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THE RICHMOND TRANSIT STRIKE OF 1903

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of History
University of Richmond

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Thomas Jefferson Headlee, Jr.
June 1960

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PREFACE

A general history of the American labor movement introduces the reader to the mainstream of trade unionism in the United States. It is the purpose of this paper, however, to record the events of only one of the less important incidents in the rapid growth of organized labor in the twentieth century. That this experiment of labor in Richmond, Virginia, in the year 1903 should have failed, does not detract from its value to the historian, for the study of even an unsuccessful strike may add much to our knowledge of the various methods of unions and anti-unionism. In addition, it surely behooves us, as Richmonders, to learn something further of "the worst strike that the city ever experienced."

The preparation of this paper would have been difficult, indeed, had it not been for the encouragement and assistance of many persons. I am very grateful, therefore, to Dr. Wesley H. Laing, Professor of History at the University of Richmond, for his interest and encouragement in the initial stages of this project and for his advice in the final preparation of the paper.

I am particularly obligated to Mrs. James B. Jarroll, Library Clerk, Virginia State Library, for aid in locating newspaper files for the period studied and making them available to me. Mr. Howson W. Cole, Curator of Manuscripts, Virginia Historical Society, kindly provided access to the only extant copy of The Opinion, a newspaper published by the striking union. For instruction in the use of the

archives of the Virginia State Library and assistance in locating the executive correspondence of Governor Andrew Jackson Montague, I am indebted to Mr. John W. Dudley, Assistant State Archivist, Virginia State Library. Mrs. Clara M. Ray, Librarian of the Virginia Electric and Power Company, spared no effort to locate the official records of her antecedent company.

Finally, I owe my greatest debt to my wife, Carol Oliver Headlee, for her continued encouragement, understanding and patience during the preparation of this paper.

Thomas Jefferson Headlee, Jr.

Charlottesville, Virginia

June 6, 1960

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CHAPTER I

THE STRIKE: A SURVEY

In the year 1903 there occurred in the city of Richmond, Virginia, a trade-union strike of such proportions as to be described as "the worst strike that the city ever experienced" ¹ It was accompanied by such violence and rioting that it caused one historian to state, "Never before in the history of Richmond had there been such disorder in times of peace." ² The year 1903 witnessed a labor conflict between the Virginia Passenger and Power Company and its employees who were members of the Amalgamated Association of Street Railway Employees.

The issue in the strike was a wage increase proposed by the men but rejected by the company. The union had also asked for recognition as the bargaining agent of the employees with the right to arbitrate any future differences with the company, but these demands were likewise refused. ³ The result of this failure to arrive at a peaceful settlement was the strike, called by the union on the morning of June 17, 1903, and lasting sixty-eight days.

During the strike the company determined to continue the opera-

1. Julia Cuthbert Pollard, Richmond's Story (Richmond, Virginia: Richmond Public Schools, 1954), p. 255.

2. W. Asbury Christian, Richmond: Her Past and Present (Richmond, Virginia: L. H. Jenkins, 1912), p. 490.

3. The [Charlottesville, Virginia] Daily Progress, June 26, 1903.

tion of its cars by employing strikebreakers, a decision which marked the beginning of trouble. With the appearance of the first cars on the streets the strikers and their sympathizers became violent, and rioting broke out. Missiles were thrown at the cars, and tracks were blockaded. Later, threats were made against company officials, and there were attempts to burn and destroy company property. As the violence grew, shootings occurred and numbers of persons were wounded. Two lives were sacrificed.

The police and civil authorities of the city were unable to stem this surge of disorder, and the trouble grew worse day by day until on June 23rd the mayor of the city, Richard Taylor, was forced to call on the governor for reinforcements. The first state troops entered the city the next day to remain for a month. At one time there were well over one thousand soldiers posted in the capital city keeping order.⁴ When the troops were withdrawn the disorder again flared up momentarily, but on the morning of August 24, 1903, the strike was finally called off.

It was estimated that the conflict had cost the company, the union, the city and state nearly a quarter of a million dollars.⁵ Business in the city had been almost paralyzed, and the public was burdened with the expense of maintaining the state militia on active

4. Taylor to Montague, June 23, 1903, Montague Executive Papers, Virginia State Library; and Adjutant General of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Report for the Period Ending 20th October, 1903 (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1903), p. 25.

5. Christian, loc. cit.

duty for thirty days. There can be no doubt as to its cost to the men. Many suffered deprivation during the dispute and, because of their participation, were jobless at its conclusion.

One might join the editor of a local paper in asking, "But was anything really gained? Would it not have been better for the company and its men to have settled their differences in a peaceable and friendly manner without resorting to these extreme measures?"⁶

The answers to these questions are to be found in a re-examination of the dispute and the respective roles played by the company, the union, the authorities, and the community. The significance of this conflict is to be discovered in a retelling of the dramatic story.

6. Editorial in the Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, August 25, 1903.

CHAPTER II

THE COMPANY

The Virginia Passenger and Power Company of Richmond, Virginia, was actually the consolidation or merger of ten previously existing companies. Its antecedents were: the Richmond City Railway Company, Richmond Traction Company, and Richmond Passenger and Power Company, all originally incorporated in 1860; the Manchester Railway and Improvement Company, incorporated in 1886, and changed to the Richmond and Manchester Railway Company in 1890; the Richmond Railway and Electric Company, also incorporated in 1890; the Virginia Electrical Railway and Development Company, and Southside Railway and Development Company, both incorporated in 1898; the Westhampton Park Railway Company, incorporated in 1900; and the Virginia Internal Improvement Company, incorporated in 1901.¹

The Virginia Passenger and Power Company itself was incorporated on December 30, 1901, and existed under that name until 1903.² This does not mean that all car lines of the company were operated under the same name, for it appears that some elements of the consolidated transit system retained their original franchises, and the Virginia Passenger and Power Company exercised its control through stock owner-

1. Secretary of the Commonwealth, Annual Report to the Governor and General Assembly of Virginia for the Year Ending September 30, 1903 (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1903), p. 289.

2. Ibid.; and [Richmond, Virginia] Transit Topics, November 30, 1957.

ship. Such an arrangement is revealed in the statement that ". . . the greatest earning power of the entire system is that occupied by the Richmond Passenger and Power Company and the Richmond Traction Company."³

In December 1902 when the Virginia Passenger and Power Company was formed, control of the consolidated companies was in the hands of one, George E. Fisher, who, although not an officer of the company, had completely dominated its affairs through his ownership of its stock. In January 1903, shortly after the new incorporation, this control passed out of his hands, but it was not until the latter part of the year and after lengthy litigation that all of the records and books belonging to the company and in Mr. Fisher's possession were finally surrendered by him. This fact, together with the complications inherited from the outgoing administration, precluded the possibility of an annual report being prepared for the first year of the new corporation.⁴ The first annual report of the newly consolidated company, therefore, covered the second year of its existence, i.e., the year of the 1903 Richmond transit strike.

I. ORIGINS OF THE DISPUTE

The first annual report made by Company President Fritz Sittording and dated April 4, 1904, made only brief reference to the labor dispute.

3. Virginia Passenger and Power Company, Annual Report of the President to the Board of Directors and Stockholders for the Year Ending December 31, 1903 [n.p.], p. 9.

4. Ibid., p. 1.

It stated the opinion that the wage controversy was inherited with the acquisition of the properties of the Richmond Passenger and Power and Richmond Traction Companies. President Sitterding described the growth of tensions between the company and the car men's labor organizations as follows:

The Virginia Passenger and Power Company was confronted in the first few weeks of its operation in and around Richmond with a demand from these organizations, which it was not in shape to meet; and the result was that by arbitration the wages were largely and, as was soon evident, unduly increased. Excessive demands of a like nature were renewed and enlarged in the spring of 1903, and it was thought essential, in order to get the company on a basis for future profitable operation, that a final settlement should be made of this matter. 5

The wage increase here mentioned by President Sitterding was granted as the result of a successful strike by the company's employees in August 1902. It was at that time that the company yielded to what the president called the "excessive demands" of the strikers and increased motormen's wages to a maximum of eighteen and one-half cents an hour and conductors' wages to a maximum of sixteen and one-half cents an hour. 6 This wage agreement which ended the 1902 strike was to have remained in effect for no specific time, and as it turned out, the men made further demands within less than a year.

In June 1903 representatives of the car men's union proposed a new contract which called for a three and one-half cent increase in the wages of those men serving the Richmond area and a two and one-half cent increase in the wages of those men working on the Petersburg

5. Ibid., p. 5.

6. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 2, 1903.

line.⁷ These proposals were declined by the company's general manager, S. W. Huff, who had been given full charge of the labor negotiations by the company's officers.⁸

In refusing to concede to the union's wage demands, General Manager Huff made the observation that the company's present cost of operation then exceeded its revenues and that statistics were available to prove this. He further held that thirty-one per cent of all receipts and forty-four per cent of the total operating expenses of the company were then being paid in wages—a proportion which exceeded that in many other cities—and that the twenty-four per cent wage increase asked for would aggregate an additional expense of eighty thousand dollars per year.⁹ It was pointed out, too, that a wage increase amounting to thirty thousand dollars a year had been granted by the company only ten months previously.¹⁰

The car men had also requested in the proposed contract that their union might have the right to arbitrate any question of dismissal of company employees. This Company Manager Huff refused, for to place the question of dismissal of employees in the hands of arbitrators would be to take from the company its power of discipline over the men.¹¹

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid., June 16, 1903.

9. Ibid., June 17, 1903.

10. The [Charlottesville, Virginia] Daily Progress, June 26, 1903.

11. Ibid.

After an initial meeting with the union representatives in which it refused to sign the general agreement proposed by the car men, the company refused to negotiate further or to accept any arbitration of the matter. This stand was taken, according to Huff, because a full conference had already been held and the proposals of the union de-

¹²clined. A local newspaper expressed the opinion that ". . . the company could not change its firm position or else it would indicate ¹³weakening."

Having failed to receive its demanded wage increase, the car men's union on June 17, 1903, declared its intention to call a strike. ¹⁴ It soon became evident that the company had anticipated this possibility and already made plans to continue the operation of its cars even if the strike should occur. The press reported, "It is understood from other sources that the policy of the company is to maintain the service as far as practicable with men temporarily employed, until the ¹⁵backbone of the strike be broken," but the officials of the company themselves had nothing to say. They did not care to make predictions concerning the strike, and for reasons of expediency they did not want to take the public into their confidence or divulge their plans in de- ¹⁶tail.

12. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 16, 1903.

13. Ibid., June 5, 1903.

14. Ibid., June 17, 1903.

15. Ibid., June 20, 1903.

16. Ibid., June 19, 1903.

II. ANTI-STRIKE MEASURES

In the year 1903 the Virginia Passenger and Power Company operated its cars under the franchises of the Virginia Traction Company, the Southside Railway and Development Company, and the Petersburg Street Railway Company.¹⁷ These three were actually separate companies, but the Virginia Passenger and Power Company had acquired the controlling stock in each and thus was able to operate a consolidated system which served the cities of Richmond, Manchester, and Petersburg, Virginia.¹⁸ The charter of the company stated that ". . . it should operate its cars unless prevented by acts of God or matters beyond their control," and as the press pointed out, "A strike or lockout has been determined as beyond their control."¹⁹ Later during the dispute when the company had found it necessary to discontinue its service on various lines, Richmond City Attorney H. B. Follard stated the opinion that

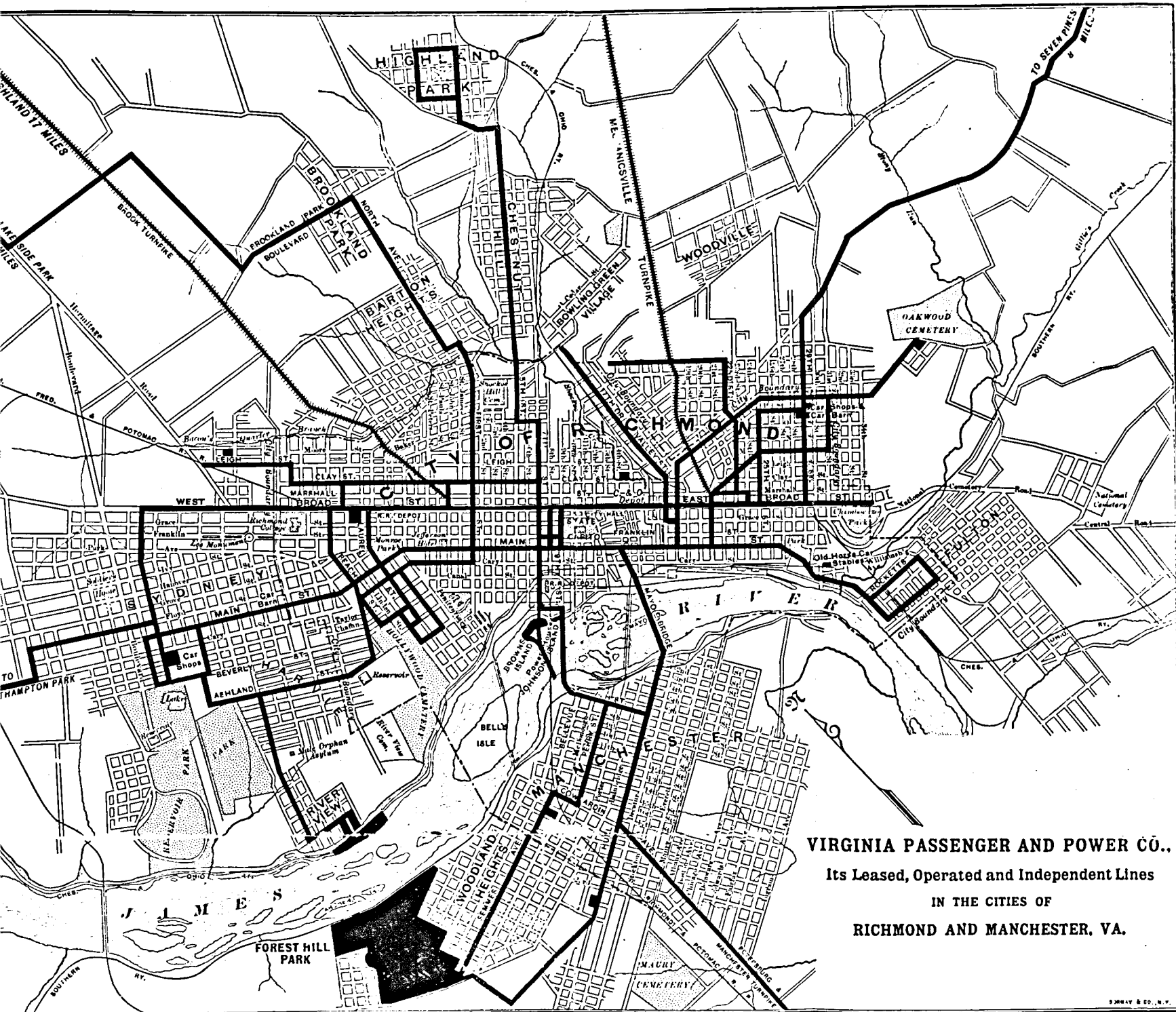
. . . under the terms of the franchise granted the Richmond Traction Company and under which the Virginia Passenger and Power Company is now operating . . . it would not have been possible to have forced the company by law to open the line sooner or to have assessed a penalty against the company for failure to operate its schedule. The fine is effective for failure to operate cars unless some unforeseen or extraordinary cause prevents.²⁰

17. Ibid., June 21, 1903.

18. See Figure 1 on page 10.

19. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 16, 1903.

