

Memories of Industrial Distress

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MEMORIES OF INDUSTRIAL DISTRESS.

May, 1894, was a month of apprehension throughout industrial America. Ominous meetings of the unemployed gave out promise of conditions worse than idleness. Across the State of Iowa the Kelly Army made a trail of anxiety. As is so true in emergencies, the actual danger and distress were apparent to but few. To the ordinary person the incident was little more than comedy. It has vanished from the popular attention to the realm of forgotten things.

The responsibility upon the Governor of Iowa and upon the authorities of the cities and towns was never felt except by the officials themselves. From Council Bluffs to Des Moines by land and from Des Moines to Keokuk by water, this unprecedented movement of a thousand men kept municipal corporations on the edge of panic. The Governor, the Attorney General, the Adjutant General and the railroad authorities of Iowa remained on the *qui vive* from the moment the "army's" eyes in Omaha were turned toward the Iowa shores to that when the flotilla passed from the mouth of the Des Moines river. The officials and interests noted spent anxious moments night and day over rights and remedies. Charity and religion, science and chicanery, were busy over the "manifestation," and all unconsciously, were interfering with the few men on whom the legal burdens rested.

What information the people at large had is apparent from the page in the newspapers in our files, but that information was largely at variance with the cold facts with which our officials dealt. What passed under the attention of the Governor of the State, like so much emergency service in the executive office, is unrecorded, but has been promised by Governor Jackson for publication in the ANNALS.

The transactions in the different cities and towns may fairly be inferred from minutes of the city council and from fragmentary manuscripts presented to the Historical Department by the City of Des Moines. The minutes show that on April

19, 1894, the mayor called the attention of the council to a telegram he had received from the citizens of Council Bluffs notifying him that Kelly's army had started for Des Moines. He requested the council to take action regarding the proposed invasion. A motion was adopted referring the matter to the mayor, the city solicitor and the committee on ways and means, with instructions to do what in their judgment seemed best.

On the 27th a motion was adopted directing the mayor to appoint necessary police "while Kelly's Army is in town." On the same day the "members of the council from the East Side are appointed a committee to locate a place for encampment." Also there was adopted a motion directing the mayor to appoint a committee of "officials from the head of the Police Department to act in conjunction with the sheriff to notify the self-appointed General Kelly of the action taken by this Council for the disposing of him and his followers." The action is in the form of the following resolution:

In view of the fact that Kelly and his followers are expected to arrive at Des Moines within two or three days, *Resolved*, that upon their arrival they be required to march through the city as rapidly as may be without injury to the men, and that under no circumstances will they be allowed to camp in Crocker Woods. All donations made by citizens will be delivered at the camp provided for them.

Among the manuscripts are the following:

To the People of Des Moines:

I am reliably informed of the near proximity to our city of the so-called Gen. Kelly and his army. It now seems inevitable that they will pass through Des Moines. The peace and dignity of our city must and will be maintained. We will treat these men kindly but firmly and we will insist that they must not remain with us, but pass on and such means as are necessary to accomplish this end will be used. I call upon the citizens to donate such contributions in the way of food and money as may provide for this company of men for one day. I am informed that they will need for a day's rations 1400 loaves of bread and 1000 pounds of beef and 50 pounds of coffee. These articles may be left at the Commercial Exchange and will be taken charge of by a committee appointed to look after this matter, composed of Aldermen Macartney, McElderry and Wilkins and Deputy Marshal Shaffer. I counsel moderation in all

things pertaining to this matter. These people are travelling through the country without the means of subsistence and our citizens are willing to give them food as an act of humanity, but we did not invite them to come here, we are not prepared to take care of them and we do not want them to stay with us.

ISAAC L. HILLIS,
Mayor.

There were filed with the council such protests as follows:

Messrs. Dean, Longshore, Christy and Redhead wish a protest entered against encamping the Kelly army on their land adjoining the east part of the city.

JAMES H. DEAN,
GEO. L. LONGSHORE,
GEO. S. REDHEAD,
CHRISTY COAL CO.

On April 30th the council formally acknowledged the receipt of a letter from Supt. Egan of the Chicago Great Western Railway to which there appears the following response:

To W. P. Egan, Supt.
Chicago Great Western Ry. Co.

Dear Sir: Your communication to the city council and the mayor giving notice that there is danger that the so-called Kelly Army will capture one of your trains, is at hand and contents carefully noted.

In reply let me assure you that we will gladly aid with the police force of this city at any time or place when you notify us that there is specific danger of any unlawful act on the part of the said Kelly's army.

Yours Very Respectfully,
ISAAC L. HILLIS,
Mayor.

A resolution was adopted April 30th in the following terms:

It is the sense of the council that the mayor be requested to inform General Kelly and his army that they move on and that at once.

It was transmitted with a letter as follows:

Des Moines, Iowa, May 1, 1894.

"General" Kelly,
Des Moines, Iowa.

Dear Sir: Please take notice of the enclosed resolution and oblige

(Signed)

Yours respectfully,
ISAAC L. HILLIS,
Mayor.

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