

EXECUTIVE OFFICE,
State of Illinois, July 5, [1894.]

HON. GROVER CLEVELAND,

President of the United States, Washington, D. C.

DEAR 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, 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-day 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 out 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, 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 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 not 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 for 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 obstructions, but because they can not get men to operate their trains. For some reason they are anxious to keep this fact from the public, and for this purpose are making an outcry about obstructions in order to divert attention.

I will cite 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 railway centers—that there was a condition bordering on anarchy there, and I was asked to furnish protection so as to enable the employees 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. The company had large shops in 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. We 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 officials of another road, stating that at an important point on their lines trains were forcibly obstructed, and that there was a reign of anarchy at that place and that 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 me 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 over 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 off, and in a few instances they cut off Pullman sleepers from the train. But all these troubles were local in character and could easily be handled by the State authorities. Illinois has more railroad men than any State in the Union, but as a rule they are orderly and well behaved.

This is shown by the fact that so very little actual violence has been committed. Only a very small per cent. of these men has been guilty of any infraction of the law. The newspaper accounts have in some cases been pure fabrications, and in others wild exaggeration.

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 case within the Federal statute, a statute that was passed in 1861, and was in reality a war measure. This 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 State 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 justice, or that could not be easily controlled by the local or State authorities, for the Federal troops can do nothing that the State troops can not do.

I repeat that you have been imposed upon in this matter, but even if by a forced construction it were held that the conditions here came within the letter of the statute, then I submit that local self-government is a fundamental principle of our Constitution. Each community shall govern itself so long as it can and is ready and able to enforce the law, and it is in harmony with this fundamental principle that the statute authorizing the President to send troops into States must be construed. Especially is this so in matters relating to the exercise of the police power and the preservation of law and order.

To absolutely ignore a local government in matters of this kind, when the local government is ready to furnish any assistance needed, and is amply able to enforce the law, not only insults the people of the State by imputing to them an inability to govern themselves or unwillingness to enforce the law, but is in violation

of a basic principle of our institutions. The question of Federal supremacy is in no way involved. No one disputes it for a moment, but, under our Constitution, Federal supremacy and local self-government must go hand in hand, and to ignore the latter is to do violence to the Constitution.

As governor of the State of Illinois, I protest against this, and ask the immediate withdrawal of the Federal troops from active duty in this State. Should the situation at any time get so serious that we cannot control it with the State forces, we will promptly and freely ask for Federal assistance, but until such time I protest with all due deference against this uncalled-for reflection upon our people, and again ask the immediate withdrawal of these troops.

I have the honor to be yours, respectfully,

JOHN P. ALTGELD,
Governor of Illinois.