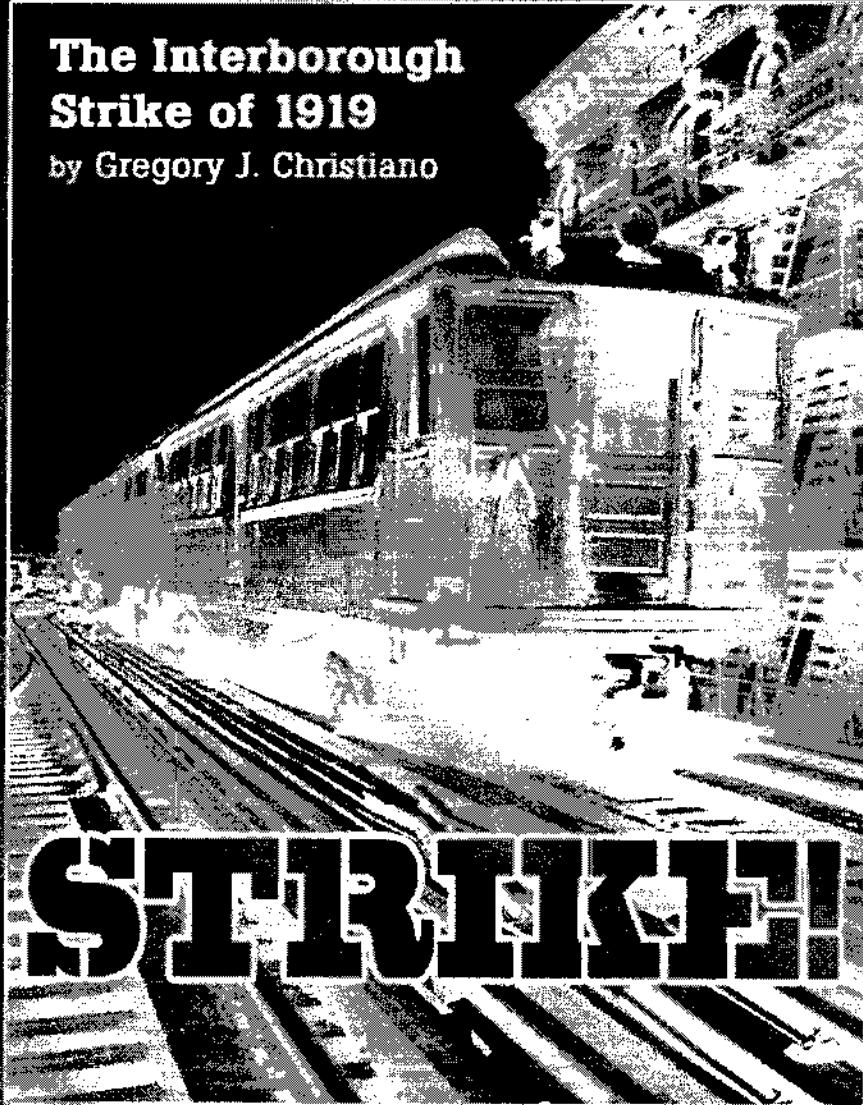


# The THIRD RAIL®

January 2003

## The Interborough Strike of 1919

by Gregory J. Christiano





## STRIKE

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The end of the Great War saw massive inflation and a spate of strikes. One in particular was the one day transit strike August 18-19, 1919 in New York City. This strike was notable because of the solidarity of the IRT workers. The fare was almost raised to eight cents, but was held at a nickel. The employees got twenty-five percent wage increase without raising the fare.

All the major dailies carried the story:  
*The New York Tribune*, Monday, August 18, 1919...

### What Granting Strike Demands Would mean

#### What I.R.T. employees get

\*62 ½ c an hour

#### What I.R.T. employees ask

93 ¾ c. an hour

#### What I.R.T. offers

68 ¾ c. an hour

#### What granting employees' demand would cost

\$10,000,000 a year

#### Number of additional passengers the I.R.T. would have to carry with same equipment and personnel at five cents each to pay what men ask

200,000,000 a year

\*Approximate average.