20. Ibid., July 29, 1903.



VIRGINIA PASSENGER AND POWER CO..
 Its Leased, Operated and Independent Lines
 IN THE CITIES OF
RICHMOND AND MANCHESTER, VA.

FIGURE 1

Thus it can be seen that during the strike the company had the option of operating or not operating its cars, and it did not feel constrained to continue its services because of any franchise obligations. However, it did choose to continue its schedules when possible, and even prior to the calling of the strike had taken steps to secure additional personnel.

In spite of the loss of experienced motormen and conductors who had gone out on strike, the company was able to keep its cars in operation through the employment of strikebreakers.²¹ On June 17th advertisements began to appear in the newspapers of neighboring cities to the effect that a strike was in progress in Richmond and new men were being employed at two dollars per day with the assurance of continued employment when the conflict ended.²² Since the wage scale in nearby communities was lower than in Richmond, it was expected that securing men would not be too difficult.²³

In the larger cities farther north detective agencies kept lists of men to be employed as strikebreakers and offered them in lots of from fifty to one hundred. A letter from the Baltimore correspondent of a Richmond paper stated:

21. "Any person hired to do the work of one who is on strike," Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1953 edition).

22. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 21, 1903.

23. Ibid., June 16, 1903.

24. Ibid., June 9, 1903.

C. W. Medinger, a professional strikebreaker of this city, has returned from Richmond and is recruiting motormen and conductors. He sent 25 men to Richmond yesterday, 25 today, and expects to send 25 tomorrow. Most of the men are experienced. 25

It appears that most of the strikebreakers came from Pennsylvania, and one arrival of the Coast Line train from Philadelphia brought sixty-seven new men.²⁶ However, the chief of the company's strikebreakers was a Mr. Farley who was from New York City and agreed with the company to supply two hundred persons at the rate of four hundred seventy-five dollars per day for himself and his men.²⁷

The salaries offered the strikebreakers appear to have varied from \$2.00 to \$2.50 per day, and when some of the new arrivals were persuaded by the strikers not to work for the company, the amount was raised to as much as \$4.50 per day.²⁸

It was charged by some of the new men that the company brought them to Richmond under false pretenses. In one case, sworn before a local judge, a strikebreaker declared that the contracts offered in Richmond had read differently from the ones viewed in Philadelphia which had stated that the men were to be hired only to work on new roads and extensions.²⁹ Another party, who came "from the West," stated

25. Ibid., July 4, 1903.

26. Ibid., June 19, 1903.

27. Ibid., August 6, 1903.

28. Ibid., June 16, June 18, and June 21, 1903.

29. Ibid., June 19, 1903.

he had not been informed that a strike was in progress but came solely because he was offered \$2.50 a day by the company.³⁰

Estimates as to the total number of strikebreakers hired by the company varied. It was reported that on the day after the strike began three carloads, i.e., one hundred eighty men, passed through Fredericksburg on a train enroute to Richmond to take the places of the striking car men.³¹ At the end of the first week a local paper estimated that two hundred strikebreakers had been quietly engaged by the company and were being seen on the streets.³² Another paper, published in the western part of the state, quoted this same number but expressed the opinion that "most of them side with the strikers and refuse to work."³³ By the end of the first week it was estimated that two hundred forty experienced men, half of whom were professional strikebreakers, were on the rolls of the Passenger and Power Company.³⁴ In the third week of the strike it was stated that the company was employing from three to four hundred men on a twelve-hour day plan at two dollars per day, but there was no indication of the percentage of old employees still with the company.³⁵ It was believed that under normal conditions the company

30. Ibid., June 18, 1903.

31. The [Fredericksburg, Virginia] Free Lance, June 20, 1903.

32. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 18, 1903.

33. The [Charlottesville, Virginia] Daily Progress, June 18, 1903.

34. The [Fredericksburg, Virginia] Free Lance, June 25, 1903.

35. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 2, 1903.

regularly employed nearly seven hundred men to operate the cars.³⁶

On at least one morning Richmond citizens were surprised by ". . . the unusual spectacle of well-known young Richmond businessmen manning the cars," as well as, ". . . clerks from the offices and friends of the officials."³⁷ But whoever manned the cars, ". . . all were armed, the motormen and conductors having pistols, the guards shotguns."³⁸

Even before the strike was called, the company had begun preparations to accommodate the strikebreakers. Cots were set up in its car barns.³⁹ Meals were provided in a company commissary at the rate of a dime each, and the opinion was that the food was ". . . very good fare for the money."⁴⁰ Although the cleanliness of the strikebreakers was occasionally criticized, this was excused because of the poor laundry facilities in the barracks, and it was further explained that despite rumors to the contrary, the health of the street railway employees in the barracks at the reservoir was excellent.⁴¹ By the end of the strike nearly all of the men were uniformed, and many of

36. Ibid., June 9, 1903.

37. The [Fredericksburg, Virginia] Free Lance, June 23, 1903.

38. Ibid., June 25, 1903.

39. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 16, 1903.

40. Ibid., July 30, 1903.

41. Ibid., July 2, and July 26, 1903.

then were wearing ". . . a sort of shirt waist uniform in very warm weather."⁴²

Most of the strikeworkers who remained in Richmond secured boarding places or homes in the city.⁴³ Several sent for their families,⁴⁴ and one rented a large house to board his fellow workers.

As the strike enthusiasm diminished and the company increased its regular force, a corresponding reduction was made in the number of professional strikebreakers.⁴⁵ The press on July 20th reported that "another evidence that the company regards the strike as now won, was the leaving for his home . . . of Farley, the chief of the strikebreakers."⁴⁶ It appears that by July 20, 1903, all of the strikebreakers, except those who had found permanent employment, had left the city.⁴⁷

One of the first annoyances facing the company was that of retrieving the badges, books and other company property still in the possession of the striking employees. When the strike was announced the company posted the following notice at its various car barns for the benefit of the strikers:

42. Ibid., July 30, 1903.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid., July 2, 1903.

45. Ibid., July 10, 1903.

46. Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser, June 20, 1903.

47. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 19, 1903.

NOTICE TO MOTORMEN AND CONDUCTORS. Motormen and conductors of the Virginia Passenger and Power Company failing to report for duty by the morning of Thursday, June 18th, 1903, can call at the general office, Seventh and Main Streets, turn in their badge, buttons, rule book, and other property of the company and receive their deposit and pay, as those failing to report for duty by the time specified will not be regarded longer as employees of the company. ⁴⁸

But five weeks later the company had still not received all of its equipment and was forced to initiate suits against thirty of its former employees who had failed to return the loaned property. ⁴⁹ It appeared that "the attitude of the men with reference to this matter . . . was rather defiant," and it looked as though the company would have "some six hundred suits" on its hands. ⁵⁰ It was suggested that some of the former employees were holding on to the buttons and badges while waiting for the company to pay off the deposits made on them. ⁵¹

The major problem facing the company during the strike was to maintain a profitable operation of its cars in spite of the violence and destruction which occurred. General Manager Huff requested that the city provide police protection for the cars when they were run, and when the rioting increased the company officials petitioned for the call of state militia. ⁵²

48. Ibid., June 18, 1903.

49. Ibid., July 23, 1903.

50. Ibid., July 19, 1903.

51. Ibid., June 18, 1903.

52. Ibid., July 2, 1903.

General Manager Huff expressed a desire for more co-operation from the sheriff's office in Henrico County, and when there was bloodshed as the result of the sheriff's refusal to call for reinforcements, the company initiated action for his removal for malfeasance and neglect of official duty.⁵³ After the state militia was withdrawn the company undertook to establish patrols of armed men in the vicinity of the suburban tracks, and the effect of this surveillance was to decrease the serious attacks on the cars and operators.⁵⁴

Finally, in an effort to halt the destruction being wreaked upon its property, the company placed the following notice in the Richmond newspapers on at least two different occasions:⁵⁵

REWARD! The Virginia Passenger and Power Company will pay a reward of \$25.00 in each case for testimony resulting in the ultimate conviction of parties for shooting at, throwing rocks or other missiles at cars, or parties placing obstructions on the tracks of the company, or otherwise maliciously endeavoring to injure the company's property or passengers, or interfering with the running of its cars.

There can be no doubt that during the strike the company paid dearly through loss of property and passenger revenue. The cost of the strike to the company was estimated at about \$125,000.⁵⁶ This sum does not cover the cost of damaged property but does include the additional expense of guards, employees and strikbreakers, and the

53. Court Order, County Court of Henrico, July 14, 1903, Montague Executive Papers, Virginia State Library.

54. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 26, 1903.

55. Ibid., July 8, and July 10, 1903.

56. Ibid., August 25, 1903.

loss of normal revenue. It might be pointed out that the strike occurred at a particularly disadvantageous time of year—during the months of June, July and August when the Petersburg line took advantage of increased summer travel and met expenses for the rest of the year.⁵⁷

Before the strike ended it was reported that of the six hundred men who went out, one hundred had returned to the employment of the company. Because it adopted a twelve-hour work day the management was able to employ one hundred less men than before the strike.⁵⁸ When the conflict was formally terminated the men were receiving a uniform wage of two dollars per day on all lines, which amounted to sixteen and two-thirds cents per hour as compared with the seventeen to twenty-two cents scale demanded by the strikers.⁵⁹

Six months after the strike had been called off, Company President Sitterding in his annual report was able to declare:
 ". . . never before in the history of this company has more complete⁶⁰ harmony existed between management and employees than now."

57. The [Charlottesville, Virginia] Daily Progress, June 26, 1903.

58. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, August 25, 1903.

59. Ibid.

60. Virginia Passenger and Power Company, op. cit., p. 4.

CHAPTER III

THE UNION

In the summer of 1903 the streetcar employees of Richmond, Virginia, were banded together in a local trade-union organization called the Amalgamated Association of Streetcar Employees, Division Number 152.¹ This local group was affiliated with the Central Trade and Labor Council of Richmond;² the Virginia State Federation of Labor,³ which was an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor; and the International Association of Street Railway Employees, a national confederation.⁴ At the time of the 1903 Richmond transit strike the Richmond car men had as their local president a Mr. Wilbur J. Griggs, while serving the union as national organizer and secretary-treasurer of the International Association of Street Railway Employees was a Mr. Resin Orr from Detroit.⁵ Membership of the local union numbered between six and seven hundred men, who were employed operating the streetcars of the Virginia Passenger and Power Company in the cities of Richmond, Manchester and Petersburg.⁶

1. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 4, 1903.

2. Ibid., June 16, 1903.

3. Virginia State Federation of Labor, Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Session, May 3-5, 1904 (Richmond: Williams Printing Company, 1904), p. 9.

4. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 4, 1903.

5. Ibid.

6. Virginia State Federation of Labor, op. cit., p. 10.

I. THE WALKOUT

In August 1902 the union successfully concluded a strike against the Richmond transit company. At that time officials of the company consented to a wage agreement of unlimited duration which increased hourly wages of mainline motormen to eighteen and one-half cents, mainline conductors to seventeen and one-half cents, branchline motormen to sixteen and one-half cents, and branchline conductors to fifteen and one-half

⁷ cents. Nine months later on May 1, 1903, the union presented a list of new demands to become effective June 1st. These included:

- (1) Recognition of the union.
- (2) Arbitration of company-employee disputes.
- (3) Reinstatement of suspended workers with pay for lost time if found not guilty by arbitrators.
- (4) Nine-hour day and pay for overtime.
- (5) 22¢ an hour for motormen and 21¢ an hour for conductors on Richmond, Manchester and interurban lines, and 16¢ an hour for motormen and 17¢ an hour for conductors on Petersburg lines.
- (6) Free transportation at all times over all lines.
- (7) A fifteen-day notice on all orders causing additional expense to the employees. ⁸

When the company declined these new proposals on May 23rd, the union began to publicize its arguments for acceptance of the new con-
⁹ tract. National Organizer Rezin Orr arrived in Richmond to aid in the campaign and, in a speech on the evening of Wednesday, June 3rd, expressed his opinion that the grave responsibility for the public's

7. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 2, 1903

8. The [Charlottesville, Virginia] Daily Progress, June 26, 1903.

9. Ibid.

safety, shouldered by the motorman of a streetcar, was certainly worth
 more than twenty cents an hour.¹⁰ Later, he submitted a list of twenty
 cities with populations comparable to Richmond which were then paying
 their car men wages equal to or better than the pay scale requested by
 the local union.¹¹ Organizer Orr further pointed out that the requested
 nine-hour day would be advantageous to the company because men working
 a reasonable number of hours were not as likely to have accidents due
 to fatigue. The provision for arbitration, he said, would allow the
 union to control the men's impulse to go on strike.¹²

The car men's union had placed plenary power to treat with the
 company in a special negotiating committee composed of National Organ-
 izer Rezin Orr, Union President Wilbur J. Griggs, P. F. DeForrest,
 W. H. Closton, and a Mr. Redford.¹³ On June 14th this committee met
 at the company offices with Company Superintendent Buchanan and General
 Manager Ruff, but the company's representatives refused to discuss the
 new contract and dismissed the delegates of the streetcar men. This
 was the last meeting of the opposing factions prior to the calling of
 the strike.¹⁴

During these attempts to negotiate, the union officers and

10. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 4, 1903.

