

CRAFT UNIONS VS. INDUSTRIAL UNIONS:
THE 1917 STRIKE AT THE MAINE CENTRAL
RAILROAD SHOPS IN WATERVILLE, MAINE

In 1917, less than six weeks after the United States declared war on Germany, the American Federation of Railroad Workers went on strike at Maine Central Railroad's Waterville shops. The Federation was an industrial union, representing car workers, carpenters, blacksmiths, boilermakers, inspectors, helpers, and laborers. It asked the railroad for four cents an hour across-the-board raise for all of its members and union recognition. Maine Central Railroad's management, understandably, opposed the demands. But also opposed to the Federation were the members of two American Federation of Labor shop-craft unions: the International Association of Machinists, Waterville Lodge no. 285, and the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen of America.

Unions like the American Federation of Railroad Workers faced a variety of obstacles in the early twentieth century, not the least of these being differences within the labor movement over basic organizing strategies. Throughout the history of American labor, industrial unions — those inclusive organizations of all workers within an industry — and craft unions — representing only select skilled workers in a particular craft — demonstrated little mutual sympathy. But the Waterville strike is a particularly forceful example of the problems posed by these divisions within the labor movement. The strike represents a classic example of conflict between management and labor. But in addition, it illustrates the destructive impact of conflict between industrial and craft unionism.

By 1917 Maine Central's shops had been a major industry in Waterville for over sixty-five years. They opened in 1850 after the Androscoggin and Kennebec Railroad reached Waterville in December 1859, from Danville Junction, fifty-five miles away to the southwest, connecting to Portland via the broad gauge Atlantic and St. Lawrence Railroad.¹ Waterville was an ideal location for a railroad center. About ninety miles



The wartime strike at the Waterville railroad shops brought conflict between unions and management, picket-line disturbances, and public recriminations. But, as the author points out, it also created tensions *between* unions. The strike illustrates the divisions that plagued the labor movement in the early nineteenth century. Maine Historical Society collections.

northeast of Portland, Waterville was less than twenty miles from the state capital at Augusta. Bangor, a brawling, rapidly growing lumber town, lay fifty miles further east. In 1850 Waterville had a population of 3,964, engaged in many different occupations. The town thrived on an economic combination of farming and lumber, with well established scythe and axe manufacturing companies, several lumber mills, a plaster mill, and the inevitable gristmills. Before the first railroad line had reached town, there were already more than one hundred and twenty-five skilled tradesmen located there.² In a dozen years, by 1862, Waterville would be the junction point of four railroad lines: the Androscoggin and Kennebec; the Portland and Kennebec (which ran from Portland along the coast and up the Kennebec to Augusta); the Somerset and Kennebec (passing through Waterville on its way north to Skowhegan); and the Penobscot and Kennebec (which ran from Waterville to Bangor). As a major junction point, Waterville developed larger and larger shops as Maine's railroad traffic boomed.

The first shops in 1850 had a very small labor force, which was composed largely of skilled workers, each of whose overall

importance to the operation was apparent. The shops employed a master machinist and two or three other machinists, about the same number of carpenters, a painter or two and a few laborers.³ No more men were required to service the four original locomotives of the Androscoggin and Kennebec Railroad, especially since the duties of the locomotive engineer and fireman at that time included responsibility for much of what today would be called preventive maintenance. Wages in the early 1850s were thirty to forty dollars a month for carpenters, thirty-five to forty dollars for machinists, and almost exactly the same for the chief painter.⁴ There was some need for tin smithing, glazing, and occasional pattern making for castings, but the latter work was done by men associated with the foundry, and tin smithing and glazing were simply done by the town's already well established craftsmen. Nearly all of the shop men came from Waterville, and most had been born there (though not John Philbrick, the master machinist). Indeed, most of the shops' labor force in succeeding decades would come from Waterville and its immediate surrounding towns.

