Electric Railway Employes of America, which read as follows:

"Section 102. When any difficulty arises between the members of any local division of this association and their employers, regarding wages, hours of labor, or any other question that may result in a strike or a lockout, the dispute shall first be taken up by the executive board of the local division, or by a committee appointed by the division for that purpose, and they shall make a thorough investigation, and seek, through conferences with the company, to get the matter satisfactorily adjusted. The committee shall, after having finished the work of negotiation with the company, submit a full report to a meeting of the division.

"Section 103. If, by compliance with Section 102, the committee has been unable to secure settlement that is satisfactory to the local division, and the question is one over which the local division believes a strike should be ordered, such question shall

be submitted to a secret ballot of the entire membership. If necessary to reach the entire membership of the division, it shall be submitted by a referendum vote under the Australian ballot system. If two-thirds ( $\frac{2}{3}$ ) of the membership thus voting decide to favor the proposition, they shall at once notify the International President. The International President, upon receipt of such notice, shall proceed to the scene of dispute in person, or by deputy, and, in conjunction with the committee of the local division, shall make a careful investigation and attempt to settle the matter in dispute. In case he fails to make a settlement, he shall communicate with the General Executive Board, either by writing or telegraphing, and get a majority of the board's consent before endorsing any strike, and in no case will he endorse a strike without first having offered arbitration. If the company is willing to submit the dispute to arbitration, he shall make arrangements and submit the case to arbitration and thus adjust it.

"Section 104. In case the international representative, who is handling questions in a dispute between a local division and the employing company has propositions from the company that he believes should be considered by the entire membership, he shall acquaint the membership with such propositions, either through a circular carefully outlining and explaining the propositions, or through a general meeting of the division. After having acquainted the membership with the proposition or propositions, he shall then have a referendum vote of the entire membership of the local division taken upon the same. If the local division has by-laws providing for a referendum vote of its membership, he shall follow such provisions. If the local division has no by-laws governing such vote, he shall then make arrangements and have such vote taken in the best and easiest manner possible—either by appointing a special election day and having the membership come to the hall or headquarters of the division and cast their vote, or through a committee who shall take the vote of the members at the different stations or barns. Every member shall be given an opportunity to vote upon such proposition, and the majority of the votes cast by the membership of the local division shall decide the question.

"Section 105. The General Executive Board shall have the power to sustain or refuse to sustain the action of the local division, providing the local division has complied with this constitution. The International President shall notify the local division of the decision without delay.

"Section 106. In case the General Executive Board refuses to sustain the local division in its application for support the local division can appeal for a vote of all local divisions in request for support, and it shall be the duty of the International President to submit the appeal and facts in the case to a vote of the general membership, which vote shall be returned to the International President within thirty (30) days, and if the appeal is sustained

the local division making the same shall be notified and shall be entitled to all support in accordance with the constitution.

"Section 107. Local divisions going on strike without the consent of the General Executive Board shall forfeit all rights to assistance and be subject to expulsion from the Association."

The evidence is therefore conclusive that the strike of the union employes of the Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway Company was never legally voted, in that no secret ballot was taken; that the men were greatly excited because of the intemperate speeches by the officials of the National Association; and that the men had no opportunity to calmly consider a vote upon this most important subject.

## Chapter VII.

### THE STRIKE

The officers of the Street Railway Company were promptly advised of the results of the meetings, both afternoon and evening, at which the strike was voted, and during the night such preparations were made as were possible to meet the situation. Chief of Police John J. Donahue took personal charge of his forces, and squads of policemen were stationed at each car barn, so that when the pickets of the strikers attempted, as they did, to intercept those who desired to work or to interfere with the cars as they came out of the barns, the police promptly and effectively prevented any and all violence. The Assistant General Manager of the company, the Superintendent of Transportation and the numerous road officers were on the scene, and one and all, together with the men loyal to the company, did all that was possible to furnish the most efficient service that could be carried on under the circumstances.

About 300 of the 635 operating employes of the company belonged to the union when the strike was voted.

Many of the operating employes, who did not belong to the union, were so much alarmed by the demonstrations of the strikers and their friends and their threats to commit bodily injury, that quite a large number of these loyal men refused to take out their cars. In order to induce as many as possible to take out their cars, an order was posted in each barn by the Assistant General Manager, stating that all who refused to work would be discharged by the company. The effect of this order was to sever from the employ of the company quite a large number of men who did not at that time belong to the union, but who were too timid to take out their cars. These men were immediately solicited by union men to join their forces, and were given assurances that within a short time the union would force their reinstatement. Some of them, against their inclinations, were thus forced into the union.

The plans so carefully laid to prevent the operation of the cars proved abortive, on account of the presence at each of the

barns of a squad of policemen. However, only a comparatively small number of cars were sent out on each line during the first day of the strike. Many of these cars were stoned, and the operatives were insulted and in some cases assaulted by strike sympathizers, but on the first day of the strike and all during its progress our citizens in large numbers rode on the cars.

During the first day of the strike a large number of circulars were distributed on the streets, stating the grievances of the strikers. The circular read as follows:

## THE STREET CAR LOCKOUT

### A Truthful Statement of Facts by the Street Car Men

#### TO THE PUBLIC

**Read, Investigate, Reflect, and then use Your Influence in Fighting  
for the Cause of Justice.**

“The Street Railway Company **Positively REFUSE** to make any agreement of any nature with the authorized representatives of their employes that would protect them in their employment.

“**THE COMPANY POSITIVELY REFUSE TO ARBITRATE** the grievances of the men.

“**The Company have Violated** every verbal promise that they have made their employes for the past seven years. **The Company Compelled** new men when being hired, to promise that they would not join the union.

“**The Company Have Compelled** their under officials to picket the union meetings and to spy upon the men, using intimidating and discriminating methods that are intolerable. They employ spies and detectives to hound our representatives and officials.

“Employes are compelled to work nine consecutive years in the service of the Company before they can receive the 26 cents per hour. The minimum wage rate is 21 cents per hour.

“About four hundred and fifty-six men were discharged or forced to resign during the past year. Only about six hundred men are employed all told, so it is easy to see how many men have any chance of ever receiving the 26 cent rate. The greatest number of the employes are kept at the low rate of wages, and with the present high cost of living it is impossible to live decently upon the amount they receive and maintain the standard of American citizenship.

“Men are compelled to work swing runs that require them to put in 20 hours out of every 24 hours, and they only receive nine and ten hours pay. The most inhuman conditions prevail in that

respect that can be found anywhere in the world. If animals were treated that way, the humane society would interfere. If men are too sick to work, the Company censure them, and sometimes suspends them from service afterward for 'discipline.'

"No provisions whatever are made for the conveniences of the men while at work and the laws of health are forced to be neglected, causing great suffering, besides injuring one's health. Extra men are **Compelled to Sit Around the Barns all Day Without Pay**, and regular men are not permitted to lay off and give the extra men a chance to work.

"At a meeting of all the employes held Monday, September 13th, the men voted unanimously instructing the committee to immediately wait upon the Company and insist upon a definite understanding that would protect them in their rights, and adjust the intolerable conditions complained of. The committee accordingly met with President Gurdon W. Wattles on Wednesday, September 15th, and explained the requests of the men. President Wattles refused to agree to any satisfactory adjustment of the grievances and said, 'that he would cut his right hand off before he would ever sign any written agreement.' Regardless of what the Company may say to the contrary, the only question involved in this fight is a question of humane treatment and decent living wages. We will be satisfied with nothing less. We have confidence that the public will insist upon fair play and a square deal and as we stand for arbitration, it is sufficient evidence that we have nothing to fear, as all we ask for is 'justice,' and that we insist upon, even though we have to fight for it.

"We regret to cause the public inconvenience, but the Company forced the fight and there was nothing else left for us to do. We have left no stone unturned in an effort to secure a peaceful settlement. We must abide by your decision. Our cause is in your hands.

P. J. LENAHAN, Sec'y.

CHAS. H. LEAR,  
W. GILLAN,  
H. P. NELSON,

M. J. KENNEY,  
W. H. PONCELOW,  
WM. S. BOIEN."

It should be noted that this circular calls the strike a "lock-out", while, as a matter of fact, it was a strike by the men and not a lockout by the company. An interesting bit of evidence, which shows that this strike was planned by the two outside leaders who came here evidently for the purpose of producing a strike, is disclosed by the fact that this circular was printed two days previous to the date on which the strike was voted.

A copy of the circular found its way into the hands of the officers of the company the day before the strike was voted. Other evidence, which they are not at liberty to disclose, advised

them of the plans of the strike promoters. They, therefore, had already communicated with Messrs. Waddell & Mahon, of New York City, and had arranged for the shipment to Omaha of a sufficient number of strike-breakers to take the places of all who might go out.

The first detachment of these strike-breakers, 128 in number, reached Omaha on Sunday morning, September 19th, and they were immediately set to work operating cars. On Monday and Tuesday additional detachments arrived, amounting in all to over 500 men, all of whom were quartered in or near the car barns, in a manner that will be more fully described in another chapter. After the first day of the strike the service of the company was increased daily on all its lines, and during daylight hours for the first three days of the strike about one-half the regular service was maintained on every line. This service was increased daily after the first three days, so that by the end of the first week of the strike practically a full daylight service was restored.

A newspaper campaign was at once begun by the company to correct the many misstatements that were being made by the strike promoters. The circular published and distributed on the streets by the strikers, containing their alleged grievances, was answered by the president of the company in a full page statement in the Sunday papers.

This statement, after reviewing the history of events leading up to the strike, concluded as follows:

"A circular to the public has been issued by the executive committee of the union. It contains so many misstatements of fact that we must review and correct these misleading statements. This statement says, among other things, that the company has violated every verbal promise it has made to its employes for the past seven years; that the company has compelled a pledge from new men that they would not join the union.

"We ask for the proof. No man entering the employ of the company has been asked regarding whether or not he would join the union. No promises of the company verbal or written have been violated with the men.

"The statement says that the company was compelling its under officials to picket union meetings and spying upon the men, using intimidating and discriminating methods that are intolerable.

"No man in the employ of the Street Railway Company has been compelled or asked to picket union meetings. The fact was brought out by a statement of Mr. Pratt, before the business men's meeting, that the local union recruited during the past month



from twelve to 300 members. Statements during this time have been authorized by the president of this company and published in at least one of the local papers, that the company did not forbid men in its employ from joining the union, and the fact that a large number have joined, under the influence of the agitation by these outside organizers during the past month, is a complete answer to this statement.

"The statement that 456 men were discharged or forced to resign during the past year is misleading. It leaves the inference that only a few of our employes are receiving the maximum wage, and that the company seeks to prevent men from becoming old enough in the service to receive the maximum wage. The contrary is true. The interests of the company are to retain all its old employes, and they are never discharged except for the most flagrant violations of rules. The fact that, out of about 600 conductors and motormen, 140 are receiving the maximum pay disproves this assertion.

"The statement that men are compelled to run on 'swing' runs that require them to put in twenty hours out of the twenty-four and only receive nine hours' pay, is absolutely false. Such a condition would make this company liable to prosecution under the Interstate Commerce Act, which prohibits any such abuses. It is true that on a few of the runs under the present schedule men from choice select runs that require their service both early and late, so that during the principal part of the day they are at home with their families. But no man is obliged to take such a run, unless from his own choice, and, as I have said before, we have at all times stated to the men that we would gladly change any schedule, if a better one can be suggested that will prevent any abuse of any kind or character among our employes.

"The inference that extra men are not permitted to earn decent wages is equally false. The average earnings for all of the extra conductors on our lines during the past month was \$55.82, and for all the extra motormen \$54.08, while the men longer in the service receive from \$65 to \$90 per month. It is true that among the extra men serving their first year's time there are many changes and fluctuations. Some are discharged, many quit of their own accord, and only those remain in the service who are of the better class. There are many floating employes who do not want to work more than a few months in any city, and this accounts for the large number of changes among the men during the first year's service.

"There is not and has not been any difference between the officers of the Street Railway Company and its union employes which could not and would not have been fairly adjusted, but for the interference of outside agitators. If the matters in dispute had been looked into by our local labor union leaders, there is not the least doubt in the world that an amicable adjustment could

have been made, the same as it was two and a half years ago under a like agitation. But this has not been done. The glory of calling a strike and winning a fight is a trophy which two rival non-resident labor leaders are seeking to carry back to a convention to be held, at which these men are candidates for re-election; and therefore, without regard to the great inconvenience and loss that will come to the communities served by the Street Railway Company, this strike has been ordered. It is not a lockout. It is a strike precipitated by agitation and undue influence from outsiders. It remains to be seen whether or not a closed shop is to be forced on to the employes of our Street Railway system.

OMAHA & COUNCIL BLUFFS STREET RAILWAY CO.  
By G. W. WATTLES, President."

Inasmuch as many false and misleading statements were being circulated as to what actually took place at the only meeting held between the President of the Street Railway Company and the Executive Committee of the Union, the stenographic report of that meeting was published in full in all of the daily papers. These proceedings appear in Chapter IV.

A mass meeting of the strikers and labor union sympathizers was called at Labor Temple for Sunday afternoon, September 19th, at two o'clock. After the meeting had been addressed by the leaders, a parade on the principal streets of the city was arranged. This parade resulted in numerous acts of violence, in that several cars were attacked and operatives assaulted. During the parade, or soon after it, a car was attacked on the Council Bluffs division near the east end of the Missouri River bridge, and the operatives were beaten and the car dismantled.

While the two national officers who were leading the strike carefully avoided any participation in rioting, and, at the beginning of the strike, in public speeches advised the strikers to refrain from rioting, yet all through the strike these leaders continually planned to bring about conditions through public meetings and parades that they, with their experience in the strike business, ought to have known might incite rioting, bloodshed and possibly murder.

As the strike progressed, however, they were not so careful as at the first in advising strike sympathizers to refrain from all violence. Regarding the rioting on the streets on Sunday, Mr. C. O. Pratt is reported in the public press to have made the following statement: "Regarding the disturbance that took place



RIOT AT 14TH AND FARNAM STREETS ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON SEPTEMBER 19TH



on the streets on Sunday, I wish to state in behalf of the union street car men that we very much regret that anything should occur that would give the railroad company any excuse for claiming that the union men and their sympathizers are in any way responsible for disorders that may arise. We will urge all our friends to exercise the utmost caution in regard to even countenancing any acts of violence."

Before the strike had continued a week, however, Mr. Pratt was quoted in the public press as follows: "I have counseled peaceful methods all along, but after what happened on Vinton Street Wednesday night and on Dodge Street today I have nothing further to say. The people of Omaha are intelligent enough to know what to do. I don't think that any citizen has to be punched in the face more than once or twice before protecting himself."

On September 23rd, Sheriff Edwin F. Brailey issued a proclamation as follows:

"To the Citizens of Douglas County: The dispute which has arisen between the street car company and its employes has resulted in the last few days in a number of riotous demonstrations, in which there has been injury to property and person. In my efforts to preserve order at these times I have observed that the disturbance is mainly caused by the gathering of curious crowds, at which times hoodlums and disorderly characters have taken advantage of the situation to perpetrate acts of violence, which cannot in any sense in my opinion be attributed to any of the parties engaged in this controversy. At this time and under these circumstances I desire to call the attention of all citizens of this city to the provisions of our statute in regard to 'unlawful assembly,' and to the proclamation of what is known as the 'riot act.'

"Our statute provides that when three or more persons shall assemble together with intent to do any unlawful act with force and violence against the person or property of any other, or do any unlawful act against the peace, or being unlawfully assembled, shall agree with each other to do any unlawful act as aforesaid, and shall make any movement or preparation therefor, the person so offending shall be fined in any sum not exceeding one hundred dollars (\$100) and be imprisoned in the jail of the county not exceeding three months.

"The statute further provides that when three or more persons shall be assembled as aforesaid and proceed to commit any of the offenses aforesaid, it shall be the duty of all judges, justices of the peace, and sheriffs and all ministerial offices, immediately upon actual view or as soon as may be, on information, to make proclamation in the hearing of such offenders commanding them in the name of the state of Nebraska to disperse and

depart to their several homes or lawful employments; and if upon such proclamation such persons shall not disperse or depart as aforesaid, it shall be the duty of such judges, justices of the peace and sheriffs and all other ministerial officers, respectively, to call upon all persons near, and if necessary throughout the county, to aid and assist in dispersing and taking into custody all persons assembled as aforesaid, and military officers or others called on as aforesaid and refusing to render immediate assistance, shall be fined in any sum not exceeding twenty-five dollars (\$25).

"I shall instruct all deputies acting under my authority whenever a crowd assembles and a riotous demonstration is made to command them to disperse and depart to their several homes or lawful employments. When this is done either by myself or deputy, all persons who remain and refuse to depart are liable to arrest and punishment under the law.

"I desire at this time especially the assistance and co-operation of the citizens of Douglas county in the preservation of order and feel satisfied that all law abiding citizens will refrain from such unlawful gatherings, and that those that do not must take the consequences.

EDWIN F. BRAILEY, Sheriff."

On September 25th, the Street Railway Company served on the City of Omaha, the County of Douglas, the City of South Omaha and the City of Council Bluffs the following notice:

"To the City of Omaha and to the Mayor and Council of the City of Omaha; to the City of South Omaha and to the Mayor and Council of the City of South Omaha; to the County of Douglas and to the Board of County Commissioners of the County of Douglas:

"The Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway Company hereby gives notice to you and to each of you that within the cities of Omaha and South Omaha, and within the County of Douglas, its street railway property, consisting of buildings, cars, tracks, switches, electrical wires and appliances, is not receiving sufficient, adequate and proper protection against unlawful assaults, injury, damage and destruction by individuals, persons and mob violence, and that the men operating its cars have not been receiving sufficient, adequate and proper protection against assaults by persons, individuals and by mob violence; and that said company fears and believes, and has good reason to fear and believe that unless more prompt, efficient and decisive action is at once taken by the said municipal and county authorities that further injury to and destruction of its said property will be wrongfully and unlawfully committed by persons, individuals and mob violence, and that further assaults will be made upon the employes of the company operating its cars, all to the great damage and destruction of the property of the company, and to the interference with and

interruption of the operation of its cars and lines of street railway.

“Demand is therefore made upon you and upon each of you that within your said respective municipalities and boundaries you take prompt, sufficient, decisive and effective action to prevent unlawful assemblages, and to prevent assaults upon the employes of the company operating its cars, and to prevent all injury and damage of every kind and nature to the properties of the street railway company hereinbefore more particularly described, so that the company shall be permitted to operate its cars and railway without interruption and interference, and that its employes may operate its said cars without fear of assault or personal injury, and so that other persons wishing to engage in the operation of its cars may not be prevented from doing so by fear for their personal safety.

“You and each of you are hereby notified that said company will hold you and each of you liable to it for all damage or injury done its property by individual persons, strikers, strike sympathizers, or the result of mob violence; and the said company will look to you and each of you, and will hold you and each of you liable to it for all damage and destruction committed upon any of its properties above described and under the circumstances above described; and for any and all damages resulting from assaults upon its employes under the circumstances above described.

OMAHA & COUNCIL BLUFFS STREET RAILWAY CO.

“By G. W. WATTLES, President.”

This proclamation and this notice had a tendency to reduce acts of violence, and from that time forward very little damage to the property of the company was done.

Pursuant to the evident plan of the strike leaders, to bring about conditions that would stop the operation of the cars, a mass meeting was called to be held on a vacant lot near the Vinton Street barn for Tuesday evening, September 21st. During this meeting and immediately after it the most serious rioting of the strike occurred. A dozen or more cars were stoned, and strike-breaking operatives were assaulted and two or three of them very seriously injured. A large number of strike-breaking operatives were at the time quartered in the Vinton Street car barn, and it was only by the most strenuous efforts on the part of the officers and lieutenants in charge of these strike-breakers that they were prevented from engaging in a general riot with the large crowd, that surrounded the car barn and continually engaged in attacking the operatives and the cars as they came on to the scene. The police, the sheriff and a large number of deputies did all in their power to disperse this mob and to prevent violence, but for nearly an

hour the rioting was continued. Several cars were badly damaged, the windows were broken, the seats were torn out and all the destruction possible was done.

This was the first evening that the company had attempted to run cars after seven o'clock P. M. The results were so disastrous that for several days thereafter no cars were run after this hour.

Other meetings and parades were planned, the meetings to be held at or near the car barns, where the danger of rioting would be the greatest, until the police and the sheriff finally forbade the holding of such meetings, but were compelled to disperse one that was being held near the Ames Avenue barn on the evening of October 1st. Messrs. Pratt and Commons and other speakers on the platform were unceremoniously removed, and the meeting was dispersed after some rioting had occurred. A great protest was made by the strike leaders against what they termed the interference of the police with their constitutional right of free speech, but, generally speaking, the best citizens of Omaha upheld the officers of the law in their most efficient efforts to preserve law and order.

But for the praiseworthy efforts of Sheriff E. F. Brailey and his deputies and Chief of Police John J. Donahue and his entire force, there is no doubt but that many crimes would have been committed by excitable individuals, who were deluded into the belief that by committing acts of violence they were assisting the cause of labor.

As the strike progressed, the sober second thought of the union laborers of the city each day lessened rioting and acts of violence. A great parade had been planned for all the labor union men of the city to take place on Saturday afternoon, October 2nd, by authority of a resolution passed by the Central Labor Union. This parade was called off on the urgent request of many business men, and while the striking carmen were permitted to parade the streets on Wednesday, September 29th, the permission was only granted on the promise by the leaders that there would be no demonstrations nor rioting. Be it said to the credit of these men that this promise was faithfully kept.



# Chapter VIII.

## INTERVENTION OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS

On Monday, September 20th, President William H. Taft was due to arrive in Omaha. On the morning of that date, Mayor Dahlman received a dispatch from Fred W. Carpenter, Secretary to the President, as follows:

“Please wire me at once condition of strike in your city. Cannot arrangements be made to have strike called off for period of President’s visit?”

The Mayor at once consulted the President of the Street Railway Company. His reply was: “We did not call the strike, and we cannot suspend it, but, if you request it, we will suspend all street car traffic during the time the President’s party is here.”

On the request of the Mayor, all car service was suspended at four o’clock P. M., just before the arrival of President Taft. Mayor Dahlman replied to the request of the Secretary to the President as follows:

“Fred W. Carpenter, Washington, D. C. Everything quiet here. All cars will be stopped from running before the President arrives and during his stay in the city.”

No doubt, the strike was called just before the important occasion of the visit of the President of the United States, with a view of forcing the Street Railway Company to an immediate acceptance of the terms demanded by the strikers. An effort was made by Strike Leader Pratt, on the day of the President’s visit, to secure from the Street Railway Company an agreement along the lines of his previous proposition, conditioned, however, as were all subsequent offers of settlement, on an agreement from the company to reinstate all of the striking employes without prejudice.

During the President’s visit order was maintained, and a practical truce in the strike situation observed.

At a meeting of the City Council on Monday, September 20th, the officers of the Street Railway Company and the leaders of the

strike were asked to appear before the Mayor and the City Council at ten o'clock Tuesday morning, September 21st, for a hearing, in order that the city officials might, if possible, in some manner bring about a settlement of the strike. Although it was a time of the greatest possible exertion, with many matters of importance to consider on the part of the Street Railway officials, the President and several members of the Board of Directors appeared at the time fixed for the meeting. The council chamber in the city hall was well filled with striking carmen, city and county officials, and a large number of prominent business men. What was said at this meeting was taken down by a court reporter and is here given in full:

Special meeting at City Hall Council Chamber, City of Omaha, Tuesday, September 21, 1909, at ten o'clock a. m., between certain officers of the Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway Company, to-wit, Messrs. G. W. Wattles, president; F. T. Hamilton, vice-president; K. C. Barton and L. F. Crofoot, directors, and R. A. Leussler, assistant general manager, and the following committee appearing for the striking employes of the Street Railway company, to-wit, Mr. Charles H. Lear, president of the street railway employes union; Mr. P. J. Lenahan, financial secretary of the street railway employes union; and David R. Turney, of the local union; at which meeting the above named persons, as well as Mr. Pratt, the representative of the International Carmen's union, presented the situation to Mayor Dahlman and the city council of the city of Omaha.

The following is a stenographic report of the proceedings:

Councilman Burmester acted as chairman of the meeting.

CHAIRMAN BURMESTER: The meeting is now open. I will ask all present to please be seated.

COUNCILMAN BERKA: I suppose one side or the other should make their statement. One side may take the affirmative and state their grievances. That is the usual procedure.

CHAIRMAN BURMESTER: If there is no objection, we will hear from the committee from the labor union.

COUNCILMAN HUMMEL: When this debate is closed, is the question to be submitted to the council, and will its action be final, and will it be carried out between the parties, or is this merely to be a friendly discussion for the good of the public, or do you want to get down to a business proposition before entering upon this discussion?