11. The [Richmond, Virginia] Opinion, June 27, 1903.

12. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 9, 1903.

13. Ibid., June 13, 1903.

14. Ibid., June 5, 1903.

negotiating committee met twice daily at the Lexington Hotel, where Mr. Orr was lodged while in Richmond, and the entire union membership continued to gather for its regular weekly meeting every Friday.¹⁵

It was at one of these weekly meetings, held on Friday, June 12th, that the men first began to consider the inevitability of a strike should the negotiations with the company break down.¹⁶ In such an event, Organizer Orr denied that he or the special committee had authority to call a strike but declared that such action required a majority vote of the entire union membership.¹⁷

Finally on Saturday, June 13th, the negotiating committee sent a letter to General Manager Huff giving the company a last ultimatum: Either meet with the union and negotiate a new agreement for one year, or agree to submit the entire problem to a board of arbitration composed of two representatives selected by the union, two by the company, and one other interested citizen acceptable to both groups. The company was given until 10 A.M. on Monday, June 15th, to reply.¹⁸

The deadline came, yet no word was received from the company. That night in a meeting at Petersburg, Organizer Orr predicted a strike ". . . unless the street railway officials make some concessions tomorrow and receive the representatives of the streetcar employees."¹⁹

15. Ibid., June 9, 1903.

16. Ibid., June 13, 1903.

17. Ibid., June 16, 1903.

18. Ibid., June 14, 1903.

19. Ibid., June 17, 1903.

Shortly after midnight on the morning of June 17th the entire union membership began to gather at the union headquarters in Old Market Hall. No communication had been received from the company and so the men had been called to vote on the question of whether or not to strike. There were approximately six hundred fifty members present when the decision to strike was reached at about 3:30 A.M. Only seven men voted against the walkout, and these agreed to abide by the majority²⁰ decision.

On the morning of June 17, 1903, the Richmond transit strike began. The motormen and conductors of the Virginia Passenger and Power Company, aggregating 667 men, failed to show up for work and the two hundred cars on the Richmond, Manchester, and Petersburg lines failed²¹ to run. It was a serious step on the part of the car men, for they realized that it was the usual practice for a company to fire its²² striking employees.

It is difficult to assess the unanimity of the men who went on strike. On one occasion, when eleven of the strikers returned to work, they were fined one hundred dollars each by the union, and, although this amount could not be lawfully collected, it did bar the men from²³ entering any other labor union until the fine was paid. In this

20. Ibid., June 17, 1903.

21. The [Fredericksburg, Virginia] Free Lance, June 16, and June 20, 1903.

22. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 16, 1903.

23. Ibid., July 28, 1903.

way the union may have been able to coerce some of its members into joining in the strike.

It appears that the car men's union, as well as various other trade organizations in the city, agreed to levy fines on those members who rode on cars manned by nonunion men. The amount of these fines varied from five to twenty-five dollars and was to be given to the car men's union for use during the emergency. ²⁴ At the beginning of the strike the local press reported, "The fines agreed upon by the various organizations have some deterrent influence in keeping members off the cars," ²⁵ but near the end of the conflict it became apparent that "even some of the members of the unions which prescribe a penalty for riding are disregarding the injunction of these organizations and risking the fines." ²⁶ It appears, however, that no fines ever were actually assessed.

Throughout the duration of the strike the union's officers were constantly denying rumors of division within the union. On July 18th, after a half dozen strikers had returned to work, there was circulated a report to the effect that there was a split among the men. This was denied by President Griggs who declared that the men were winning the strike. ²⁷ Later several of the car men admitted

24. Ibid., June 23, 1903.

25. Ibid., June 20, 1903.

26. Ibid., July 28, 1903.

27. Ibid., July 18, 1903.

that they believed two-thirds of the entire number on strike was willing to return to the company on the old terms of employment,²⁸ but when thirty-two men returned and then immediately gave up their positions a second time, it was explained, "The return of so many men a few days ago was due to a misunderstanding within the union."²⁹

II. FINANCING THE STRIKE

Much of the control exerted by the union upon its members was due to the strikers' dependence upon the union for financial support while unemployed. Company Superintendent Buchanan felt that many of the men who would otherwise have returned to work were ". . . holding off because they fear that if they return now they will lose the money due them from the strikers' fund."³⁰ There can be no doubt that the union did raise funds for the benefit of its men, yet after four weeks of being without work one union man was forced to return to the company declaring that he had received a total of only five dollars from the union since the beginning of the strike.³¹

Local trade-unions within the city were quick to contribute funds to the car men's cause, and even before the strike was called at least fifteen local unions had pledged financial support in the

28. Ibid., July 24, 1903.

29. Ibid., July 26, 1903.

30. Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser, July 22, 1903.

31. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 22, 1903.

event of a walkout. These included the bakers, confectioners, cigar makers, car builders, plumbers, carpenters, boiler makers, blacksmiths, iron moulders, bartenders, machinists, painters, paper hangers, tobacco workers, and bricklayers unions of Richmond. On the day following the calling of the strike the car men had received five hundred dollars in numerous donations.

The first contribution from a Negro labor union was a ten dollar gift from the Hod Carriers Union of Richmond. It was reported that the delegate from this group "tried to keep in the background" while delivering the contribution, but instead he was called on to make a speech in the union hall and was then vigorously applauded.

In addition to contributions from individual unions the striking car men received at least one hundred dollars from the city's labor confederation, the Central Trade and Labor Council. Private individuals also presented gifts, and it was told that one dollar was given by a blind beggar. Other contributions of small amounts were reported, one being a gift of \$6.91 from the East End Baptist Sunday School.

In spite of local contributions the organization of strikers

32. Ibid., June 16, 1903.

33. Ibid., June 19, 1903.

34. Ibid., July 1, 1903.

35. Ibid., June 25, 1903.

36. The [Fredericksburg, Virginia] Free Lance, June 25, 1903.

was slowly weakened by the return to the company of men who were
 ". . . not receiving the financial assistance they expected and
 which they regard as necessary."³⁷ A Mr. C. H. Clayton returned to
 work stating that the payments from the national union were being
 delayed and that he ". . . owes higher duty to family than to
³⁸
 union."

During the strike Organizer Orr denied that the union needed
 any assistance from the national organization,³⁹ yet after the strike
 was over Mr. Daniel McCallum, the president of the Virginia State
 Federation of Labor, declared that one reason for its failure was the
⁴⁰
 lack of a good strike fund. Mr. McCallum stated:

I offered the help provided by the State Federation, a
 per capita assessment on its membership; but they refrained
 from calling for it, and worried along bravely with the help
 of their International, the local unions, fraternal bodies,
 and private citizens—they worried along, over 600 of them,
 and many of them with wives and helpless little ones. ⁴¹

In any event, the union received no help from the state federation
 and very little assistance from the national organization, i.e., the
 International Association of Railway Employees of which Mr. Orr was
⁴²
 secretary-treasurer.

37. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, August 6, 1903.

38. Ibid., July 9, 1903.

39. Ibid., July 4, 1903.

40. Virginia State Federation of Labor, op. cit., p. 11.

41. Ibid., p. 10.

42. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, August 25, 1903.

After five weeks of unemployment, it was rumored that the striking car men had received only one dollar each since the strike began. "On the contrary," declared Orr, "the men have received benefits from time to time, some more than others because their needs were greater. Over \$5,000 has been paid in strike benefits since the struggle began."⁴³

Commenting on this amount the editor of a local paper said:

Estimating on the basis of five weeks that the strike has been on, and placing the total number of strikers at 600, the sum of \$5,000 which Mr. Orr stated had been distributed in strike benefits, each man would have received on the average the sum of \$1.66 per week since the strike began. Making allowance for some receiving more than others, it is probable that the majority have not received more than \$1.50 per week, or about \$8.50 [sic] for the entire five weeks.⁴⁴

The desire for a weekly paycheck may have caused some of the strikers to eventually return to the company, but in spite of the reports that the men were in financial straights, it was declared by the union that "there is no dearth of money for the necessities of the strikers."⁴⁵

III. UNION TACTICS

During the course of the strike the union employed various schemes to coerce the company into yielding to their demands.

43. Ibid., July 28, 1903

44. Ibid., July 29, 1903.

45. Ibid., July 2, 1903.

The first efforts of the car men were aimed at persuading the company's strikebreakers to sympathize with the union and not operate the recently abandoned cars. As the strikebreakers entered the city they were met by delegations of the car men, for union pickets were placed on eight-hour shifts at every railroad station and thirty men were on duty night and day.⁴⁶

Sixty-seven strikebreakers arrived on a Coast Line train on the morning of June 18th, and the pickets were able to persuade all but seven to either find other work in the city or to return home.⁴⁷ Two days later one hundred twenty-five strikebreakers arrived in the city, and it was reported from various sources that a number varying from eight to thirty were persuaded not to work for the company.⁴⁸

Organizer Orr declared that only peaceful persuasion was used with the strikebreakers and that there were ". . . no threats of any kind."⁴⁹ Two of the would-be strikebreakers swore in an affidavit signed before a notary that they had not been intimidated.⁵⁰ An out-of-town paper reported concerning the two hundred men employed as strikebreakers by the company: "Most of them side with the strikers and refuse to work."⁵¹

46. Ibid., June 18, 1903.

47. Ibid., June 19, 1903.

48. Ibid., June 21, 1903.

49. Ibid., June 19, 1903.

50. Ibid., June 21, 1903.

51. The [Charlottesville, Virginia] Daily Progress, June 18, 1903.

Eventually, however, the company was able to secure enough men to operate the cars, and by July 2nd the local newspaper was able to report that in addition to the Richmond lines, the lines through Manchester and Seven Pines had resumed operations after sixteen days' idleness.⁵² The union had failed to keep the strikeworkers and new employees from working.

Even before calling the strike the union realized that it might not be able to prevent the operation of the company's cars and began, therefore, to make plans for a competitive transit system. On the day before the strike began it was rumored that the men would operate hordies,⁵³ cabs, and vans to compete with the company's cars on the principal streets of the city, and two days later the union actually had in operation wagons supplied by the Hub Clothing Company and run by the unemployed car men.⁵⁴ This rival system initially provided public transportation on Main and Broad Streets free of charge.⁵⁵

In Petersburg the strikers' competing transit service was given the name, "The Tally-ho Line," but in that city neither the union nor the company had many riders.⁵⁶ In Richmond, where the

52. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 2, 1903.

53. "A type of low-hung cab, usually with two wheels, with side seats and entrance at the back." Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary (1953 edition).

54. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 16, 1903.

55. Ibid., June 19, 1903.

56. Ibid., June 20, 1903.

union system had begun to charge the same fares as the streetcars, the patronage of its horse-drawn vehicles was ". . . conspicuously in evidence morning and evening when the workers used them."⁵⁷

As the conflict lengthened, there was an announcement from the strikers that a stock company was being formed and would be incorporated to start a permanent autobus line to parallel the lines of the streetcar company and compete with it for trade.⁵⁸ Richmond City Attorney H. R. Hollard gave the opinion that no franchise was required for the enterprise, and nothing but the usual vehicle tag was necessary.⁵⁹

By the end of July the proposed stock company had been given the name, "The Public Service Company," its directors had been selected, and preliminary steps had been taken to secure a charter. It was determined that the capital stock would be a minimum of twenty-five thousand dollars with a maximum of fifty thousand dollars and that it would be divided into one dollar shares, not more than fifty shares to any one person.⁶⁰

Two days before the strike was called off there was a meeting of the stockholders of The Public Service Company, but thereafter there is no further news of its activities in the local papers.⁶¹ It is con-

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid., July 10, 1903.

59. Ibid., July 29, 1903.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid., August 15, 1903.

ceivable that this project of the strikers might have failed due to inadequate financing, a plausible conjecture when it is noted that the cost of only one vehicle, carrying as many as twelve persons and capable of ascending the grades of Richmond's streets, was as high as seven thousand dollars.⁶²

In addition to attempting to dissuade the strikebreakers from operating the company cars and providing, instead, a rival transportation system, the union also tried to win public support for its cause. On July 21st a local newspaper carried a notice in which the union expressed its regret for the necessary inconvenience of the strike.⁶³

The union also printed small cards for public distribution which stated its arguments for a nine-hour working day and an increase in wages.⁶⁴

Later the union began to publish a weekly paper, The Opinion, in which the strikers ". . . set forth their claims in a clear and concise manner to a generous public."⁶⁵ In addition to eulphistic essays on the virtues of the laboring class, this paper, as its name implies, also expressed some of the strikers' opinions. For example:

Captain Guilgon is a good man when he is in his right mind, but unfortunately he is seldom in that condition.

.....

A man can have a big mouth; he can seek to serve cor-

62. Ibid., July 29, 1903.

63. Ibid., June 21, 1903.

64. Ibid., June 27, 1903.

65. See Figure 2 on page 33.

THE OPINION

Volume I. No. 2.

RICHMOND, VA., JUNE 27, 1903

PRICE ONE CENT.

APPEAL OF CAR MEN

Set Forth Their Claims in a Clean and Concise Manner To a Generous Public.

To the friends of organized labor we send greetings, and to a generous public an appeal for a spirit of fairness and justice to obtain in passing final judgment upon the claims which organized labor is now making in behalf of Division 152 of Street Railway Employees. With a bold and solid front the Division is standing to a man for the claims they are making, resting upon the justice of their cause, and the honesty of their purpose, believing that our contentions are right and just and not based upon flimsy or faltering pretexts.

To organized labor and the friends thereof, it is idle to assert that we will not continue to contend for what we regard as our rights inalienable by the laws of equity and fairness.

Organized labor will take no backward step. In the whirligig of time great economic questions have arisen, and will yet arise, to bring capital and labor to a better understanding and a closer affiliation. And to the solution of problems that have and must appear organized labor is destined to act as the key to unlock the door that opens into a field where contentions, and every discussion



P. & P. CO. FANNING THE FLAMES TO BURN THE PUBLIC.

MILITARY TO CHANGE

After This Week State Troops Will Be National Reserves at President's Call.

This week witnesses the end of the militia of Virginia as a State force and its transference to the Federal government and transformation into a reserve of the regular army subject, like the regular army, to the direct orders of the President at all times.

The change, of course, is to be made quietly. The most dangerous attacks upon the liberties of a people have always been made insidiously. It is only when by quiet and stealthy methods the enemies of human liberty have gained a position from which they can strike with safety that they have resorted to force. And so, very fittingly and consistently, this act which makes every man between the ages of 18 and 40 subject to military duty, at the demand of the President, is being quietly put into effect, and the average man does not even stop to reflect that this may very well mean the beginning of the transformation of a republic in fact into a republic in name only.