One element of Waterville's population which would change was the French-Canadian population, which in 1850 numbered only 244 people, over half of them young children, mostly born in Maine to immigrant parents.⁵ By 1910 the number of French-Canadians in Waterville would be between 40 and 50 percent of the city's population, and by 1930 both the United States' census and the local French language newspaper, the *Franco-Americain*, would report French-Canadians at between 50 and 60 percent of the total population. As late as the 1970 census, 30 percent of Waterville's people claimed French as their mother tongue. As a work force for the railroad shops, the Franco-Americans would stand apart from the close-knit skilled machinists, carpenters, and painters, and it would be a long time before the Franco-Americans would reach desirable positions in Maine Central's Waterville shops.⁶

Maine Central Railroad was formed in 1862 by legally recognizing an already existing union (since 1856) of the Androscoggin and Kennebec Railroad and the Penobscot and

Kennebec Railroad.⁷ From small beginnings the Maine Central and its shops grew steadily through the remainder of the century. All kinds of maintenance and repair work were done in the shops on locomotives, passenger and freight cars, and specialized rolling stock such as cranes and snow plows. Much of the rolling stock was built in the shops, as were several locomotives. The original shops, immediately west of the town's railroad stations, grew haphazardly in the center of Waterville. In common with similar facilities all over the nation, they became outmoded and inadequate by the 1880s as locomotives and rolling stock grew heavier and more complicated. The original shops were replaced by new and much larger shops in 1887 at a location next to the Kennebec River about a mile north of the old shops.

By 1886 Maine Central employed 120 men in the old shops.⁸ The new shops opened the next year with a roster of 250.⁹ Nearly three hundred were employed by 1898.¹⁰ Just before the first World War about four hundred were in the work force.¹¹ Wages for the machinists, however, did not change significantly from 1850 to 1900. Machinists in the first few years of shops operation received about forty dollars a month for a seventy-two hour, six-day week. In 1887 machinists were paid just over fifty-three dollars a month, and by 1900 they were receiving about sixty dollars a month for a six-day week of ten hours a day.¹² Such wages were similar to those paid for skilled work in other shops across the country.

Machinists were among the "aristocrats of Labor," a group that included engineers, firemen, conductors, carpenters, pattern makers, and steam fitters.¹³ As such, their wages were higher than those in the city's cotton, woolen, and paper mills, all constructed after 1874. Among Waterville's working-class population — the city by 1910 had over 13,000 residents — the less skilled jobs were being filled by Franco-Americans, particularly in the paper and textile mills, where the work force was over fifty percent Franco-American, almost exclusively so in some departments.

As the railroad shops expanded, the work force became more complex and hierarchical, dividing along lines of skill

and ethnicity. While the shops hired some French-Canadians, mostly for common labor or helper jobs, they still drew most of their workers from "railroad families," which had sent men into railroad work for two or three generations.¹⁴ State industrial investigators in 1898 dwelt upon the "American born" workers in the shops in their study of Waterville that year, and pointed to the native-stock force as an indication of excellence in the workmanship. The writer also noted that "the men are contented and a strike is never known."¹⁵

Such a claim is underscored by the fact that the last quarter of the nineteenth century was a time of great labor unrest, particularly in the nation's railroad industry. Maine railroad workers remained aloof from national trends until after the turn of the century. Then, at a time when railroad union membership nationwide increased by about 300 percent, the Waterville shops saw a flurry of union activity.¹⁶ Commonly unions were organized but were not recognized for years on end. This would be the case in Waterville.