COUNCILMAN MCGOVERN: To be fair to those invited to appear before the council, I think it is proper to say at this time that the honorable mayor of this city came before the council yesterday afternoon and all the members of the council agreed to

call this committee together; that is, a committee from the employes of the street railway, and Mr. Wattles and other officers of the road, and give them an opportunity to present their difficulties, and to see if it is within the power of the council and the mayor to settle the troubles, or bring the parties together as near as possible, and give the city of Omaha what she is entitled to have, peace at home and good street car service. We would like to hear from the mayor.

CHAIRMAN BURMESTER: If there is no objection, the mayor will be heard from.

MAYOR DAHLMAN: Mr. President and gentlemen: My object in asking the council to hold a meeting with the parties who are engaged in this controversy, was this:

It seems that—as we all know—there is a strike on; and it has, of course, been a great inconvenience to the public, and it will undoubtedly result in a great loss to both cities, whoever may win; and my object in calling the city council and asking them to have this meeting with the different committees was to see if there was anything we could do, as officials of the city, to bring about some settlement which would bring this controversy to an end; and for that reason it was suggested that a committee of the local men themselves, the men who have actually been engaged in the running of the street cars, be invited, and the officials of the street car company. Of course, if we could have each side of the question presented separately by the representatives of both sides here, who understand all about the controversy, we might be able to do something towards settling the difficulty, and these men who are now out might be able to go back to work and everything be settled satisfactorily.

I felt that it was our duty, as city officials, to do what we could to settle this difficulty, so that we might have peace and harmony in the community, and the business of the street railway and of the city go on undisturbed as it has been in the past; and I thought the proper way would be to hear from each side and then see whether there is any suggestion that can be made whereby we could get the parties together and get this thing settled. That was my idea in calling this meeting together.

CHAIRMAN BURMESTER: What is your further pleasure? I want to hear from the committee of the labor union. Gentlemen, we are ready to hear from the committee.

MR. LENAHAN: Mr. Chairman and honorable mayor and fellow citizens: The street car men, as employes of the Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway company, desire nothing but peace, and the street car boys will do all in their power to bring about peace.

We had one or two conferences with the officials of the Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway company—one before the directors and the final one before Mr. Wattles about a week ago. We did

everything then, at our conference before Mr. Wattles, that could be done. We appealed to Mr. Wattles to concede something to the street car boys—to put them on some basis whereby they would know under what conditions they were working, and to eliminate some of the conditions that are objectionable to them.

While many of the committee believe that Mr. Wattles himself is a fair-minded man and does from time to time try to do the best he can, probably, for the men, we took the position that Mr. Wattles is not always in the city; that he has other business; that he has other homes in other places, and only spends a portion of his time in Omaha, and that he should give us something in writing so that when grievances were raised from time to time, we could go into the office of the superintendent of transportation and say, "Here are Mr. Wattles' instructions, Mr. Superintendent; we, want you to deal with us along those lines."

He made many good suggestions at the meeting, suggestions which, if we had them under his signature we could accept—several of them. But he made the statements—good statements, as I would call them, for the men—and then refused absolutely to sign his own statement.

Now, gentlemen of the city council and honorable mayor, those were the conditions that brought about the serious matter that is now confronting us in the city of Omaha.

At that meeting we begged and pleaded with him, and appealed to him to agree to something specific whereby the street car boys of Omaha would know exactly what his instructions were to the under officials and to the transportation department.

It is needless for me to go over the whole situation. Mr. Wattles agreed to do away with some of the wrongs, such as swing runs and other matters. He thought he could probably get around that and settle that all right.

So the committee asked him outright: "Now, Mr. Wattles, won't you sign some statement to this effect; won't you sign something for us so that we can take it back to the meeting and show the men where you stand, so that the men will not misunderstand us; and, another thing, it will be a protection to us, so that we will not go back there misconstruing your words?"

"No, sir," he said, "I will absolutely sign nothing for this committee." He said, "Never shall I sign any agreement with representatives of this organization."

He says, "I have my agreements with my older employes and non-union men; and," he says, "before I will break my word to those men, I will cut my right hand off," or "I would have my right hand off." Something to that effect; and, I guess, those are the exact words he used.

Then I made an appeal to Mr. Wattles again in behalf of the street car men, and I told him the seriousness of the situation. I begged him to concede something that would be reasonable and

fair, and told him that in the event of him refusing to be reasonable and fair that he would bring about a strike in the city of Omaha.

He says then—he went into a lengthy statement—and he says: “We have taken this matter up seriously; we have been prepared—we have been prepared for you men, and we don’t care much about your organization anyhow; we would just as soon go to work and have it out at once;” and he raised the red flag, and he said, before the committee, that he was prepared to run the street car men’s organization out of the city of Omaha, whatever it may cost or at all hazards.

Now, then, gentlemen, we tell you that the street car men of Omaha are a part of the citizens of this community, and like Mr. Wattles has got his friends, we want to inform him that the street car men that have been operating his cars for the last twenty-one or twenty-two years, have also friends.

We told Mr. Wattles at that time that the sentiment of ninety-five or possibly one hundred per cent of the men was with us.

He doubted that statement, and I do not blame him for that. I do not blame him for that—for at that time—at the time we made the argument—we only had seventy per cent of the men in the organization. But after the men saw the position we took—they saw that we took an honest, upright position; that we were not forcing Mr. Wattles or the street railway into any awkward position; we were not asking him to sign any contract for a closed shop, or of an exclusive nature—all we wanted was a contract whereby we knew where we were at—under what conditions we were working, and try to bring up the underpaid men in this city to a fair basis so that these men and their families could live decently.

Those were the only conditions that we asked.

We showed him plainly that the newer men in the service were not getting a fair remuneration for their service—and he partly agreed with us on that—partly agreed with us that they were not—after it was fairly stated to him.

But those are the conditions, gentlemen, and we regret them very much and if there is anything—any suggestions that the city council may have to offer, along peaceable lines, I do assure you, as a representative of the street car employes, that I shall do everything in my power to bring about peace and harmony between the officers of the street railway company and their men.

Personally, I have no feeling against this company. I want to see them prosper. I want to see them go ahead and make money. But at the same time I claim as an American citizen that the men have rights, and we are going to protect them if we had to strike every thirty days to protect those rights.

That is all, gentlemen. I thank you for your attention.

CHAIRMAN BURMESTER: Any other member of the committee want to be heard?

MR. LEAR: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the city council: I was present with that committee before Mr. Wattles at that time, and we argued the question over there as best we could—as poor members of the street railway—men without an education before a learned man—and neither one of us has any education or the chances or the ability—we might have the ability but we have not had the opportunity—to put this thing as fairly and squarely as we would like to before a man that has got the education and who is making a study of this thing. But he refused to do anything. He said he would cut his right hand off before he would sign any statement. He refused to give us anything at all in writing. We told him that we wanted something under his signature to take back to these men, and that otherwise we would not be able to answer for the action of the men. He says, “Let them go out. I have five hundred men right here to take their places, and the minute you step off your car you will lose your position.” That is the message that he gave us to take back to these men; men that have been in the service of this company for years, and have been faithful in the performance of their duty at all times and under all conditions; men that do not refer to the members of this council as he did—men that do not call the council “hounds” because they imposed an occupation tax of sixty thousand dollars a year on the street railway company. No, sir. We pay our taxes like honorable men and honorable citizens. We do not go around and call the council “hounds” because they do something that we do not want them to do. And another thing he said was that if the council put through the measure for eight fares for a quarter that instead of a raise in our pay we would get a reduction.

And when we went up to the meeting he ran a stenographer in there, and he says, “I want a report of this meeting, but I do not want it for the purpose of publishing it;” he says, “I just want it for a memorandum of what is said here.” I have a copy of the paper here in which he has published it—the whole thing garbled as it is all the way through.

The street car company paid for the publication of this statement in the newspapers of this city. The street car men have not got money enough in their treasury to pay what the cost of the publication of that statement must have been. That statement is put before this council, and I say that it is garbled all the way through, and I will say whether that man takes his oath or not, because there are things in there that were not said at that meeting, and there are not things in there that were said at that meeting.

That is the kind of a proposition we are up against.

In this fight we have acted honorably all the way through; we have acted honorably in every conceivable way and on every point, and he cannot deny it. But how has he acted in his dealings with us? When he told us that he would not sign any agreement,

he also promised us that there would be no published statement of the meeting.

It does not hurt us a bit. Our conduct has been honorable and has been along lines that will be approved by the people of this city and of this community. Our men have acted honorably and squarely and uprightly in this fight all the way through, and yet they won't give us one thing.

He says, "If I sign this agreement it will mean a closed shop." Gentlemen, he is fighting a closed shop and he has got a closed shop himself, and that is the only kind of a shop he wants to work in. He believes in a closed shop himself, and yet he won't give us a written agreement that we can take back to the men. We asked him for something that we could take back to the men so that we could say to them, "Here is something that Mr. Wattles has given under his own signature; he has authorized us to submit this to you." But he would not do it. And when we went before these men there was nothing for them to act upon; nothing for them to accept or reject. There was nothing for them to do. He said he was prepared for a strike, and there was nothing for them to do but strike. They had nothing they could depend upon; nothing they could present to the under officials to show what had been agreed to by Mr. Wattles.

I am sorry for the citizens of this town, and I am sorry that they are in such a predicament today, but we have acted honorably and used every means in our power to avert this condition. We have done everything we could do as honorable men to try to avert this situation, but the company won't meet us half way, they won't do anything at all. We could not get even one little word from this corporation to take back to the men and say, "Here is some concession that the company will make to us;" so that we could take it up and try to avert this strike.

God knows there is none of us wanted this strike. No one wanted it less than I. I have a wife and three children, and I have nothing except that which I can obtain as a result of my labor.

I have a wife and three children at stake right now. I have nothing, only my own work. I have worked for this company for twenty years. I have my home, but I never earned it out of the street railway company. Never. I had to earn it on the outside. When I was laid up for weeks and weeks, they refused to pay my grocery bills and coal bills. I was an old employe, and they did not come forward and say "We will help you out." No. They never came near me, none of them. You men came forward and done it, but not the company.

Gentlemen, I thank you. I am sorry I have taken up so much of your time, but I have tried to put the situation before you in my poor way as best I could. I never had the advantage of education. I have worked since I was seven years old. My father died when I was thirteen. I have presented this in my poor, hum-

ble way. What little I have had of education I have obtained from books. I hope you will excuse me for any bad breaks I may have made. That is all I have to say just now.

CHAIRMAN BURMESTER: Any other member of the committee wish to be heard? Mr. Turney.

MR. WATTLES: Are you in the employ of the Omaha Street Railway company?

MR. TURNEY: I went through the extra list. I have been in the employ of the company fourteen months. We have very hard work on this extra list. We are jumped from one line to another. I have worked the South Omaha line one part of the day and the Hanscom Park line the other. I work at all hours, and have to be on hand eighteen hours of the day, and probably get four hours' work some days and more or less on others. It depends on the lines that are running and the people that have to be handled. Men that work for the company don't want to kick or to be called kickers or agitators, because that will get them into trouble. I got sick one day on the Hanscom Park line and I telephoned in to send a man out to relieve me, and the superintendent got angry and he says, "I cannot do anything for you, we haven't got any men here;" and I says, "I am not able to make another trip;" and he says, "Go ahead and try it." I telephoned again from the other end of the line and I says, "You will have to get a man to relieve me;" and so when I got back he had hustled around and got a man some way, and I suppose he could have got him before. I don't think any foreman should keep a man on when he is sick. That is all I have got to say.

COUNCILMAN KUGEL: Will you explain what is meant by swing runs?

MR. TURNEY: On a swing run you get one trip on one run say at eleven o'clock or noon, and then you show up at five in the evening and work until the last train along until twelve o'clock at night. Then there is another swing run where you go to work at three different times in the day, and your different runs may be three to five miles apart. It works a hardship on the boys who have the swing runs, because they have to put in very long hours and do not get very much for it.

COUNCILMAN KUGEL: How many hours out of the twenty-four do you put in on swing runs?

MR. TURNEY: It requires sixteen hours on some of them.

MR. WATTLES: How many of such runs are there that require sixteen hours?

MR. TURNEY: There are quite a number of them.

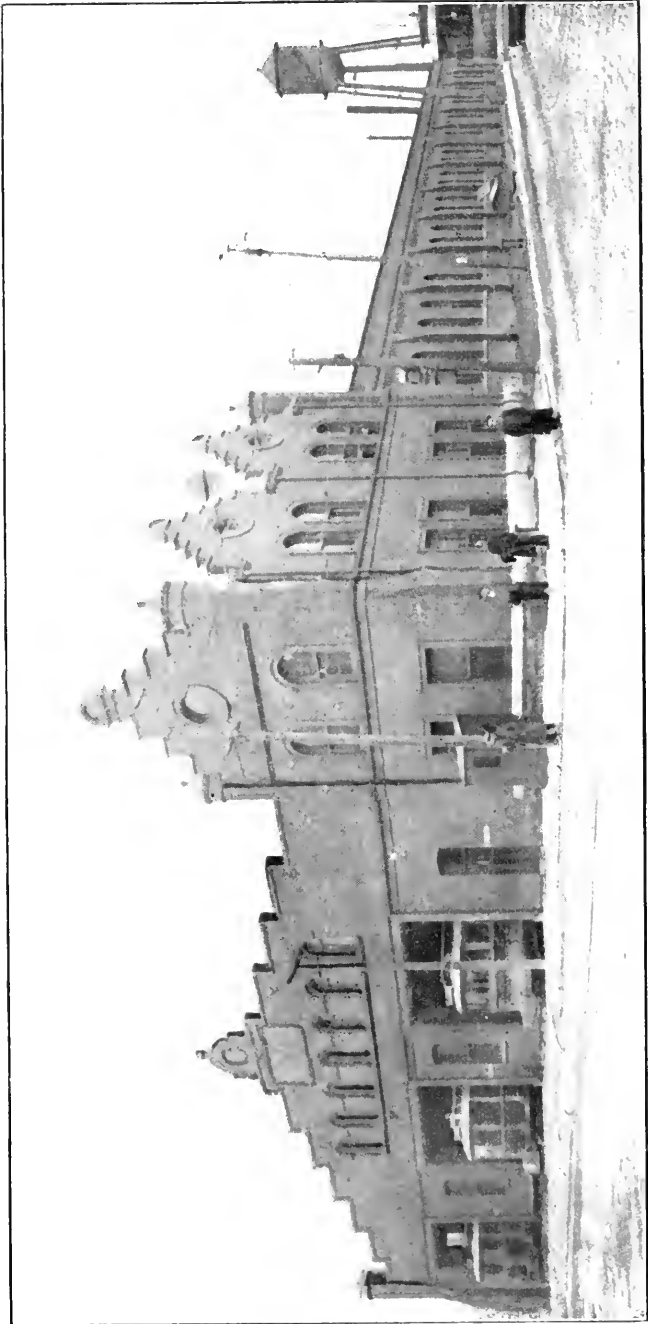
MR. WATTLES: How many? Do you know?

MR. TURNEY: I understand there are four or five out of one barn.

MR. WATTLES: What barn is that?

MR. TURNEY: Ames avenue, 24th and Ames.





AMES AVENUE CAR BARN



COUNCILMAN KUGEL: Do you work on the barn time?

MR. TURNEY: No. From the time they take the train out on the road until they get back to the barn.

COUNCILMAN KUGEL: What is the pay? How long do they work before they get the maximum rate?

MR. TURNEY: When they start in on the extra list they get twenty-one cents an hour, and they run up to twenty-three cents an hour, and in the ninth year they get twenty-six cents an hour; and there is two years of this nine that you don't get any raise.

MR. WATTLES: No. I beg your pardon. You are raised every year until you get twenty-five.

MR. TURNEY: And then it jumps to twenty-six in the ninth year. You start in at twenty-one cents and in the ninth year you get twenty-six cents an hour. On some of those swing runs you go to work three different times in the day; and on some of the runs you work eight hours and nine hours for the thirty days in the month.

COUNCILMAN KUGEL: Do they get any pay when they are being broken in?

MR. TURNEY: No, sir; there is fourteen days without pay. I have been breaking in new men right along. I broke in eight or ten this season.

COUNCILMAN KUGEL: How about men who have had experience in other cities? Motormen and conductors that have been on street railways before?

MR. TURNEY: Yes, those that come from other towns,—my orders are to break them in for fourteen days.

MR. WATTLES: Experienced motormen?

MR. TURNEY: I don't know whether they are experienced or not. I break them in until they are thoroughly broke in. My orders are to break them in for fourteen days.

MR. WATTLES: Until they know how to run the cars?

MR. TURNEY: Until they can handle the cars, so that people won't get hurt or anything like that. Thoroughly break them in. I believe that is all I have to say.

COUNCILMAN BERKA: Were you one of the committee that waited on the officials of the street railway company previous to the strike?

MR. TURNEY: No, sir, I was not on that committee.

COUNCILMAN SHELDON: Mr. Lenahan, did you wait upon Mr. Wattles?

MR. LENAHAH: Yes, sir.

COUNCILMAN SHELDON: Did you prepare a schedule of wages to be presented to Mr. Wattles, and was it presented to Mr. Wattles before the strike was inaugurated?

MR. LENAHAH: Yes, sir.

COUNCILMAN SHELDON: You may state to the mayor and council what increase there was in this schedule from the old

schedule that has been in force on the street railway. I think we should have a statement from the street car men of the exact demands that they are making from the street car company. We should have a succinct statement so that we can know exactly the points of difference in this controversy.

COUNCILMAN BRIDGES: Mr. President, before we proceed to get that information, I would like to ask a question or two of the railway employes. These men are here representing the street railway employes, and in their statement they say they are anxious to have a settlement. Now, there isn't any use going through all this routine business unless we know there is a chance of accomplishing something. It is unnecessary to take up any time unless we can accomplish something. Now, I would like to ask this committee if they are in a position to say whether their organization would be willing to arbitrate this question. Would the street railway company and street railway employes be willing to submit this question for settlement to some disinterested parties? Would they be willing to accept a proposition of that kind?

MR. LEAR: I will state to the city council, as chairman of this committee, that we would favor that proposition. I omitted that in my talk.

COUNCILMAN BRIDGES: Are you willing to accept a proposition of that kind?

MR. LEAR: Yes, sir.

COUNCILMAN BRIDGES: Now, I think the proper thing would be to find out from Mr. Wattles whether his side will agree to a proposition of that kind. If they cannot agree to that we are only wasting time here by talking. The proper way to do is to find out if these people can agree on that and end all this discussion, and then we will know whether there is anything that can be settled or not. I would like to know from Mr. Wattles whether his company is prepared to accept a proposition of that kind.

MR. WATTLES: When you are prepared, gentlemen, I am ready to present the situation in about the same manner that the other side has to you, and I will answer that question during the progress of my talk.

COUNCILMAN BERKA: Has the committee got through?

COUNCILMAN BRIDGES: I was trying to eliminate a lot of argument to see if we could not settle some of these matters.

CHAIRMAN BURMESTER: We will hear from Mr. Wattles.

MR. WATTLES: Gentlemen: This is a critical time. It is not a time for fiery or exciting statements to be made by any one, and I am not here to make any such statements in so far as the street railway company is concerned. All I have asked and all I do ask is that the facts be placed before this community. I am willing and ready to appear before any body of any kind, at any time, and state the facts as they exist insofar as the street railway part of this matter is concerned. And I appear, at your command.

before you here today, the honorable members of this council and the mayor of the city, whose commands I am always ready to obey. I appear before you to state the situation, as near as I can, in a calm and dispassionate manner, in order that we may get at the real facts. There is always so much froth and so much talk, and so many wild statements made of things that happened that never occurred, in times of excitement, that we are liable to get led away from what the real facts and the real situation is.

Now, it is true that I called a stenographer into the only meeting that I ever had with the union committee alone, where we sat down together to talk things over, and I was very careful to get the same stenographer that this same committee had brought to my office—

MR. LEAR: I beg your pardon. It was not the same committee.

MR. WATTLES: Well, it was the committee of the union—it was the committee of the same union, two and a half years ago, when we had some controversy and talk of strike. We were to have a meeting at my office at which I was to state the company's side of this case, and when the committee came in they said, "In order that we may have a record of this for future reference we have brought a stenographer here to take down what is said and we ask your permission that he should come into the room and take down all that is said." I readily granted that request, and the stenographer took down those proceedings. So that in inviting the stenographer to take down the things that happened in my office, I secured the same stenographer that they brought to my office two years and a half before that, and I asked that he be admitted to take down exactly, word for word, everything that was said. I had no idea when this was done that there ever would be any occasion to publish it. I had no idea that there ever would be any dispute over what really was said or the real gist of it.

But immediately after the meeting broke up, word came to me, from different sources, of things that I had said in the meeting that I never dreamed of saying, and then I began to realize how important it was—how fortunate it was for both sides of this controversy that every word was taken down exactly as spoken. So I said, "Now, these men have a perfect right to have what they said at this important meeting, that led up to the present condition, placed before this community. They have a perfect right that this community shall judge as to the justice of their cause, and the fairness or unfairness of the manner in which their requests were received." And so—at considerable expense, I will admit,—I published in yesterday's papers a sworn statement, by the stenographer—the same stenographer that the union brought to my office two and a half years ago—of exactly what was said. Any of you can read that proceeding, and I invite you to read it.

These men have come before you here this morning, and have made, in rather heated manner, a good many wild and untruthful statements as to what was said there.

MR. LEAR: I take exceptions, gentlemen, to the statement that I have made any untruthful statements here. I have not been untruthful in any statement that I have made here this morning. I take exception to any man getting up here and vilifying me and saying that I made any untruthful statement.

COUNCILMAN BERKA: One person at a time, please.

MR. WATTLES: It is fortunate that the proof is at hand and is available to every one who can read. You have heard the statements that have been made here—made by a man who says that he is not versed in public speaking, and we will grant him all the leniency possible in that regard—we will grant him the further leniency that he is laboring under extreme excitement—but fortunately for me, and fortunately for you, and fortunately for this community, what was said at that meeting is in cold print—and read it over is all I ask of you. Compare it with what has been said here today as to what did happen there, and see whether or not the statements made here are correct.

Now, I will withdraw the statement that the gentleman objects to. I was thinking or trying to think of another word. I did not want to say untruthful. I do not want to be disrespectful to these men or to any other man in this world. I have tried to treat this situation fairly and honestly, and treat every man concerned in it with due and proper respect and consideration, and that shall be my position to the end of it.

It has been said, for instance, that I said, "these city hall grafters" imposed a tax of sixty thousand dollars on this company, and that I called you men here "hounds," and that I said other disrespectful things.

I ask you, gentlemen, to refer to the record. I will stand by what I said. Let that say whether or not I said those things.

COUNCILMAN BERKA: Did you, as a matter of fact, state that?

MR. WATTLES: I did not.

COUNCILMAN BERKA: That is all I want to know.

MR. WATTLES: I never said a disrespectful word of the city authorities of this city, or of the present council or of any other council, and, fortunately, on this critical and important occasion I have the proof.

All that is only a matter of introduction and this trouble has nothing to do with it; these little by-plays of what men said or did not say, and all that sort of thing which comes along in times of excitement, we can cast aside; it is not material. It has created no feeling on my part and it should not on the part of any one else.

Let us see what the real question is that has caused these differences, and what the real situation is now.

These men came before the board of directors of the street railway company, and there were some other men in our employ present there, and both sides expressed themselves as to certain complaints that they had, and certain matters that they wanted to have rectified. They were treated courteously, and they went away, apparently in a good, friendly frame of mind. No business was really discussed at that meeting, and the position of the company was only tentatively outlined. That meeting was held on the second day of September. On the 15th day of September, or some time before the 15th day of September, I was asked to receive this committee from the union at my office.

I readily granted this request, and I always have granted every request of every kind and character for a meeting or a hearing on the part of any man in the employ of this company, or any committee representing any of the men in the employ of this company, and they have always had free access to my door. When these men came in—they came one time before that—or a part of them—they told me some of these things that were coming up. I said, "Boys, why don't you come up here and tell me about these things? Why haven't you been in here? For two years and a half I have not seen you here. You have not been in here to tell me that there was anything wrong with the runs; that there was anything wrong with the wages; that there was any real grievance that you had against this company that you wanted to discuss." But they came in at this time, the only time for two years and a half that a committee of the union has called on me, to discuss the signing of a contract which they then and there presented, and which is not the contract that has been published in the papers. I hold a copy of it in my hands. This is a draft of an agreement between the street railway company and the union, and it recites a number of matters and the relations and rules that shall exist for two years.

MR. LEAR: Mr. Wattles, for the information of the council, is it not a fact that you were presented with a copy of that agreement or something we thought might meet with your approval, before this controversy had arisen? Is it not a fact that you received a copy of the modified demands that you thought would suit you better?

MR. WATTLES: No.

MR. LEAR: Isn't it a fact that Mr. Pratt presented them to you at a meeting of the Business Men's Association?

MR. WATTLES: Mr. Pratt had a memorandum when we met him before the Business Men's Association, which he read to that body, and said that that would be satisfactory to the employes. That is the memorandum that has been published in the papers. It does not differ materially, not so much as to cause any matter of great controversy when we simmer it all down. It really means

about the same as the contract presented to us. It differs in a few particulars, but a few important particulars.