Whether or not the Governor had the legal right to "accept" this act for the State of Virginia or whether Congress had the power to change the terms under which militiamen enlisted, we shall not under-

reached, but that appeal was denied us. No, we were forbidden to offer any basis of settlement on our part, but tersely reminded that the street railway company had delivered its ultimatum, and would not further confer with a committee from its employes, even though the chief end and object of that committee was to reach an amicable settlement, and a peaceful ending of all existing con-

CONTRIBUTIONS TO DIVISION 152

The following donations have been received since our last issue: E. P. Pearson, a friend, M. Estes, J. S. Vaughan, a friend (car fare for week), friend Southern shops, Joe Williams, J. T. Crawford, M.

management of the brewery, and that no request had ever been made from any employe to have the beer placed on the unfair list.

Blacksmiths To-Night.

A special meeting of the Blacksmiths' Union will be held to-night in Landrum's Hall, in north Sixth street, at 8 o'clock. The meeting is to further assist the car men finan-

Organized labor stands not for disorder, but for peace; not for violence, but for persuasion; not for anarchy, but for government based upon the consent of the governed; and above and beyond all, for a fair square and just remuneration for services rendered.

Flinny is the accusation that



WILBUR J. GRIGGS.

Division 152 is seeking to take control of the street railway company of Richmond, and manage the affairs of the company. No such idea has entered the mind of a single individual of the six hundred motor-man and conductors in the division.

Enacted in the constitution and general laws of the Amalgamated Association of Street Railway Employees of America are these words: "To encourage the settlement of all disputes between employes and employers by arbitration, to secure employment and adequate pay for our work, to reduce the hour of daily labor, and by all legal and proper means to elevate our moral, intellectual and social condition." In accordance with the spirit of the constitution of our organization we have sought a settlement by arbitration when disagreement arose, but we have sought in vain. We have appealed for a conference, and believed when that appeal was made that a peaceful conclusion—one mutually satisfactory—would be

street car men in asking for new scale of wages within ten months after there had been a settlement by arbitration, how strong must be the point against the company for seeking within two days after that agreement had been made to change the hours of labor that had just been fixed by requesting the employes to reopen a question that had already been definitely determined.

Let not the public be deluded by any accusation that the street car men desire to assume the power of preventing the discharge of any member of the union by the company. There is nothing in the by-laws to this end, and whenever it has been suggested to be embodied in the compact it has always been done in a spirit of friendship towards the company, and as an assistance. In this spirit it has been accepted by corporations throughout the country that have learned to value the suggestion and to appreciate it.

The wages that are being asked for by the street car men of Richmond and vicinity can be compared with wages now being paid in the following cities: Danbury, Conn.; El Paso, Texas; Colorado Springs, Co.; Worcester, Mass.; Saginaw, Mich.; East Liverpool, Ohio; Houston, Texas; Pittsburg, Pa.; New-castle, Pa.; Akron, Ohio; Wheeling, W. Va.; Aurora, Ill.; Toronto, Can.; New Orleans, La.; Youngstown, Ohio; Scranton, Pa.; Portland, Ore.; Meridan, Conn.; Lansingburg, N Y., and Steubenville, Ohio.

In conclusion, we again repeat that the members of Division No. 152, are content to wage their contest in peace and order. That the end may be reached without harm or hurt to another individual is the hope of all who respect law and order. It is ordained in the destiny of things that capital and labor must stand upon a mutual platform, or else they fall, and in that fall both go down together. Organized labor seeks the fulfillment of its claims and wishes, not through the glitter or gleam of the bayonet, nor

(CONTINUED ON FOURTH PAGE)

Jewel, \$1 each; J. O. Blankenship, \$11.75; W. W. Perdue, \$5; Mr. Johnson, \$3; friends on Westhampton line, \$11; a friend, 50 cents; George Davidson, \$5; Mr. Schwartz, \$2; J. S. Moore & Son, \$10; Mr. Taylor, \$5; N. J. Jacobs, \$10; Krug Brothers, \$10; friend, \$10; employe Thalheimer Bros., \$8; P. E. Irama, \$10; citizens of Manchester, \$77.93; Climax Grocery Co., \$3; J. C. Snellings, \$10; August Grocery Co. employes, \$2; Carpenters' and Joiners' Social 388, \$50; Thos. F. Bagley, \$5; "Silas Johnson," \$10; physician, \$10; Paperhangers and decorators, \$25; Atlantic Coast Line employes, Rocky Mount, N. C., \$11.50; New York Art Galley, \$5; Brewery Workers, \$50; Lodge No. 10, Machinists, \$100.

The donations thus far received from voluntary sub-criptions has exceeded \$1,000.

TO THE FRIENDS OF THE CAR MEN

Street car men want to maintain a nine-hour day.

They want \$1.89 per day for conductors, and \$1.98 per day for motormen, in Richmond, Manchester and inter-urban lines.

They ask for \$1.53 per day for conductors, and \$1.62 per day for motormen, in Petersburg.

They ask for arbitration. Will you kindly walk and help them secure these reasonable demands?

Brewery Workers Aid.

The Brewery Workers on Wednesday donated \$50 to Division 152, and imposed a fine of \$10 on any member caught riding on the cars during the strike, and for the second offense expulsion from the union will follow.

Nothing was done in reference to the Home Brewery, the members saying that there was no trouble existing between the union and the

strains have already handsome sum and will again show their liberality to-night.

To Our Soldier Boys.

We know that you are compelled to do your duty in this strike to keep order, but please, as good American citizens, do not have any more to say or to do with the men who are running the cars than you can help. Make them feel that you are simply on there in discharge of your duty, and they will have no sympathy from you at all, as I notice our officers laughing and joking with them.

T. B. S.

Trunk Makers to Aid.

The employes of Rountree's trunk factory have pledged themselves to contribute 25 cents a week each for the striking car men. In doing this the men say that while they have no union they sympathize with the men and walk until the strike is over.

Druids Asked to Walk.

Myrtle Grove, No. 16, United Ancient Order of Druids, passed resolutions Thursday night requesting its members and their friends not to ride on the cars during the strike. All other Groves of the city will pass like resolutions at their regular meetings.

Eureka Club Banquet.

The banquet tendered to the members of Division No. 152, Thursday night by the Eureka Club in their club room, 1014 West Broad, was a great success and highly enjoyed by all who participating.

The members marched from Sanger Hall in a body up Marshall street to the club house, about 400 being in line. After having enjoyed the sumptuous repast arranged under the supervision of Mr. A. G. Anthony, speeches were made by Mr. Orr and President Griggs.

enlisted to serve under the Governor of Virginia's orders, within the State of Virginia, will now find themselves liable to service under the orders of the President anywhere in the United States or in its colonies

The contention has, of course,



REZIN ORR.

been set up that by the hocus-pocus of the old act and a more or less vague court decision, the President has constructively had such power all along. But the fact stands out that for a hundred years no President has asserted that power and it had become for all practical purposes obsolete. But this act has explicitly revived it and authorized the President to use it.

We do not concede that the President had previously the power conferred by this act, but let us assume for the sake of the argument that he did have it under the old act. The vast difference that the new act has made in the situation can be made clear by an illustration. There is, we are informed, an old law in this State that has never been repealed which permits a man to beat his wife, if he doesn't use a stick larger than his thumb, and there is an old law in Massachusetts that subjects a man to fine and imprisonment for kissing his wife on Sunday. Does any sane man contend

CONTINUED ON FOURTH PAGE

porations, and yet not necessarily be a lawyer.

.....

Our people ought not to be quick to jump on Dick Taylor. He has done the best he could "under the circumstances." Much ought not to be expected from a self-confessed figurehead. Don't blame a man for not going above his capabilities. 66

On at least one occasion such defamatory utterances backfired on the editors of The Opinion. In one of the later issues of their paper they printed the following notice:

67

STORY OF DR. JEKILL AND MR. HIDE REVISED
State of Virginia, City of Richmond, to wit:
This day William Ferris appeared before me and made an oath that C. B. Buchanan, superintendent of transportation for the Virginia Passenger and Power Company, is traveling under an assumed name. His right name is James Martin.

Given under my hand this day, July 4, 1903.

HERMON HOLTE
Justice of the Peace

Upon the publication of this notice the editors of The Opinion were hauled into court, and there Dr. Jere Witherspoon, "an eminent divine," stated that he had known Mr. Buchanan since his birth and could swear that the charges in the affidavit were false. Thereupon, the judge promptly fined the two editors one hundred dollars each for rushing into print with a statement before an investigation of its truth had been made.

In addition to publishing choice bits of libel, The Opinion

66. The [Richmond, Virginia] Opinion, June 27, 1903.

67. The [Richmond, Virginia] Opinion, [n.d.], cited in Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 9, 1903.

68. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 15, 1903.

also made an effort to cultivate the friendship of those who could aid the cause of the striking car men:

We have the kindest feelings for our policemen. We would not reflect on them if we could. They are good men. They are gentlemen.

.....

We return many thanks for the flattering notice given us by the Hera Leader. 69

At other times The Opinion was not above using its columns to convey a veiled threat to those who would patronize the streetcars:

Yes, there are a few Negroes riding on the cars, but they are not our best Negroes If you look in the proper place you will find decent Negroes, but you will not find them on the cars.

.....

We have a list of business men who have been riding on the cars. Our friends have sought to get us to publish the list. We do not feel that the time has come for such work. We trust it never will. 70

The over-all effectiveness of The Opinion as a medium for the shaping of public opinion favorable to the strikers cannot be ascertained. One can only note a comment found in the Fredericksburg Free Lance to the effect that the labor paper was "very largely sold."⁷¹

The strikers' suggestion of a possible boycott was no idle threat, for it was reported that the boycotting was carried on extensively by the idle car men. They not only boycotted merchants,

69. The [Richmond, Virginia] Opinion, June 27, 1903.

70. Ibid.

71. The [Fredericksburg, Virginia] Free Lance, June 25, 1903.

manufacturers, and ministers who rode on the cars, but spotted city
 officials and promised to remember their actions at the next election.⁷²
 Boycotting was practiced while the union admonished, "This is all
 wrong. Allow every man a right to his opinion."⁷³

The Bricklayers Union of Richmond was in thorough sympathy with
 the striking car men, and in order to transmit this feeling into effec-
 tive action, each member of the union simultaneously notified the con-
 tractor for whom he was working that if the contractor used any lime
 purchased from the Sitterding-Carnesal-Davis Company, he would find
 himself without a skilled bricklayer. By attacking one company of which
 Mr. Fritz Sitterding was part owner, the men hoped to effect a change of
 policy in another company, the Virginia Passenger and Power Company,
 of which Mr. Sitterding was president.⁷⁴ This attempted boycott by the
 Bricklayers Union in sympathy with the striking car men ended in fail-
 ure, however, and the bricklayers found themselves faced with a ten
 thousand dollar lawsuit.⁷⁵

As the strike progressed the car men began to discover numerous
 ways to use the "letter" of the law to harass the streetcar company.
 For several days groups of strikers and their sympathizers made it their
 business to stand on the city's street corners, watch the company's cars

72. Ibid., July 4, 1903.

73. The [Richmond, Virginia] Quinion, loc. cit.

74. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 21, 1903.

75. Ibid., July 9, 1903.

which were being run by strikebreakers, and report them for minor violations of the city's ordinances. On Friday, July 10th, there were twenty-two such cases reported to the authorities, charging the company with failing to ring gongs at crossings, not using headlights, and running at too great a speed.⁷⁶

One might ask, to what extent was the striking union under the influence of local socialists? Early in the dispute it was reported:

One or more socialists have gained access to the meetings of the streetcar men at Sanger Hall and have attempted to expound their creed and their utopian theories, including attacks on capital, but as soon as their line of argument developed they were promptly stopped. The men are trying to keep socialism and politics out of their meetings⁷⁷

At this same time one of the union's officers declared, "Every effort is being used to keep the radical element out and to prevent any radical utterances."⁷⁸

However, in spite of their earlier intentions to avoid the socialists' influence, the striking car men seemed quite proud to announce only a month later:

Mr. Cantrell, a well-known local socialist, made an address of half an hour or nearly. He contrasted the daily income of the average workman with those of the President of the United States, of Messrs. Rockefeller, Morgan, Schweb and others, and impressed the inequality of conditions He urged laboring men to elect their own representatives in the legislature in order that they might secure legislation favorable to them rather than to capital.⁷⁹

76. Ibid., July 11, 1903.

77. Ibid., June 24, 1903.

78. Ibid.

79. Ibid., July 30, 1903.

Following this meeting there was the passage of a resolution expressing the men's belief that the action of the company in refusing the strikers' demands was ". . . not only a fight against the union by concentrated wealth, but a general onslaught on all unions to reduce the laborers to a lower standard of living."⁸⁰ Thus it can be seen that the earlier sentiment against socialism had been changed.

IV. FAILURE

The strikers gradually began to return to the company, seeking their old positions despite the fact that the strike was still technically in progress, and the company declared its preference for its former employees.⁸¹ By July 23rd thirty-five of the union men had returned to work in Richmond, Manchester and Petersburg, and within four days all lines were being operated on regular schedules with all positions filled.⁸²

By August 14th the patronage of the streetcars had approximated prestrike conditions, and the absence of disorders had convinced the public of the safety of riding at any time, night or day.⁸³ A Norfolk editor was prophetic when he declared that ". . . the Richmond strike has probably passed into the annals of roughhouse history."⁸⁴

80. Ibid., July 31, 1903.

81. Ibid., July 22, 1903.

82. Ibid., July 23, and July 28, 1903.

83. Ibid., August 14, 1903.

84. Editorial in Norfolk [Virginia] Dispatch, July 1, 1903.

On the morning of Friday, August 24th, sixty-eight days after the strike had begun, forty or fifty members of the union gathered in Sanger Hall to hear a speech by Union President Griggs. Mr. Griggs declared that on two occasions the men had had victory almost within their grasp, but their opportunity had been lost because of desertions from the union at a critical moment. Following this speech a motion was made to call off the strike. After a short debate a vote was taken, and the decision was unanimous. End the strike!⁸⁵

The motion to abandon the strike did not carry with it the suggestion that the union be dissolved, for in spite of many desertions from the ranks there were still three hundred fifty to four hundred members in good standing at the end of the conflict.⁸⁶ The union continued to hold its regular weekly meetings, but the proceedings were of little consequence, and one year later the organization had ceased to function.⁸⁷

A number of contemporaries attempted to explain the factors which contributed to the union's downfall. The editor of the Richmond Times-Dispatch suggested:

The strikers labored under two serious disadvantages. The one was that large numbers of men who did not belong to the union were willing to work at the wage which the company was paying The other disadvantage that the strikers labored under was that some of their misguided sympathizers

85. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, August 24, 1903.