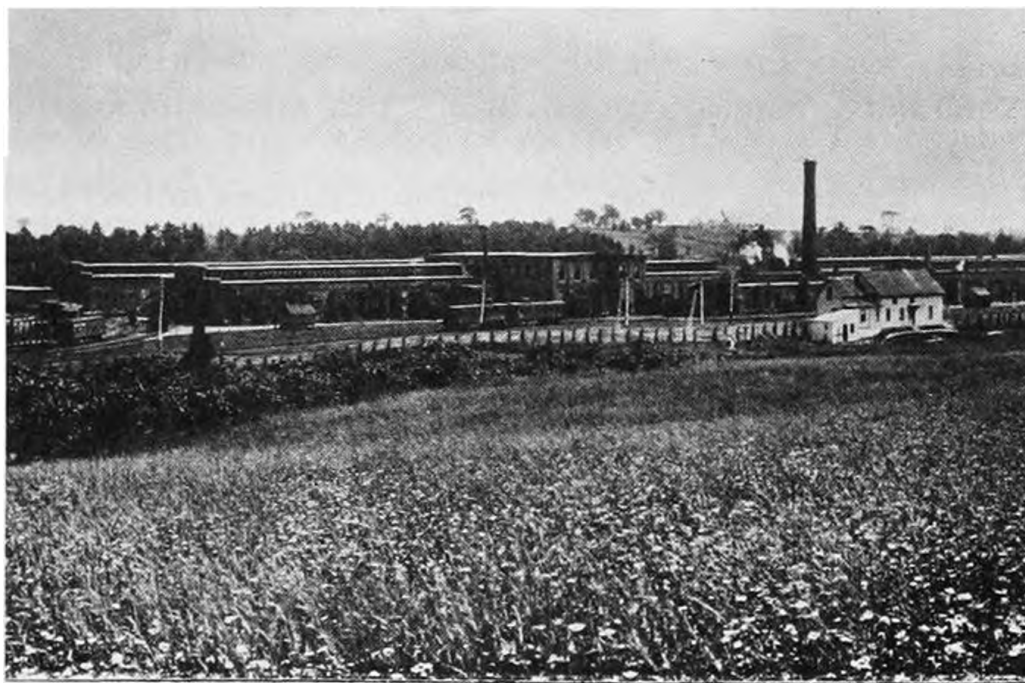
On June 9, 1903, shop workers, responding to nationwide developments in the labor movement, formed a local of the American Federation of Labor's International Association of Car Workers, Pine Tree Lodge, No. 144. The organization grew rapidly. In a year its membership rose to 110, including a majority of those working in the passenger and freight car shops. Initially qualifications for membership were simple; prospective members had to be competent car workers and pay an initiation fee of \$1.00 and monthly dues of \$.25. Car workers in the union assumed their daily hours of labor to be ten, and they expected and received a minimum wage of at least \$1.25 a day for all members.¹⁷ Despite rapid membership growth, the Car Workers union won no trade agreement (contract) from Maine Central, and in 1905 its leadership altered its organizing strategy. Like most turn-of-the-century A.F.L. affiliates, the Car Workers refocused their organizing efforts on the shops' most skilled and most strategically important workers. Their numbers dropped from 110 to 25 as they limited membership to car inspectors, engine employees, and those working on air

brakes. At the same time the leadership raised initiation fees to \$2.00 and demanded a nine hour day and a minimum wage of \$1.90.¹⁸

Like the Car Workers, machinists organized in 1904 into an exclusive union of twenty-five members and affiliated with the International Association of Machinists (A.F.L.) as Waterville Lodge No. 285. They too would be denied a trade agreement for years to come. Their initiation fee was \$3.00; dues were \$.75 a month, and their aims were a nine and a half hour day, with a minimum daily wage of \$2.25.¹⁹

The machinists and the car workers were organized on traditional craft-union principles: solidarity only among the skilled workers in a relatively narrow field of activity within the industry. In 1911, however, the International Association of Car Workers withdrew from the American Federation of Labor while engaged in a four-year-long shopmen's strike on the Illinois Central and Union Pacific railroads (1911-1915). Three years later the car workers merged with a relatively new industrial-type union, based in the middle west. There a strongly socialistic orientation and a sense of great urgency — a resolve to combat more objectionable management policies involving premium pay, time study, and skill dilution — resulted in a new organizing strategy. This new "Federation of Federations" included the American Federation of Railway Workers, an industrial rather than a craft union, and when the Car Workers merged with the new American Federation of Railroad Workers in 1914, the new organization began appealing for members from all the shop crafts working on United States railroads.²⁰ Union membership across the nation was soaring — up from 1,907,000 in 1906 to 2,773,000 in 1916 — and with the national rate of unemployment dropping steadily to less than two percent, it was to be expected that movements such as the American Federation of Railroad Workers would become active in Maine.²¹

The failure of the car workers and machinists to gain recognition was attributable, at least in part, to the growing bargaining power of the Maine Central Railroad. Management



CAR SHOPS OF THE MAINE CENTRAL RAILROAD.

was no longer simply a local affair. Maine Central had grown almost continuously from its beginnings in 1849. Through the process of absorbing more than thirty-five small Maine railroads by 1917, it had expanded to almost 1,300 miles of track, running through Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont as well as ten miles into New Brunswick and sixty miles into Quebec.²² Although far smaller than the great national railroad systems, Maine Central's pattern of consolidation was a classic case of the rising power of big business, and its power to dictate working conditions had grown enormously since the early days of the Waterville shops.

