

Historic Telegrams that Passed Between Governor Altgeld and President Cleveland

The full text of Governor Altgeld's telegram to President Cleveland protesting against the order to send federal troops to Chicago, the president's reply, and the second telegram of the governor reiterating his protest in an elaborate attack on the constitutionality of the president's act, are printed here through the courtesy of Mrs. John F. Altgeld. The three telegrams were read by President Cleveland in his speech to the students at Princeton, N. J., last night, and on them he based much of his argument in defense of the position he took at the time of the railroad riots in Chicago.

ALTGELD'S PROTEST BY TELEGRAPH.

Executive Office, State of Illinois, July 5, 1894.—Hon. Grover Cleveland, President of the United States, Washington, D. C.—Sir: I am advised that you have ordered federal troops to go into service in the state of Illinois. Surely, the facts have not been correctly presented to you in this case, or you would not have taken this step, for it is entirely unnecessary, and, as it seems to me, unjustifiable. Waiving all questions of courtesy, I will say that the state of Illinois is not only able to take care of itself, but it stands ready to furnish the federal government any assistance it may need elsewhere. Our military force is ample, and consists of as good soldiers as can be found in the country. They have been ordered promptly whenever and wherever they were needed. We have stationed in Chicago alone three regiments of infantry, one battery and one troop of cavalry, and no better soldiers can be found. They have been ready every moment to go on duty,

and have been and are now eager to go into service, but they have not been ordered out because nobody in Cook county, whether official or private citizen, asked to have their assistance or even intimated in any way that their assistance was desired or necessary.

So far as I have been advised, the local officials have been able to handle the situation. But if any assistance were needed the state stood ready to furnish 100 men for every one man required, and stood ready to do so at a moment's notice. Notwithstanding these facts the federal government has been applied to by men who had political and selfish motives for wanting to ignore the state government. We have just gone through a long coal strike, more extensive here than in any other state, because our soft coal field is larger than that of any other state. We have now had ten days of the railroad strike, and we have promptly furnished military aid wherever the local officials needed it.

In two instances the United States marshal for the southern district of Illinois applied for assistance to enable him to enforce the processes of the United States court, and troops were promptly furnished him, and he was assisted in every way he desired. The law has been thoroughly executed and every man guilty of violating it during the strike has been brought to justice. If the marshal of the northern district of Illinois or the authorities of Cook county needed military assistance they had but to ask for it in order to get it from the state.

At present some of our railroads are paralyzed, not by reason of obstruc-

tion, but because they cannot get men to operate their trains. For some reason they are anxious to keep this fact from the public, and for this purpose they are making an outcry about obstructions in order to divert attention. Now, I will cite to you two examples which illustrate the situation:

Some days ago I was advised that the business of one of our railroads was obstructed at two railroad centers, and that there was a condition bordering on anarchy there, and I was asked to furnish protection so as to enable the employes of the road to operate the trains. Troops were promptly ordered to both points. Then it transpired that the company had not sufficient men on its line to operate one train. All the old hands were orderly, but refused to go to work. The company had large shops which worked a number of men who did not belong to the railway union and who could run an engine. They were appealed to to run the train, but flatly refused. They were obliged to hunt up soldiers who could run an engine and operate a train.

Again, two days ago, appeals which were almost frantic, came from the officials of another road stating that at an important point on their line trains were forcibly obstructed, and that there was a reign of anarchy at that place, and they asked for protection so that they could move their trains. Troops were put on the ground in a few hours' time, when the officer in command telegraphed me that there was no trouble, and had been none at that point, but that the road seemed to have no men to run trains, and the sheriff telegraphed that he did not

need troops, but would himself move every train if the company would only furnish an engineer. The result was that the troops were there twelve hours before a single train was moved, although there was no attempt at interference by anybody.

It is true that in several instances a road made efforts to work a few green men and a crowd standing around insulted them, and tried to drive them away, and in a few other cases they cut off Pullman sleepers from trains. But all these troubles were local in character and could easily be handled by the state authorities. Illinois has more railroad men than any other state in the Union, but as a rule they are orderly and well behaved. This is shown by the fact that so little actual violence has been committed. Only a small percentage of these men have been guilty of infractions of the law. The newspaper accounts have in many cases been pure fabrications, and in others wild exaggerations.

I have gone thus into details to show that it is not soldiers that the railroads need so much as it is men to operate trains, and that the conditions do not exist here which bring the cause within the federal statutes, a statute that was passed in 1881 and was in reality a war measure. The statute authorized the use of federal troops in a state whenever it shall be impracticable to enforce the laws of the United States within such states by the ordinary judicial proceedings. Such a condition does not exist in Illinois. There have been a few local disturbances, but nothing that seriously interfered with the administration of

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