86. Ibid., August 26, 1903.

87. Virginia State Federation of Labor, op. cit., p. 14.

engaged in acts of lawlessness. Every stone thrown, every pistol fired . . . was a blow struck at the strikers and injured their cause. 88

The Norfolk Dispatch editor agreed, "We doubt whether they will be able to carry the load of the disgraceful work . . . that lawless sympathizers have put on them." 89

Union President Wilbur J. Griggs in his report to the Ninth Annual Session of the Virginia Federation of Labor stated that the car men's defeat was ". . . partially due to giving the company too much time to prepare for the walkout," as well as the bad publicity given the movement by the violence and the ". . . many disgraceful acts committed by the company." 90

Daniel McCallum, president of the Virginia Federation of Labor, charged that the company had ". . . relied upon their millions to buy a victory by hook or crook," and pointed out that the car men's defeat illustrated two morals: "First, let young unions confer with old unions. Second, see to it that there is a good strike fund within reach." 91 Had these rules been observed the strike, in the opinion of many, would have ended differently or else been indefinitely postponed.

88. Editorial in Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, August 25, 1903.

89. Editorial in Norfolk [Virginia] Dispatch, June 26, 1903.

90. Virginia State Federation of Labor, op. cit., p. 10.

91. Ibid., p. 11.

CHAPTER IV

VIOLENCE

There can be no understatement of the amount of disorder and violence which accompanied the 1903 Richmond transit strike. The editor of the Norfolk Dispatch observed that the "peaceful" Richmond car strike reminded him of the gentle assimilation methods used in the Philippines, and a Suffolk Herald editorial writer regretted to see that in the capital of the state there was so much disorder and sympathy for lawlessness. A Richmond paper declared:

The strike of the streetcar men has paled into insignificance and been completely overshadowed by the demonstrations of lawlessness reported from various sections of the city and suburbs. A situation bordering upon insurrection against law and order prevails intermittently 2

I. A DESCRIPTION OF MOB RULE

Demonstrations against the company began almost immediately. On the second day of the strike a crowd numbering an estimated three thousand gathered on Main Street and pelted the streetcars with mud, eggs and filth. Percussion caps were placed on the tracks and when they exploded women fainted. Three days later there was a similar

1. Editorial in Norfolk [Virginia] Dispatch, June 24, 1903; and Suffolk [Virginia] Herald, [n.d.], cited in Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 30, 1903.

2. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 25, 1903.

3. Ibid., June 19, 1903.

occurrence in the west end of the city, involving 1,500 persons. During the night "tons of obstructions" were piled on the company's tracks in Fulton by a seemingly organized gang of approximately forty men, and there was also an attempt to burn down "Bockett's Bridge" which served as a streetcar trestle in that part of the city.⁴

On Tuesday, June 23rd, a west end car jumped the tracks and was attacked by a mob. There was a demonstration at the company's Twenty-ninth Street car sheds in which fifty to a hundred men were injured by missiles. Car windows were broken and obstacles were placed on the tracks. Some time after midnight the car tracks on upper Lester Street were actually torn up and carted away.⁵

On the night of June 25th as a company streetcar was crossing the city line into Henrico County at Lombardy and Vine Streets, someone outside and standing on the edge of a crowd fired a shot into the car. Guards on the car returned the shot by firing into the crowd with guns loaded with squirrel shot, striking at least six persons.⁶ Later that night there was retaliatory action when several cars were fired on from ambush and three operators were injured.⁷

Shortly after the dispute broke out into the open, Company Manager Huff received an anonymous letter threatening harm to his fam-

4. Ibid., June 23, 1903.

5. Ibid., June 24, 1903.

6. Ibid., June 25, 1903.

7. Ibid., June 26, 1903.

ily and the burning of his home. When it was learned that two strangers were in town trying to locate the house, a military guard was posted around it and the manager's family removed to safety.⁸

On July 1st a large quantity of dynamite was stolen from a quarry in Chesterfield County, and it was feared that it would be used to destroy company property.⁹ Three weeks later the headlines of the Richmond paper read, "MORE LAWLESS WORK IS DONE. EXPLOSIVES SHAKE AND DAMAGE CARS. ATTEMPT MADE TO KILL MOTORMAN."¹⁰

The disorder continued, and at one time it was necessary to employ as many as eight or a dozen men to guard one car.¹¹ During a trial on July 28th it was revealed that there had been a plot to murder three of the company's officers, and on August 7th two men were arrested and confined in a Henrico County jail for "feloniously shooting at an electric car with intent to maim, disfigure, disable and kill the motorman and conductor thereon."¹²

Two lives were actually lost during the strike and were directly attributable thereto. A Mr. Luther Taylor was shot and killed in the city of Manchester while resisting arrest, and a motorman named Charles E. Graham was stabbed to death by a fellow striker in a personal en-

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., July 1, 1903.

10. Ibid., July 24, 1903.

11. Ibid., July 1, 1903.

12. Ibid., July 29, and August 6, 1903.

counter growing out of the strike.

II. THE DEATHS OF GRAHAM AND TAYLOR

Mr. Charles E. Graham was a Richmond resident and an employee of the Virginia Passenger and Power Company. As a noteman and member of the local union he had obediently quit work when the walkout was agreed upon, but from later testimony it appears that he was not altogether satisfied with the union's decision.¹⁴ When, after two weeks of unemployment some of the strikers began to murmur against their self-imposed hardship, Graham was heard to repeat the rumor that various men were returning to work. A fellow striker, Walter H. Lowery, reprimanded him for this statement, and when Graham denied spreading the rumor a verbal exchange followed. Witnesses to the dispute declared that Graham publicly cursed his admonisher and vowed to kill him before the day ended. Later that night a fist fight between the two men was broken up by the military.¹⁵

On the following evening, July 3rd, as Lowery was walking alone near the corner of Twentieth and Broad Streets, he was attacked by Graham. According to the account later given by Lowery, he drew his knife to ward off his assailant and in the struggle which ensued cut him severely on the face, arms, and body. The bleeding Graham was rushed

13. Ibid., July 5, and July 3, 1903.

14. Ibid., July 4, 1903.

15. Ibid.

to the hospital where he died the following day, and Lowery reported the incident to the First Precinct Police Station.¹⁶

In its closing statement the coroner's jury which investigated the alleged murder determined that Graham

. . . came to his death on the third day of July, 1903, from the effects of wounds inflicted by a knife in the hands of Walter H. Lowery on the second day of July, 1903, and they are of the opinion that the killing was done in self-defense. 17

The death of Luther Taylor was attributable to an entirely different set of circumstances, for the evidence revealed at the inquest indicates that he was shot by the military while attempting an escape.

Taylor, who was an ironworker by trade and not a member of the striking car men's union, had been called down by a soldier on the night of July 4th for being drunk and disorderly. Then, when he used abusive language to the militiamen and continued to create more disturbance, he was arrested and transported from the scene of the incident in Manchester. The trip was made in Taylor's own buggy with a corporal sitting in the seat behind him.¹⁸

The corporal and his prisoner proceeded down Hull Street, and upon reaching Cowardin Avenue Taylor turned his horse into the Avenue and announced that he would go no further. The corporal then rose to

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Adjutant General of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Report for the Period Ending 20th October, 1903 (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1903), pp. 46-47.

his feet to take the reins, but as he did so, Taylor shoved him out of the buggy and attempted to make his escape. When Taylor failed to heed the command to halt, numerous shots were fired at him by the corporal and other soldiers standing nearby. The horse did not stop until it was shot and wounded near the bridge at the lower end of Cowardin Avenue,¹⁹ four blocks away.

An examination of the prisoner revealed that Taylor had been mortally wounded, and he died on the way to the hospital.²⁰

The coroner's inquest lasted four days, and more than sixty witnesses were examined.²¹ Throughout the entire hearing, the press reported, there was an apparent feeling against the soldiers revealed in the testimony of nearly every civilian heard.²² When it finally adjourned, the coroner's jury had decided

. . . said death was due to a gunshot wound inflicted by a bullet fired from a gun in the hands of either Corporal W. E. Lane or Sergeant R. P. Burwell, and whether said shooting was justifiable . . . [the jury was] unable to agree. ²³

The case then went before a grand jury. In its report to Judge John H. Ingram of the Hustings Court of Manchester, the grand Jury declared that the troops were present at the request of the mayor of the city for the purpose of keeping order. This implied the right to arrest

19. Ibid., p. 47.

20. Ibid., p. 48.

21. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 15, 1903.

22. Ibid., July 11, 1903.

23. Ibid., July 9, 1903.

and recapture prisoners, even if shooting were necessary—and Taylor had been arrested and then shot while seeking to escape. "Like results might have followed under the ordinary police protection of the city," the jury's report declared; "Hence, the grand jury finds no good reason²⁴ for placing blame upon any person or persons"

The death of Luther Taylor was the first case in Virginia to involve the shooting of a civilian by a soldier in the line of duty during²⁵ peace time.

III. RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE VIOLENCE

Who was responsible for these disorders? Officers of the union stated that the men had adopted a strict code to discipline the conduct of the strikers. There was to be no interference with the running of the cars other than the non-violent picketing of the car barns. There was to be no profanity nor use of intoxicants, and the men out on strike were told to wear their easily-identified uniforms on the streets.²⁶ Yet in spite of these precautions, violence did occur.

The union officials denied that they had fomented the disorder, and the local press appears to have accepted their innocence. "The striking car men, with one or two exceptions," declared the Baptist editor of the Religious Herald, "have not been charged with disorderly con-

24. Ibid., July 28, 1903.

25. Ibid., July 9, 1903.

26. Ibid., June 18, 1903.

duct, but have conducted themselves with admirable propriety.²⁷ The editor of the Times-Dispatch felt that neither the company nor the union was responsible for the violence but that it was the product of the city's lawless element which reveled in the excitement.²⁸

A Fredericksburg paper reprinted the protestation of innocence by Union President Wilbur Griggs and stated that he had appointed his oldest and most reliable members to help preserve order.²⁹ The president of the Virginia Federation of Labor observed:

While some of our people disapproved of the strike, all the people were devoted to the car men as polite and orderly men, and they admired their fidelity and generally good behavior under a strain calculated to try men's souls.³⁰

Not all observers, however, held the strikers to be completely guiltless of the violence. According to Alexandria's evening paper, the company had claimed that it was the union which was responsible for the disturbances.³¹ The Charlottesville Daily Progress likewise expressed its regret that the "... strikers in Richmond have resorted to violence and destruction."³²

27. Editorial in The [Richmond, Virginia] Religious Herald, July 2, 1903.

28. Editorial in the Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 25, 1903.

29. The [Fredericksburg, Virginia] Free Lance, June 20, 1903.

30. Virginia State Federation of Labor, Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Session, May 3-5, 1904 (Richmond: Williams Printing Company, 1904), p. 10.

31. Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser, June 22, 1903.

32. Editorial in The [Charlottesville, Virginia] Daily Progress, June 24, 1903.

Probably the best revelation of the union's attitude toward the disorders is to be found in a statement published in its own newspaper, The Opinion, which advised the strikers ". . . not to shoot. You may hit the wrong man!"³³ However, one cannot fail to be impressed with the fact that of the over six hundred men on strike, not one of them was ever convicted of any crime.³⁴

Although much of the disorder undoubtedly was caused by either the strikers or their sympathizers, some of it may have been instigated by the company itself, for it must have been realized that the rioting and violence reflected poorly on the cause of the strikers.

On the second day of a trial of alleged participants in a riot in the Fulton section of the city, the proceedings took somewhat of a turn when

. . . several prominent military men . . . told on cross-examination that it was their belief that the riot had been planned by the Passenger and Power Company and the militia in order to break the strike. Some of the company's witnesses admitted that the . . . Passenger and Power Company officers knew the riot was to occur--that they arranged for the car to be at the particular point at a certain time. 35

Such testimony leads one to speculate that this particular incident may have been planned by the company for the purpose of discrediting the strikers, but a news article appearing on the following day stated, "The testimony on Thursday did not show that either the military author-

33. The [Richmond, Virginia] Opinion, June 27, 1903.

34. Virginia State Federation of Labor, loc. cit.

35. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, August 7, 1903.

ities or the management of the Passenger and Power Company had anything
whatever to do with concocting the plot."³⁶

That a latent spirit of lawlessness existed at all in Richmond in 1903 and was manifested in unchecked mob violence is, perhaps, an indictment of the city itself as much as it is an accusation to be hurled at either party to the actual dispute.

36. Ibid., August 8, 1903.

CHAPTER V

THE AUTHORITIES

It is to be regretted that the Richmond streetcar strike was so early marked by violence, but that disorder did occur and the city authorities were unable to cope with it is a fact too obvious to be denied.

There is evidence, however, that in Richmond there was an increased effort to maintain law and order during the months of the strike. A comparison of statistics for the year of the strike, 1903, and the years preceding and following it reveals that in the month of June the arrests of white males numbered 192 in the year 1902 and 181 in the year 1904, but 338 in the year of the strike.¹ Similarly, the figures indicate that the total of all arrests during the three months of June, July and August, was 1,735 in the year 1902 and 1,740 in the year 1904, but 2,175 in the year of the strike.²

I. THE RICHMOND POLICE FORCE

An examination of the comments elicited by the performance of Richmond's police force during the strike reveals that some of the city's citizens were quite happy with the service they received, while others

1. Chief of Police of the City of Richmond, Virginia, Annual Report for the Year Ending December 31, 1902 (Richmond: C. E. Flanhart Printing Co., 1903), p. 8; For the Year Ending December 31, 1903, p. 7; and For the Year Ending December 31, 1904, p. 8.

2. Ibid.

felt that the protection afforded by the city's officers of the law was not at all satisfactory.