By 1917 Maine Central Railroad had almost one hundred and fifty steam locomotives, more than three hundred passenger, mail, and baggage cars, and over seven thousand freight cars.²³ In addition to the principal shops in Waterville, the company operated a somewhat smaller set of shops at Thompson's Point, on the western edge of Portland, and had a very old shop for freight car repair at Turner's Island in South Portland. Waterville, however, was the major shop location, where in a

typical year 125 of the 149 locomotives [1917 roster] would be serviced and overhauled.

World War I found the Maine Central in much better shape than many other United States railroads, due to money invested by the Morgan interests when Maine Central was briefly within J. P. Morgan's New Haven Railroad empire. However, Waterville was subject to national wage and price trends in the months preceding the war that brought increasing bitterness in the railroad shops. As the national preparedness effort drove wages higher in shipbuilding and in munitions factories, wages in the railroad industry failed to keep pace. Across the nation the issue was growing contentious.

America's entrance into World War I on April 6, 1917, was marked by brief patriotic celebrations in the shops.²⁴ Yet hardly a month after war began, the shops were swept by a strike over wages and union recognition. Back in January 1917 representatives of the shop workers in Waterville who belonged to the American Federation of Railroad Workers requested a four cent an hour increase across the board for all shop workers. Maine Central officials had little or no interest in recognizing the American Federation of Railway Workers, and they delayed in formally meeting with them from January until the first week in May. Then on May 4, the company offered four cents an hour to the skilled men and one and a half cents an hour to unskilled and semiskilled workers, such as helpers. The offer was the same type of wage proposal that Maine Central would offer any A.F.L. craft union. No substantial progress was made over the weekend and up to Tuesday, May 8. Clearly the impasse was over the new union's demand for a single raise for all shop workers — a reflection of the inclusive bargaining strategy of the industrial union. The American Federation of Railroad Workers came down a cent to three cents an hour, but they indicated their determination to get an equal raise for all, as "... it cost[s] the families of the unskilled just as much to live ..." as those who were skilled.²⁵

As current labor historians have indicated, industrial management nationally during this period adopted a policy of

dividing the labor movement by coopting and cooperating with craft unions, whose leaders had clearly committed themselves to economic advancement based upon recognition of craft skills.²⁶ While it is probably too facile an explanation to see Maine Central management taking a stand entirely on the basis of these national patterns, what followed was almost a textbook example.

Maine Central's final offer was four cents an hour for boilermakers, blacksmiths, and machinists, two cents an hour for carpenters, car repairers [carmen], and painters, and one and a half cents an hour to unskilled and semiskilled men, such as freight-yard nonoperating crews, helpers in the various trades, laborers, sweepers, watchmen, and wipers. The American Federation of Railroad Workers' final position was for an across-the-board raise of three cents an hour. Failing to reach agreement, on May 9, at 9 a.m., all but the A.F.L. machinists and a few carmen belonging to the A.F.L. Brotherhood of Railway Carmen of America quietly put their tools away, formed ranks, and marched out of the shops.²⁷

The strike continued for many weeks. During that time it gradually became clear to the public that the issue keeping nearly all workmen but A.F.L. machinists out of Waterville shops was not a penny or so difference in hourly rates, but a much more profound question of rival unionism — in this case, industrial versus craft unionism. Nationally the conservative A.F.L. railroad unions (machinists and carmen) were at odds with the more radical American Federation of Railroad Workers, who represented car workers, blacksmiths, boilermakers, inspectors, carmen, and carpenters, as well as painters, helpers, laborers, and watchmen. At Waterville, this rivalry would be played out in the dramatic events of the Maine Central strike in the months to come, and it would resonate through the roundhouses in Rumford, Bangor, and Calais as well.²⁸

The strikers had a good press in Waterville (which had a Democratic mayor and a police chief who was a former lead blacksmith in the shops), and they were described as behaving

with much dignity. One workman was quoted as saying:

We have nothing against the Maine Central, nothing against the foremen. It is simply a walkout for better conditions for us all. I don't think that there is a man who walked out today but what if there were a passenger wreck would volunteer his services willingly²⁹