We discussed that matter fully, frankly and freely, as the record of the discussion will show. It takes two full pages of the newspaper to publish all that was said by these men and by myself on that most important occasion, and on the report of that meeting between these gentlemen and myself at that time, which they took back to the union, this strike was voted. That was the only meeting I ever had with them to discuss this matter, and the record of it is before you. I will not attempt to traverse what was said or what was not said on that occasion, but I invite you all, and I invite every citizen of this community, to read that record, before you decide as to who is right and who is wrong. I stand on the record. That is the position the street railway company has taken.

Now let me strip the froth from this fermentation, and get down to the real question at issue:

It has been said that this company is treating its employes in an inhuman manner; that if the society for the prevention of cruelty to animals should find a horse treated in that way they would prosecute the owner, and all such harsh statements have been put out before this community as the cause of the strike. It has been said that the men are underpaid, and that that is the cause of the strike.

It is not, gentlemen, That is not the cause of this strike at all. Why? I appeal to the record. I appeal to what I said to these men—to what I have always said to our employes. I have always said to these men—"Gentlemen, I do not believe in low wages. I am in favor of good wages; and it is my pride, as an officer of this company, to have you men, in its employ, receive better pay than any other men in any other city in the United States, where anything like similar conditions prevail as do in this city." And it was a matter of brag with me, and I was boasting about it. I came before this council here, when we had some controversy, and I boasted to you of the fact that the company treated its men fine, and that I wanted to continue that treatment, and that I wanted even to add an increase to their present rate of wages. That has always been my position. When these men talked to me about wages, what did I say to them? Read the record! "Why," I said to them, "We will do the very best we can for you. We are doing better now than anybody around here. We are doing better than any city of the country of our size and importance, where anything like the present conditions prevail." And I showed them what the situation was in other cities. That is a guide to a certain extent as to whether wages are high or low. We cannot say that we are going to pay carpenters in Kansas City ten dollars a day, and in Omaha five dollars a day or four dollars a day. We do not say that we are paying bricklayers in Minneapolis eight dollars a day, and in Omaha six dollars a day. There



is a general wage scale in all lines of business, that prevails throughout the cities of the country, where conditions exist similar to the conditions in our city. What is that situation? Why, it has been placed before you time and again in the public print. I will tell you.

How about Kansas City, our main competitor at the south—about twice as big as Omaha, probably, but it is a competitor of this city. They begin at 18 cents an hour for the first year—we begin at 21. They finally, after the sixth year, reach 23 cents an hour—the sixth year we are paying 25, and the ninth year we go up to 26. We are three cents over them.

Let us look at some of our other competitors. St. Joseph is right here under our nose. The last census shows practically the same population as Omaha. I do not believe they have it, but the census figures show they have. St. Joseph, the first year, 19 cents; second year, 20 cents, third year 21, fourth year 22, fifth year 22, and the sixth year and thereafter 23. They begin two cents under us and they stop three cents under us.

How about Des Moines? The first year the street car men in Des Moines receive 19 cents; the sixth year they get up to 24 cents—two cents under us all the way through. Let us go up to St. Paul and Minneapolis—they are competitors of ours and a little larger than we. They start where we do, at 21 cents the first year, and the sixth year they get up to 25 cents, and there stop, while we go on a cent further. Milwaukee, in our territory here, pays 19 cents an hour the first year; the sixth year they get up to 24 cents an hour. We are two cents over Milwaukee.

St. Louis—a good deal bigger city than Omaha—let us see what they do. The first year they pay 20 cents, and the sixth year they get to 25, and there they stop. They are one cent under us all the way through.

And so it goes all through the list of cities of anything like the importance of Omaha.

Then, take such cities as Boston—commencing at 21 cents and stopping at 24. Washington, D. C., 22½ cents flat. Philadelphia, 22 cents flat. New Orleans, 22½ cents flat. And so on through the list. I will not burden you with it. It was all laid before these men, the rates in all of these cities in the country, and notwithstanding the fact that it was shown clearly that Omaha is paying higher wages to its street car men than any one of the competing cities of the country, I offered to meet these men fairly. "Why," I said, "you are going to get a raise. Don't be in a hurry. Don't come here and say, 'Unless you raise my pay before tomorrow morning I am going to quit, I am going to strike.' I cannot grant it under that sort of talk; because if I should permit you to do that once, next year it would come up, perhaps, again; and we would have the whole thing to go over. I will have to meet that situation some time, and I will meet it right now. I will

not do that under pressure. But your pay will be raised; there need not be any question about that."

Now, about these runs that we hear so much about—the inhuman treatment of the men by the company, because it is forcing them into these swing runs:

Nobody has to take one of those runs who don't want it, gentlemen. All the runs that the company has for its regular men are matters of choice. They have the pick. They can take a run, or let it alone and take another. Isn't that so?

MR. LEAR: Yes.

MR. WATTLES: Runs are selected according to seniority of service. The old men have the right to the best runs, and the young men come along and have to take what is left.

But let us see about these runs. I have not heard anything about these runs before, except years ago when Mr. Tucker was alive, when some of the street car boys came up to talk about the runs. He said, "Boys, any change that you can suggest in your runs that will be better for you, or will make it easier for you, that will not impair the service of the company, that will permit us to take care of the crowds at the rush hours, I will adopt in a minute." And so I said the same thing to these men.

Read the record.

I not only said that, I said, "I will go into these runs, since you have mentioned it. I have not heard anything about it before. Two years and a half have passed by since I have seen any of you men. Why haven't you come here and told me your runs were wrong. I would adjust them in a minute."

This gentleman here had another complaint: He said he could not get off this summer, the lines were so busy, and we did not have enough extra men and he could not get off. I said, "My friend, you do not have to strike for that; why didn't you let me know about it; I would get you off. I will furnish men enough to man the cars of this company, so that every man employed by it can have ample time to get off and rest. We do not want any misunderstanding about those things; and there is no need for any board of arbitration to settle them. It is time enough for you to talk about arbitrating questions when I refuse to settle them for you."

Those questions are not at issue, gentlemen. Those are not the questions that caused this strike. That is not the reason of this strike. Let no man be deceived.

I will tell you the cause of the strike:

About a month ago, a stranger came to Omaha. He put up at one of our best hotels. Had a good room and good board, so far as I know, good cigars and good whiskey. I do not say that he had them. But he was well dressed; had all the appearance of a gentleman. He went among these laboring men, and, according to the statement of one of the officers of the international body

before the Business Men's Association, he found that there were twelve members of the union at that time.

MR. LENAHAN: That's not correct.

MR. WATTLES: Well, that is the statement that was made before the Business Men's Association. There were twelve members of the union, when Mr. Commons came here a month ago. Whether that is correct as to the number that belonged to the union at that time, I do not know, but that is the statement that was made before the Business Men's Association.

But he went among these men and said, "Men, you have some grievances here that ought to be corrected; this company is not doing by you what it ought to do; now I come before you preaching the gospel of peace; I do not want any strike; we are not going to have any strike."

(If he had come here and said, "Boys, we are going to have a strike," they would probably have run him out of town at that time, because they did not want any strike.)

"We are not going to have any strike, but there are some things here that must be corrected. If you will follow my views and let me lead in this matter, I will get you a whole lot of things that you do not have now; I will get you better pay and get you better conditions; I will get a signed contract between you and this company, where you can force this company to do what you want it to do, not only now but in the future. This contract will only run two years, but we must have that contract; that is the thing we must have."

And he preached among the men and exhorted among them, and they held frequent meetings down here at the Labor Temple, and they aroused a good deal of revival and a good deal of enthusiasm, until finally some wild words of force were suggested.

At first, when he came here, he did not say I was a bad man. The men would not have stood for it. There are too many of them who know to the contrary. There are too many of them who have come to me in trouble, and have never been turned away empty-handed; there are too many of them who have been justly discharged by the officers of this company and have appealed to me, and if there was any possible excuse or reason why they could be reinstated, the rules have been cast aside and they have been reinstated in their positions. The men of this company are not my enemies; at least they were not a month ago; they were my friends.

But this situation was stirred up in this community, until we approached the critical time of the coming of the President of the United States. Then another man appears upon the scene, from abroad somewhere. He does not live in Omaha and has no interest here whatever. He goes before these men and he tells them, "You go up to the president's office and demand his signature on that contract, and if he don't sign it you tell him there is going to be a strike." This man I did not meet alone. I suppose,

perhaps, I ought to have met him, but I will tell you the reason I did not. I do not care to discuss with anybody the relations between myself, or the corporation I represent, and the men who are working for it, except with the men. And so I said, "I do not care to meet this man," and I did not meet him at my office. But when he insisted on seeing me, I said, "All right, come before the executive committee of the Business Men's Association where we can have reputable witnesses." I did not say, although it was in my mind, where we will have reputable witnesses as to what transpires between us, and I will talk this over with you.

He came up there. He said to the business men there assembled: "I am not here to say one word against Mr. Wattles. He is a very fine gentleman and he stands high among the men," and he spoke many complimentary words regarding me, for which I thank him. "But I am up here to tell you men that there is a serious condition on, that is going to culminate, probably this afternoon, in trouble, unless it is met in some way." What was said and done by him there before that committee is fortunately also a matter of record. These business men have heard some statements made as to what was said and done there, that were not just exactly correct, and they have put out a signed statement in the morning paper as to what happened there before that committee.

What did happen? Briefly: He told of these grievances, of this trouble about these swing runs and inhuman treatment and all that sort of thing, and then he told about the wages and other things; and then he told about the company discriminating against its union men.

I got up and said, "Gentlemen, we can settle this here in a minute. There is no cause for a strike here. We can settle this whole question very easily. I will put into the hands of every employe a signed statement that will say that this company will not discriminate either for or against its union or non-union men; and in the matter of runs a new schedule will be put out that will eliminate any cause of complaint on that score; and we will increase the pay of these men at the earliest moment practicable, and within a short time."

I told our men that, and I said more. I said, "Now, men, when we come to the next increase of pay, I am going to consult you. I want to know whether this scale is too wide or whether you want it crowded together, and I am going to act a good deal on what the great bulk of our employes want to do in that regard."

And I said the same thing before the Business Men's Association. I said, "We will settle this whole thing. I will put out these signed statements, and then if I do not keep them, or if this company and its officers do not keep them, then it is time for you to come and say, "Let us arbitrate and see whether you have kept

them or not; or let us fight, if necessary, over the fact of whether you have kept them or not."

I embodied these messages of peace and good will to the employes in a letter that I wrote to one of the labor union men of the city, and which Mr. Pratt had and read before that committee. He was going to take it down, as he said, and read it without comment before the meeting of the street car men, who were in session that afternoon, and he was going to leave it to those men to say whether or not that was satisfactory.

Let us see what happened!

He went out of the room, not entirely satisfied with the action of the business men's committee, because they had then and there in his presence unanimously voted to approve the course of the street railway company.

Now, there are few men, even under the most extreme excitement of religious fervor or fanaticism of any sort or kind, who will go out and tell an untruth. While these men, as I know, are pledged not to reveal what happens down here in these meetings, at least a half dozen of them have told me that this man came down before that meeting and, instead of reading this letter without comment, and letting the men vote quietly and peaceably and after careful consideration on the question of whether they would strike or not, made one of the most rabid and vehement and vindictive speeches that was ever made in the city of Omaha, in which he called me all the vile names that he could lay his tongue to.

MR. LENAHAH: Never, never, never.

MR. WATTLES: And then in the fever of the excitement, he asked these men to vote whether or not they were going to strike.

Was he a messenger of peace or was he a messenger of war?

He is the man, he and his lieutenant who is here assisting him, who have caused this strike.

And why has the strike been called? For no other reason on earth than that this company refused to violate its solemn agreements with its non-union men, of whom it has a large majority, even today, in its employ.

MR. LENAHAH: Where did you get them, if that is a fair proposition?

MR. WATTLES: I will state that this company has in its employ over eleven hundred men, and about three hundred of them belong to the union.

MR. LENAHAH: Do you want to know just how many you have got out?

MR. WATTLES: To the best of my information. I want to be corrected if I make a misstatement.

There are more than that many men out. But why are they out? I will tell you why. They are out because their wives have been warned that if they go to work their lives will be in danger; and these wives have telephoned to me and appealed to me to

know whether their husbands are going to lose their jobs or not, if they fail to go to work against such warnings.

We did not sign the contract. Why? Because when the union was first organized here, the international officer who came before our board of directors and asked us to reinstate the men who had been suspended because they joined it, stated to us positively and assured us in language of which we have a copy, that no contract would either then or at any future time be required between this union and this company; that the purpose and object of the organization of this union here was to promote the interests of the men.

Our non-union men came before us—old men in the employ of this company—men who have worked for us from ten to thirty years—came to us and said, "Are you going to enter into a contract with this union? Are you going to recognize this union, and thereby either force us out of your employ or into the union, which we do not want to join?"

And we said, "No, gentlemen, that is all arranged; have no fear in that regard. We have agreed with these men that no contract shall be required of us, and we are going to treat them just the same as we treat you, and we are going to treat you just the same as we treat them."

Two years and a half ago they demanded that we sign a similar contract, and when they came up to the point of a strike, they asked me finally if I would go before three leading labor union men of this city and state the case of the company. I said I would, although I would not be bound by what they might say, because they were naturally a partisan board; they were leaders in the union movement here.

I stated the case of the company, and what was the finding? One of the findings reads, "That we find that, whereas, when the union was organized an agreement was made between the company and the union that no contract would be required, therefore we recommend that you withdraw this request for a contract."

But now it comes back again. Why does it come back? I will tell you why it comes back.

There is not a labor union member of any organization in this hall, nor an employer of union men here, who does not know what such a contract means. Of course we know what it means—sugar coat it as you will—make it easy and agreeable to take at the first dose—but it means nothing more nor less than the unionizing of this road; then the driving out of the employment of this company of every man who does not or will not join this union. That is what it means, and every labor union man here knows that that is what it means, and that that is the purpose and object of this contract.

They have tried to say that it did not mean that. But you cannot fool men who employ union labor help, nor can you fool men who are members of labor union organizations.

Why do they want such a contract? They want such a contract for the very purpose that when every man who belongs to that union and who is working for this company has joined it, they can go before the board of directors at their next meeting and say: "Here is a new contract now; you sign that, or every wheel that you have in the city of Omaha will stop at twelve o'clock tonight." And what are men to do with their hands crossed and tied in that fashion? They must submit to any sort or kind of demand that may be made by any agitator who comes here, with no knowledge whatever of local conditions.

And that is the reason we did not sign the contract—because we owe an obligation, gentlemen, to this community. This thing simmers right down to this one point: The street railway company owes the people of this community a service—a continual service. The city authorities of this city, and the authorities of this county and state owe this corporation not only protection of its property but of its employes. That is the relation that exists between you, gentlemen, and you, Mr. Mayor, and this company.

This council has no right to convene here—when you get down to legal rights—and say this or that or the other thing regarding this strike. It can only say the things that come within the province of this council to say.

I am glad to appear before you here. I am glad to have you and everybody else understand the situation, if I can make it plain—and I am here to make it plain.

What is the situation now?

These men, some three hundred of them; without a moment's warning, without a day's notice; a few days before the President of the United States was to be received as the guest of this city; quit the employ of this company. They had a perfect right to do so, and we do not challenge that right in any way. It would have been a good deal better, I will admit, if they had come to me and said, "Now, we are not satisfied; this is not satisfactory to us, this arrangement that you propose, but the President is coming here next Tuesday and we have the Ak-Sar-Ben coming on, and it will inconvenience a lot of people that we do not want to inconvenience and think there is no necessity of inconveniencing at this critical time; and we will let this dispute rest where it is at the present moment, and we will take it up when these things have passed by and we will talk about it some more; and we will see if we cannot get some ground where we can both stand."

That, it seems to me, gentlemen, would have been the honorable way for these men to have treated the company by which they have been employed, some of them for many years.

But, no, that does not suit the men who are guiding the destinies of these good workmen. They said, "Now is the critical time, right at this moment, to make them all the inconvenience possible; stir up all the feeling over this thing possible, and then you will win so much the sooner."

So I will admit, and the record shows, that when these men talked to me about forcing this situation, when they said to me, "We are going to strike unless you sign that contract," I will admit that because I must admit it—the record is printed—that I did say to these men: "Gentlemen, we have tried to get along with the situation as best we can. We have promised to protect you as union men in every right that you possess. We have also tried to protect the non-union men who work for this company. But if you precipitate a strike on this company and on this community at this critical time—if you leave the employ of this company at this critical time, we cannot take future chances of just such things occurring again—we are going to employ from that time on non-union men to work for this company. We cannot be forced into this situation any more. It is not fair to this community that we should place ourselves where we can be forced into such a situation as is here today—a disgrace to this community." And so they were warned. They laughed about it, and said, "That is all right," and that perhaps I did not mean it.

Now let me say one thing on that score: I never made a promise or a pledge in my life that was not worth one hundred cents on the dollar. It is worth that this year; it will be worth that next year, and it will be worth that in the future.

Mr. Pratt says I never ought to have made that agreement about not signing a contract, and now I ought to be forced to violate that agreement. May be that is good, honest doctrine. It is not my way of doing business. He says that a verbal agreement, in law, only lasts a year anyway. My verbal agreements do not expire with the old year. They are good the next year just the same.

While this is a critical situation; while I have had letters threatening my life, and telephone messages warning me that I am a spotted man; and while we may have to come up, gentlemen, to some such tragedy to finally settle this matter right; and will have to unless the authorities who are sworn by their oaths to preserve law and order in this community do their duty—and I have faith and confidence that they will do it—but even though just that tragedy occur, if I wake up on the other shore and have it to think all through eternity that I did not violate my solemn obligation to the men in my employ, it will be a happy thought. How much better than to have the stain upon me during all my life that at the critical stage, at a time, perhaps, when thousands and hundreds of thousands of my own fortune was at stake, I failed. I do not want that memory, and it never will be my memory.



Now, what is the situation? These men have quit our employ. We owe an obligation to the city. We have tried to fulfill it. We have brought men here at great expense, because everything must be done quickly and the time was short. We did not have time to wait, we had to get men at any price. We had to get them and bring them here to perform the service that these men have said, by their acts, that they no longer want to do. And we have brought men here, good men. Every crime that is committed in the city will be laid at their doors. That is the usual procedure.

These men say there will be no rioting. Oh, no. But every time, gentlemen, that there is a parade of these honest workmen on the streets of Omaha, like there was last Sunday, it breaks up in a riot and in bloodshed. And that is what will happen in the future. You can depend upon it.

I have never been accused of being either a fool or a man who did not try to keep posted on what was going on. I know what is happening. I am not deceived. I am not at liberty to state the things I know. But, gentlemen, the men who do commit crimes in this community must answer for them before the law.

Now, what are we going to do? We are running the cars here. We must run them. Let us see what the people who run street cars in the country are saying to me, by telegrams and by letters by the bushel. I brought a few samples—telegrams even.

“Could you use two sober and experienced motormen permanently? References?”

That is a telegram that comes from Kansas City, giving the address.

Here is a letter from a gentleman in Council Bluffs: “There is one of your old conductors (gives his name) for four years a very efficient conductor left this city and went east; has married there and wants to come back here and get a job. Can you take him?”

Another man writes from Kansas City that he would like to send me two or three men. “Can you use two or three good men? Wire.”

I withhold all of these names. You can look them over, any of you who want to.

“Can bring fifty experienced men five hours notice. Wire answer. Springfield, Illinois.”

Another man writes a letter that he is a good workingman; that he has worked on the street cars up at Sioux City, but we pay better wages down here and he wants to come down here to work; he hears we need men.

“St. Louis, Mo.: I herewith apply for a position as conductor on your Omaha road. I am thirty-six years old, etc.”

“Springfield, Illinois: Notice by the paper you are having a strike; I am twenty-two years old and want a position.”

"Chicago, Illinois: An experienced motorman living in Chicago wants to know if he can get a permanent position and bring along references."

"Waterloo, Iowa: See by the Chicago papers that you are sadly in need of men; I have had over two years experience in street car service; am thirty-four years old. Am getting seventeen cents an hour here and would like to come to Omaha and work."

Indianapolis same way.

There will be no trouble, gentlemen, in filling the places of all the men who live in Omaha and have been engaged in the work here, and who do not want to work for this company. If they do not want to work for the company they have a perfect right to say so.

Now as to the question of arbitration: If a man drives out your horse and buggy for you in the morning, just as you are getting down to business, or some evening just as you are going out to some important engagement; and just as you are getting into the buggy, he jumps down off the box and says, "Here, I have written up a contract that I want you to sign, about my future employment; now, if you don't sign that contract I am going to quit, and I am going to quit right now, and cause you all the trouble I can; not only am I going to do that, but I am going to go out and try to keep any other man from taking my place and working for you."

"Well," the employer says, "all right now, John; you are excited; I am sorry you feel that way about it, but if you do, I guess you better quit; I guess you better go." The next day John comes around and brings a friend, and says, "Can't we fix this matter up some way? Let us arbitrate it?" What do you say, or what would any reasonable man say under those circumstances? He would say, "Well, really, I cannot see that you have any matter to arbitrate here. You quit. You inconvenienced me a little and you threatened me some, but you have drawn your pay; we are all square; I guess we need not talk any more about this, and I will get along the best I can."

Now, that is not the position this company is going to take, gentlemen. Do not misunderstand me, nor get a wrong impression from what I say. The time is going to come very shortly when these letters and similar letters will have to be answered. Before that time comes, and before men are brought here to permanently fill the places of those men who have been in our employ, due notice will be given.

It is probable that the old runs of many of these men have been permanently filled today. I do not know. The seniority rule of this company is in force just the same when there is a strike as when there is not one, and that rule is that the employes of this company have choice of positions, according to length of service.

But we are going to be fair. We have tried to be fair. We have tried to be just. And I appeal to the people of this community and to the city council of Omaha to say whether or not we have been fair and just. If we have not, we must lose that valuable asset—public sentiment and good will.

From the letters and the messages over the phone, from all parts of the city, I know that we have behind us in the position that we have taken, the support of the people of this community, regardless of sex or condition. All we ask of the city officials is to give us the full and due protection that they are sworn to give us by their oath of office, and we will proceed with the operation of the street car system in Omaha; and at the same time we will try to be fair and we will try to be just.

Now, gentlemen, one more word, and I am done.

This is not a time for political seeking of advantage. It is no time to work or talk politics. I am perfectly willing to sit here and hear this question discussed, as long as my time will permit—and I am a very busy man, especially these days—by the men who are directly interested in the question at issue. But I am not going to remain here to hear outsiders, who have come here and stirred up this trouble, tell you men that we are to blame for it.

Gentlemen, haven't we any friends left among the labor union leaders of the city of Omaha? Why, some of our brightest and best men are at the head of that movement here. Who are they? Mr. McCullough of the Bee; Mr. Sturgis, Mr. Guye; and no end of good, level-headed labor-leaders are here, perfectly competent to handle any situation that comes up in this community. If they had handled this situation there never would have been any trouble.

I think I have said about all I care to say now.

COUNCILMAN BRIDGES: I asked Mr. Wattles a question. He said he would answer that question in his statement.

MR. WATTLES: I think I have.

COUNCILMAN BRIDGES: Then we are to infer from your statement that you would not arbitrate this question under any circumstances. That is the way I would take it from this statement. Now, if that is the case, it is time for this city to take some action to see if there is not some way by which the people can be moved from one part of the city to another. I think if Mr. Wattles' position and the position of his company is fair, as he states it is—he states there is no doubt in his mind but what he is right in every way, shape and form—if that is the fact, then he should not be afraid to arbitrate this question.

MR. PRATT: Mr. President and gentlemen: My name has been freely used in connection with this situation, and inasmuch as he has brought me into it I would like to have an opportunity to answer a few of the points that he attempts to make.

COUNCILMAN MCGOVERN: This meeting is neither a regular nor a special meeting of the council. It was called at the suggestion of our mayor and the members of the city council, so that they could meet a committee of the employes of the street railway who were called in here, and also certain representatives of the street railway company. Now, this matter is for discussion between both of these parties at this meeting. We are not here as members of the city council. Sitting as a city council, as Mr. Wattles has said, we would have no authority to take up a matter of this kind, but the council, as individuals, have authority to discuss any matter we see fit to discuss in a meeting of this character. We are only here as citizens of Omaha, and I think that these committees have all they can do to handle their own part of the business at this time, until further action may be taken.

COUNCILMAN BRIDGES: Mr. President: I do not know anything about this man Scott or whatever his name may be; I have never seen him before today, and I do not know who he is or where he came from, but I venture to say that he came here at the request of these street car employes, just the same as you or I would send to New York or some other place and get a man as our attorney to represent us, if we thought he had the ability to do it. If we had a case that we wanted to win, we would get the best talent we could procure to win that case. And there is no question in my mind but that these street car men have sent for this man to come here and help them handle this difficulty for them, and to represent them. Now, they had a difficulty with the company a few years ago on a similar proposition, and they had the vice-president of the organization here at that time, and he consulted with Mr. Wattles. I met the gentleman while he was here, and while I do not remember the exact circumstances of that particular case, I know that the street car men continued at work without any change so far as the public knew. If there were any changes that went into effect in a minor way it was not known to the public. Now, if these people sent for this man to come here and represent them, this man whom Mr. Wattles has been freely roasting during all of his argument, he is entitled to some consideration; and he may be able to make some suggestion by which this difficulty can be settled, and the public not have to walk to and from their business without transportation of any kind; and I think it is no more than right that he should have an opportunity to say a few words in order to explain his position, and explain why he is here.