Early in the dispute, before daily disorder had begun to occur, the city authorities were praised for their energetic enforcement of law and order. It was brought to the attention of the editor of the New York Times that

... Richmond shines by contrast with more than one Northern municipality . . . in this respect of enforcing the law and keeping the peace. The local authorities deserve the gratitude, not only of their constituents, but of the American public in general. 3

The Alexandria Gazette agreed, "The police protection in the city is good." ⁴ The Richmond Times-Dispatch observed that two or three policemen were being posted at almost every corner on the Main Street car line and were serving eighteen hours of continuous duty ⁵ per day.

Because of the additional demands made upon the police during the strike it was deemed advisable to supplement the regular force with special police, sworn in for the duration of the emergency. "In time of exigency," City Attorney H. R. Pollard declared, "[police] commissioners may appoint, temporarily, without authority from the city council, a suitable number of additional policemen for such time

3. Editorial in the New York Times, [n.d.], cited in ltr, John H. Davis to Governor Montague, June 26, 1903, Montague Executive Papers, Virginia State Library.

4. Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser, June 22, 1903.

5. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 20, 1903.

as shall appear necessary." Accordingly, on the first day of the strike twenty-three new officers were sworn in and placed on duty at the city's three police stations.⁶ This attempt to add manpower to the city's forces was not a complete success, however, for although some of the new men proved themselves to be fine policemen, others did not. It was reported later that nine of the special officers got "boozed" and had to be dismissed.⁷

Members of the city's regular police force began to be criticized for their indifferent attitude toward the strike disorder. Most of these opinions which reflected poorly on the law officers appear to have been reported in out-of-town newspapers. The editor of the Fredericksburg Free Lance declared:

It is asserted with great candor, and there seems to be some grounds for the assertion, that the police force of the city has been decidedly derelict in their duty during the present strike, and there are several instances where it is charged that the members of the force have sympathized with the strikers to the extent of allowing disorder without an effort to arrest the offenders.⁸

The Alexandria Gazette also observed that the sympathy of many of the policemen was evidently stronger than their sense of duty, and reported that there was indignation among many of the citizens at

6. City Attorney of Richmond, Virginia, Opinions from January 1, 1902, to December 31, 1903 (Richmond: G. E. Flanhart Printing Co., 1904), p. 98.

7. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 18, 1903.

8. Ibid., August 6, 1903.

9. Editorial in The [Fredericksburg, Virginia] Free Lance, July 16, 1903.

10

such conduct.

In a letter to the editor of the Richmond paper, a Staunton, Virginia, correspondent wrote that he had kept closely in touch with the whole strike situation and had noticed that the city police were utterly useless in controlling the disorder. ¹¹ To this charge the Richmond editor responded, ". . . Nor are we apologizing for the police. Some of them were undoubtedly delinquent." ¹²

Chief of Police Howard realized the need for discipline within his force and on July 25th addressed the men. "It has been fully, fairly and squarely demonstrated to me," he warned, "that the department has not been doing their full duty. I want to emphasize that remark in this way—that they failed to see things that they should see." ¹³ But the policemen continued to sympathize with the strikers and felt constrained to overlook acts of violence perpetrated against the company. As a result the Police Board found it necessary to use strong discipline in obvious cases of neglect of duty. On two occasions the newspapers reported a total of one hundred sixty-five ¹⁴ dollars in fines having been levied against four officers.

The city authorities began to realize their inability to cope

10. Editorial in Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser, July 9, 1903.

11. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 30, 1903.

12. Editorial in Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 30, 1903.

13. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 26, 1903.

14. Ibid., June 20, and July 21, 1903.

with the situation. Mobs controlled the city streets and the street-
 car company appealed for more effective protection.¹⁵ Mr. Farloy, the
 chief of the strikebreakers, predicted that the city's police force
 would be unable to handle the mounting violence, and the newspaper
 re-enforced his statement that the situation had grown serious. "The
 thin blue line," the paper said, "is not strong enough to dominate at
 the same time all the streets over which cars run."¹⁶

Richmond's Chief of Police Howard prepared for a showdown by
 ordering riot guns to be held in readiness.¹⁷ Over in Manchester,
 however, that city's police chief had already admitted defeat. In a
 letter to his mayor, Manchester's chief of police, James A. Lipscomb,
 admitted that in case of riot it would be impossible for his force to
 cope with the mob.¹⁸

The situation grew critical and finally on June 23rd in a letter
 to Richmond's mayor, Richard M. Taylor, the officers of the Virginia
 Passenger and Power Company demanded that he call for the state militia
 to re-enforce the local police:

Dear Sir,

The undersigned companies regret that the police force of
 the city of Richmond, efficient as it is, is not sufficient to
 enable them to operate their cars in accordance with their
 franchise.

15. Ibid., July 2, 1903.

16. Ibid., June 23, 1903.

17. Ibid., June 25, 1903.

18. Ibid., July 2, 1903.

The rioting at various points in the city on last evening and today and the statements of the chief of police and the three captains of police that the force at their command is inadequate to preserve law and order in the city and give protection . . . compel these companies to demand of you that you call to your aid, in the manner provided by law, such military force as may be required 19

Mayor Taylor now had to comply with the company's request for additional troops or else accept all responsibility for the failure to control any future violence.

II. MAYOR TAYLOR'S DECISION

Even before the strike was actually called Richmond's mayor, Richard H. Taylor, had sought to aid in the peaceful settlement of the dispute. On June 13th he approached the company's general manager, S. W. Huff, and suggested a conference with the union, but this suggestion was rejected by Mr. Huff.²⁰ Two days later the mayor received a request from the union that he approach the company as conciliator,²¹ but by that time he had already received Huff's refusal.

After the dispute had broken into the open and rioting crowds of strikers and sympathizers were roaming the city, Mayor Taylor began to make personal appeals to the public for order. On one occasion he went to the scene of a disorder and addressed the crowd, but without effect. It was reported, "He has been the workmen's candidate and

19. Cited in Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 24, 1903.

20. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 16, 1903.

21. Ibid., June 16, 1903.

idol, but [now is] the object of much abuse because he did not declare
 for the strikers,"²²

On another occasion while trying to calm a disorderly mob the mayor expressed his sympathy for the strikers. Attempting to catch the attention of the noisy group, he suddenly exclaimed, "I am with you boys!" and then continued his admonitions against the use of violence. Regarding this declaration the editor of the Charlottesville Daily Progress said, "Mayor Taylor of Richmond exhibited poor judgement when he announced to the mob which he was trying to quell: 'I am with you boys!'"²³ Two other newspapers quickly came to the defense of the mayor and his ill-advised statement. The editor of the Fredericksburg Free Lance reasoned, "If he had said to them, 'Boys, I am against you!' they surely would not have heeded his advice."²⁴ The Richmond editor ventured to explain that the mayor was expressing his sympathy for the strikers' cause and had shown this sympathy by refusing to ride on the company's cars, but he did not mean to sympathize with violence.²⁵ From the evidence at hand one must conclude that Mayor Taylor was willing to lend his support to the striking car men, but only so long as they limited their methods to peaceful persuasion.

22. Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser, June 24, 1903.

23. Cited in Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 23, 1903.

24. Editorial in The [Fredericksburg, Virginia] Free Lance, July 2, 1903.

25. Editorial in Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 30, 1903.

Mayor Taylor was not the only city official to champion the cause of the striking union. On one occasion the Richmond press reported that Howard Healy, a Richmond city councilman, was arrested for throwing chunks of ice at a passing streetcar. ²⁶ Noting the assignment of Richmond's policemen to duty protecting the transit company's property, the paper reflected, "It does not mean that the city sides with the company." ²⁷

Across the river where there was considerable sentiment favorable to the striking car men, it was very difficult for Manchester's Mayor Maurice to adopt a line of action which was not in some way influenced by political considerations. However, as the violence grew to the proportions of an insurrection Manchester's mayor, with the advice of his chief of police and city attorney, finally decided to call on the governor for help. Whereupon the apt observation was made that ". . . if ²⁸ the election came tomorrow, Mayor Maurice would easily be defeated."

Similarly, when Richmond's Mayor Taylor was requested by the streetcar company to petition the governor for troops, he was under the same political pressures as the mayor of Manchester. Upon receipt of the request Mayor Taylor read the lines carefully phrased by the company's lawyer and then called for a conference with Chief of Police ²⁹ B. F. Howard and Commonwealth's Attorney D. C. Richardson. After a

26. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 19, 1903.

27. Ibid., June 24, 1903.

28. Ibid., July 10, 1903.

29. Ibid., June 24, 1903.

full week of uncontrolled rioting and violence there could be but one answer to the allegation that the force at the mayor's command was inadequate to preserve law and order in the city. Accordingly, on Tuesday, June 23rd, Richmond's mayor requested the governor to send state troops into the city.

III. THE GOVERNOR AND MILITIA

In 1903 the Virginia Passenger and Power Company operated its streetcars over lines in the cities of Richmond, Manchester and Petersburg, and in the counties of Henrico and Chesterfield. In the city of Petersburg, although fifty-two of the company's employees went out on strike, there was no violence or disorder of any kind to tax the resources of the local authorities.³⁰ But from June 23rd to July 23rd the two cities on the banks of the James and their surrounding counties were forced to depend upon the strength of Virginia's state militia in order to keep the peace.³¹

On June 23rd Colonel George Wayne Anderson, commanding officer of the Seventieth Infantry Regiment, Virginia Volunteers, received orders from Governor Andrew Jackson Montague to take state troops into the city of Richmond and, subject to the instructions of the local

30. See Figure 3 on page 60.

31. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 20, 1903.

32. Adjutant General of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Report for the Period Ending 20th October, 1903 (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1903), p. 25.



The City of Richmond,

VIRGINIA.

MAYOR'S OFFICE,
CITY HALL.

RICHARD M. TAYLOR
MAYOR

Richmond, Va., June 23rd, 1863.

Hon. A. J. Montague,
Governor Of Virginia.

Sirs-

In view of sundry breaches of the peace, which have occurred in this City within the last twenty-four hours, and the tumultuous and riotous resistance of the law and imminent danger which now exists, I hereby call upon you for aid in the restoration of peace and good order in this City.

This call is made in pursuance of Section 333, Code of Virginia, 1857.

Respectfully,

Richard M. Taylor
Mayor

Dick. R. M. T.

FIGURE 3

MAYOR TAYLOR'S REQUEST FOR STATE MILITIA

mayor, take such action as necessary to prevent any violation of the law.³³ On the following day a similar executive order was given for the sending of troops into the county of Henrico, and on July 2nd the state militia was ordered into the city of Manchester and the adjacent county of Chesterfield.³⁴ In each instance these orders subjected the occupying forces to the authority of the leading civil officer in each locality.

To aid the civil authorities in these areas Governor Montague supplied all twelve companies of the Seventieth Regiment of Infantry and six of the twelve companies of the Seventy-first Regiment. He ordered out Battery "A" of the First Artillery Battalion, the Staunton Rifles, the Clifton Forge Rifles and two companies of the Richmond Light Infantry Blues. All told, there were on active duty twenty-two of the thirty-eight companies which comprised the Virginia Volunteers.³⁵ A total of 1,333 men were called to arms because of the strike disorder.³⁶

In addition to the remaining sixteen companies of state militia,

33. Stern to Anderson, June 23, 1903, ltr cited in Adjutant General of the Commonwealth of Virginia, op. cit., p. 26.

34. Stern to Anderson, June 24, 1903, ltr cited in Adjutant General of the Commonwealth of Virginia, op. cit., p. 28; and Halley to Anderson, ltr cited in Adjutant General of the Commonwealth of Virginia, op. cit., p. 30.

35. Adjutant General of the Commonwealth of Virginia, op. cit., p. 25.

36. Statistic based on company rosters appended to Adjutant General of the Commonwealth of Virginia, op. cit.

the governor had other reserves to be used if necessary. On June 27th the chief executive received a telegram from Blacksburg, Virginia, advising him that a company of V.P.I. cadets had volunteered to be at his disposal within eight hours notice in case of an emergency. ³⁷

There can be no doubt as to the legality of Governor Montague's action in calling out the state troops. Article five, section seventy-three of the Virginia State Constitution requires that ". . . the Governor shall take care that the laws be faithfully executed," and in order that he might carry out this instruction it is provided that "he shall be commander-in-chief of the land and naval forces of the state, and shall have power to embody the militia to repel invasion, suppress insurrection and enforce the execution of the laws." ³⁸

Shortly after Governor Montague had issued his orders activating the Volunteers he received a letter from Justice John Taggard Blodgett of the Rhode Island Supreme Court. In his correspondence to the governor, Justice Blodgett enclosed the advance sheets of majority and minority opinions in a Rhode Island Supreme Court case. In this case the governor of Rhode Island had been forced to regulate the violence ³⁹ accompanying a strike by calling out the Rhode Island state guard. Although these opinions are no longer attached to the correspondence

37. Osterbind, et. al., to Montague, telegram dtd June 27, 1903, Montague Executive Papers, Virginia State Library.

38. Cited in editorial in Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 30, 1903.

39. Blodgett to Montague, July 4, 1903, Montague Executive Papers, Virginia State Library.

and despite the fact that Justice Hodgett refrained from rendering a personal opinion on the Virginia situation, it is interesting to note that a problem similar to Virginia's was being faced at approximately the same time farther north and was being solved by identical means.

Governor Montague received advice and praise from near and afar for the energetic manner in which he handled the strike disorders in Richmond. From the president of a New York firm he received congratulations and the comment, "We are glad to see that leading newspapers recognize and acknowledge the good work" ⁴⁰ From a Richmond resident he received the advice, "Do not hesitate to do your full duty in preserving in Richmond and in the whole state, the right of every man to labor how and when he pleases. Don't worry about the votes, and the votes will be all right." ⁴¹ Another New York correspondent congratulated the governor for the "splendid efficiency demonstrated in this crisis." ⁴²

Governor Montague's actions were eventually brought to the attention of the President of the United States, for in a letter to the governor the editor of The American Monthly Review of Reviews declared, "I took the liberty to quote from your letter in writing to President Roosevelt, and I called his attention to the vigor with which you have been steadily suppressing lawlessness and maintaining public order." ⁴³

40. John H. Davis to Montague, June 26, 1903, ibid.

41. Jacob L. Eschiel to Montague, June 23, 1903, ibid.

42. George Foster Peabody to Montague, July 11, 1903, ibid.

43. Albert Shaw to Montague, August 17, 1903, ibid.

The sending of state troops into Richmond proved to have been the only way to stop the violence which occurred, for hoodlums which had been bold under the police regime ". . . fled before the Springfield rifle." It was observed by the local press that "the gleaming bayonet and musket in the hands of a man with orders to 'shoot to kill' had an irresistible influence over the riotously disposed."⁴⁴

An editor in one of Virginia's cities which was called upon to supply troops declared, "The Governor was right in calling out the militia or resorting to any other means to keep the peace."⁴⁵ He appears to have reflected the opinion of most of the state's population.