Financial support for the strikers was immediate from Maine Central's operating crews (represented by the "Big Four" brotherhoods — the Engineers, Firemen, Conductors, and Trainmen) who felt constrained to honor their contracts to run the trains, but still made substantial donations of money to the strikers. The Brotherhood of Railway Clerks, an A.F.L. union, also pledged its support for the strikers at their bimonthly meeting.³⁰

Shippers on Maine Central felt the strike immediately, as an embargo was placed on all but essential freight by the railroad, in order to assure the maintenance of food supplies. At the end of May 1917 there were more than five hundred "Bad Order" cars sidetracked in the Waterville yard, and there were many more such cars on sidings all along the line due to hot boxes, pulled drawbars, and similar malfunctions.³¹ Strike-breakers appeared in Waterville at the end of May, coming from Bangor by train directly to the shops and returning daily to that city fifty miles away.³²

Waterville's Chamber of Commerce, impressed not only by the local crisis but also by the wave of strikes across the nation in textiles, shoe manufacturing, meat packing, quarrying, urban transit, and many other railroad shops, offered to help as conciliator between Maine Central and its striking shop workers. Even though Samuel Gompers, president of the A.F.L. had pledged officially that there would be no strikes for the duration of hostilities, there were actually 6,205 recorded strikes between April 6, 1917 and November 11, 1918.³³ In the first days of June a committee to articulate the public's interest in the local strike situation was formed, consisting of the city's

mayor, Ora A. Meader; the vice-president of the Chamber of Commerce, Frederick C. Hill; and Colby College's president, Arthur J. Roberts.³⁴

The strikers met daily to discuss their struggle. On May 31 union organizer John Humphrey of Chicago, State Labor Commissioner Roscoe Eddy, and two members of the State Board of Arbitration and Conciliation met in Augusta for nearly five hours with no results. Two days later the strike leaders reached out for help from an unusual source: the Women's Suffrage Movement. Urged by their leaders, the strikers attended a public suffrage meeting on June 2. At the rally, Humphrey praised Deborah Knox Livingston, national superintendent of the Suffrage Department of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, for her fine address in favor of suffrage for women. He urged every striker to vote in favor of political equality for women.³⁵ Instead of referring to the Augusta conference, Humphrey spent his time that Sunday afternoon attacking Frank Jennings, the American Federation of Labor organizer for the machinists. The A.F.L. shopcraftsmen, Humphrey pointed out, had obtained a closed shop contract from Maine Central two weeks before. The machinists won protection from nonunion workers and four cents an hour, while the six A.F.L. workers in Waterville gained only two and a half cents an hour. Humphrey dramatically contrasted these differential rates with the American Federation of Railroad Workers' request for a three cent increase for everyone, regardless of the degree of craft skill.³⁶

James Dwyer, formerly a shop worker in the Boston and Albany Railroad shops in Boston, was the other organizer present at the Sunday suffrage meeting. Dwyer thanked Mayor Meader, Waterville Chief of Police Ernest Finnimore (a blacksmith on leave from Waterville shops), and the members of the Chamber of Commerce for their concern and assistance. He then directed his oratory to the Maine Central officials then serving as negotiators with the union. General Manager Dana C. Douglass, he informed the crowd, was better fitted to be a car cleaner than a manager. Douglass and Phillip F. Hammett,



The Waterville shops during more peaceful times. The 1917 strike brought to a head the competition between the American Federation of Railroad Workers, a broad-based industrial union, and the AFL craft union affiliates in Waterville. Maine Historical Society collections.

superintendent of motive power, were “dirty” and “unprincipled.” As for Master Mechanic Fred Ramsdell, he was “nothing more than a stool pigeon.” Finally, above all else, he attacked the “scab” machinists with this revealing threat: “Mr. Highbrow machinists [sic], we are going to lick you and the railroad before we are through.”³⁷

Clearly the real prizes in the struggle were union recognition and the closed shop. These two conditions would allow the machinists to use their shop committees to govern work rules for the machinists, helpers, and apprentices. Union recognition meant working agreements. Maine Central Railroad, on the other hand, was willing to contract with the established, more conservative A.F.L. machinist union, but the insurgent American Federation of Railroad Workers operated in the radical Eugene V. Debs tradition as an industrial union. The bitterness between the two unions — one industrial and the other craft — surfaced in a long, angry article published in the *Waterville Sentinel* attacking the A.F.L. machinist union.

