

THE END OF THE WORLD'S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION IN LATE 1893, coinciding as it did with a severe national industrial depression, let loose destructive forces that shattered Chicago's grandiose expectations of an unlimited future. Unemployment and misery savagely struck the city. As Jane Addams wrote of her Hull House relief operations, "we all worked under a sense of desperate need and a paralyzing consciousness that our best efforts were most inadequate to the situation." During the winter, tens of thousands of workers lost their jobs; factories and businesses closed. The unemployed and homeless drifted through the city.

In February, the fiery British reformer William T. Stead proposed a new,

cleansed vision of the city in his inflammatory book, *If Christ Came to Chicago*. Based on an 1893 conference that established the Chicago Civic Federation, the book attacked the wealthy, the powerful, the corrupt, and the immoral, often equating the four. Stead's jeremiad undercut the prestige of Chicago's builder/philanthropist elite who seemed unwilling to respond to the city's new social conditions. Their inertia during the Pullman Strike was even more damaging to their reputations. During the months of the strike, the city's merchant and manufacturing gentry provided little leadership. Rather, they seemed to sink from sentiments of largesse to shudders of fear in a few short months.

Like the city, the Pullman Palace Car Company benefited from the fair. Its

1894

January: Edison Kinetoscopic Record of a Sneeze, earliest extant copyrighted film

March: Coxey's Army departs Massillon, Ohio; arrives in Washington, D.C. on May 1

April: ARU strike against Great Northern Railroad; predepression wages restored

a Stead's *If Christ Came to Chicago* opened with a foldout juxtaposing an image of Christ and the money changers with this map of the block bounded by Clark, Dearborn, Harrison, and Polk Streets in Chicago's First Ward. The map both illustrated many of the reform issues raised in the book and anticipated the use of mapping to present social information that informed the *Hull House Maps and Papers* and the Chicago School sociologists.

b The unrest at Blue Island sketched here in the *Chicago Tribune* led Attorney General Richard Olney to request federal troops to preserve order during the Pullman boycott. The investigation by the U.S. Strike Commission concluded that, in addition to 12 persons who died, the railroads lost at least \$4,672,916; Pullman workers lost at least \$350,000 in wages; and the 100,000 employees on the 24 railroads centering in Chicago lost wages of at least \$1,389,143. In addition, "very great losses, widely distributed, were incidentally suffered throughout the country."

c U.S. regular troops on the lakefront, *Harper's Weekly*, July 21, 1894. This image by T. Dacy Walker, drawn from a photograph by J. W. Taylor, captures both the high visibility of army troops in Chicago and the skyline that the city had celebrated during the World's Columbian Exposition just a year earlier. The view is from Lake Park (Grant Park) looking south and west toward the Illinois Central train station. Altogether there were some 6,000 federal and state troops, 3,100 police, and 5,000 deputy marshals in Chicago during July 1894.

d Some of Chicago's unemployed took refuge in the abandoned buildings on the world's fair grounds. On January 8, 1894, the Manufactures and Liberal Arts buildings and the Peristyle burned, leaving only the twisted, underlying framework.

e The human costs of the depression and the Pullman Strike led to the organization in 1894 of three of Chicago's most famous settlement houses: Chicago Commons, Northwestern University Settlement House, and the University of Chicago Settlement House. Located at 140 Union Street, Chicago Commons served as home to Graham Taylor and other settlement workers and as a meeting place for neighborhood activities. It originally had belonged to a German-American family who had moved as industry replaced agriculture. After the Great Fire in 1871, it served as the office of the Northwestern Railway. Subsequently, the main house became a boardinghouse for lake seamen while the annex provided housing for eight "very poor Italian families."



end, however, brought an abrupt decline to profits. Pullman released workers and lowered wages while keeping rents high in the model town adjacent to the works where employees were encouraged to live. Encouraged by the American Railway Union (ARU), Pullman workers organized union locals and elected a grievance committee. When Pullman refused their demands for higher wages, lower rents, and union recognition, a strike began on May 11.

At first, Chicagoans supported the strikers, but when the ARU launched a national sympathy boycott, positions hardened. When local officials seemed unable to control the escalating disorder, president Grover Cleveland authorized the use of federal troops to guard mail shipments sent by train. When

troops fired on strikers in Hammond, Indiana, on July 8, attorney general Richard Olney secured an injunction against the ARU, ensuring that the strike would be lost.

The violence and disruption of the strike seemed to mark the waning of the power of the city's former leaders. Together with the depression, it revealed how ill-equipped the city's institutions were to support the immigrants, industrial workers, and poor. The result was a new agenda for the city, unimagined in either the splendid summary of nineteenth-century culture at the world's fair or in Stead's plans for its reformation.

James Gilbert

July: ARU officers arrested for violating injunction

August: Sino-Japanese war

September: John Dewey begins teaching at the University of Chicago

October: Nicholas II ascends to throne of Russia

November: People's Party (Populists) win state, local, and congressional seats in off-year elections

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