Concerning the effectiveness of his forces during the crisis, Colonel Anderson, the officer immediately in charge in the Richmond area, reported the following:

As it was, no mob dared show itself after the troops were in hand and properly disposed. [Instead,] the riotous element was driven to the use of torpedoes and all manner of obstructions which could be secretly placed on the track, to the use of missiles and weapons which could be thrown or fired from concealment, and to the use of abusive and violent language The presence of the troops in force, however, and the knowledge that they would fire upon those using weapons or dangerous missiles . . . ultimately resulted in establishing order and normal conditions. 46

When the last state troops were finally withdrawn from the city on July 23rd after thirty days occupation, the adjutant general com-

44. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 7, 1903.

45. Editorial in Norfolk [Virginia] Dispatch, June 25, 1903.

46. Cited in Adjutant General of the Commonwealth of Virginia, op. cit., pp. 52-53.

mented upon their cost and contribution to keeping the peace. "Whilst the force in the field was large and its cost to the Commonwealth was great," Acting Adjutant General Stern explained, "it was the price she has had to pay to save many lives and to maintain without bloodshed the dignity of her laws."⁴⁷

IV. TRIAL OF SHERIFF SOLOMON

For some time after the Richmond transit strike had begun the adjoining county of Henrico remained with no more protection than that afforded by its regular police force. Thus responsibility for keeping order in the county was placed in the office of Henrico county sheriff, at the time of the 1903 Richmond transit strike occupied by Sheriff Simon Solomon.

On numerous occasions Sheriff Solomon expressed his opinion that no state troops were needed in the county. "As far as I know," he declared, "there has been no disorder within my jurisdiction. I have found my people orderly and respectful of the law."⁴⁸ When it was suggested that the militia might be called out as a preventive or precautionary measure, the sheriff declined, saying that he did not need assistance.⁴⁹

Sheriff Solomon's opinion, however, was not shared by another

47. Ibid., p. 57.

48. Cited in Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 25, 1903.

49. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 26, 1903.

county officer, Judge T. Ashby Wickham of the Henrico County Court. In a letter to Governor Montague, Judge Wickham expressed his apprehensions⁵⁰

Dear Sir:

It is proper, in my judgment, that I should lay before you the present condition of Henrico County so that you may determine whether you should under section 211 of the Code of Virginia call out the military. Mr. Solomon, as he is at present advised, absolutely refuses to do this. There have been only trifling acts of disorder in the county The danger as it now rests is from the lawless element to be found in Richmond, as in all other large towns, and which will flow out into the county where we have not an adequate police force to restrain them. It seems to me that this danger is very real and imminent and cannot be averted except by calling out the military in the county

Judge Wickham's fears were realized when on the night of June 24th there was an incident of violence just inside the county line in which several persons were shot and seriously injured.⁵¹ The "Vine Street Riot," as it came to be called, served to reveal the error of Sheriff Solomon's previous judgement, so he immediately petitioned⁵² the governor for state aid. In commenting on the incident the sheriff placed the blame for the disorder on the company, ". . . whose Pinkerton men," he claimed, "had deliberately aggravated the trouble⁵³ by shooting into the people without cause."

50. Wickham to Montague, June 24, 1903, Montague Executive Papers, Virginia State Library.

51. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 25, 1903.

52. Solomon to Montague, June 24, 1903, ltr cited in Adjutant General of the Commonwealth of Virginia, op. cit., p. 27.

53. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, loc. cit.

The tragedy which resulted from Sheriff Solomon's tardy action aroused the public, and agitation began for his removal from office. The editor of the Richmond Times-Dispatch stated that it was sheer nonsense to say that the guards on the streetcar fired without provocation, and "If the sheriff had called for troops the incident would not have occurred."⁵⁴ An Alexandria paper agreed that the shooting was the natural sequence to the refusal of the sheriff to ask for military protection.⁵⁵

Prior to the incident the streetcar company had made frequent requests for military protection of its car lines in that part of the county lying west of the city. When, as a result of the sheriff's inaction there was injury to its employees, the company charged Sheriff Solomon with ". . . malfeasance, misfeasance, incompetency, and gross neglect of official duty."⁵⁶ After detailing the circumstances of the strike and its efforts to continue the operation of cars in the county in fulfillment of its obligation as a public service corporation, the company alleged that the office of the county sheriff had afforded it no protection. "He was even appealed to on the strength of his oath of office," the company charged, "and to this last he replied that an oath of office did not cut much figure these days."⁵⁷

54. Editorial in Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 15, 1903.

55. Editorial in Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser, June 25, 1903.

56. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 5, 1903.

57. Ibid.

Eventually the case for the sheriff's removal was brought before the county court. There, Judge Wickham disqualified himself from presiding because he had already expressed an opinion on the matter in his letter to the governor.⁵⁸ Instead, he ordered Samuel F. Waddill, Clerk of the Henrico County Court, to request that the governor appoint another judge, and F. W. Sims of the Louisa County Court was then designated to temporarily replace Wickham.⁵⁹

The trial of Sheriff Solomon began on July 27th and lasted six days. During this time the company sought to prove that the sheriff was politically motivated when he refused to request militia. A witness quoted Solomon as having said that while he was "fooling" with the company, his opponent in the coming election was out campaigning among the strikers.⁶⁰ Governor Montague was called to testify and revealed that he had delicately suggested to the sheriff the need for troops. The governor also declared that when the crisis became apparent, he had ordered troops into the county a good half hour before receiving the sheriff's request.⁶¹

In defense of Sheriff Solomon it was shown that he had been careful and thorough in his investigation of the conditions prevalent in

58. Cf. ante, p. 66.

59. Waddill to Montague, July 4, 1903, Montague Executive Papers, Virginia State Library; and Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 15, 1903.

60. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 28, 1903.

61. Ibid., July 29, 1903.

the county. A dozen witnesses testified that before he had postponed his request for troops, the sheriff had consulted many of the county's well-informed property-holders, who stated emphatically that there was no occasion for military protection. It was further pointed out that the sheriff had acted upon the advice of the commonwealth's attorney, who declared that the situation had not reached the point where additional troops were necessary.⁶²

The jury was hopelessly divided, and Judge Sims, rather than coerce a unanimous verdict by keeping it penned up indefinitely, discharged it.⁶³ Thus was Sheriff Solomon acquitted.

After the trial in a letter congratulating the governor for his appearance in the case, one of the trial's spectators wrote:⁶⁴

One thing is certain: That though the jury disagreed, a great object-lesson was taught to all sheriffs and other officers, which must in the future [be] to the public good --namely, that they are not possessed of a final discretion in the discharge of their duty, but are liable at anytime to be called to account.

The case of Sheriff Solomon revealed the reluctance with which one civil officer admitted his inability to control the strike situation. But the violence which accompanied the 1903 walkout was of such proportions as to have tested the resources of even the most competent civil authority. It was for this reason that the calling out of the state militia proved necessary.

62. Ibid., July 30, 1903.

63. Ibid., August 2, 1903.

64. Ryan to Montague, August 6, 1903, Montague Executive Papers, Virginia State Library.

CHAPTER VI

THE COMMUNITY

It has been demonstrated that the Richmond transit strike of 1903 was a costly affair, having taken the lives of two men, caused the serious injury of numerous others, and occasioned the destruction of considerable property. But the effects of this conflict reached far beyond the actual parties to the dispute and touched the lives of almost every resident of Richmond, Manchester, and the surrounding counties.

I. PUBLIC OPINION

On June 23rd eight hundred citizens of the city of Manchester gathered in Leader Hall and adopted a resolution requesting the Virginia Passenger and Power Company not to run its cars in their city until the strike was settled.¹ A few days later a local lodge of the Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons, a group numbering among its members some of the city's most influential citizens, met in the Masonic Temple and passed a resolution of sympathy with the strikers.² After observing these and similar expressions of the public sentiment in that city, the editor of the Richmond Times-Dispatch came to the conclusion that "a most intense feeling against the Passenger and Power Company

1. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 24, 1903.

2. Ibid., June 25, 1903.

prevails in Manchester."³

There can be little doubt that the striking car men received their greatest public support in the city of Manchester. It was believed at that time that the civil authorities of the city were of the same mind as the people, and any attempt to run the streetcars would have resulted in uncontrolled disorder.⁴

Just outside the city of Manchester the country folk of Chesterfield were not so much in sympathy with a strike which had deprived them of their transportation into town. When the operation of the streetcars was finally resumed in Manchester and the adjoining county, it was the people in the county who hailed the cars with handkerchiefs and were the first to ride.⁵

In the city of Petersburg there was very little agitation by the strikers or by the townspeople in their behalf. A few businessmen feared being boycotted and therefore refused to ride on the streetcars, but the majority rode the cars once they were put back on regular schedules by the company's strikebreakers.⁶ Fifty-two union members went out on strike, but except for a single spike being placed on a track and causing a derailment, there were no other incidents in the city of Petersburg. The strike ended with no mass meetings having been held

3. Editorial in Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 26, 1903.

4. Editorial in Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser, June 30, 1903.

5. Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser, July 3, 1903.

6. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 25, 1903.

and no violence of any kind having been perpetrated.⁷

In the city of Richmond, although opinion was more divided than in Manchester, the people generally favored the strikers. Out-of-town newspapers recognized a decided partiality, one declaring, "The sympathy of the public is naturally very generally with the laboring man."⁸ Another paper observed, "The people as a rule are strong sympathizers, and that is perhaps the bitterest spot of the whole against the company."⁹

Early in the strike the merchants of Richmond began to realize the adverse effect which a prolonged dispute would have upon their businesses. Accordingly, a group from Broad Street petitioned the city's chamber of commerce to devise some means of settling the affair, but the chamber declined, declaring that mediation of the strike was not within its jurisdiction.¹⁰ Earlier some of the businessmen of the city had sought a peaceful settlement by approaching Company Manager Huff in behalf of the workers, but this also failed.¹¹

When the conflict did break into the open most of Richmond's merchants sided with the strikers. Rather than patronize the company's

7. Ibid., July 17, and July 21, 1903.

8. Editorial in The [Charlottesville, Virginia] Daily Progress, June 24, 1903.

9. Editorial in Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser, June 29, 1903.

10. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 25, 1903.

11. Ibid., June 16, 1903.

cars, these business men provided private transportation for themselves and their employees or else used the vehicles run by the union, purchasing advertising space on them as well.¹² The Star Clothing House, a local retailer, headed one of its newspaper advertisements with the declaration, "Walk? Well I should say so!"¹³ Many of Richmond's citizens stuck bravely to their self-imposed task of "walking to help the boys."¹⁴

Although generally in sympathy with the strikers, the business and professional men bitterly resented the union's move to boycott those riding on the streetcars. A petition was circulated and signed by the city's leading merchants and professional men who declared that they had no part in the dispute and should have the right to use the cars without fear of retaliation.¹⁵ When violence broke out the management of the Richmond Cedar Works urged its employees not to sympathize with nor contribute to the lawlessness.¹⁶ As the strike dragged on it was reported that the local office workers and wage earners were disgusted with the unsettled state of affairs and were tiring of their walks to and from work every day.¹⁷

12. Ibid., June 21, 1903.

13. The [Richmond, Virginia] Opinion, June 27, 1903.

14. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 2, 1903.

15. Ibid., July 1, 1903.

16. Ibid., June 26, 1903.

17. Ibid., July 1, 1903.

The demeanor of Richmond's Negro population was above reproach, and except for a financial contribution to the strikers from a local Negro union, the colored persons of the city refrained from taking sides in the dispute. The city press observed that they conducted themselves
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". . . with great discretion."

The local clergy, however, was not so willing to remain apart from the struggle. Realizing the sacrifice being made by the unemployed
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car men, The Religious Herald, a Baptist weekly, sympathized:

We are not sufficiently acquainted with the merits of the dispute to justify us in expressing an opinion thereon. We do, however, feel profound sympathy for the men who have gone out, and who in any event must miss scanty salaries on which they and their families have depended. Whether they win or lose, there must be serious privation endured by them and by their wives and little ones.

In order to end the strike and get the men back to work as soon as possible, a group of twelve local pastors met at the city's Y.H.C.A. on June 23rd and drafted a plan whereby the strikers would return to work temporarily, pending arbitration of their differences with the company. The union readily agreed to this plan, but the company stood firm
20
in its refusal to arbitrate. The editor of a Fredericksburg paper declared, "The company has shown little disposition to end the strike. On the contrary it has been obstinate and domineering and spurned the

18. Ibid.

19. Editorial in The [Richmond, Virginia] Religious Herald, June 25, 1903.

20. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 24, 1903.

21

proposition made by the ministers."

The part which the ministers attempted to play in the settlement of the strike was ". . . criticized severely in some quarters and commented on favorably in others." ²² The bitterness of feeling among some church members was demonstrated by the circulation of a rumor to the effect that one Richmond pastor was liable to be boycotted by his congregation because he rode on the company's cars during the strike. ²³

Perhaps the greatest holder of public opinion was the public press. Most out-of-town newspapers clearly expressed their views during the dispute, such as the Fredericksburg Free Lance, which declared the union's demands to be "unreasonable," and the Alexandria Gazette, which claimed that "busybodies went among the men and sowed seeds of discontent." ²⁴

The Richmond editors tried to be more diplomatic and less harsh on the striking car men, but even so, the union charged that the local press was against it. ²⁵ During the inquest into the shooting of Luther Taylor, Commonwealth's Attorney Charles L. Page found it necessary to

21. Editorial in The [Fredericksburg, Virginia] Free Lance, July 4, 1903.

22. Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser, June 23, 1903.

23. Ibid., June 30, 1903.

24. Editorial in The [Fredericksburg, Virginia] Free Lance, August 27, 1903; and editorial in Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser, June 16, 1903.