CHAIRMAN BURMESTER: If there is no objection, we will hear from Mr. Pratt.

MR. PRATT: I will try to make my remarks just as briefly as possible. I do not want to misquote or in any way misrepresent Mr. Wattles. In referring to the request from his men about this contract that was presented to him, he says that the men took their

strike vote upon the original proposition that was submitted to him. That is not true. The men modified their proposition.

I want to say, of course, that when I came to this city, it was at the request of the street car men. Our international officer, Mr. Commons, had been here for some time, and it looked as though they were going to be unable to get any adjustment from this company, and the men themselves had written to our office for an international representative to come here. President Mahon asked if I would come over and assist in trying to bring about an amicable adjustment. I want to say that about four years ago I came here on a like mission. At that time there was a threatened strike and Mr. Wattles met me, after the committee and myself had failed to reach any adjustment and the men were ready to strike at that time, and I met him in the bank and had an hour or so conference with him and he made some promises to me. I said, "Mr. Wattles, will you get your committee of your employes together and make these same promises to them? If you will, I will recommend to the men that they do not permit any trouble to occur and they will continue at work."

He said he would. And he did meet the committee of his employes and he made them the same promises, and that settled the matter without any outside interference or without any difficulty, and that was brought about through my personal efforts, and I think Mr. Wattles will admit it, and I assured Mr. Wattles when I came here that my mission was one of peace and I referred him to his own associates of the street railway world in this country. Never in my life have I been charged with inciting a strike, but I have been instrumental in bringing about many amicable adjustments where strikes were threatened and the question referred to the union.

Now as to experience or knowledge of conditions:

I have been a railroad man for sixteen years. Six years I worked on the cars in Columbus, five years as motorman and one as conductor. I know the conditions that prevail in the operating of the car from either end. I know the conditions throughout the United States and Canada, and I think I am as well versed in those conditions as Mr. Wattles; I have negotiated contracts and settlements with different companies in various parts of the country.

Now then, if Mr. Wattles wants to be fair and the situation is as he says it is, all in his favor, why does he fear arbitration?

As to our bringing about the difficulty at the present time: I want to say that the men were ready to strike when I came here a week ago Saturday, and I have told them, "Not yet."

Now, let us see what was said then. A meeting was called of the men, and I did not know at that time that the Eagles' convention was coming to this city, and we did not want to do anything to mar their pleasure and their entertainment in the city of Omaha;

and I not only got a statement from Mr. Commons and from the committee, but I wanted to hear the men direct, and a meeting was called for Monday. In that meeting I told the men I was not there to talk, but that I was there to listen to them, and I took a chair and sat down in the chair and I asked them to tell me just what they wanted me to do and how far they wanted me to go. I positively refused to talk to them, or to advise them one way or the other, because if I did Mr. Wattles or the company would make a claim that I was here inciting trouble, and we have a signed statement from all of the men who attended the meeting as to what took place there. The men themselves, one after another, without any exception, got up, and in a determined way expressed themselves. They said, "For seven years we have tried to maintain an organization here for our protection. Year after year these troubles come up and we have tried to get some adjustment, and when an international officer is here things are smoothed over temporarily, and as soon as you are gone their promise is violated and we get no result, and during the past year out of a little over six hundred employes there was 456 men discharged or forced to resign"—those are the best figures I have been able to obtain regarding their employes.

Now, it is true that the organization has gone down several times. When I came here one year ago it had been practically wiped out of existence, until there was only a handful of men up there in the meeting. Why? Because of intimidation, because of a marked preference for non-union men, because of discrimination.

We were successful in getting them together again for their protection and to try to be relieved from these conditions.

Now then, if Mr. Wattles says that he ordered Mr. Nash to abolish all these runs a year ago, why is it that seven years have gone by and he has not changed them.

He is an experienced railroad man. He gets up here and he makes some very nice promises. He made several to me four years ago, but they have not been carried out.

Now, he dwells specifically upon a statement that he says—or an agreement that he says he entered into with a man named Wilson—who is a machinist and in no way associated with the street car men's organization—who happened to be in the city at the time they organized and who was called into their conference. He says he made an agreement with this outside man, or an understanding that certain things were to be done, and yet he tells you that he will not deal with any outsider.

The employes of this organization working here today claim they have no knowledge of any such agreement, and that they as employes never made any such agreement.

Now, he says he went to that machinist, who is not connected with this organization, an outsider, and dealt with him, and yet he won't deal today with his own men, and wants to hold them to a contract of that kind.

I would like to have him present that contract that he says he has. I would like also to have him present the agreement that he says he has with the non-union men, so that we will know what that agreement is, with whom it was made and when it was made.

Mr. Wattles says he will not make any agreement with the union men, and yet he asks the public to help him enforce that kind of an agreement or pledge to the non-union men.

That was the situation on Monday when this meeting was called, and I asked the men to tell me what to do, and I said to them that I would leave no stone unturned to try to bring about an amicable settlement and adjustment. I said, "Ask for another conference with the company." They did have a conference with Mr. Wattles and they came back empty handed, without a single thing. He told them he would rather cut off his right hand than sign an agreement. I said then, "We will call a meeting for Friday afternoon and evening, and I will do my best in the meantime to see if we cannot get some one interested in this city to get Mr. Wattles to make some concessions that will help us out of this strained situation." And I did. I waited upon representative men in this city. They went to Mr. Wattles and asked him to meet me. He made as an excuse that he had refused to meet Mr. Commons and for that reason he would not like to meet me, and he replied in that letter to this gentleman. He replied to him by letter. He would not answer him direct when he waited on him. He says, "I will reply to you by letter," and he did write him a long letter. And so he finally said, verbally, "I will meet Mr. Pratt before the Business Men's organization at one o'clock Friday." We met on Friday afternoon. Our meeting was at 2:30 on Friday afternoon and on Friday night. And I said to these gentlemen that I would go up there and present to them our side of the case, and I hope, gentlemen, that everything is recorded that was said there. I hope that it is all recorded as far as I am concerned, and I ask them to produce all of that record or any part of it.

I appeared before that body at one o'clock on Friday afternoon, and after Mr. Wattles got up and made a few introductory remarks, I introduced myself and I addressed these gentlemen and presented the grievances of the street car men against the company, and I said that I had always held Mr. Wattles in high esteem. I did say that, and I defy Mr. Wattles to bring forward a single man in this city that has ever heard me say a disrespectful word of him, or apply epithets to him, in any way or at any time, and we have the signed statement of every man who was in the meeting that I never referred to Mr. Wattles except in the highest

terms, which is the fact. I did say that I believed he was misinformed; that I believed his under officials were doing things of which he had no knowledge, and that he listened to them and was influenced by their statements, and I defy Mr. Wattles to produce any man that has ever heard me speak of him in other than respectful terms. If these gentlemen make such statements to Mr. Wattles, they are stating things which are untrue and which can be disproved.

Now, I understand we are not in arbitration here. If we are we will bring forward evidence to substantiate every statement that we have made, and Mr. Wattles does not need to fear arbitration, if he has been so fair and broad-gauged in this treatment of his employes. Why does he fear arbitration? We court arbitration.

I explained the situation to the business men and several of them put a crossfire of questions, and then somebody called for Mr. Mahoney. I do not know who Mr. Mahoney is. And he was asked if he would look over this proposed agreement. I had submitted a modified proposition. I told Mr. Wattles that was why I had asked for the conference with him, that I had desired to submit a modified proposition from the men, and if he would concede to some of these points, I would go before the men and recommend it as a settlement. But he did not wish to meet me and the only chance I had to present it was before that body, and I had read it to them, and Mr. Mahoney was asked to look it over. He did look it over and he undertook to find flaws in the contract. He says, "Mr. Pratt, let us read this first clause and then the last clause." He says, "Who are the responsible parties to this agreement?" He says, "I do not see anybody here but the company."

"Well," I said, "Mr. Mahoney, that is not our fault. We have a responsible organization that is willing to sign this agreement, but the company refuses to deal with the organization and we have made it read with the employes of the company, to meet the wishes of the company." I said, "You can make that contract just as strong and binding as you want it, Mr. Mahoney. You can have it signed by the international officers as an evidence of good faith." I said, "I do not care anything about the phraseology, you can put it any way you care to have it just so you do not destroy the substance." I said, "This contract is not an ultimatum and neither was the original one." I said, "It may be considered as a memorandum of what the men would like to have; they would like to discuss these things with the company and have an amicable adjustment. You may change it, we care only for the substance, and make it as binding as you like."

It was about a quarter past three when the conference adjourned, or it was about that time when we left the hall. Before I left the hall a motion had passed unanimously to stand by Mr. Wattles and his company's position. Before that motion was



passed, however, Mr. Wattles suggested that he would send to every employe of the company a written communication setting forth just what he would do. I said, "Mr. Wattles, what would be embodied in that letter?" He said, "It will be a similar letter to the one you have read here, that I submitted to this gentleman who asked for a conference." And that letter we have here. In his own letter he says that the company has always reserved the right to tell its employes that they prefer to have them not join the union. He admits that in his letter. And further along in the letter he says this company will continue the same policy in the future that it has in the past, and that is the kind of letter he wanted to send back to his men as individuals.

Now, he said in that conference as he says here today that he would always meet with his employes as individuals or as committees. I said, "Mr. Wattles, are you willing to make this statement in concrete form in the nature of a letter to your committee of employes—the men are now waiting in their meeting hall for me? Will you make it in the nature of a letter, so that we will have something under your signature, to carry back to the union—will you make that statement in writing to the committee of your employes that you will deal with them as a committee? The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Will you sign a statement that you will deal with that committee?" He said, "No," he would not do it. He would not even do that.

When I left the hall I said, "I do not know what the result of this meeting will be, because I know the sentiment of the leaders at the meeting on Monday, and you are sending me back to the meeting empty-handed."

And I read that letter, exactly as I told Mr. Wattles I would do, without comment, in both meetings. I did not attempt to discuss the letter either directly or indirectly, and I did not discuss the question of a strike. I read the letter, first, without comment, and asked them to express their own intentions in that meeting—in both meetings, and we have a signed statement here by the men themselves, who were present at the meetings—his own employes—to that effect.

After the men voted, I will admit that I talked to the organization and assured them that I would stay with them in the fight to the end. There was no fire-eating oratory and no vilifying statements made against this company or any of its representatives. We realized that they were trying to force these union men out of the service, trying to destroy the organization and not permit it to exist here. And when Mr. Wattles tells you that this is not a question of wages, I agree with him. Yes, I agree with him. He knows well that this fight is being carried on for the purpose of destroying this organization, and for the purpose of forcing all union men out of this railway system.

At the meetings up there I also read Mr. Taft's position on the question of labor organization, in his Chicago speech. And I want to read that paragraph here, and I submit that we are willing to settle this question on the basis of Mr. Taft's statement.

This is the paragraph:

"I know there is an element among the employers of labor and investors of capital which is utterly opposed to the organization of labor. I cannot sympathize with this element in the slightest degree. I think it is a wise course for laborers to unite to defend their interests. It is a wise course for them to provide a fund by which, should occasion arise and strikes and lockouts follow, those who lose their places may be supported pending an adjustment of the difficulties.

"There is supposed to be an adjustment after there is a strike or a lockout. They have a right to expect that their grievances will be adjusted, and they should be supported in their demand for arbitration by the men who have been selected by the voters of the community to protect the interests and the rights of its citizens.

"I think the employer who declines to deal with organized labor and to recognize it as a proper element in the settlement of wage controversies is behind the times. There is not the slightest doubt that if labor had remained unorganized wages would be very much lower. It is true that in the end they would probably be fixed by the law of supply and demand, but generally before this law manifests itself there is a period in which labor, if organized and acting together, can compel the employer promptly to recognize the change of conditions and advance wages to meet a rising market and an increase in profits, and on the other hand can delay the quick impulse of the employer, facing a less prosperous future, to decrease wages."

I offered to accept a settlement—

MR. WATTLES: Will you also read the additional clause on unorganized labor?

MR. PRATT: I will let you read any part you desire, Mr. Wattles.

MR. LEAR: I would like to correct Mr. Wattles in one thing. He says the letter was not read until after the vote was taken. I was there and it was shown before the vote was taken and I can swear to it. It was read before the vote was taken.

MR. WATTLES: What President Taft said concerning unorganized labor is not here. It has been cut off, but I can state it substantially: "Nothing I have said or shall say should in any manner be construed into an attitude of unfriendliness to the men who do not join unions;" and he goes on and says that the rights of the men who do not belong to a union are just as sacred and should be just as firmly protected as the rights of those who do.

[Note by stenographer: The paragraph of President Taft's speech, to which Mr. Wattles referred, is as follows:

"Nothing I have said or shall say, should be construed into an attitude of criticism or unfriendliness to those workingmen who for any reason do not join unions. Their right to labor for such wages as they choose to accept is secured, and any lawless invasion of that right cannot be commended. All advantages of trades unionism, great as they are, cannot weigh a feather in the scale against the right of any man lawfully seeking employment to work for whom and at what price he will."]

MR. PRATT: Mr. Chairman?

MR. WATTLES: Just one more word on that subject. Just a word. The Scriptures say that a house divided against itself cannot stand—

MR. PRATT: And I want to subscribe to that sentiment. That is just what he wants to do—to divide the house of his employes and stifle organization. He does not want to make a specific agreement with them under which they would be entitled to call on him and say, "You agreed to do so and so and you have not done it." Mr. Wattles told you in his argument that the reason that he did not want to sign an agreement was because he would have a closed shop as soon as he did it. That is one of the things that these men have not asked for. They simply ask for an agreement which will insure their protection. They have never asked for a closed shop agreement. We waived the question of the recognition of the union, because we did not want to hurt Mr. Wattles' feelings. We offered to accept a signed statement if he would address it to the committee.

Mr. Wattles has referred to the fact that we are sleeping in rooms and stopping at hotels. Where would he have us stop—in livery stables? I want to tell Mr. Wattles that we live on \$6 a day, and out of that amount we have to pay our expenses and support our families.

Mr. Wattles has said that we have no interests here. We have interests here. These car men are chartered under the amalgamated association and are entitled to protection.

Mr. Wattles has spoken of local labor leaders. We do not question the ability of the local labor men here, but we say that every man has his trade—a machinist is not familiar with the conditions of the street car man, and Mr. Wattles will admit that these men of whom he has spoken are not familiar with the conditions of the street car men. We have not asked that he admit us to the conferences at all; we have only asked him to treat with a committee of his employes and try to reach some adjustment.

Now, gentlemen, there is a money question too, but I am not going to take up your time in discussing that because I do not think it is necessary. I only ask you to read the statement he has printed in the papers. I do not see anything bad about that stenographic report of this conference. The committee has got enough in there to show whether the men or the company is in the

right, and any intelligent man who reads it can determine that question for himself. Read it. Read it. There is nothing there but what is in favor of the men. I do not care if something has been left out, or whether some typographical errors have crept in. Read the whole report from beginning to end.

Another question is the swing run. There is absolutely no reason why the swing run should not be abolished, and they have been abolished by the up-to-date systems of the country.

With reference to the wages paid at Kansas City. The men have been struggling there for years to get an increase of wages, and we have men there today helping them in their effort to get better wages from the company, and if the question is submitted to arbitration here we are ready to justify our position on the wage question; we are ready to show that the scale asked is just and reasonable and is necessary for the proper support of the men and their families.

I want to tell you of an incident that came up when I was here four years ago. I met a young girl; she was only sixteen years of age, and wanted to get honest employment; she went into the store of one of the local merchants and applied for employment; the merchant offered her four dollars a week, and she says, "I cannot live on four dollars a week." He says, "Get wise and do as some of these other girls, and get some one to pay your room rent for you." I sent that girl home, and she is now married and has a respectable home.

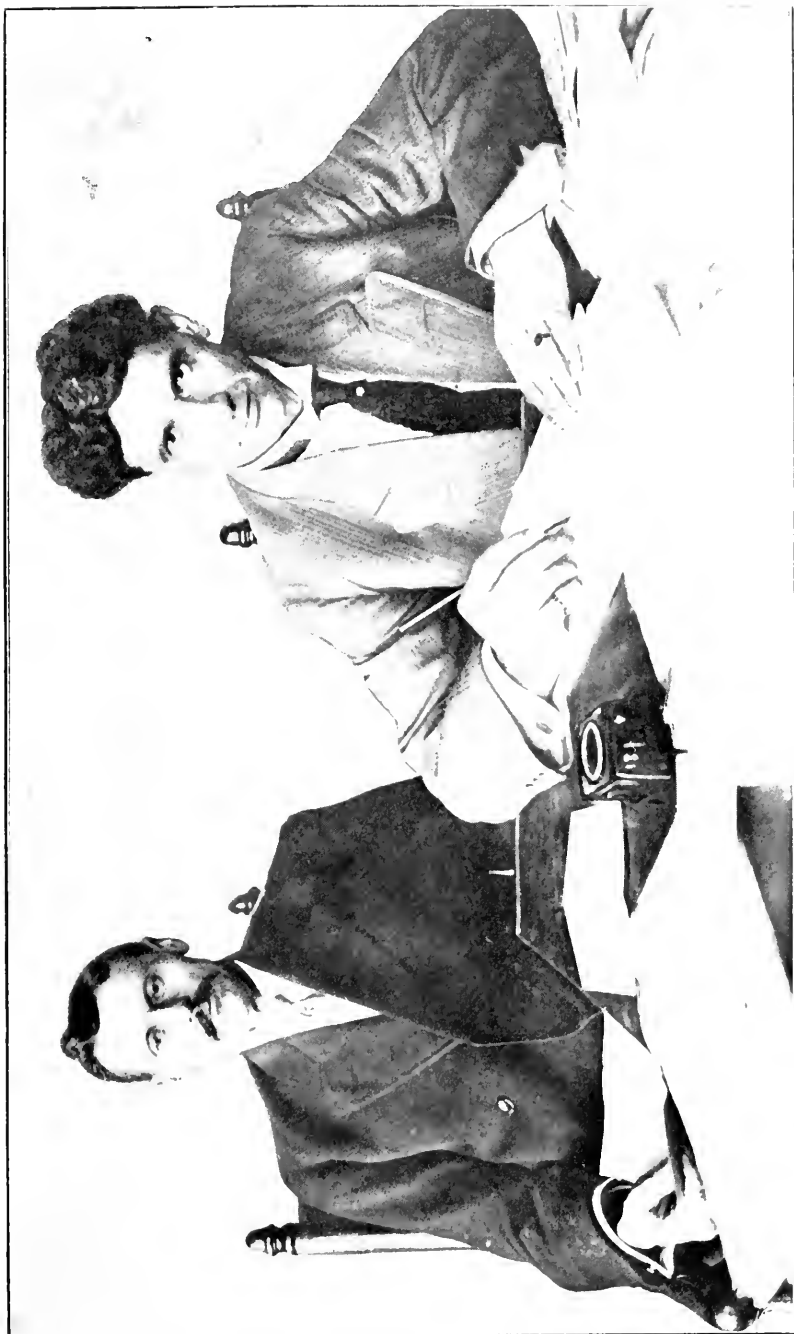
Now, we are not trying to tear down wages; we are not trying to force our wives and our daughters into business of that kind. I will admit we want better wages, but we are not making any arbitrary demand. We stand before you, gentlemen, today, and we are willing to let any fair-minded board arbitrate that question of wages and we will accept its decision.

Now then, we did not figure on having a strike at a time when it would cause the greatest inconvenience to the people of this community. I did not know that President Taft was coming, and I did not know that there was such a thing as an Ak-Sar-Ben. After the strike was on we offered to arbitrate, to put the men back to work and declare a truce pending the arbitration, but our offer was not accepted.

If Mr. Wattles was so considerate of the public interest and the public welfare, he would have said, "Gentlemen, we will have no trouble with you; President Taft is coming here; we will arbitrate these questions."

And I want to say, gentlemen, when there is a question sufficiently grave to provoke a strike or a lockout, it is a question for arbitration. (Applause.)

**COUNCILMAN BERKA:** The parties who have taken the affirmative will have the right to close, and if the committee desire to make any reply they have that privilege.



BEN COMMONS

THE OUTSIDE AGITATORS

C. O. PRATT



CHAIRMAN BURMESTER: Has the committee anything further?

MR. LENAHAN: I wish to make a few remarks in reply to the many things that Mr. Wattles has said. He made a verbal agreement with us two and a half years ago, and at that time he convinced the committee that his position would be fair; and, in fact, he won me over completely and convinced me of the righteousness of his cause, but two weeks had not elapsed after that verbal agreement was entered into until the under officials of this company had violated every promise that Mr. Wattles had made, and ever since we have been treated like a band of outlaws.

We have been picked upon and we have been humiliated, and we have been treated as though we had no rights to be respected, and as though we did not even have the right to live.

MR. WATTLES: Have you ever come to me during all this time? I have not had a single complaint that any of the promises or agreements made with the committee had been violated. Has your union ever come with any complaint?

MR. LENAHAN: We never have, for the simple reason that we believed that the way we had been treated, and the conduct of the under officials of this company—in chasing us around like we were a lot of wild beasts—that it was under your specific orders that those things were being done, and that is the reason we did not feel like going up there to be thrown downstairs by you and to be humiliated. We did not feel like doing that, Mr. Wattles. We took all these things into consideration, and we said, “Now we will live under this sort of persecution and see just exactly how far this company is willing to carry it.” They have carried it to the extreme, and the attitude and disposition of the men on this system will show it today—will show how Mr. Wattles has been held by his own men in the cities of Omaha and Council Bluffs. That shows whether the treatment you have been giving to your men has been reasonable and fair. And, gentlemen, the sooner Mr. Wattles gets off his high horse and gets down to business, the better it will be for the community and the better it will be for the corporation of which he is the president.

He may be the president, and he may be all right, and he may have the business ability, too, but I do not believe he represents the whole street railway of the cities of Omaha and Council Bluffs. (Applause.)

MR. LEAR: I will say that it is a fact that we are willing to have these questions submitted to arbitration and I believe our position will be shown to be fair and square. We are willing to arbitrate, and a board of arbitration could be appointed this afternoon if the company will consent to it.

COUNCILMAN BRUCKER: I move that the speech-making be closed.

CHAIRMAN BURMESTER: Is there a second to the motion?

COUNCILMAN BERKA: If there was anything brought out by Mr. Pratt to which Mr. Wattles desires to make a reply, anything which he has not had an opportunity to answer, he would have the right to do that now.

MR. LEAR: Mr. Chairman—

CHAIRMAN BURMESTER: Any other gentleman of the committee wish to say anything further?

MR. LEAR: I wish to say in regard to Mr. Wattles' statement that he made no disparaging remarks against the city council—I don't know that he did at the last meeting—but I was before him three times, and I will take my oath on the stand that I have twice heard him make the remark that if it had not been for the city hall grafters and hounds he would have raised the wages, would have been glad to divide the money between his men. Those are the words he used.

MR. WATTLES: I want to simply say that I never said such words, and the record of the meeting that was reported will show that I never used such language. Now they say it was at some meeting of which we have no record. I repeat that I never made any such remark.

MR. LEAR: Mr. Wattles, do you remember the time that Mr. Gillan, Mr. Poncelow and myself went up there to arrange for a conference before the board of directors?

MR. WATTLES: I remember your coming there.

MR. LEAR: And what statement did you make about this council and about this sixty thousand dollars?

MR. WATTLES: I did not make any at that time.

MR. LEAR: I beg your pardon. Didn't you say that the council had imposed this \$60,000 tax on you and that you would not be able to raise our wages?

MR. WATTLES: No.

MR. LEAR: I will go before any tribunal in this country and swear to that.

COUNCILMAN MCGOVERN: Mr. Chairman, I move that we adjourn until three o'clock this afternoon to the mayor's office, and that the council and the committee representing the street railway employes, and the officials, or a committee of the officials representing the Omaha Street Railway company, meet together there and have a conference about this affair.

MR. WATTLES: I will say that I cannot be present at that meeting. I have an engagement to meet some of the employes of this company this afternoon, that will preclude my meeting with you at that time.

CHAIRMAN BURMESTER: There is a motion before the house.

MAYOR DAHLMAN: Mr. Chairman, before you take this vote. As I said before, this meeting has been called to see whether the mayor and city council can do anything towards bringing about a settlement between the parties involved in this controversy.



Now, this motion that has just been made suggests that the mayor and city council, and a committee of the railway men and committee of the railway officials, meet at my office at three o'clock.