Many [of the nonstriking machinists and carmen] did not content themselves with minding their own business but instead ... several machinists and

WATERVILLE STRIKE

many members of the B.R.C. of A. [A.F.L. Brotherhood of Railway Carmen of America] chose to try their hand at strike breaking by stooping to every unfair method imaginable to try and divide and force their fellow shop men back into the shops

We only contend that representing as we do a majority of the employees of the Locomotive and Car Dept. as well as all of the employees of the Maine Shop of the M. of W. [Maintenance of Way] Department we are entitled to an agreement to govern the working conditions in the Department in which our members are employed.³⁸

The strike continued for weeks. Under pressure from the Chamber of Commerce, Maine Central's President Morris McDonald (concurrently president of the Boston & Maine and Maine Central Railroads) entered the negotiations after June 11. Up to that time the chief railroad negotiators had been Maine Central's Dana Douglass and Philip Hammett. In spite of brief hope for an early settlement, the addition of the railroad's president to the negotiations made little difference. Hammett informed the Chamber of Commerce that the strike was not really over wages, but about union recognition and "working agreements." McDonald added that he could not break faith with the machinists and that the Maine Central's final terms were: "The Shops to be opened and the men on strike to return without blacklists or lockout and after 12 months to receive a working agreement."³⁹ While the union strikers remained away from their jobs, "scab" machinists continued to reach the shops from Boston, as well as from Bangor. The Boston scabs allegedly were available due to a strike in Boston against the Boston and Albany railroad. According to organizer Humphrey they were paid \$5.00 a day (more than twice what many shop workers were paid) and given free board, clothing, and tobacco. They had a thirty-day contract with the Maine Central, and Waterville's city government appointed numerous deputy sheriffs to protect them and the railroad's property.⁴⁰

Convinced that they could do no more, the first special committee of the Chamber of Commerce disbanded in late June. The Chamber then appointed a new committee which called for more aggressive action by the state government to settle the strike.⁴¹ Meanwhile, Waterville's newspaper carried reports of Maine Central train breakdowns, slowdowns, and, for the first time, violence when an explosion blew up a short piece of rail on the main line about a mile west of Waterville station. No one was injured and the strikers quickly disavowed any involvement in the incident.⁴²

A few days later personal violence erupted between strikers and scabs. On July 17 Peter Gurney, one of the few local Waterville shopmen who had continued working, was attacked by strikers and his house was stoned. Gurney was a fifty-three-year-old painter who had worked for the railroad over 25 years. Almost at the same time, three strikers attacked two scabs on College Avenue only a few yards off the railroad's property. The strikebreakers were part of a daily machinist contingent commuting from Bangor and Brewer. John Donahue, Walter Coady, and Albert Luce, arrested for assaulting the scabs, were out on bail minutes after their arraignment due to quick action by organizer Dwyer. On the following day in court two strikers were fined, Donahue being assessed a total of \$30.00 in fines and \$6.00 in costs while Luce owed \$5.00 in fines and \$6.00 in costs. Coady was found not guilty and discharged. The scabs left the court house, boarded a trolley, and rode back to the shops facing jeering women, while they sat in humiliation under the protection of a "stout deputy sheriff."⁴³

The next few days were marked by occasional fist-fights and attacks on scabs and more fruitless meetings between strike leaders and State Labor Commissioner Eddy. In mid-July, the strikers learned that a settlement between Portland's Cumberland Light and Power Company and its hundreds of trolley car motormen and conductors gave the latter ten percent wage increases. The agreement put those men into a new pay scale ranging from twenty-seven to thirty-three cents an hour.⁴⁴ Much closer to home, the Maine Central Railroad apparently



The 1917 strike affected rail traffic throughout Maine. Maine Central kept trains running on reduced schedules by hiring scab labor and sending equipment to the Schenectady locomotive works for repair. Photo courtesy Bangor Historical Society.