25. Virginia State Federation of Labor, Proceedings of the Ninth Annual Session, May 3-5, 1904 (Richmond: Williams Printing Company, 1904), p. 10.

suggest to the editor of the Times-Dispatch that it would be ". . . more consistent with purposes or ends of public justice to withhold newspaper comment meanwhile."²⁶ A Norfolk editor came to his Richmond colleague's defense with the observation that "as a matter of fact, the Richmond newspapers have been notably conservative and conspicuously fair in their treatment of the entire strike situation."²⁷

By August 9th, two weeks before the strike actually ended, it was reported that outside of the union and friends and family of the car men, the strike had almost ceased to be talked about.²⁸ With the end of violence and the resumption of dependable public transportation, the controversial transit strike ceased to be an engrossing topic in the city.

II. EFFECT ON THE CITY

The most immediate effect of the transit strike upon the city of Richmond was the interruption of practically all public transportation. The Richmond Times-Dispatch tried to find humor in this inconvenience, however, and on the second morning of the dispute its footsore readers opened their papers to find a large cartoon depicting two men, one cool and rested, the other hot, dusty and tired from walking. The caption

26. "Letter to the Editor" in Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 10, 1903.

27. Editorial in Norfolk [Virginia] Dispatch, June 29, 1903.

28. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, August 9, 1903.

read: "Which is the Suburbanite?"

But the situation in the city was far from humorous, and only three days after the walkout it was reported in the Fredericksburg Free Lance:

Businessmen in Richmond have already become disgusted with the strike. Every class of trade is seriously affected and some branches of business are almost paralyzed. The strike . . . has drawn the attention of the people from all business. Not only are the people unable to get to the centers where the stores are, thus crippling retail trade, but they are not taking interest in business under their very noses.

As the situation worsened complaints were heard from those merchants whose sales had dropped because of the strike. A local editor calculated that Richmond's storekeepers lost in the first month of the dispute an amount exceeding their usual annual profits.³¹ A Manchester correspondent reported that retailing had been paralyzed in that city as well.³² Some estimated that business on Broad Street had been decreased by as much as fifty per cent.³³

The small merchants of the city were the most seriously affected because they lacked the necessary capital to sustain them during the emergency. It was observed that in the market on Sixth Street, where forty or fifty colored women had previously gathered to sell flowers,

29. Ibid., June 18, 1903.

30. The [Fredericksburg, Virginia] Free Lance, June 20, 1903.

31. Editorial in Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 10, 1903.

32. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 1, 1903.

33. Ibid., June 19, 1903.

only six or seven of them were regularly present during the strike. Because of transportation difficulties these vendors had been unable to bring their flowers in from the outskirts of the city where they lived.³⁴

But if the center of the city suffered from a shortage of customers, the outlying districts may possibly have benefited from the inability of the suburbanites to migrate. The press stated on the fifth day of the strike that business in the Fulton district had actually improved, for people there were forced to shop in their own neighborhood.³⁵

A few industrious businessmen actually used the strike situation to their advantage. Kaufmann and Company, Broad Street merchants, cleverly employed the business depression as the gimmick to advertise a sale: "The Car Strike Compels Slaughter Prices!"³⁶ The Baltimore Shoe Company, located on East Main Street, appealed to the new pedestrians: "Streetcar Boys, Attention: During the strike we will half-sell your shoes for 25¢ per pair."³⁷ Of course the greatest increase in business was among the city's drivers of carriages and cabs for hire. No sooner had the streetcars stopped running than the rates for the rental of private vehicles skyrocketed.³⁸

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., June 23, 1903.

36. Ibid., June 28, 1903.

37. Ibid., June 29, 1903.

38. The [Richmond, Virginia] Ordinance, June 27, 1903.

Richmond's real estate brokers were particularly inconvenienced by the scarcity of transportation, for thus they were denied easy access to their various properties. Four firms reported profitable sales early in the strike, but these were believed by the local press to be exceptions, and most other dealers declared that their sales had declined.³⁹ A well-known builder stated that he had practically stopped his construction operations and would build no more houses for the duration of the strike because he ". . . did not know how far-reaching the evil influence of the strike would be."⁴⁰

Postmaster Wray T. Knight declared that the mail service was little affected by the strike, but generally there was an over-all commercial decline in Richmond following the walkout.⁴¹ A reporter for the Alexandria Gazette was able to observe, "Business has been hurt very much by the strike, especially the retail business."⁴²

Almost nothing was written in the local papers concerning unemployment as a result of the strike, and except for the car men themselves, one is led to believe that few other workers were laid off during the dispute. There was but one reference to a layoff and this mentioned the possibility of a reduction in sales personnel during the business de-

39. Ibid., June 21, and July 26, 1903.

40. Editorial in Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, July 7, 1903.

41. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 19, 1903.

42. Alexandria Gazette and Virginia Advertiser, July 2, 1903.

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pression.

One of the more far-reaching effects which the disorder and violence of the strike might have had on the city was the discouraging of investments within the city. "Richmond and Manchester have been advertising far and wide as desirable places for investment," a Richmond editorial writer declared; "We have urged outsiders to come here and build factories and start new enterprises, giving them the assurance that their investments would pay." He continued, "Mr. Gould⁴⁴ finally came and bought up our streetcar lines, but the property had hardly come into his possession before he had a disastrous strike on his hands and terrific assaults were made on his property."⁴⁵ Four days after the strike had begun it was rumored that one stockholder in the transit company was willing to sell his several thousand dollars worth of shares at a loss.⁴⁶

Observing the lawless element in the city, Richmond's Mayor Taylor requested that women and children refrain from appearing on the streets unless absolutely necessary.⁴⁷ It was made known that the police regretted that some sections of the city not touched by carlines could not be patrolled with their usual regularity. As a result several

43. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 26, 1903.

44. Frank Jay Gould of New York City, the company's first vice-president and chairman of the board of directors.

45. Editorial in Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 30, 1903.

46. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, June 21, 1903.

47. Ibid., June 25, 1903.

unsavory characters were reported wandering in the streets, some making ⁴⁸spurious solicitations on behalf of the striking car men.

If the strike encouraged misdemeanants, it had little effect on the city's churchgoers. When it was announced that the suspension of streetcar transportation had not seriously affected church attendance, more than one pastor used the object lesson provided to prove that the operation of the streetcars on Sunday in the past had been a needless ⁴⁹desecration of the Sabbath.

During the distraction of the strike the city's usual entertainments and amusements were somewhat curtailed. Over the weekend of June 27th the Richmond bars were closed by order of the mayor, who admitted witnessing little drunkenness among the strikers but nevertheless realized that only one intoxicated man was necessary to promote a ⁵⁰serious disorder. Fearing any large assemblage of persons might be provoked into becoming a riotous mob, the mayor also ordered Professor Felix Iardella to discontinue his park band concerts for a period of one ⁵¹week, until the Fourth of July. A final blow as far as the children of the city were concerned came when a wild west show, featuring Colo Younger and Frank James, was refused permission to parade through the

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid., June 23, 1903.

50. Ibid., June 27, and June 28, 1903.

51. Ibid., June 26, 1903.

52

city's streets.

With public transportation halted, business at a standstill, and most amusements in the city prohibited, the outgoing railroad trains were about the only prosperous enterprise still in operation—for many Richmonders sought to "get away from it all" by retreating to the mountains and seashore.

III. COST OF THE STRIKE

On one occasion while the Richmond transit strike was still in progress, the editor of the Fredericksburg Free Lance wrote: "The people of Virginia are wondering how much more those six hundred and thirty-five Richmond streetcar strikers are going to cost the Commonwealth."⁵⁴ He was referring here to the cost of maintaining state militia in the capital city, an expense to be shared by taxpayers over the entire state.

The cost of the troops is one of the few expenses which can be stated with any degree of accuracy.⁵⁵ In his report to the governor,

52. Ibid., June 30, 1903.

53. Ibid., June 24, 1903.

54. Editorial in The [Fredericksburg, Virginia] Free Lance, July 9, 1903.

55. It should be remembered that all costs are stated in 1903-dollar values, which are considerably less than present-day equivalents. For example, Virginia's annual per capita disposable personal income was \$145 in 1900, as compared to \$1,158 in 1950. This indicates an almost 700% increase over a fifty-year period. Citizenship Challenges, Community-State-National (Rural Sociology Report No. 80, Blacksburg, Virginia: Agricultural Experiment Station, January, 1952), p. 63.

Adjutant General William Holte stated that \$66,248.70 had been paid in salaries and for transportation, food and other supplies.⁵⁶

The Manchester city council authorized two hundred fifty dollars for salaries for special policemen employed during the strike and, in addition to this expense, lost revenue in the form of a tax on street-car fares which were not collected.⁵⁷ This tax loss was estimated to be at least five hundred dollars.⁵⁸

The city of Richmond and county of Henrico paid five or six thousand dollars for extra police and other expenses incidental to the strike, according to the local press, but there was no statement of the taxes lost through the decline in streetcar fares.⁵⁹

The cost of the strike to the company was estimated at about one hundred twenty-five thousand dollars. This sum included the expense of guards, regular employees and strikebreakers, and the loss of normal revenue. It does not, however, include the cost of the property damaged or destroyed during the riots.⁶⁰

The strikers themselves were believed to have lost approximately fifty thousand dollars in wages.⁶¹

56. Adjutant General of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Report for the Period Ending 20th October, 1903 (Richmond: Superintendent of Public Printing, 1903), p. 69.

57. Richmond [Virginia] Times-Dispatch, August 8, 1903.

58. Ibid., July 17, 1903.

59. Ibid., August 25, 1903.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

There is no way to determine the miscellaneous hospital and medical expenses of those injured in the disorders, nor can one accurately estimate the serious losses sustained by the various businessmen of the city. However, the total of ascertainable costs of the 1903 Richmond transit strike, as figured by the local press, was two hundred fifty-six thousand dollars.⁶² This amount was revised by later historians⁶³ to "nearly a quarter of a million dollars."

62. Ibid.

63. W. Asbury Christian, Richmond: Her Past and Present (Richmond, Virginia: L. H. Jenkins, 1912), p. 490; and Julia Guthbert Pollard, Richmond's Story (Richmond, Virginia: Richmond Public Schools, 1954), p. 255.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The Richmond transit strike of 1903 stands out as the worst labor dispute in the city's history. It was marked by mob violence, destruction of property, attempted murders, and two actual deaths--one of which was the first peacetime killing in the state by a soldier in the line of duty.

However, this Richmond dispute was not a singular incident, for at the turn of the century organized labor across the country was struggling for recognition by both business and the government. In the year previous to Richmond's strike the United Mine Workers had staged a futile five-month walkout against eastern mine owners, and two years previous to this the Iron, Steel and Tin Workers had lost fourteen union contracts after an unsuccessful three-month strike against the United States Steel Corporation.¹ At the time of the Richmond strike there was in Rhode Island a labor dispute whose violence had necessitated the ordering out of state militia. Thus, the Richmond controversy was but a part of the nationwide struggle of labor in the expanding economy of a growing America, and as such this local dispute takes on a national significance.

An examination of the 1903 Richmond strike reveals the meth-

1. United States Department of Labor, Brief History of the American Labor Movement. Bulletin No. 1000, 1957 Revision (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1957), et passim.

ods of unions and anti-unionism as practiced in this period of industrial adolescence. After the walkout in Richmond an effort was made by the striking car men to persuade non-strikers and strikebreakers to desert the company, and a union-operated transit system was begun in competition with the established car line. Public support for their cause was enlisted by the publication of a union newspaper, handbills, and other propaganda. The union threatened to boycott any businessmen who remained faithful to the streetcar company, and strikers promised to remember at the polls any politician who sided with the company. The transit company itself was harassed with charges of minor infractions of the law, and threats, violence, and destruction of property were resorted to in an attempt to coerce it into yielding.

To meet the threat to its operations, the company hired strikebreakers and continued to operate its cars after the walkout. No recognition was given to the union as a representative of the car men, and those who participated in the strike were warned of the risk of losing their jobs. When violence threatened, the company appealed to the local authorities for protection.

During the strike local law enforcement proved inadequate, and it became necessary to seek help from the state militia. Later, recognizing the need for an expanded police force, the mayor of Richmond strongly recommended an increase in the force. ² But during the strike

2. Mayor Richard H. Taylor, Annual Message and Accompanying Documents of the Mayor of Richmond to the City Council for the Year Ending December 31, 1903 (Richmond, Virginia: O. E. Planhart Printing Co., 1904), p. 7.

the state militia was the only force capable of suppressing the mobs, and most persons throughout the state praised the governor for his success in re-establishing order.

Opinion in most quarters favored the cause of the strikers, if not their methods. Business and professional men, the press, public officials, and the citizenry in general felt that an increase in wages and a recognition of the union were justifiable aspirations for the car men. Except for the disapproval of violence and boycott of disinterested merchants, there is little else in the way of criticism of the striking union, but instead many expressions of sympathy for their cause.

A malodorous aspect of the conflict was the fact that one county sheriff and some of the city policemen allowed their sympathies for the strikers to blind them to their public duty. In one of these instances, however, it was demonstrated that a civil officer was accountable for his actions to those who elected him, and in most other instances the local authorities remained faithful to their responsibility for maintaining public order.

Considering the violence perpetrated, the malfeasance brought to light, and the bitterness engendered, one might condemn the strike as a thoroughly wasteful and utterly futile undertaking. But there were lessons to be learned from the failures of the Richmond car men in 1903: The events of the Richmond strike gave proof that the right to work was as sacred as the right to quit work. It took the combined strength of the company, the city police, and the state militia, but it was finally impressed upon the strikers and their sympathizers that

the faithful employees were not to be coerced nor hindered in the conduct of their jobs. Also, the Richmond union disregarded the public peace and inflicted upon the community untold discomforts, monetary loss, and the accompanying evil of strike violence. Using these methods, it rightfully and necessarily met with defeat.

But this was a time when the American workman was in an evolutionary process of improving his condition, and the Richmond car men's union did demonstrate that organized labor was a growing power. Despite their failure to win an immediate objective, the Richmond car men's union and others like it eventually achieved their ultimate goal: A nation-wide recognition of the labor movement and a greater concern for the social and economic welfare of the wage earner.

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VITA

Thomas Jefferson Needlee, Jr., was born in the year 1931 in the city of Richmond, Virginia. He attended the public schools of that city, and then, after completing his freshman year at Hampton-Sydney College, he entered the U.S. Navy for a four-year tour of duty.

He completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Richmond, from which he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in June 1957. After teaching history and government in the public schools of Richmond, he returned to the University of Richmond to earn a Master of Arts degree. He is now engaged in further graduate studies at the University of Virginia.

Mr. Needlee is married to the former Miss Carol Elisabeth Oliver, also of Richmond. They have two daughters.