Now, I would like to invite Mr. Wattles to be at my office at two or a quarter past two, and I would like to talk with him alone; and then I would like to ask the three gentlemen who are here, who have been invited up here to represent the local street car men, to come after I have talked with him; and if this motion carries, the mayor and the city council then will talk this matter over, and I think by meeting these two parties separately I will be in a position to tell the city council just how the situation stands, and we will see then whether anything can be done or not.

If this is satisfactory, and these gentlemen will accept that invitation, I would be glad if they would do it.

This meeting is simply called, as has been stated here before,—it is not what might be called an official meeting—but it has been called by the members of the council who represent the city in an official way, and if there is anything that we can do towards bringing about a settlement here, why, we want to do it. Of course, if we cannot, why, that is another proposition.

I feel that in the interests of the men who have gone out of the employment of the street car company, and in the interests of the street car company itself and the whole people of the city of Omaha, that the least we can do as city officials is to do what we can to see if we cannot bring about a settlement. Now then, this is done in a spirit of fairness and I believe it is for the best interests of everybody, and if we do not succeed, why, we at least have done what we thought was best for us to do.

If we do succeed in accomplishing something that will settle this controversy, then we have done the best we could. (Applause.)

MR. WATTLES: I will say that I will be very glad to wait on the mayor at any time that he may see fit to call me.

MAYOR DAHLMAN: That is very nice. I will make it a quarter past two.

MR. WATTLES: I have another meeting, but I will postpone it, Mr. Mayor.

MAYOR DAHLMAN: Then we might make it more convenient.

MR. WATTLES: I could meet you at half past one.

MAYOR DAHLMAN: That will do.

MAYOR DAHLMAN: What time can you gentlemen be here? This is not going to be a meeting where you will be together. This is to be a meeting where I am going to talk with you separately. I want that understood.

CHAIRMAN BURMESTER: This being understood, then the motion is that we adjourn to meet at the mayor's office at three o'clock. Carried.

STATE OF NEBRASKA, }  
COUNTY OF DOUGLAS, } ss.

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and complete record of the proceedings at the meeting held in the council chamber of the city of Omaha between the hours of ten and twelve on the morning of September 21, 1909, which meeting is more fully described in page one of this transcript.

I further certify that this transcript contains 65 pages of type-writing, numbered 1 to 65, both inclusive.

In testimony whereof, I have hereunto signed my name, at Omaha, Nebraska, this 16th day of October, A. D. 1909.

FRANK J. SUTCLIFFE,  
Shorthand Reporter.

# Chapter IX.

## TERMS OF RE-EMPLOYMENT SUBMITTED

It is needless to say that none of the results planned by the city council were obtained through this public meeting. It only served to acquaint those present with the details of the controversy.

At the meeting with the mayor on the afternoon of the same day, the president of the street railway company discussed some of the terms and conditions which he would recommend to the board of directors to be offered to the strikers. On the same afternoon, at a meeting of a committee of three, Messrs. Burmester, Berka and Funkhouser, of the city council, this discussion was continued with no definite results.

On the following day, Mayor Dahlman called a meeting of the mayors of the five cities involved by the strike. Mayor Frank Koutsky of South Omaha, Mayor Thomas Maloney of Council Bluffs, Mayor F. S. Tucker of Florence, and Mayor Charles A. Tracy of Benson, met with Mayor Dahlman at his office. By invitation, the president of the street railway company attended this meeting. Again terms and conditions, under which the street railway company would receive back into its employ at least a large percentage of the striking men, were discussed.

This discussion was continued from day to day during the remainder of the week, and one point after another was agreed upon, between the mayors on the one side and the president of the street railway company on the other. The final question, as to whether or not the men would be allowed to return to the service of the company and retain their membership in the union, was left to be determined at a meeting between the mayors, the officers and directors of the street railway company, and the committee before mentioned from the city council, to be held at four o'clock on Sunday afternoon, September 26th, at the office of the street railway company.

At this meeting, the terms and conditions which the officers and directors of the street railway company were willing to concede

were fully discussed. All of these terms had been tentatively agreed to between the president of the street railway company and the mayors of the five cities at the previous meetings, except the proposition concerning the union. The proposition outlined by the street railway officials was as follows:

“6. We cannot peaceably conduct our affairs with part of our employes union and the remainder non-union. This plan of operation has been tried for seven years, and has now resulted in this strike, in spite of all our efforts to prevent it. At the meeting with the committee of the union, on September 15, 1909, the president of the company positively told the committee that, if under the existing conditions the union men quit the employ of the company, never again would a union man be employed by the company. Notwithstanding this, the union called this strike, thereby subjecting the public to greatest inconvenience, and both the public and this company to enormous loss. We cannot permit such conditions to again arise, and have, therefore, decided to employ only those who are willing to work on a non-union basis.”

To this proposition there was dissension by all the mayors and by every member of the committee of the council, as well as by several business men who were present. The officers and directors of the company were strongly urged by all present to modify this condition, so that the striking employes might return to the service of the company without humiliation, and without the surrender of their union affiliations.

After a thorough discussion of the subject, the street railway officials finally agreed to eliminate this paragraph and insert in lieu thereof paragraphs 6 and 7. After this change had been agreed upon, the proposition was signed by the president of the street railway company and its directors, and was recommended for the acceptance of the men by the mayors and the committee of the council. On the following morning, Monday, September 27th, it was published in all the daily newspapers in Omaha and Council Bluffs, and was posted in all the company's car barns. This proposition in full as published was as follows:

**PROPOSITION MADE BY STREET RAILWAY COMPANY.**

**“TO THE FORMER EMPLOYES OF THE OMAHA & COUNCIL BLUFFS STREET RAILWAY COMPANY:**

“You are hereby notified that on or before Tuesday noon, September 28, 1909, meritorious employes, including at least 90

per cent of those who are now out on a strike, will be received back into the employ of the company at the same wages which each was receiving at the date he quit our employ, subject to the seniority rights which have been acquired by those employes who have remained in the service of the company and those who have been employed for permanent service since September 17, 1909. Former employes who fail to report for duty on or before the date above mentioned will lose all of their rights hereunder and their positions will be filled by the company with others who are seeking to obtain them.

“Those who re-enter the employ of this company will do so under the following terms and conditions:

“1. It will be the policy of this company in the future as in the past to pay its employes as good or better wages as similar employes receive in other cities where like conditions prevail to those in this community. An increase of pay, which will amount to at least one cent per hour, will be made as soon as the financial condition of the company will justify, and, if the strike ends at this time, within one year from this date.

“2. This company will keep in its employ a sufficient number of extra men, so that regular employes may lay off in time of sickness or for other purposes, on reasonable notice to the company.

“3. A careful revision of the schedules will be made within sixty days and the present features, which have been objected to, will be eliminated so far as possible.

“4. In the event any employe of this company is dissatisfied with the treatment he receives from under-officials, he shall have the right to appeal to the general manager or the president, or the board of directors, and have the case reviewed without prejudice.

“5. All motormen and conductors, when called upon to take out extras, will be paid from the time they report for duty until they are relieved.

“6. This company will make no contract with, nor recognize, nor deal with any union among its employes. It will deal with all its employes alike as individuals.

“7. The future policy of the company in the employment of new men will be to employ only such as will agree to work on a non-union basis.

“OMAHA & COUNCIL BLUFFS STREET RAILWAY CO.,

By G. W. WATTLES, President.

F. T. HAMILTON,

L. F. CROFOOT,

W. V. MORSE,

K. C. BARTON,

C. R. TYLER,

W. A. SMITH,

Directors.

“The above proposition by the Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway company is the result of protracted negotiations, and we recommend it to the employes for their acceptance.

JAMES C. DAHLMAN, Mayor of Omaha.

FRANK KOUTSKY, Mayor of South Omaha.

THOS. MALONEY, Mayor of Council Bluffs.

F. S. TUCKER, Mayor of Florence.

CHAS. A. TRACY, Mayor of Benson.

LOUIS BURMESTER,

M. F. FUNKHOUSER,

LOUIS BERKA,

Committee of City Council of Omaha.”

It afterwards transpired that Mayor Dahlman had consulted Mr. C. O. Pratt, the strike leader, during the progress of the negotiations on the proposition, and that he had expressed no objections to the terms as finally announced, although Mr. Pratt afterwards stated he had not agreed to anything, except to arbitrate all the questions involved.

As a matter of fact, no action was taken by the union as a body on this proposition of the street railway company. The claim was made that no official copy of these terms had been served on the officers of the union, and Mr. Pratt was quoted in the newspapers as follows: “We have received no statement of terms from the company to the proposition and no answer to my last communication, and therefore can do nothing.”

Numerous other objections were raised, but the men themselves were not given the opportunity to vote one way or the other on the question of whether or not they were willing to return to work on the terms announced. A committee of the union published a signed statement in the newspapers regarding the proposition of settlement, as follows:

#### CAR MEN'S STATEMENT.

#### DEALS WITH THE PROPOSITION MADE BY THE STREET RAILWAY COMPANY.

“The locked out union street car men desire that the general public should know of the unfair treatment that is being accorded them by the street railway company and how far-reaching their influence goes in an effort to place us in the wrong light.

“We have always stood ready for fair and impartial arbitration of our grievances, the men to all return to work immediately.

“On last Thursday the five mayors representing Omaha, South Omaha, Council Bluffs, Benson and Florence met our representatives and agreed to try and obtain a satisfactory settlement for us with the company or insist upon arbitration. Their efforts on Thursday failed of any satisfactory results, and they agreed to meet the company’s representatives again on Friday. The efforts of Friday proved as fruitless as those of the day before. They then said they would meet the company’s representatives again on Saturday and make a further effort. On Saturday there was nothing accomplished that was indicative of favorable results. The mayors told us that they were to meet with President Wattles, the board of directors of the company and a committee from the city council at three o’clock Sunday afternoon, and that they would give us a definite answer at that time. With this assurance we called a meeting of the locked-out carmen at the Labor Temple for Sunday night at eight o’clock, to receive and act upon any propositions that the mayors might have to submit back to us.

“On Sunday afternoon at their meeting, according to published statements, a committee from the Business Men’s Association were invited to be present and participate in the deliberations. It will be noticeable that labor’s interests were entirely ignored. The decision arrived at during this conference was placed in a sealed envelope to be opened at ten o’clock on Sunday night for the benefit of the newspaper men, with the understanding that no special extras should be put out upon the street. Why were the car men who were waiting at the meeting hall, for the purpose of learning the results of this conference, entirely ignored? There must be something radically wrong when a committee of this kind will purposely withhold important information of this nature from the men who were directly involved in the controversy, and who had marched long miles to be present at their meeting hall, and were anxiously waiting to co-operate in the interest of peace and in restoring normal street car service in the city of Omaha.

“Up to the present moment not a word has been received from the mayors, city council or the street car company by the locked-out car men, advising them of any proposals for their consideration. The men waited all day at their meeting hall again on Monday for some word to be sent to them for their consideration. A letter was sent to Mr. Wattles Monday forenoon urging that he appear before his employes and give them any assurances that his company were willing to make, if they would return to work. Not as much as a reply has been received from him.

“In the newspapers we have read a statement of what the company and the mayors have had to say. We feel that Mr. Wattles’ statements need no reply from us. The public can read and understand his position. It fully bears out every claim that we have made against the company. It even deprives us of rights that we have previously enjoyed. It is clearly an insult, not only to

the carmen, but to every patron who rides upon the street cars in this city. Mr. Wattles has revealed himself before the public in his true character more forcibly than we could possibly have done. We feel that no right thinking man or woman, regardless of whether they are in sympathy with organized labor or not, would ask us for one moment to give such a proposition serious consideration.

"The suggestions the company have offered through the newspapers would mean that ten per cent of the men could never be returned to work, and that the ninety per cent would have to return at the foot of the extra list, if Mr. Wattles so desired, under the interpretation of his seniority clause. The seventh clause providing that in the future no man would be given employment unless he obligated himself not to join a labor union, is clearly a violation of the law, and surely Mr. Wattles does not want to stand before the public as openly advocating violation of the laws.

"This company is in a position to pay the increased wage asked for by the men, and no better evidence is needed than to point to the fact that they have been paying imported men five dollars per day, with board and keep, and permitted them to retain the greater portion of the receipts taken in upon the cars.

"We still stand for arbitration, and urge an immediate settlement upon any amicable and honorable basis, but if Mr. Wattles insists that this is a fight to a finish, our fight has only just begun.

"We ask that all our friends withhold patronage and support from the company until such time as they will recognize the just claims of their former employes. We would also urge that you use every honorable influence to bring about an amicable adjustment, not only in our interests, but in the interests of this entire community.

"We deeply regret that we are forced to continue such an unpleasant warfare, but this company has left us no other alternative.

"Thanking our friends for the loyal support that they are giving us, both morally and financially, and assuring you of our sincerest appreciation, we beg to remain,

WILLIAM H. PONCELOW,	H. P. NELSON,
W. GILLAN,	W. S. BOIEN,
MICHAEL KENNEY,	P. J. LENAHAN,
E. I. MORROW,	CHARLES H. LEAR,
Committee Representing the Street Car Men."	

Before the time expired, however, about sixty striking employes returned to the service of the company, and from that time forward, during the succeeding two weeks, about 200 more applied for service, and 167 of them were given positions.



# Chapter X.

## LABOR COMMISSIONER'S INVESTIGATION

On Tuesday forenoon, September 28th, Mr. Will M. Maupin, Deputy State Labor Commissioner, called on the president of the street railway company, and stated that he was investigating the cause of the strike. After asking numerous questions and receiving full information on every phase of the subject, he asked the president to certify a newspaper copy of the terms of settlement offered to the men as being a true copy of the proposition made. This was done. He then stated that he would be very glad to offer his services to, if possible, settle the controversy, and stated that he would rather be the cause of an amicable settlement than to be governor of the State of Nebraska.

After some discussion, he asked that the time fixed for the men to return to the service of the company be extended, in order to permit him, if possible, to remove any objections to their acceptance of the proposition, or make any modifications necessary to induce them to accept it. He was told that this time had been fixed by the board of directors of the street railway company, and could not under any conditions be extended. He left the office of the president to consult with the strike leaders, and agreed to return with his report at five o'clock P. M. on the same day. He did not again call on the president until about eight o'clock in the evening of the same day, when he called at his residence, and then presented the following, which he stated was the final proposition of the strike leaders:

“ Every man to be reinstated to his former position without prejudice.

“ Wages 26, 27 and 28 cents per hour.

“ Abolition of the swing run system.

“ Men to be protected in their employment, by being permitted to have accredited representatives selected by the employes to take up grievances that may arise from time to time, with the proper officials of the company, for adjustment.

“ A provision for arbitrating differences that cannot be amicably adjusted between the accredited representatives of the employes and the proper officials of the company, so as to preclude the possibility of further strikes or lockouts.

“ No discrimination to be made against any employe for membership in any organization, and all employes to be protected in their rights to belong to any organization if they so desire.

“ Sufficient extra men to be maintained to permit regular men to lay off duty, at least four days in every month.

“ An agreement embodying the above suggestions to be entered into for a period of one year.”

This proposition was discussed for some time, and in this discussion Mr. Maupin especially insisted on the point that all the strikers should be taken back into the employ of the company without prejudice. The president of the company made it clear to him that this could not be done, as some of these men had engaged in acts of violence against the company, and as others had committed offenses which precluded their re-employment by the company. When Mr. Maupin replied that it would be a punishment on some of the leaders if they were to lose their positions, which the rank and file of the striking employes would hardly be inclined to impose on them, the president stated that the company had been punished most severely; that the public had been punished by great inconvenience and loss; and that it would be unreasonable to suppose that the strikers would be returned to their positions without any punishment whatever. After some further discussion on the proposition presented, it was rejected by the president of the company, and Mr. Maupin left the city that same evening.

He afterwards made a report to the governor of Nebraska, which was published. It reads as follows:

“ In the matter of the present strike of the motormen and conductors of Omaha, against the Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway company, I have the honor to submit the following report:

“ The present difficulty had its inception some four or five years ago, when the motormen and conductors in the employ of the above named company, perfected an organization to promote their interests. After careful investigation, it appears that there is also in Omaha an organization of business men, whose purpose is to enforce the ‘open shop’ policy and to refuse to recognize unions of employes. Since the organization of the street railway employes

there has been considerable friction, the men asking that their grievances be presented to the company through a committee selected from among their number, and this request being refused when presented. The influence of the organization of business men is very powerful in this business world. The employes of the street railway company declare that the members of their union have been discriminated against. As evidence of this they claim that, of approximately 650 motormen and conductors employed last year, not less than 450 were discharged or forced to resign because of this alleged discrimination.

"About six weeks ago the employes appointed a committee to wait upon President Wattles, of the company, with a statement of what they wanted.

"President Wattles refused to agree to any of these requests. A number of conferences were held between the committee representing the employes and President Wattles. To the demands of the men, he offered to increase wages as soon as the financial condition of the company permitted, and to increase them one cent an hour inside of one year. President Wattles refused to recognize a grievance committee representing the union, or to consent to arbitration of grievances. He stated that there was no need of a committee, and no necessity to make provision for arbitration.

"As before stated, several conferences were held between the employes and President Wattles, but without avail, and then the union sent for two of its international officers. These officers arrived and assumed the duty of trying to reach an agreement. President Wattles agreed to meet Chairman Pratt before a meeting of the executive committee of the Business Men's Association. Mr. Pratt told what the men wanted, and Mr. Wattles told what he was willing to write and send to each individual employe. Mr. Pratt took President Wattles' statement back to the employes and submitted it without comment. The employes thereupon decided to strike, and the strike began on Saturday morning, September 18.

"President Wattles insisted that the company was plunged into this strike without notice, and taken unawares. The striking employes claim that before the strike was twelve hours old professional strike-breakers, many of them armed, were being imported into the state and used to man the cars.

"The Monday following the strike, I went to Omaha with a view to acquainting myself with the facts. Before making any effort to seek an adjustment of the difficulty, I thought it best to await the result of efforts being put forth by Omaha parties. A councilmanic hearing was held, at which President Wattles and the committee from the striking employes aired their grievances. Nothing resulted. A little later the mayors of Omaha, South Omaha, Florence, Benson and Council Bluffs undertook to reach

a settlement. They met from day to day, and finally, on Sunday afternoon, September 26th, they evolved a plan of settlement which was endorsed by President Wattles. This, however, was not officially presented to the striking employes, but was put into sealed envelopes, and given to the daily newspapers with the understanding that the envelopes were not to be opened until ten o'clock that night, and no extras issued. Up to Tuesday, September 28, the striking employes had no official knowledge of this, and then I was empowered by President Wattles to present it to them, which I did. The men refused to accept any plan of settlement that would deprive them of the right to join any lawful organization or society that might appeal to them.

"On Monday, September 27, I proceeded again to Omaha for the purpose of using my best efforts to adjust the differences between the striking employes and the company. I first sought to ascertain what the men wanted, and after having informed myself as to that, I proceeded to confer with President Wattles. President Wattles met me fairly and frankly and we went over the situation thoroughly. Upon the main contentions of the men he would not concede anything. He refused to deal with a committee of the employes, after the question of the union had been eliminated from the discussion. He refused to submit any point of difference whatever to arbitration. Finally, he declared against employment in the future of any man who would not agree to remain outside of any union of street railway men. He did agree to take back ninety per cent of the striking employes, but under no consideration would he agree to taking them all back. He also declared to me that it was his intention, and the intention of the executive committee of the company, to 'punish somebody' for calling this strike. The employes would not listen to a proposition of settlement based upon the possible punishment of the men who had transacted their business for them. It was upon this that the final split came. President Wattles insisted that only ninety per cent of the strikers would be re-employed. I suggested to the men that they agree that in case all were taken back the company might consider individual cases on their merits, and, if it had a grievance against any man because of his connection with the strike, the case should be fairly and impartially arbitrated by a committee composed of three men, consisting of one from the company, one from the men, and yourself, acting in your official capacity as the commissioner of labor. The men agreed to this, but President Wattles refused.

"With this I ceased all efforts to reconcile the parties to the controversy, feeling that I had exhausted every means at my command.

"With some experience in labor strikes and industrial disputes, I am compelled to say that the present strike in Omaha has been conducted with less disorder than any strike of a similar nature

within my experience. The strikers are conducting themselves in a most orderly manner. True, there has been some disorder, but it has been caused by foolish sympathizers of the strikers.

“It appears to me, your excellency, after a careful investigation of the causes leading to this strike, and a faithful effort to bring it to an end, that an impartial investigation should be had under the provisions of the statutes. This, I believe, should be done for the purpose of making a permanent record, if for no other reason. Business is suffering, men are suffering, the general public is suffering. I believe this whole matter could have been settled without a strike. The striking employes say that they have at all times been willing to submit every point of dispute to arbitration, and to return to work in a body if assured of a fair and impartial arbitration of the points mentioned. President Wattles has so far refused to submit anything whatever to arbitration.”

# Chapter XI.

## THE BUSINESS MEN'S ASSOCIATION

It is proper at this time to state the part in the strike which the Omaha Business Men's Association had taken from the beginning. This organization was effected as a protective organization against unreasonable demands from labor unions in 1903, when the city and many of its industries were paralyzed by numerous strikes that had been called, and by others that were threatened. At the time of its organization nearly every business man of any importance in the city of Omaha became a member. Its purposes and principles were declared in the following language:

“Declaration of Principles adopted April 20, 1903.

“This organization is known as the Business Men's Association and its purpose is purely defensive, and made necessary, as it has been thought by the various corporations, firms and individuals identified with it, by the apparent determination upon the part of the labor organizations of the city to either control or ruin every business enterprise. The great object of the association is to protect its members in their rights to manage their respective businesses in such lawful manner as they may deem proper and expedient, employing such help as seems best adapted to their purposes, under such contract as is mutually satisfactory to the parties concerned, and not to antagonize any individual or organization.

“It is the further purpose of the organization to maintain the principle that every man has certain inalienable rights, one of which is to seek and obtain employment upon such terms as his services warrant, in order that he may support himself and those dependent upon him. The organization is composed of the principal business institutions of the city, is thoroughly and completely organized, and will act as an organization in defending the rights of its individual members, should occasion require. The organization seeks no fight with organized labor in any form, so long as its own rights are not interfered with.

“Its position is that while organized labor has the undoubted right to become associated together for any lawful purpose, yet when it becomes a breaker of the law by resorting to intimidation; threats or personal violence, the picketing and boycotting of persons and firms who are unwilling to submit to its dictation; when it becomes an obstruction to commerce by interfering with the lawful pursuits of individuals or firms; or when it takes upon itself the duty of chastising persons who are seeking to make an honest living in such manner as seems best; that it then becomes an unlawful, illegal and unpatriotic combination of men who must be met with whatever organization and force is necessary, in order that the principle of this government may be maintained, which guarantees to all individuals life, liberty and an opportunity to secure the means of subsistence in such manner as they may elect.”

The effective work done by this association in preventing strikes, and in settling those that have been declared, has had much to do with the industrial progress of this city from the date of the organization of the association down to the present. Contrary to the general belief among union men, the association is not opposed to unions as such, but stands for the open shop.

Before the strike was called, the president of the street railway company appeared before the executive committee of the Business Men's Association, with Mr. C. O. Pratt, the strike leader, and both sides of the controversy were stated fully to this committee. After hearing these statements, and questioning Mr. Pratt carefully and closely regarding the demands of the union, the executive committee voted unanimously in his presence, endorsing the position taken by the street railway officials in refusing to enter into a contract with the union. It was at this meeting that the president of the street railway company offered to make substantial concessions in writing to the employes, and address the communication to each employe individually, which offer was refused by Mr. Pratt.

Immediately after the strike was called, a general meeting of all the members of the Business Men's Association was called to be held in the Commercial Club rooms, at four o'clock Sunday afternoon, September 19th. At this meeting the matters in contro-

versy were again discussed and explained, and at this meeting the position taken by the street railway officials was again unanimously endorsed by the full membership present.

The number of business men present at this meeting was about 260.



## Chapter XII.

### EFFORTS TO SETTLE THE STRIKE

The time having expired for the men to return to work, under the terms proposed by the company and endorsed by the mayors and committee of the council, and the company's proposition not having been accepted officially by the union, a number of business men, whose trade had been seriously affected by the strike, and who looked forward to a greater loss of trade during the Ak-Sar-Ben celebration, September 29th to October 9th, became alarmed over the situation.

On Tuesday, September 28th, an editorial appeared in the Omaha Bee, as follows:

#### TIME TO ARBITRATE.

"Will 200,000 people dependent upon adequate street railway service sit idly by while a disastrous street car strike is fought out through mere stubbornness of employer and employes?"

"Will the business men of three cities simply look on while a paralyzed street car service destroys their business and inflicts irreparable injury upon the good name and standing of the community?"

"Will Ak-Sar-Ben permit without a word of protest the heavy labor of a year and the outlay of \$50,000 in preparation for the fall festival, upon whose eve we have arrived, to go for naught because the people for whose entertainment all was planned cannot come?"

"If considerations of business have no weight, will we without an effort at adjustment suffer helpless women and children to undergo the physical exhaustion of compulsory walking, or the exposure to injury from overcrowding or violence if they attempt to ride?"