found no difficulty in coming to an agreement with the A.F.L.'s International Association of Railway Clerks. On July 19 the clerks requested an increase in wages and equal pay for equal work without regard to the sex of the workers. On August 1 they received a raise of about three dollars a week. Assuming a standard fifty to fifty-five hour week, they had received a five or six cents an hour increase, more than the four cents given the machinists. Remarkably, the clerks had also obtained equal wages without regard to gender.⁴⁵

How Maine Central was able to keep its trains rolling with its shops largely closed during the strike is something of a mystery, but a possible answer is found in a newspaper item that suggests extensive contacts between Maine Central's locomotive inspector and the big locomotive shops in Schenectady, New York.⁴⁶ Probably several of Maine Central's locomotives were towed to the American Locomotive Works in Schenectady to receive "contract repairs" instead of normal shop work. The practice of using outside contractors for major

locomotive repairs already had developed on other railroad lines and caused much labor uneasiness.

Finally, on August 7 the Maine State Board of Arbitration called a meeting with strikers and railroad officials. After several days Maine Central's Morris McDonald and the representatives of the American Federation of Railroad Workers agreed to abide by the arbitrator's decisions and progress was swift toward ending the strike.⁴⁷

Balloting on the arbitrator's decision was held on August 12 at Portland, Brunswick, Waterville, and Bangor. The Maine Central's final offer was a two and a half cents to four cents an hour raise depending upon worker status, such as apprentice, helper, or journeyman. Seniority would continue to figure in wage rates, as it had before the strike. There would be no recognition of the American Federation of Railroad Workers. The Maine Central did issue a statement that it might recognize the Railroad Workers in eight months when the A.F.L.'s Machinists' contract came up for renewal.⁴⁸ No record of any such recognition has been found, however. The strikers agreed to this settlement, apparently without great bitterness, possibly because great demand for railroad equipment guaranteed everyone plenty of overtime pay. In any event the *Waterville Sentinel* reported the strikers' final meeting as a kind of celebration, which closed with a unanimous vote of thanks to both John Humphrey and James Dwyer, the latter being sent on his way with a new and "handsome" black leather traveling bag.⁴⁹

From the end of the strike in August 1917, through May 1920, wages would rise steadily in the United States railroad industry. The nation's railroads were nationalized on December 31, 1917 (officially at noon December 28, 1917, but the year-end date was chosen for accounting purposes) and one immediate result was much higher wages. These increases were distributed so that those at the lowest level of employment received the most, and those at the highest levels the least.⁵⁰ Ironically, this action was very similar to what the American Federation of Railroad Workers had advocated, in spite of the fact that the Railway Employees' Department of the A.F.L. was

recognized as the sole bargaining agent for railroad workers during the period of government control.⁵¹

The 1917 strike of the Waterville, Thompson's Point, and Brunswick maintenance of way shops is an example of what American labor historian David Montgomery called a "direct challenge to managerial authority and contempt for accepted A.F.L. practice."⁵² In common with other large strikes of the period it ended disastrously for the workers, who faced a determined, well-funded management and opposition from their fellow workers in the ranks of A.F.L. Such defeat, in this case in the face of rising wartime demand, was just a preview of what was to come in the 1920s when organized labor would experience steady reverses, in Maine as well as in the entire nation.

NOTES

¹Androscoggin and Kennebec Railroad, "Timetable #1" (1849), Maine Historical Society.

²U.S. Census, 1850, Kennebec County, Waterville, Maine. Among the skilled tradesmen listed are fifteen blacksmiths, seventeen carpenters, thirty-three joiners, seven tinsmiths, five foundry men, six machinists, twelve painters, several specialized axe and scythe forgers, polishers, and sharpeners, several carriage makers, and more than twenty other men who called themselves mechanics.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Androscoggin and Kennebec Railroad, "Day Book, 1850-1852," Maine Historical Society.

⁵U.S. Census, 1850, Kennebec County, Waterville, Maine.

⁶Interview with Napoleon Marcoux, Waterville, Maine, April 3, 1985. At the time of the interview Mr. Marcoux was considered the most knowledgeable man in Waterville on local Franco-American history. We discussed my identification of shop workers as Franco-American by name and he agreed with my method, while helping me to identify about one hundred more whose names were changed by Anglicization.

