

Student Handout 2 – Transcript of Introductory Video

On July 19, 1877, workers from the Pennsylvania Railroad company launched a strike in Pittsburgh which ignited the great strike of 1877 and ultimately turned into a national labor action.

According to the *Pittsburgh Evening Chronicle* the trainmen struck because of an order directing the doubling up of trains which imposed double duty upon the workers.

When a local sheriff was unable to disperse the crowd of strikers and sympathizers, the governor responded with the following statement:

"I John F Hartranft, do hereby admonish all good citizens that a persistence in violence will compel resort to such military force as may be necessary to enforce obedience to the law."

Pennsylvania Railroad President, Thomas A. Scott stated that the troops would give the strikers "a rifle diet for a few days."

Yet the situation did not improve and tension continued to mount between strikers and the troops. Said one striker, "We will wade up to our waist in blood before we leave." And then the troops fired upon the strikers. The *Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette* called the unrest "A high carnival of smoke and flame and pillage and riot run mad. The *New York Herald* reported, "The area was actually dotted with the dead and dieing."

For days the riots continued. Striking workers burned and damaged locomotives, tracks and equipment.

39 buildings were destroyed including Union Station. 31 people died and countless were wounded. The strike finally ended as management gained the upper hand.

During the summer of 1877 across the nation one hundred thousand workers had gone on strike. More than 100 had been killed and nearly a thousand jailed.

This event became known as the Great Strike of 1877.