"Will we wait for bloodshed and loss of life before we act, or will we call a halt on street car company and strikers alike and insist that the public has some rights which both are bound to respect?"

**"The Bee believes the time has come to arbitrate.**

"As the conference of mayors has flunked, only one way seems to us to remain to save the situation in time to prevent still more damaging results.

**"The street car company, and the strikers, should be compelled to submit to arbitration of disinterested third parties.**

**"Let an arbitration board be chosen acceptable to both sides.**

**"Refer to this board all questions at issue on these conditions:**

**"1. All the strikers to go back to work at once.**

**"2. All the strike-breakers to be sent back whence they came at once.**

**"3. No employe to be dismissed or harassed because he belongs to a union.**

**"4. No employe to be dismissed or harassed because he refuses to join a union.**

**"5. The award to cover everything in controversy regarding wages, hours and runs, and so far as it may affect wages to date back to the day the men return to work.**

**"Let the arbitration board be charged with making a thorough investigation of conditions of street railway service, hear the grievances of the men, consider the interests of the company and, after full hearing, bring in its findings without undue delay.**

**"The chief obstacle in the way of this plan is to secure the arbitration board. As we have no law providing us with such a board ready-made, one must be improvised by mutual agreement.**

**"For a starting point The Bee has hastily compiled the names of forty representative business and professional men, who, although not consulted, could, we believe, if they would, act fairly as arbitrators:**

**10 RETAILERS.**

ROBERT COWELL  
C. M. WILHELM  
JOSEPH HAYDEN  
O. E. BERG  
HENRY ROSENTHAL  
CHAS. R. SHERMAN  
MORRIS LEVY  
JOSEPH FRENZER  
R. S. WILCOX  
HERBERT M. ROGERS

**5 LAWYERS.**

JOHN L. KENNEDY  
C. J. SMYTH  
A. W. JEFFERIS  
A. C. WAKELEY  
F. A. BROGAN

**5 PHYSICIANS.**

ROBERT GILMORE  
HAROLD GIFFORD  
F. A. WEARNE  
R. S. ANGLIN  
J. B. RALPH

**10 WHOLESALERS.**

Z. T. LINDSAY  
C. H. PICKENS  
DAVID COLE  
T. C. BYRNE  
N. SPIESBERGER  
W. L. YETTER  
GEORGE COTT  
W. C. BULLARD  
E. M. ANDREESEN  
B. F. MARSHALL

**5 CLERGYMEN.**

C. W. SAVIDGE  
F. L. LOVELAND  
FREDERICK COHN  
FATHER MCGOVERN  
E. H. JENKS

**5 REAL ESTATE.**

A. C. KENNEDY  
G. W. MORTON  
A. L. REED  
BYRON R. HASTINGS  
G. N. HICKS

“From these names the strikers ought to be able to select twenty who would be acceptable to them.

“From the twenty thus chosen by the strikers the street railway people ought to be able to select five who would not be objectionable to them.

“The five thus selected would owe it, as a patriotic duty to the community, to accept the grave responsibilities and take up the task as soon as the men returned to work.

**“With the backing and support of the whole community, which it would have, such an arbitration board would be in position to enforce its findings, and not only put an end to the present strike, but prevent recurrence.**

“Here is a feasible way to get down to business.

“It is time to arbitrate.”

This editorial was no doubt endorsed, if not inspired, by a number of merchants who saw serious losses ahead of them, if the strike continued.

It was with some surprise that the street railway officials learned that some of the leading merchants of the city were endorsing the demand for arbitration. A meeting of the leading merchants of the city was therefore called at the office of the president of the street railway company, on the afternoon of September 29th. This meeting was attended by about thirty-five of these merchants, and the position in which the company had been placed by this demand for arbitration was thoroughly discussed.

It was explained at this meeting that, whereas the strike had been called for the purpose of forcing the street railway company to recognize the union and enter into a contract with it, this demand had been abandoned, and now, as the first step to arbitrate, the demand was made that all the strikers be reinstated in their former positions without prejudice; that immediately after the strike was called the officials of the company had been asked by the non-union men, who did not leave its employ, whether or not, under the rule of seniority of service which had always been in force, they were not entitled to the promotion in seniority which gave them choice of runs over all who had quit the service; that the men were told that this rule entitled them to such preference, and many of them had remained in the service during the trying ordeal of the strike, with the express understanding and with the knowledge that they were to have the runs abandoned by those who went on a strike; that now to reinstate the strikers in their old places would be an act of bad faith on the part of the street railway officials, which

would involve the rights of the non-union employes in a manner that they had no right to do.

These business men were further told at this meeting that any talk of arbitration was prolonging the strike, and increasing the difficulties the street railway officials were obliged to surmount in order to end it. It was made plain to these merchants that there are questions which honorable men cannot afford to arbitrate, and that some of these questions were involved in the present situation; that no man could arbitrate whether or not he would keep his promises and agreements with third parties; and that under no condition would the street railway company consent to arbitrate the questions involved in this strike; and that to continue the discussion and agitation for arbitration was only to prolong the losses of the company, as well as those of the merchants of the city.

After this meeting there was no further talk of arbitration.

The Board of Governors of the Knights of Ak-Sar-Ben held a conference with the board of directors of the street railway company, at which they proposed a truce during the Ak-Sar-Ben celebration. They stated that they would endeavor to have the strikers return to work during this period, and let the fight be taken up again after the celebration. This seemed impractical to the directors, and the suggestion was discarded by them, although the strike leaders agreed to adopt it, provided that all men should be reinstated, and that the company should agree to arbitrate any differences that might be found to exist at the close of the truce.

This ended all efforts to compromise the controversy by arbitration or otherwise, except that some of the striking employes, with a committee of labor union leaders, called on the president of the company on October 6th, to talk over the situation. Some misunderstanding regarding this verbal conference resulted, and at a second meeting a written memorandum was given the committee by the president of the company, to the effect that the men would not be received back into the employ of the company except on a non-union basis, and that the rule of seniority of service would not be changed. No action was taken by the union as a result of this meeting.

From that time forward all business men and interested parties settled down to the conviction that the strike must be fought

out to a finish. A large number of old employes having returned to the service and many new men having been employed, the strike-breakers were returned to their homes by train loads, so that by October 13th, all of these strike-breaking crews, except a few men who had shown themselves honest and proficient, and had expressed a desire to remain in the permanent employ of the company, had been returned whence they came.

Normal conditions were speedily restored. Rioting and assaults ceased, except in a few desultory attempts to injure the property of the street railway company. The practice of hanging rocks or heavy irons attached to a short rope from the trolley wires in dark places, so arranged that the rock would strike the front vestibule of the cars about on the level with the motorman's head, became quite frequent, and several operatives were seriously injured by this inhuman method of attack. A reward of \$500, offered by the company, for the arrest and conviction of any persons guilty of this or similar acts, put a stop to this practice, and very soon the fear of assault among employes passed.

Regular service on all lines was so completely restored by Monday, October 4th, that the crowds attending the Ak-Sar-Ben festivities during the week were taken care of in an efficient and satisfactory manner. The business of the community resumed its normal conditions. The fear of the merchants that their trade would be seriously crippled during this week proved to be unfounded. The Ak-Sar-Ben festival was a success and not a failure, as had been prophesied and feared by the Board of Governors.

## Chapter XIII.

### ATTEMPTS TO PUNISH BY LEGISLATION

The strike leaders now began a new line of attack. Through their influence, ordinances were introduced before the city council calling for a reduction of the fares of the company. One ordinance provided for the sale of eight tickets for 25 cents during certain hours, another one for the sale of six tickets for 25 cents during all hours to adults, and twelve tickets for 25 cents to children. Mr. C. O. Pratt, as reported in the newspapers, announced gleefully that the "strike has only just begun, and the street railway have not yet begun to awaken to what is going to happen to them before we are through with them."

An ordinance was introduced and passed by the city council, over the veto of Mayor Dahlman, which provided for the licensing of motormen on street cars. In addition to the payment of one dollar license fee to the city, it required motormen to be trained for two weeks by men who had been in the employ of the company for three years, before they could become qualified to operate cars in the city of Omaha. This ordinance was intended to prohibit the operation of cars by strike-breakers, and in effect would prevent the street railway company from operating any cars on the streets in case of a strike, by other than its old employes. The ordinance was so clearly in the interest of union strikers, and so flagrantly exceeded the authority of the city council to regulate the street railway service under the laws of the state, that the company at once brought injunction proceedings in the courts enjoining its enforcement, and announced the intention of contesting the legality of this or any other ordinance, that might be passed for the purpose of punishing the company for the position it had taken in connection with the strike.

Petitions calling for a referendum vote, on the question of six tickets for 25 cents, were circulated, and signed by a large number of people. These petitions were finally filed with the city clerk, to await the action of the city council on the ordinances introduced on this same subject.

A petition was filed with the State Railway Commission by three citizens of Omaha, asking the commission to ascertain the physical value of the property of the company, to reduce its fares, and for other and further relief.

In these numerous attacks on the street railway company, a desired opportunity was afforded to many politicians, who believed this to be the psychological moment for them to secure popular favor by promoting the cause of the strikers.

A petition signed by more than 1,200 of the leading business men of the city, protesting against the passage of the ordinances to reduce the fares of the company, and the appearance before the city council of some of the leading business men of the city to voice their protest against the proposed action, brought about a change of sentiment in this regard. The general consensus of opinion of the property owners of the community seemed to be, that it was better service and extension of lines that this growing city needed, rather than cheaper fares, and that this was no time to seek to punish the street railway company for fighting a strike that had been forced upon it.

The ordinance was indefinitely postponed by a vote of eight to four.

The city attorney rendered an opinion that the referendum had never been legally adopted by this city, so the petitions went for naught.

The strikers continued to issue threats against the company. These threats now took the form of legal and legislative rather than physical attacks. On the evening of October 3rd, Mr. Pratt left the city to attend the national convention of the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employes of America. He returned only for a few days after the convention had closed, and during these few days he was sick and confined to his hotel. His statements, however, went out through the press that, from now on, the attacks against the company were to be along the lines of demands for reduction of fares, attacking the franchise of the corporation and by other means, which, he promised, in due time would destroy the street railway company.

A short time thereafter, Mr. W. D. Mahon, president of the Amalgamated Association, visited Omaha, and in a speech at Washington hall is reported to have said that relief for the street railway strikers must come through their activity in political matters;

that both the Republican and Democratic parties were corrupt and not in sympathy with the laboring men, and that they must find this relief in an independent party or through the Socialist party. He announced that the future plan of warfare against the street railway company would be by legislative and legal measures, that would be brought by the strikers to harass and annoy the street railway management.

The labor unions of Omaha had been led to believe that from Mr. Mahon some practical suggestions would be received. He was advertised as a man of broad business capacity, who was able to see a situation as it existed, and deal with it accordingly. Much disappointment was expressed, among all classes of laboring men, when it became known that he had failed to comprehend the situation here, or give any practical advice to the much-deluded strikers, who had lost their positions by following the advice of the under-officials of the Amalgamated Association.

Mr. Ben Commons, the first of the national officers to come to Omaha, remained in charge of the situation until December 1st, when he departed. One of the principal newspapers, in announcing his departure, quoted him as follows: "The strikers are now being well cared for by regular strike benefits, from not only the international organization but from contributions of the other local unions in addition, and it being the policy of the organization to carry on its fights to the finish, the strikers are in position to wait until it is done through an attack on the company's franchise."

It would seem, from the statements of these national officers, that, because of their failure to force the street railway company to sign a contract with the union, after a disastrous strike had been fought out under their advice and leadership, if their threats can be carried out by them, the people of this community are to be inflicted with a further conflict, which, if successful, would greatly impair the service of the street railway system, would retard its expansion, and prevent the fruition of its plans for a better service to the public and an increase of wages to its employes. It remains to be seen whether or not this community is to be so afflicted in its future development, through the vindictive plans laid by these non-resident agitators, who have no interest whatever in the future welfare of the cities served by the corporation they seek to harass and destroy.



The energies of the strikers during the fall campaign were directed to defeat Sheriff Brailey, who had made himself obnoxious to them by breaking up one of their open air meetings during the strike. The Socialist candidate, Mr. E. I. Morrow, was a striking street railway conductor, and every striking union man and the unions generally endorsed his candidacy and sought his election. The result of the ballot showed that Mr. Brailey had been elected by about 3,000 majority, and that while Mr. Morrow had polled several thousand votes more than the regular Socialist ticket, yet he was third in the race, having received less votes than either the Republican or Democratic nominees.

## Chapter XIV.

### THE STRIKE-MAKER

On Sunday, September 26th, an article, and an interview with Mr. C. O. Pratt, was published in the Omaha Daily News, under the head "The Strike-Maker—Pratt". This article in full was as follows:

"Who is this man C. O. Pratt who came to Omaha and started this street car strike?"

First President Wattles of the street railway company asked the question, and then the echo was heard from thousands of disgruntled citizens as they have hiked back and forth. Some drew their own conclusions and called him a mere "agitator," while others were so harsh as to dub him an "anarchist."

Pratt is simply a professional strike-maker, and about the only real type in existence. He admits that strike-making is his business.

"A strike is a final resort," he says. "First is conciliation; second, arbitration; third, the strike, and strike hard when you strike and strike to win. If you have to fight, give 'em the best fight you have in the shop."

This man Pratt came to Omaha about two weeks ago and within a few days the strike was precipitated, but with the diplomacy that has made his business a profession he now cheerfully denies that he ordered it and the strikers agree. The strikers to a man say they voted for the strike themselves.

It is this remarkable power that he has that makes him successful in his business. When everything has been said and done, Pratt does not stand as "the agitator" in the eyes of his "boys," yet he is a fighter. His features betray the fighter. Every line in his face reveals a spirit of determination. His black eyes flash defiance, when he is defiant; they sparkle kindly in his peaceful moods. Always is he self-composed.

This strike-maker is not an esthetic figure. He has a face lined and hard like that of the legitimate actor in the cartoon. The muscles of his mouth are over-developed, as those of a constant speaker. His expression, his eyes far apart, a frequent protrusion of his lips, suggests the portraits of the late Lawrence Barrett.

He is a man of medium build, there being nothing to indicate physical strength. He is forty years old and stands about five

feet and ten inches. His waving black hair is slightly tinged with gray and combed nearly in the middle. His clothes are light gray and characterless, from his broad-toed shoes to his red necktie.

Pratt's first connection with labor was in 1893, when he went to Cleveland and became a motorman on a street car. He remained on this job five years and then was a conductor for a year. When a strike came, Pratt became active. The strike lasted eleven months and the company agreed to reinstate all its old employes but one.

"Who is he?" asked Pratt.

"Yourself, sir," replied the railway official. "You have been too active."

The young man made no threats about continuing the strike, but looked the official straight in the eyes and said:

"Very well, sir, leave me out—I remain on a strike."

And he did. Ever since he has been on a strike and has struck hard. Since that day he was locked out in Cleveland he has been in a score of strikes, and it is declared that he has won most of them. Taking up the gauntlet thrown down by the Cleveland railway official, Pratt went forth to battle for the cause of conductors and motormen. He attended the national conventions of street railway employes, and is now chairman of the international executive committee of the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employes of America.

The lot of Pratt as a strike-maker has not been pleasant, and he has been made to earn his little \$6 a day and expenses. Numerous attempts have been made on his life and in a number of big strikes he has been black-jacked. Also he has been arrested and always is he shadowed by detectives. While in Omaha two detectives have been on his heels almost constantly. The two sleuths are known to Pratt, who has played a number of practical jokes on them and takes great delight in "ditching" them several times a day. The sleuths are registered at the Murray hotel as Davis and Jackson, and to a newspaper man admitted that their lay was to shadow the strike-maker.

Once, in Baltimore, Pratt was dogged continually by a mob of detectives, and was finally landed in jail and the authorities tried to "railroad" him to the penitentiary. Similar tactics were resorted to in the recent Philadelphia strike, which he handled successfully for the carmen, but he escaped even arrest.

As a professional strike-maker and manager, Pratt's course has dotted the map of the United States. After being locked out at Cleveland he went to Dayton, then to Knoxville, then to Nashville, then to Louisville, then to Lexington, then to Terre Haute, then to Aurora, Elgin and Marengo, then to Chicago, then to Butte, Ogden, Salt Lake City, then to San Francisco, then to Philadelphia and now he has Omaha. Besides these places he has a number of other cities and towns in his record. In many instances he has

been instrumental in averting strikes. He spends his time in traveling from one city to another, but does not always bring about a strike.

"Where we can get results for the boys without striking I am more than anxious to do so," he said. "Strikes are usually just as severe on the men themselves as on the companies."

The honesty of Pratt is never questioned by the union men, who have read in several magazines about his experience in Chicago, where he had a chance to take \$5,000 for himself but gave it to the men and showed up the bribers. It was during the struggle at Elgin and Aurora that the incident occurred, according to Pratt and others. A "friend" offered to give him \$5,000 for the privilege of naming one of the arbitrators.

"I told the fellow to meet me in my room with the cash and I then laid the trap to catch the 'higher-ups,'" said Pratt in relating the story. "I bored holes in the wall and had four reliable men stationed within call. When the fellow produced the \$5,000 I shoved it back and said 'I don't want your \$5,000.' That was the signal for the four men to rush in.

"Of course, the briber disclaimed ownership of the \$5,000, so we took it and put it in the strikers' fund. I got the money, but did not get the men higher up."

Pratt declares that in nearly every controversy offers of bribes are made to him when the companies are put in a hole. He says he could get rich quick if he took all the bribes tendered him, but he would rather take his \$6 per day and have a clear conscience.

"My life work is for the street car men and there's not money enough in the world to buy me off," he asserted.

Out in Salt Lake City, Pratt was accused of dragging "the church" into the strike, or dragging the strike into "the church." In fact he admits that he manipulated the trick, as President Joseph Smith of the Mormon church was also president of the railway company. He says after exhausting all other sources, he resorted to the potential influences in the Mormon church, and the result was an adjustment.

"What are the essential elements of a strike?" was asked Pratt, and he said:

"Well, you have got to take into consideration the conditions and the environments. Often there is a strong entrenchment of power with which you have to deal. There are two essentials: It is necessary to get together an army of soldiers who will have confidence in you and who are willing to take advice. Too often petty jealousies interfere and there is a lack of harmony, and success is limited. But build up your own foundation; get the case properly before the people. That is the second essential. It is necessary to select issues that will appeal to the general public, regardless of the question of unionism.

"Many people do not understand that the trades union movement is established solely for the elevation of the working class, and to obtain for the working men and women more humane treatment.

"So it is necessary to eliminate that question, and present only such issues as will give evidence of the things for which we are fighting.

"When I have selected my ground for a fight, I never allow the injection of personalities or other side issues to enter. I fight along a direct line and go after the things I set out to get. Other issues are usually injected for a purpose, usually to divert attention from the real questions at issue, and whatever is said, my sole object is the condition of the men and the things they are after.

"You must endeavor to obtain all the strong influence that will give you support—that will stand behind you.

"One of the first things I demand from the men is that they refrain from the use of intoxicants, and at all times be peaceful. Loud and profane language or abuse of strike-breakers will not be permitted. We must show the public that we are after peace, and during a struggle must at all times be good citizens."

Experience has taught Mr. Pratt all the tricks of the game on both sides, he says. He says he knows just what move will be made next by the railway and knows just how to meet it. The developments in Omaha, he says, have been along the same lines as those in other cities.

As an example of the moves in a strike he points to Philadelphia. Usually, he says, there are six steps, which worked out this way in Philadelphia:

Step 1—"The company says, "There is no strike and cars will run just as usual."

Step 2—"The strikers will not be taken back, there never will be any arbitration, and the full service is being rapidly restored."

Step 3—"There wouldn't be any strike if it wasn't for the Buttskies that come here from other cities."

Step 4—"We could settle this whole matter if we had only our old men to deal with."

Step 5—"We'll settle with our own men."

Step 6—"Settlement."

"This same line of action has practically been followed out in Omaha, with only a few immaterial variations," said Mr. Pratt Saturday night. "With each move I've made a check on my program, and now believe settlement probable."

The home of Mr. Pratt is at Welshfield, O., where he has a wife and three children, the eldest being fourteen years old and the youngest six years old. When he is officiating as father instead of strike-maker he can be found in one of three places—in a one-acre field that he devotes to agriculture; in the library, where he

has an interesting collection of books, or in the yard or somewhere playing with his three children.

Each night before he goes to bed—and that is often at two or three o'clock in the morning—he writes a letter to his little family. “My wife is deeply interested in my fight for labor’s cause and I keep her posted,” he said.

But the life business of this professional strike-maker, as he expresses it, is “improving the conditions of the street railway employes of America.”

“If you want to put it that way, no town is safe,” he said. “That is, no town where the men get less than twenty-five cents an hour. If I can get to a town like that and get any chance to build up a union and a demand for a decent wage scale, I’ll be there on the first train.

“I tell you there is a mighty lot of satisfaction in feeling that maybe you’ve done something for your fellow man.”

It should be noted in the foregoing article that one of the essential elements in a strike, as stated by Mr. Pratt, is that “it is necessary to select issues that will appeal to the general public regardless of the question of unionism”. It is evident to the careful student that this program was followed by him in the Omaha strike.

While, as a matter of fact, nearly all the material points at issue between the strikers and the company, which the union had any right to expect to have granted, were offered before the strike was commenced, and again during its progress—such as an increase of wages within a reasonable time, the employment of sufficient extra men to permit regular employes to have time off, a revision of the schedules to eliminate objectionable features, and the payment for time to motormen and conductors when called upon to take out extras, etc.—yet these questions were, at the beginning of the strike, made most prominent by the strikers as the cause of the trouble. In their circular to the public, and in subsequent interviews, these matters were kept in the foreground, while the officials of the street railway company at all times maintained that the strike was called for the sole purpose of forcing the company to recognize the union and enter into a contract with it; contrary to their pledges and agreements with their non-union employes, that they would not at any time enter into a contract with the union; and contrary to the agreement with the officers of the union itself, made when the union was organized, that no such contract would be required.

In one of Mr. Pratt's many published statements he is quoted as saying, regarding this agreement with the non-union men: "It ought to be broken, for his agreement with them was that he would not make any agreement with the union men. We ask the public to help us force him to break his agreement with the non-union men." But immediately after the strike was called, it became evident that, in this community, no strike could be successful that was waged for the purpose of forcing an employer to enter into a contract with his union employes, that would make it impossible or disagreeable for non-union men to work for this employer, and therefore the principal arguments that were used during the strike were along other lines.

In a later interview, Mr. Pratt is quoted as follows: "The fact is, the company is making a false issue. We are not asking for a 'closed shop.' The issue is one of bread and butter and humane treatment." However, in his public address before the mayor and city council, he admitted that "the question of wages was not the cause of the strike." It would seem that in this strike this labor union leader adopted the policy announced in the published article, entitled "The Strike-Maker—Pratt," to arrange such issues as in his judgment would best appeal to the sympathy of the public.

Although the officers of the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employes of America, who came to Omaha and brought about the strike, at all times claimed that they came here at the urgent request of the employes of the street railway company, this statement has been denied by members of the union, who should have known if any such request for their coming had been made. It is a fact that this Amalgamated Association, with its many officers, vice-presidents, organizers and delegates, is supported, and the salaries of these men are paid, by the income received from the monthly assessments paid into the national treasury by the workingmen who belong to street railway unions. It is evident that the more of these men who belong to these unions, the larger the income of this national association, and the larger the salaries that can be paid to these national officers.

On account of the increase of the income of the association during the past year, at the last annual meeting of the association, held at Toronto, Ontario, in October, 1909, the salary of W. D. Mahon, president of the association, was increased from \$2,500

to \$5,000 per annum. It is, therefore, not unreasonable to conclude that these national officers were directly interested in the establishment of a large and successful union among the employes of the Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway company, and in securing for these employes a contract with the company that would insure the payment of the monthly dues to the national association.

One of the paragraphs of the contract, presented to the officers of this company for execution, reads as follows:

“Any member of the Association who may be expelled by the Association for a violation of any of the rules or laws of the Association, or of the rules or regulations of the company, shall be discharged by the company on written request of the Association.”

If the demand for the execution of this contract had been complied with, the street railway company would have been placed in the position of a collecting agent for the National Association, in that it would agree to discharge any man, however proficient his services might be, who had been expelled by the union for a violation of any of the rules or laws of the association, including the rule requiring this member to pay his monthly dues to the National Association.



# Chapter XV.

## STRIKE-BREAKERS

In the Sunday edition of the Omaha Daily News, of September 26th, an article appeared under the heading "The Strike-Breaker—Waddell." This article in full, as published, was as follows:

With the advent of the professional strike-maker and labor agitator, of necessity came the professional strike-breaker.

No longer do large business concerns employing large numbers of men depend upon spasmodic efforts of the officials, to counteract sudden and unexpected hostile acts of the employes, to maintain the immense plants in operation pending a settlement of the points in dispute.

The professional strike-breaking firm is formed to meet just such contingencies, and large corps of trained men are maintained by those concerns to take immediate charge of any situation, meet all occasions that may arise during a strike, and to do all the worrying for the attacked business concerns, until the differences with employes are arbitrated, or a new force of employes is organized to carry on the permanent work.