⁷Maine Central Railroad, *Annual Report, 1863*, p. 15.

⁸*Waterville Mail*, May 7, 1886.

⁹"The Maine Central Railroad as Related to Waterville," *Waterville Mail*, n.d. (ca. 1892), Waterville Historical Society.

¹⁰*Maine Central Messenger*, February 1898, p. 57.

¹¹Clement Given, "Waterville as a Railroad Center," in *Board of Trade*

Journal (Portland, Maine), March 1911, p. 575.

¹²State of Maine, Bureau of Industrial and Labor Statistics (hereafter, BILS), *Annual Report, 1887*, p. 88; *1898*, p. 96.

¹³Andrew Dawson, "The Paradox of Dynamic Technological Change and the Labor Aristocracy in the U.S., 1880-1914," *Labor History* 20 (Summer 1979): 330.

¹⁴*Maine Central Railroad Magazine*, March 1925, p. 13.

¹⁵BILS, *Annual Report, 1898*, p. 98.

¹⁶David Gordon, Richard Edwards, Michael Reich, *Segmented Work, Divided Workers*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 153.

¹⁷BILS, *Annual Report, 1903*, p. 49.

¹⁸BILS, *Annual Report, 1905*, p. 57.

¹⁹*Ibid.*

²⁰David Montgomery, "The 'New Unionism' and the Transformation of Worker Consciousness in America, 1909-1922," *Journal of Social History* 7 (Summer 1979): 523-24; *The Railroad Worker* (American Federation of Railroad Workers, Chicago, Illinois), July 1917, p. 9.

²¹Gordon, et al., *Segmented Work, Divided Workers*, p. 154.

²²State of Maine, Public Utilities Commission, *Steam Railways Report, 1919*.

²³Maine Central Railroad, *Annual Report, 1916*, p. 40.

²⁴*Morning Sentinel* (Waterville), May 10, 1917.

²⁵*Sentinel*, May 10, 1917. The *Sentinel's* editor indicated that he leaned toward the strikers.

²⁶Gordon, et al., *Segmented Work, Divided Workers*, p. 15.

²⁷*Sentinel*, May 11, 1917.

²⁸*Bangor Daily Commercial*, May 10, 1917; *Railroad Worker*, July 1917, p. 9.

²⁹*Sentinel*, May 10, 1917.

³⁰*Ibid.*, May 11, 17, 1917; *Eastern Argus* (Portland, Maine) May 15, 1917; *Kennebec Journal* (Augusta, Maine) May 12, 1917; *Railroad Worker*, September, 1917, p. 20.

³¹*Bangor Commercial*, May 30, 1917; *Bangor Daily News*, May 31, 1917; *Sentinel*, May 30, 1917.

³²*Bangor Commercial*, May 30, 1917; *Bangor News*, May 31, 1917; *Sentinel*, May 30, 1917.

³³Montgomery, "The New Unionism," p. 514.

³⁴*Bangor Commercial*, June 2, 1917.

³⁵*Sentinel*, June 4, 1917.

³⁶*Ibid.*

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸*Ibid.*, June 5, 1917.

³⁹*Ibid.*, June 23, 1917.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, June 25, 1917.

WATERVILLE STRIKE

⁴¹*Ibid.*, June 23, July 3, 1917.

⁴²*Ibid.*, June 18, 23, July 3, 1917.

⁴³*Ibid.*, July 18, 19, 1917.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, July 14, 1917.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, August 2, 1917; U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Monthly Review* 5 (September 1917): 577-78.

⁴⁶*Sentinel*, July 17, 1917.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, July 17, 1917.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, August 10, 1917.

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, August 18, 1917.

⁵⁰Wages rose an average of \$400 per worker in 1918 over the previous year, although what this actually meant in terms of wartime inflation is difficult to calculate. See U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*, Bicentennial Edition, part 1 (Washington, D.C., 1975), p. 167.

⁵¹W. T. White, "Railroad Labor Protests, 1894-1917 ... ," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 75 (January 1984): 20.

⁵²Montgomery, "The New Unionism," pp. 511, 512.

George H. Merriam is Professor of History at Fitchburg State College. Professor Merriam has a long-standing interest in Waterville history. He will publish another article on Maine railroading in RAILROAD HISTORY this spring.