With the first hint of trouble, conveyed to him by his secret agents among the employes, the up-to-date general manager now-a-days immediately gets in touch with one of the large strike-breaking concerns, of which there are several, informs its head of what he expects and asks for assistance. He states how many men he will need if a walkout is declared, and asks that men be held in readiness to ship on twenty-four hours' notice.

The organization of a large strike-breaking firm is like that of an army. With the proprietors, as the commanding generals, is a force of subordinate officials always "on the job", and who are in constant touch with an immense force of volunteers, who can be called from their regular employment for temporary engagements at any time.

A call is received for so many hundred or thousand men for a certain line of work. Immediately the strike-breaker communicates with his lieutenant in charge of that particular department, and the latter consults a register on which are entered the names of men who are ready and willing to be thrown into the breach pending a settlement.

Telegrams are sent to these men, or the general managers of the firms they regularly are employed with, and they are supplied with transportation to assemble at some point within short distance of the place of trouble.

Then comes the second call that the strike has been declared, or is to be declared within a few hours, with an order to ship. A corps of men sufficient to meet the demand immediately is started from the central point, sometimes in a body, but as often in small parties traveling unobtrusively.

With the men go a force of cooks and assistants, to feed and care for the ones who are to actually take the places of the strikers, for strike-breakers of necessity are clannish and do not mix with the public.

Arriving at their destination, the men practically go into camp in the shops or factories in which they are to work, or in case of street car or railroad strikes, in the barns and round houses of the concerns they are to assist. There their life when not on active duty is the life of the soldier in barracks, but with far more strict regulation and discipline, and at the same time better pay and provender.

James A. Waddell, of the strike breaking firm of Waddell & Mahon, of New York City, at present the largest strike-breaking firm in the country, is handling the Omaha street car strike.

Brain and brawn are combined in this man, making him a typical man for a typical job. Big and burly, he is capable of enforcing any command he makes. But combined with this is a keen brain and a will that makes failure almost an improbability.

With Waddell in Omaha are five hundred employes, with the necessary equipment of managers and lieutenants. While Waddell is coping with the local situation, the company also is helping to break strikes on an eastern railroad; in a large eastern city for the National Biscuit company, and in the southeastern part of the country for an association of brewers. Some of Waddell's army are baking biscuit, while others are brewing beer, and still others hammering rivets in boilers or tugging at the throttle levers of locomotives. Forty-five hundred men are on the payroll at present, and the average wage paid is \$5 a day, with everything furnished.

"Strike-breaking as a regular business is much more remunerative than many others," declares Waddell, "and at the same time it is much more interesting and exciting."

Twelve years ago Waddell was the purchasing and employing agent for a large firm of government contractors, doing a business of eight or ten million dollars a year. Then the Interborough street railway strike in New York came on, and Farley, the "king of strike breakers," now retired, was not handling street car strikes. August Belmont sent for Waddell, and asked him to take charge of the employment of men to break the strike, and their direction during the trouble.



JAMES A. WADDELL.



ARCHIBALD MAHON.

STRIKE-BREAKING CONTRACTORS



Waddell broke in with Archibald Mahon, who had previous experience in strike-breaking, by handling 8,000 men during the Interborough strike. He liked it so well that he took the advice of Belmont and other New York business men, and continued in the work after the Interborough strike was won. Today the firm has offices in New York, Philadelphia, Boston and Chicago, and the payroll, even when all is quiet, is \$5,000 a month.

"Three hundred and fifty thousand men are on our registers subject to call for strike-breaking," says Waddell. "These men are regularly employed by large concerns, but are given leaves of absence when required for strike-breaking. When through with a job they return to their regular positions. Many of our men have been with us since the organization of the business, and many others came to us from Farley when he retired. Strike-breaking is a recognized vocation, popular among those who have tried it. It requires nerve, judgment and perfect control of the temper, also abstinence from chronic indulgence in dissipation in any form. The pay is good, ranging from \$3 to \$10 a day, according to the demands of the situation to be met, and the skill required to fill the positions. The average wage is \$5 a day.

"But the strike-breaker is far better off financially than the average laboring man in any line. When on a job everything is furnished him that he requires—food, tobacco, reading matter, medical attention, laundry and barbering. A strike-breaker leaving New York for a place on the west coast need not take a cent with him, and will not be called upon to spend anything until he returns at the close of the strike. Everything he possibly could desire, and that he will be allowed to have under the rules and regulations all are required to observe, is furnished him."

The men on the job in Omaha are motormen and conductors from the Brooklyn Rapid Transit company and the Chicago street railways. All with the exception of a few conductors, new to the business, have regular runs with the companies in these places. They were furnished transportation to Omaha, and will be returned when the strike is over.

The wage paid them is \$5 a day, with everything furnished, and the men are being housed and boarded at the Ames, Vinton and Harney barns. Individual cots, with two sheets and a pillow, changed three times a week, and plenty of blankets are on the beds supplied.

At the Vinton and Ames barns the men are quartered in the rear of the barns. At the Harney barn on the second floor.

The commissary and kitchen department comprise regular hotel ranges, presided over by cooks regularly in the employ of the strike-breaking firm. Meals are served at long tables covered with white oil cloth, and the menu comprises that served at an ordinary hotel. Everything is of the best quality.

In the bunk section of the quarters also are reading and card tables, and over in one corner is a barber chair, with an experienced barber, who shaves the men and cuts their hair free of charge. At the reading tables are all the latest papers and periodicals, and an abundance of cigars and tobacco is furnished to help while away the time.

The men are allowed two changes of linen a week, laundered free of charge, and three shirts. When not on duty they are required to be in quarters, but a number are allowed to go about town on a pass each evening, on the promise that they will not drink or indulge in discussion of the strike. Two men in Omaha who violated the pledge were summarily discharged by Waddell Saturday morning.

Two yellow slips, turned in by the lieutenants in charge of quarters at the Harney barn, told the story of the falls from grace when Mr. Waddell appeared at the office Saturday morning. The men immediately were sent for. Both, when confronted with the report slips, admitted that they had been drinking, and one pleaded that he needed four or five drinks a day to quiet his nerves.

"Discharge them both," said Waddell to his secretary, after listening to the excuses, "and blacklist this man who can't get along without liquor. Men who drink cannot be strike-breakers."

A complete hospital equipment, a corps of physicians and nurses, and an ambulance are parts of the outfit for handling a big strike, according to Mr. Waddell, but the strike-breaker does not consider the Omaha strike a very big event.

"The Omaha strike is one of the most orderly I ever have participated in," says Mr. Waddell. "and the Omaha police department, with the number of men available for duty, has handled the situation better than the police department of any other city in which our firm has operated. Where the police department is not able to handle the situation, we bring along a complete hospital corps, because the injured men cannot be sent to the general hospitals, where they are subjected to annoyance by the other patients. No hospital corps is necessary in Omaha, but we have a physician along who inspects the quarters every day, and who looks after the health of the 500 men."

A police department of 2,000 men, drawn from the retired policemen of New York and Brooklyn, is a part of the organization of the strike-breaking outfit, supplied where the local authorities cannot handle the strikers and request outside aid.

"These men," says Waddell, "coming from the large cities are especially trained in handling crowds and riots, but are rarely needed except in the small manufacturing towns of the east, where the entire population sometimes is composed of the strikers and their families.

"In such towns we also furnish our own commissary supplies, for our patronage of a local merchant would mean his financial ruin if he accepted it, as he would be forced out of business when the strike was settled."

Then Mr. Waddell laughingly recalled the effort of a local laundry to secure the contract for the strike-breakers while here.

"That man doesn't know what he is going up against if his regular patronage is with laboring men," he said. "But then, it isn't my business to tell him."

But if Waddell couldn't find a laundryman to do the work, he would have a force of laundry workers here within a day, and it would be just the same with the butcher, the baker and the candlestick maker. What other people will not do for the strike-breakers they do for themselves.

"Strike-breaking isn't the only vocation of the Waddell-Mahon corporation," declares Waddell. "Strike-settling is just as important and far more agreeable."

"This department takes charge of negotiations between employers and employes, when a strike is threatening, and so far has settled without a strike every such difficulty referred to it. Every large strike-breaking firm now has a strike-settling department, and they generally are used by large eastern concerns when it comes to making new-agreements with their men, or drafting new wage schedules."

Waddell and his strike-breakers will fade away as unobtrusively as they came to town, when the present strike is settled and the men go back to work. Some will return directly to their homes and regular jobs, while others will go on to other troubles between employers and employes.

Regarding the strike-breakers, Waddell and Mahon, it can be truthfully said that they acted with promptness and dispatch, after being requested to furnish 500 experienced conductors and motormen, for service on the lines of the Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway company during the continuance of the strike. The first detachment of 128 men arrived from Chicago on Sunday morning, September 19th, twenty-four hours after the strike had been in operation. Other detachments came from New York as soon as the trains could bring them, after the order had been given for their shipment. The most of these men were experienced in the line of work required of them, and, as soon as they were quartered at the three principal car barns of the company, were placed under the charge of lieutenants or under-bosses, from whom they received their orders while they were on duty. These lieutenants and bosses had evidently been selected because of their special ability to enforce their orders to the men by physical

prowess, if necessary. Several combats between the men themselves were quelled by these lieutenants, who were always able to knock down and subdue any who refused or neglected to obey.

In nearly all cases reported, the operatives were brave and always ready to defend themselves and the property of the company against mobs or individuals, who in any manner interfered with the operation of the cars. One of the most common causes for trouble was the refusal of some passengers to pay their fare to the strike-breaking conductors. In such cases the motorman was generally called by the conductor. He promptly responded by stopping the car, and coming to the passenger, trolley-controller in hand, would notify him in a gruff and positive way to either pay his fare or be put off the car. In most cases the fare was paid, but in cases where further refusal was made, the passenger was unceremoniously put off the car.

These strike-breakers paid no attention to the continual wordy abuse of passengers. To be called "scabs" seemed not to disturb them in the least, but they did not permit passengers on the cars to ride without paying their fares; nor did they submit to any personal violence from any of the passengers. They were generally ready for trouble, and did not seek to avoid personal contact with anyone who attempted to assault them.

In some cases where mobs congregated and where trouble was imminent, some of these conductors and motormen left their cars and escaped in the crowds, but, generally speaking, they remained on the cars and fought their way, where necessary, to the end of their routes. Some, but not many, of these strike breakers were injured in riots. Fortunately, no one was killed nor permanently injured. In many cases the strike-breakers were armed, but as a rule they did not display their arms, and only one or two cases of the use by them of fire arms were reported. In all ordinary conflicts, they effectively used the iron switch rods or the trolley controllers on the cars when attacked.

Many amusing incidents were told by the newspapers regarding the actions of these strike-breakers during their service. Of course, when they first arrived they did not know the names of the streets, and at the beginning the company did not have sufficient old men to send out to instruct them just where their cars were to run, so that, during the first few days, some of the cars were switched on to the wrong lines. One case is reported of a



Farnam street car, running north on 10th street, being switched on to the Harney street line. The conductor was asked by a passenger if this was not the Farnam street car. He replied pleasantly that it was. The passenger then asked if they were then on Farnam street. The conductor went forward and talked with the motorman, and came back and admitted to the passenger that he did not know what street he was on, but would find out when he came to the next car barn. He secured this information at the barn at Twentieth and Harney, and in due time his car was switched back on to the right street.

The strike breakers were an accommodating lot. On one occasion, a Park car on Leavenworth turned south on Park avenue, but when a large number of the passengers signified their intention to transfer to the West Leavenworth line, the train crew backed the car to the switch, and turned it west on Leavenworth street. Some of the passengers, who had alighted, again boarded the car and asked the conductor why he was going out on Leavenworth. He replied: "You see, most of the passengers wanted to go out on Leavenworth, and as we had never been out on that line before, we thought we would go out and see the country. How far is it, anyhow, out to the end of this line?"

An east side Park car turned west at the switch at Park avenue and Pacific street. When the passengers protested that the car was going on the wrong track, the conductor backed up and was about to proceed, when a woman, who had said she wanted to get off at Mason street, told the conductor that they had already passed Mason street one block. He backed the car up a block for her convenience, and then went on south on Park avenue.

A loaded special car, that should have stopped at Fortieth and Farnam, was run on through to Dundee for the convenience of the passengers. They, however, were obliged to pay an extra fare to the conductor before he would take them on. None of the fares paid were registered by him; in fact, very few of the fares were registered by the conductors. In one case, the register had been clogged up with a nail so that it could not be used. In many instances, passengers refused to pay their fares unless the conductor would register them. In some instances, the passengers themselves pulled the register cord, and not only registered their own fares but many others.

Three school girls boarded the car at Sixteenth and Davenport streets, and refused to pay their fares, because the conductor was not registering the fares he collected. In this case, the conductor let them ride, but when they wanted to get off, he refused to stop the car to let them off. One of them caught the register cord and began registering fares, and continued it until the conductor stopped the car and let them off.

It was reported, but not verified, that one crew, who learned that the fare was ten cents on the Bridge line to Council Bluffs, started to switch their car on to this line, in order that they might get some of the ten cent fares, instead of the five cent fares they were obliged to take in Omaha. But, not being acquainted with the switches, they were not able to get their car on to this line.

A crew on the Florence line, discovering when near Fort Omaha that it would be too late for them to take the load of passengers to Florence and get back to the barn before dark, notified the passengers that they must leave the car. This the passengers refused to do, and when the crew left the car standing on the track, one of the passengers took charge of the trolley, and it was run to Florence and left on the track there.

These conductors knew nothing about the correct issuing of transfers, so transfers were freely given, and were accepted on any line they were presented. In some cases, conductors gave passengers several transfers, that they might have for future use.

Some ladies boarded a Farnam street car, and asked if it ran to Fortieth and Cuming. The conductor said: "Bless you, I don't know where Fortieth and Cuming is. I was told to take this car out and follow the track; that is what I am doing."

Some other passengers asked if a car ran to the depots. The conductor politely said: "You will have to stay on and see; I don't know exactly where the car does run to."

A lady passenger on one of the lines gave the conductor a fifty-cent piece in payment of her fare. He gave her back a twenty five-cent piece, and slowly and carefully counted out to her five nickels. She took the money without comment, and quickly put it in her purse. A passenger who sat beside her, thinking that the conductor had made a mistake in giving her back the full amount in change of the money she had paid him, stepped out on the platform and said to the conductor: "Don't you know that you gave that lady back fifty cents in change for the fifty-cent piece she

gave you?" The conductor replied: "Yes, I know it, and she knows it, too, but she may have some trouble in passing that quarter I gave her."

As a rule, very few of the fares were registered by these strike-breaking conductors. There were some exceptions, and some of the men faithfully rang up all the fares they collected. These were men who wanted to remain as permanent employes of the company. The others, regardless of the criticism they received on every hand, refused to ring up fares or to turn them in at the barn. They paid no attention to the officers of the company, and on one occasion when General Manager Smith was on the car, the conductor was told that Smith was the general manager of the road. He took hold of the register and rang up three fares, with the remark, "We'll take fifteen cents on Smith." Frequently, the registers on cars on which there were fifty passengers would show that only three or four had been registered.

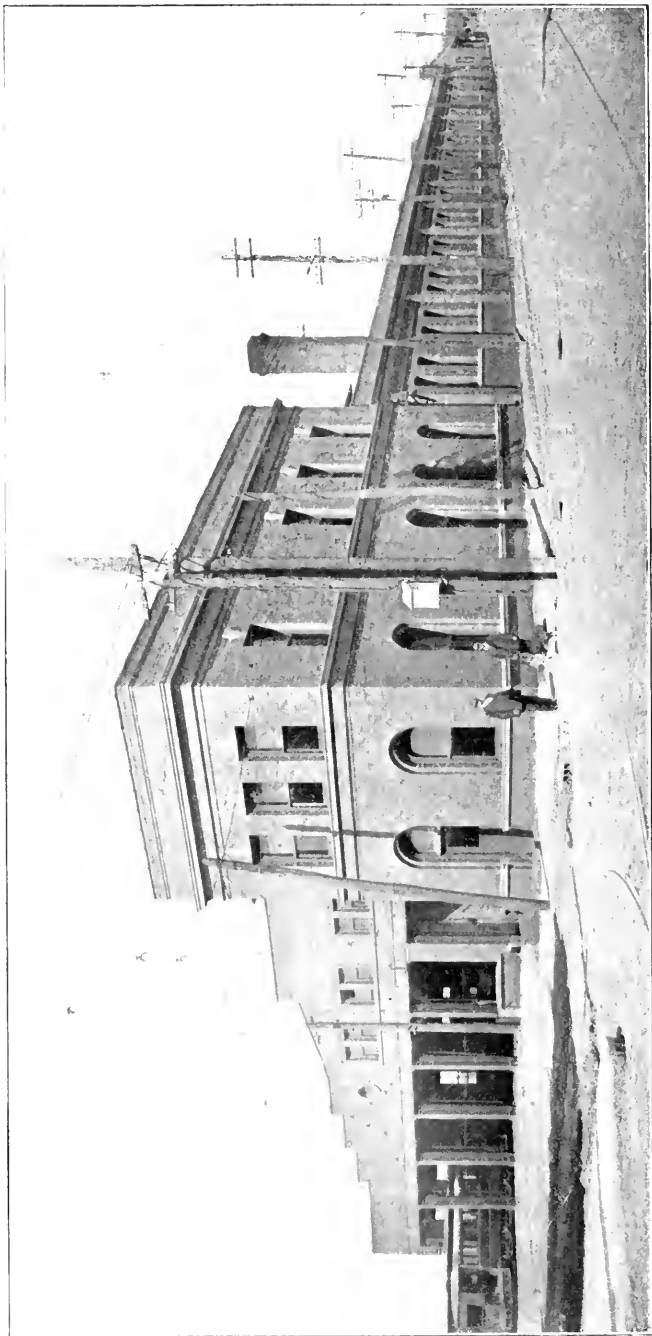
The strike-breakers were liberal with the company's money, often giving it to the strikers themselves. During the parade of the strikers, one of the strike-breaking conductors, as he passed the parade, handed a nickel to each one of the strikers. They had no regard whatever for rules or regulations, knowing that they would not be discharged. They frequently remarked to passengers that they were hired to run the cars, not to collect fares. Few passengers rode without paying at all, but very little of the money collected by the strike-breakers reached the treasury of the company; but, as a rule, they were a jolly lot of disreputables. They could and did operate the cars successfully. They did not know the sensation of fear, and were always ready for a fight.

An heroic incident occurred during the riot on September 21st, near the Vinton street barn. A strike-breaking conductor had a woman and child on his car when the brick bats and stones began to fly through the windows. He stopped the car and, in the face of an angry mob, took the woman and child, shielding them from the blows of the rioters with his own body, until he had landed them safely on the sidewalk. He then fought his way back to his car, where he was assaulted again and again, and beaten almost into insensibility before he finally reached the Vinton street barn. But he stuck to his post, like the hero that he was, and when the fight was over, by no word or act of his did he indicate that he had done anything worthy of mention. When asked for the

details of this encounter, he refused to say anything, except, "I stuck to her until I landed her in the barn."

The scene in the Vinton street barn, where a large number of strike-breakers were confined on the evening of the riot, has been described by those who saw it as most remarkable. When the cars began coming into the barn, showing the evidences of the riot by broken windows and bleeding crews, the effect on these men—the comrades of the men who had been attacked—was electrical. From all descriptions, it acted as does the scent of blood on the wild beast. The lieutenants quickly called to their assistance twenty-five of the strongest of the strike-breakers, and armed them with controllers from the cars, not for the purpose of keeping the rioters from coming into the barn and attacking these men, but to prevent the men from going out of the barn to attack the rioters, who were gathered in great numbers in that vicinity. The guards formed in solid lines between the men and the doors. The men begged and pleaded with the guards and the officers of the law, who were present, to be allowed to go out and put down the riot. They explained to the officers that they knew just how to do it, and that if they would let even a dozen of them go out among the rioters, they would have them dispersed in short order.

No doubt, this meeting and other similar meetings were planned for the purpose of exciting these strike-breakers into an open attack on the men engaged in rioting, that would result in great bodily injury and possibly murder. But it was the determined purpose of the street railway officials, and their positive instructions to the strike-breakers' leaders, that under no provocation should these men be permitted to attack or assault citizens, even though they were engaged in rioting. On this special occasion, at the Vinton street barn, it seemed for a time impossible to hold the men in confinement, while their associates were being assaulted on the outside. One big, burly lieutenant, who saw an Italian immediately across the street throw a brick through the window of a car loaded with women and children, quietly slipped away from his post of duty, crossed over the street, and, with one dexterous blow under the heart with the controller, the Italian was dropped unconscious on the spot where he stood. The lieutenant leisurely walked back to the deputy sheriff, who had seen him administer this summary punishment, and remarked, "If you would only let a dozen of us go out among these cowards, we would have them



VINTON STREET CAR BARN NEAR WHICH THERE WAS RIOTING



dispersed in no time." But the order was positive that they must remain in the barn, and with this single exception it was not disobeyed.

It is a very difficult matter to record a word of criticism against these strike-breakers, who displayed so many loyal and commendable qualities under stress, in a period of great excitement and much provocation. They stole the fares of the company with the abandon of hardened thieves, but, as a rule, they protected its property and the passengers in their charge with the loyalty of veteran soldiers. So, whatever their faults might have been, they were forgotten by the officials of the company and by the public generally. It was said that the conductors divided their collections with the motormen, and again with the lieutenants at the barns, who, if all reports were true, were as corrupt as the operating men. It is said that some of these lieutenants demanded two dollars from each conductor, before he was sent out on his run to collect this money back from the public. It was hinted that the leaders of the union and of the strike-breakers were in collusion, and worked together for the profit of both. It was reported that these leaders were seen together on certain occasions, in conference over the progress and possibly the prolongation of the strike, but no positive evidence of these reports was ever produced, although rumors flew thick and fast, and these rumors were believed by many who heard them.

However this may be, one lesson of this strike to the officers of the street railway company was made very plain—that the whole system of strikes and strike-breaking, by professionals engaged in these two lines of civil warfare, is wrong and wasteful in the extreme. If strikes must occur, and it seems that they must, so long as the labor agitator is permitted to follow his vocation unchecked by the laws of the land, then the street railway companies, in danger of losses incident to this lawless work, should organize to protect themselves.

An organization could easily be effected among the principal street railway companies of the country, whereby each would agree to furnish, in case of strike, its pro rata number of experienced men, to go to the city where a strike was about to take place, and, under the proper officers of this organization, take charge of the operation of the cars abandoned by the strikers. Fifty or one hundred brave and efficient men could be found among the opera-

tives on any road in the country, where five hundred or more men are employed, who would be willing to enlist for such service, they to be excused from their regular duties by their home companies during their absence, and to receive as compensation for their work all expenses and ten dollars per day for the time of their service.

Such an organization among the principal street railway companies of the country would prove an effective standing army, and would prevent many strikes, which are often precipitated because of the knowledge of the strike-makers that no adequate means is at hand to conduct the business of the street railway company when a strike has been declared.



# Chapter XVI.

## LOYALTY REWARDED—VIEWS OF THE MEN

Twenty-five days after the strike in Omaha had been declared, sufficient regular employes had returned to the service of the company, with the new men who had been employed and put into service, to make up a full crew of operatives, and the last of the strike-breakers were sent back to their homes. From that time forward the strike, so far as the company was concerned, was at an end.

At a meeting of the board of directors of the street railway company, held on October 4th, for the purpose of rewarding conductors and motormen who had remained in the service of the company during the strike, the duration of the strike was officially fixed at fifteen days—from September 17th to October 2nd. By resolution of the board, the general manager was authorized to pay to each regular conductor and motorman who reported for duty during this time five dollars extra per day for each day he reported, and five dollars per day additional for each day during the strike on which regular conductors and motormen took out cars. To those operatives who worked during the full term of the strike, this award amounted to \$150 each. To those who worked for a part of the time the amount was less, but the paying of this reward was a source of great satisfaction to the officers of the company and the public generally, and especially to the men who received it.

Much favorable comment was made by the press and otherwise on the liberality of the company in this regard. Soon thereafter, the road officers and barn foremen were each paid the sum of \$200, as a token of appreciation of the company for their loyal service. Others who had been especially faithful in their services were rewarded accordingly.

To secure a fair expression from the employes of the street railway company regarding certain subjects concerning the strike, the president of the company, on November 8th, addressed the

following letter to twelve of the men who were in the employ of the company at the time of the strike, one half of them union men and one half non-union. This letter read as follows:

“Omaha, Neb., Nov. 8, 1909.

“DEAR SIR:

For future reference I am preparing a history of the recent street railway strike. In order that it may correctly represent the views of all parties concerned I am asking several old employes of this company to write me letters expressing their views, which letters will be published as a part of the history.

“I would like to have you write me a letter in your own language which will state:

“The length of time you have been in the employ of the company;

“In what capacity, whether conductor or motorman;

“Whether or not you joined the union among the employes;

“If you did join, or did not join, what were the motives which inspired you to make the decision;

“What has been your experience with the company regarding any causes of complaint;

“If you have had any ground for complaint in the past, please state what was the nature of this complaint against the treatment you have received from the officers of the company.

“What in your judgment was the general condition a month before the strike was called among the conductors and motormen?

“Was it good and satisfactory, or was it unsatisfactory to the men?

“If unsatisfactory, in what respect?

“If you joined the union and went out on strike, please state fully just what was the cause which inspired you to go out on a strike, and whether or not you think the men were justified in striking.

“If you have no objections, and were a union man, state whether or not a vote by ballot was taken, as provided by the by-laws of the union, on the question of the strike.

“If you were not a union man and quit the service of the company during the strike or at any period of it, state for what reason you quit.

“ You may include any other items that you think are important in your letter, and whatever you say will not be counted against you in any way by the officers of the street railway company, as it is my desire to give a number of the representative employes of the company the opportunity of saying just what they have in mind regarding all matters in these letters. In a general way please embody in your letter as many of the points above mentioned as you see fit to do, and send the letter to me as early as convenient, and greatly oblige,

“Yours truly,

(Signed) G. W. WATTLES,

President.”

The following replies were received:

“Omaha, Neb., Nov. 9, 1909.

“MR. G. W. WATTLES,  
Omaha, Neb.

DEAR SIR:—I have been in the employ of the company for twenty-two years last month. Two years I drove horse cars on the 13th street line, and twenty years on as motorman on the 24th and Hanscom Park line. I did not join the union because I was satisfied with the treatment I was receiving, and had no complaint to make against any of the officers of the company. I think everything was satisfactory the month before the strike, and do not think the men were justified in striking. My reasons for not joining the union nor not walking out during the strike are that every man that wishes to make a headway has to plan ahead and can't be called out on a strike any time the union says; so I don't think that anyone knows a man's business any better than the man himself, and whether he can afford to lose the time and perhaps his position or not.

“ Yours truly,

(Signed) BERT P. BOONE.

“ Omaha, Neb., Nov. 10, 1909.

“MR. G. W. WATTLES,  
Omaha, Neb.

DEAR SIR:—In reply to your letter of the 8th would say, I have been in the employ of your company over nineteen years as conductor. I did not belong to the union at the time of the strike. I did not take my car out of the barn the morning of the strike. I did not feel safe and could not stand to be called scab and other

words. I was the fourth car out in the morning. The rest of the men would not go out that belonged ahead of me, so I refused to go too. The foreman said I was discharged, so I stayed away from the barn. I joined the union the second or third day of the strike. I never had anything to do with bringing on the trouble. I never had any complaint to make about the company. As far as I am concerned they have always treated me good, but I don't think that I deserved to be put back on the list where I started nineteen years ago. Would like to see all the old men reinstated in their old places, as they were before the strike. I am not satisfied with the conditions as they are now.

"Yours truly,

(Signed) CHARLES SNYDER.

"Omaha, Neb., Nov. 10, 1909.

"MR. G. W. WATTLES,  
Omaha, Neb.

DEAR SIR:—Your letter of the 8th inst. received requesting me to write you a letter expressing my views in regard to the recent street railway strike and the position I occupied as employe of the company. I will answer your questions, in the the first place, in the order in which you have asked. I have been in the employ of the street railway company twenty-two years in the capacity of conductor, starting in in December, 1887, under the superintendency of Mr. F. A. Tucker. I joined the union about ten years ago at a time when all the conductors and motormen were members. Myself and some others joined, in order, if any trouble arose, we could have a voice and vote in the matter; but we had some half dozen agitators who were always trying to make some trouble about having better wages or the union recognized, etc., and the thing became so corrupt that myself and several others withdrew. We had a vote during my membership on a strike. I voted against it, which was the last meeting I attended. I have never had any cause for complaint against the company since I have been in their employ, and if I should become dissatisfied, I will simply quit and not throw a brick at the man that takes my place, or destroy any of the company's property.

"I did not go out on the strike, and do not think any one was justified in so doing, and I had heard but very little dissatisfaction expressed among the men before the strike, except a few chronic agitators. During the strike and while at work I was frequently

approached by the strikers, who begged me to quit work and go with them on the strike, but they got no satisfaction from me, and they finally gave it up as a bad job. It may be that I will not be with the street railway company a great while longer, but when I do quit, I hope to have the good will and friendship of all those with whom I have been associated for so many years.

“Very truly yours,

(Signed) CHARLES WARD.”

“Council Bluffs, Iowa, Nov. 11, 1909.

“MR. G. W. WATTLES, President,

Omaha, Neb.

DEAR SIR:—I take this means of expressing my views and telling you why I did not join the union or go on a strike. I have been employed as conductor for the street railway company in Council Bluffs for the past nineteen years. I did not join the union because I did not want to be under any obligations to go out on a strike, preferring to be at liberty to use my own judgment. In this case it looked to me like everything could have been settled without a strike, except recognition of the union. So long as I get fair treatment and good wages I will try to be satisfied. As less than half the conductors and motormen of this division belonged to the union, I don't see why they should be recognized separately.

“I have no complaints to make against the company or its officials. I have found the foremen and road officers on this division reasonable and agreeable to deal with. Up to a month before the strike it seemed to me that the men on this division as a whole were pretty well satisfied. I suppose it is natural for us to want all the wages we can get, but this was easily disposed of and furnished no grounds for a strike. I don't know of any instances where union men have been discriminated against or any promises the company have made that were not kept. My mind was never in the balance as I could see no good reason for a strike.

“Yours truly,

(Signed) W. F. THORNE.”

“Omaha, Neb., Nov. 12, 1909.

“MR. G. W. WATTLES,

Omaha, Neb.

DEAR SIR:—In reply to your letter of November 8th, will answer your questions as follows:

"I have been in the employ of the company for twelve years last March. I have acted as conductor during the entire time. I joined the union the night before the strike—but not of my own accord. Two men came to my house and wanted me to go down to the union meeting—said it was an open meeting and all carmen were invited to attend, and C. O. Pratt was going to speak. I finally consented to attend, and no more than sat down at the meeting till Mr. Morrow and Gillen and several other street car men came and asked me to join the union. I said, 'Not now'. Morrow said, 'I have your name and want a dollar'. I told him I didn't have any money with me. Just then an acquaintance stepped up and paid it for me. It is under these conditions that my name is among the union men. I have never attended any of their meetings or paid any further attention to it. Never received any of their money, and do not consider myself a member.

"I have never had cause for complaint while in employ of the company.

"So far as I know a month before the strike the condition among the men was good.

"I went to the car barn to go to work on the morning of the strike and met about fifty men this side of Ames avenue. They said there was a strike on, and I turned back home.

"I don't think the men were justified in striking.

"At the meeting a rising vote was taken.


"Yours truly,

(Signed) H. S. HALLENBECK."

"Omaha, Neb., Nov. 12, 1909.

"MR. G. W. WATTLES, President,  
Omaha, Neb.

DEAR SIR:—Answering yours of late date will say, first, that I have been in the employ of your company as motorman since May, 1898.

"I did not join the union, simply because it does not quite suit my idea of things. For instance, the way they have of voting a man out of a position does not look good to me. 

"Causes of complaint, I have always found our company ready and willing to adjust matters in a fair and just manner, consequently have no grievance on that score.

"The condition before the strike I think very good. The feeling was unusually good for a bunch of men that size. To be

sure there are always a few who are always out of fix and could not be satisfied. I only hope to see things running in as good shape in the near future.

“Thanking you for the kindness shown, I beg to remain,

“Yours respectfully,

(Signed) J. W. KEPLER.”

“Omaha, Neb., Nov. 14, 1909.

“MR. G. W. WATTLES,  
Omaha, Neb.

DEAR SIR:—I have been in the employ of the street railway company for thirteen years and six months as conductor.

“When the employes first organized a union I was persuaded to join it. After I attended a few of their meetings and learned their methods, I withdrew. That was about seven or eight years ago.

“I joined the union at that time because there was talk of a strike, and I thought I would have a chance to vote against trouble.

“I have never belonged to the union since that time.

“During the years of my employ I have had no complaints to offer against my treatment by the company. I have no complaint to offer against the officers of the company.

“A month before the strike was called the general condition among most of the men seemed to be satisfactory, with the exception of a few agitators.

“I did not join the union and did not go on a strike, because I do not believe in such methods. I do not think the men were justified at all in causing a strike.

“Not being a member of the union I cannot say positively what kind of vote was taken, but I was told that they took a standing vote.

“I did not quit the service of the company during the strike. I worked the first day of the strike thirteen hours. All the cars stopped at seven o'clock, and there was no way provided for me to get home, so I had to walk the forty (40) blocks after that hour. I remained at home the next three days, because it was too far to walk, and I had no way of getting back and forth.

“In regard to this strike I would say, that I do not believe there ever would have been any strike if it had not been for Mr. Ben Commons and Mr. Pratt, two outsiders who had no business to

influence the men at all. After Mr. Commons had been here a few days, several of the men tried to influence me to attend their meetings, but I knew where I stood on unionism and didn't go. I did all in my power to influence the men against going on a strike, and did influence a great many of them to return to work after the strike was on.

“ Yours truly,

(Signed) G. C. HUSE.”

“ Omaha, Neb., Nov. 14, 1909.

“ MR. G. W. WATTLES,  
Omaha, Neb.

DEAR SIR:—In reply to yours of the 8th will say, I have worked for the Omaha Street Railway company as conductor ever since the 29th of August, 1898, most of the time on the Harney line. I joined the union about two months after it was organized, but being in poor health I have not attended the meetings. I believe in organized labor. If the laborers did not organize, capital would crowd them off the earth. I do not believe in strikes, as both sides are losers. I do believe in the New Zealand method of arbitration.

“ In this instance I think there was very little to arbitrate. Of course, we need more money too, as everything we have to buy has advanced very nearly fifty per cent. If I had been able to attend the meetings I should have voted NO! ! from start to finish. While the men are probably treated as well as most companies treat their men, we are called to the office for apparently no cause, or so slight that it seems mere boys' play. I was called because I issued a universal transfer when I had a big load, and once for accidentally sitting down while crossing Cuming street on an extra going in. We had no passengers. I lost a day to explain.

“ I can't see why the public should be requested to find fault with the men. If they were compelled to advance their wages during an investigation, there would be less reporting done.

“ I do not consider that I went out on a strike at all, for I was sick and could not have worked anyway. I was taken down on Wednesday, the 14th, with erysipelas and was not able to work till the 3rd of October. I have had to lay off two days since then on account of sickness. If I had been able I certainly should have taken my car out on the 18th and kept it out, too. As it was I



reported for work on the 29th and furnished a doctor's certificate, as well as a statement from the night foreman, Dan Mulcahay.

"As I was not at the meeting that voted to call a strike, I don't know what kind of a vote was taken, but several of the men who were there have told me that a standing vote was taken, and if a secret vote was taken the strike would never have been called. When I did go to work I worked overtime, double time and extra time, anything to help out during the carnival. I received no extra compensation but got what the time amounted to.

"Respectfully,

(Signed) NAT. P. SACKETT."

The purpose of this letter was to ascertain, if possible, if there was any real dissatisfaction among the rank and file of the men before the strike was called, and, if so, what was the cause of the trouble. It would seem, from the tenor of the replies, that there was not in reality any deep-seated, general feeling of dissatisfaction among the men.

# Chapter XVII.

## LESSONS OF THE STRIKE

At the very beginning of the strike, President Taft delivered a speech on labor in Chicago, in which he made the following statements:

“I know that there is an element among employers of labor and investors of capital which is utterly opposed to the organization of labor. I cannot sympathize with this element in the slightest degree. I think it a wise course for laborers to unite to defend their interests. It is a wise course for them to provide a fund by which, should occasion arise and strikes follow, those who lose their places may be supported pending an adjustment of the difficulties.

“I think the employer who declines to deal with organized labor, and to recognize it as a proper element in the settlement of wage controversies, is behind the times.

“There is not the slightest doubt that if labor had remained unorganized wages would be much lower. It is true that in the end they would probably be fixed by the law of supply and demand, but generally before this law manifests itself, there is a period in which labor, if organized and acting together, can compel the employer promptly to recognize the change of conditions and advance wages to meet a rising market and an increase in profits, and, on the other hand, can delay the too quick impulse of the employer facing a less prosperous future to economize by reducing wages.

“There is a higher standard of living among American laborers than in any other country in the world, and while there have doubtless been a good many other reasons for this, certainly the effect of the organization of labor has been to maintain a steady and high rate of wages, making such a standard of living possible.

“Nothing I have said or shall say should be construed into an attitude of criticism or unfriendliness to those workingmen who for any reason do not join unions. Their right to labor for such

wages as they choose to accept is sacred, and any lawless invasion of that right cannot be too severely condemned.

“All advantages of trades unionism, great as they are, cannot weigh a feather in the scale against the right of any man lawfully seeking employment to work for whom and what price he will. And I say this with all the emphasis possible, even though the fact is that, if I were a workingman, I should probably deem it wise to join a union for the reasons given.

“Of course, when organized labor permits itself to sympathize with violent methods, with breaches of the law, with boycotts and other methods of undue duress, it is not entitled to any sympathy. But it is not to be expected that such organizations shall be perfect, and that they may not at times and in particular cases show defective tendencies which ought to be corrected.”

Perhaps this statement on the part of the President had as much to do as any other cause in encouraging the striking street car men in their fight. The first part of the speech was quoted by the strike-leaders on many occasions. The last part of it, which qualifies to a large extent what is said about unions, was seldom, if ever, quoted.

It was unfortunate that the President did not explain, in this address, how “workingmen, who for any reason do not join unions,” are to be protected in “their right to labor for such wages as they choose to accept,” if employers of labor are compelled or induced to sign agreements with unions, which practically preclude them from employing or continuing in their employ any who do not belong to the union. The contract submitted by the union in March, 1907, to the officers of the Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway company contained the following provision:

“Section 3. All motormen and conductors who are now or may hereafter become members of the Association shall remain members in good standing in the Association as long as they remain in the service of the company, providing that such continuance of membership shall not conflict with the laws of the Association. All new motormen and conductors hired in the future shall receive their necessary instructions upon the car at the hands of the members of the Association, and upon making application for membership in the Association, and their membership shall be governed by the same rules as that stated above in regard to present members of the Association. The company further agrees that in case

the Association expels a member for the violation of its laws, that they will dismiss such employe from the service of the company upon receipt of the proof of such violation from the Association."

It is needless to say that if the demand for the execution of this contract had been complied with, there would not have been any further opportunity for workingmen who did not belong to a union to find employment with the Omaha & Council Bluffs Street Railway company.

The first section of the contract with the Cleveland Electric Railway Company and Division No. 268 of the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employes of America, of Cleveland, Ohio, reads as follows:

"Section 1. The company recommends that all motormen and conductors in their employ, become members of the Association and will post notices of such recommendation upon the signing of this agreement, the substance of such notices to be agreed upon between the company and the committee representing the Association. All motormen and conductors who are now or may hereafter become members of the Association, or who have made application for membership in the Association up to and including the date of the signing of this agreement, shall remain members in good standing of the Association so long as they remain in the service of the company, providing that such continuance in membership shall not conflict with the laws of the Association. All new motormen and conductors employed in the future, after a probationary period of sixty days, if they still remain in the service, shall become members of the Association and subject to the above provisions. Should the Association expel a member for the violation of its laws, the company agrees to dismiss said member from the service upon receipt of the proof of such violation from the Association."

The writer is reliably informed that in all cases where contracts are entered into between street railway companies and union employes, that even though provisions such as above cited are not at first inserted in such contracts, sooner or later provisions of this character are demanded by such unions. As a matter of fact, no employer of union labor can be found who will admit that he is able to maintain an open shop where union men and non-union men work in harmony together. The theory of labor unions is

that all who do not belong to the union are "scabs," and should not be permitted to work by the side of union men. While, in theory, men who do not belong to unions should be protected in their rights to work for whomsoever they choose, and for such wages as may be mutually satisfactory, as a matter of fact, no places for such workmen can be found with corporations or individuals who have contracts with well-organized unions.

The letters received from the men confirm the opinion of the officers of the street railway company, frequently expressed by them during the strike, that this strike was inflicted on the employes of this company without just cause and at the dictation of outside agitators, who came to this city for the purpose of forcing the execution of a contract, **which would insure their association a monthly income of several hundred dollars** out of the wages of these workingmen; and that, failing to secure the execution of this contract by peaceful methods, a strike was called to enforce this demand.

That the strike was never legally voted in accordance with the by-laws and rules of the association is beyond question; that the passions of the men were intentionally aroused, and that they were called upon in the heat of excitement to vote the strike by a standing vote, instead of by a ballot, is equally certain.

Finally, the men who precipitated this crime against labor, when they knew they had been defeated, instead of acting the part of true generals by advising the strikers to accept the reasonable and just proposition of the company, under which nearly all of the men might have returned to work, counseled the rejection of this proposition, and the continuance of an unprofitable and unjust warfare, in which every man who follows their leadership and advice must finally accept absolute defeat, with all the loss and suffering to innocent parties which such defeat must entail.

To assume the authority of placing in jeopardy the fortunes of a large number of workingmen, and the future comfort and happiness of not only these men but their wives and children, is a grave responsibility, which should only be undertaken by leaders who act through motives which cannot be questioned. To sacrifice the interests of honest workingmen, who entrust their all with confidence to such leaders, is truly A CRIME AGAINST LABOR.



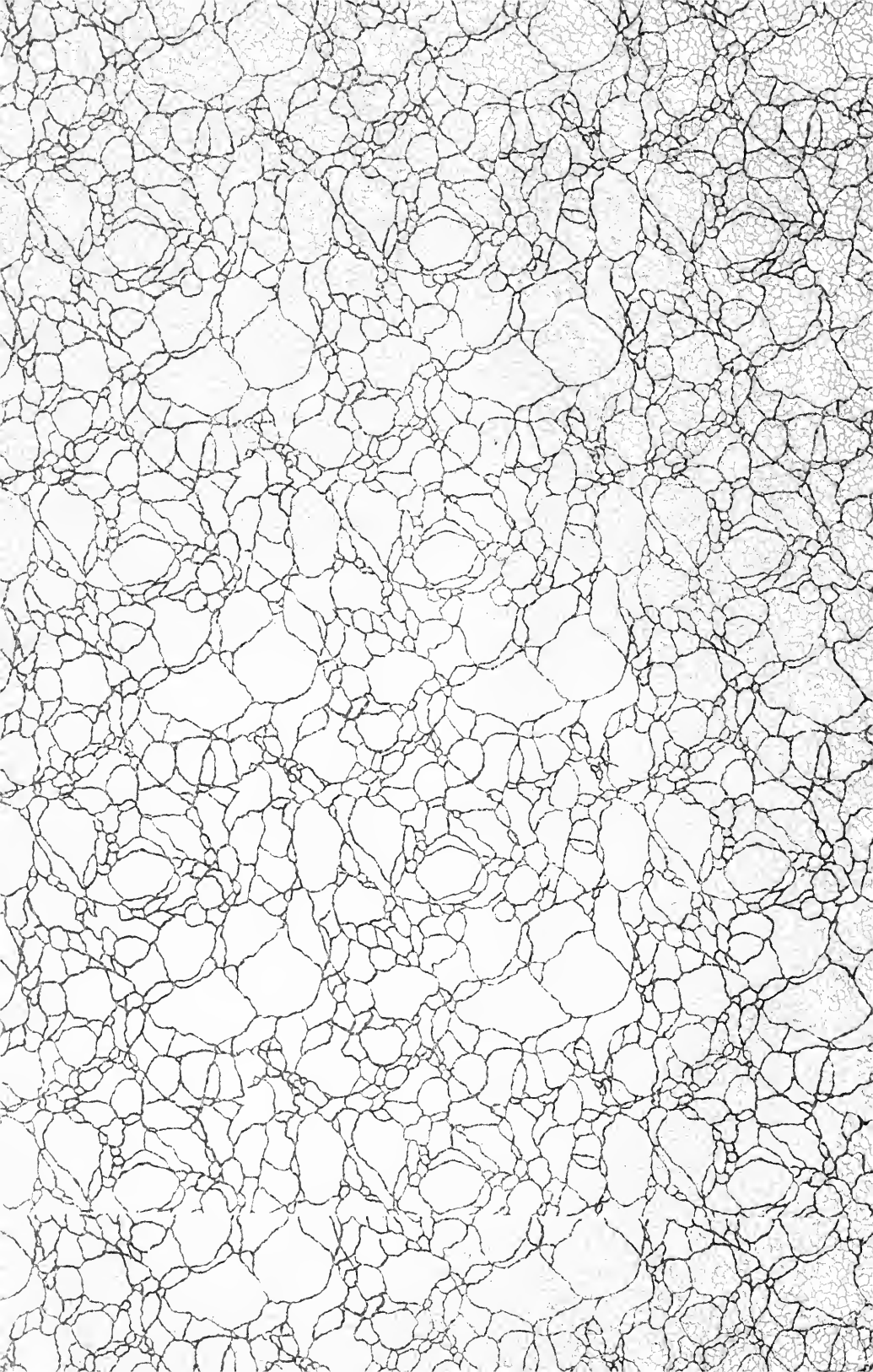


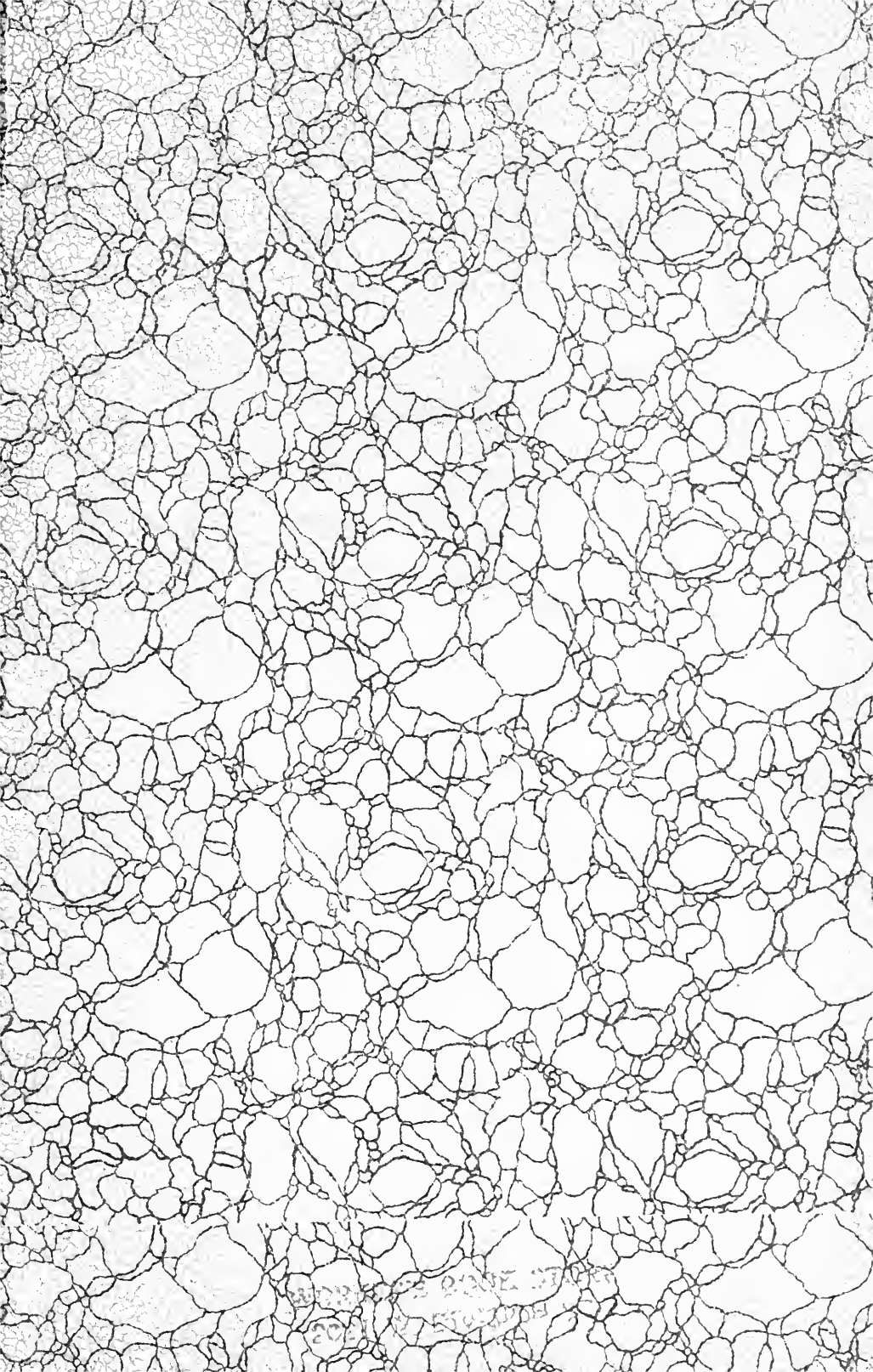




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