## Elevated and Subway Lines Idle in Manhattan and Bronx

### Interborough Makes No Effort to Run Cars, Loyal men Sent Home

### Mayor Calls Strikers Eight-Cent Fare Tools

### City Operates 300 'Buses and Prepares to Put 900 More on Regular Routes To- day.

Not a single passenger was carried over the subway, and elevated lines of the Interborough after 4 o'clock yesterday morning. When the strike order of the Brotherhood of Interborough Employees became effective the roads shut down completely.

No attempt was made by the Interborough management to resume service.

Loyal motorman and conductors who reported for duty were told by officials to go back home.

District Attorney Swann, who has been investigating the charge of conspiracy between Interborough officials and employes to get an 8-cents fare, said last night that the men his office had

interrogated seemed to have been "coached and drilled thoroughly for several months." Of the twenty men interviewed not one he said, had attended a meeting of the Brotherhood at which the strike was discussed. He also announced he had received information that, the men had been promised one-third of the fare increase.

District Attorney Martin, of Bronx County has come upon similar information, and will start an investigation to-day. So will Lewis-Nixon, Public Service Commissioner.

Governor Smith arrived in town last night, for what purpose could not be learned.

The city suffered little inconvenience during the first day of the strike. A few more surface cars were operated than is usual on Sunday and these appeared able to take care of all passengers. The B.R.T. Broadway subway carried thousands.

Taxicab companies and 'bus lines reported small increase in business. There was no confusion and no disorder.

Beyond an appeal by Mayor Hylan, made over the heads of leaders of the Brotherhood to the striking men themselves, no move toward mediation or arbitration was attempted.

The city prepared to cope with the business rush to-day by means of 1,200 'buses, boats plying on the Hudson and East rivers, and augmented suburban service on the

New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad. By these agencies it is hoped to handle traffic until the strike breaks from sheer inertia.

Mayor Hylan in his appeal to the Interborough employes, told them they were merely being used as tools by the Interborough management, which hoped to realize 8-cent fares through the strike. He asked the men to meet in Madison Square Garden at any hour of the day or night and permit him to talk to them.

Three hundred 'buses were operated over five routes by the city yesterday. Nine hundred more 'buses will be run to-day and six more routes will be opened.



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Leaders of the strike were served with copies of an injunction signed by Supreme Court Justice Lydon, at 7 o'clock yesterday morning - three hours after the strike started. A clause in the injunction forbids officers of the Brotherhood from supporting the strike or addressing strike meetings. The order is returnable tomorrow.

### Mayor Appeals to I. R. T. Strikers to Arbitrate

### Pleads for Hearing and Says He Can Prove They Are Being Misled -- Declares Hedley Refused 50 Per Cent Raise Even if Given 8-Cent Fare

Mayor Hylan issued a personal appeal yesterday to the striking Inter- borough car men. He made it in writing after futile efforts to get the consent of officers of the Brotherhood of Interborough Employees to address the men.

The Mayor again charged that the interborough was using men only for the purpose of obtaining eight-cent fares. He charged that if higher fare was allowed the men would not get the 50 per cent increase in wages they are demanding

He asked that the 15,000 Interborough employes meet him at Madison

Square Garden and discuss the strike situation. "Any hour of the day or night" is suggested by the Mayor for the meeting.

His appeal to the men follows:

"Friends and Fellow Citizens:

"Since your representatives first called me at 4 o'clock Friday afternoon and said you intended to strike at 4 o'clock this Sunday morning, I have been endeavoring to get them to call you together so I could address you. Your representative has persistently refused to do this, so I am addressing you this way because I want every individual man among you to know exactly what it is I want to say to you and what your representative apparently doesn't care to have you hear.

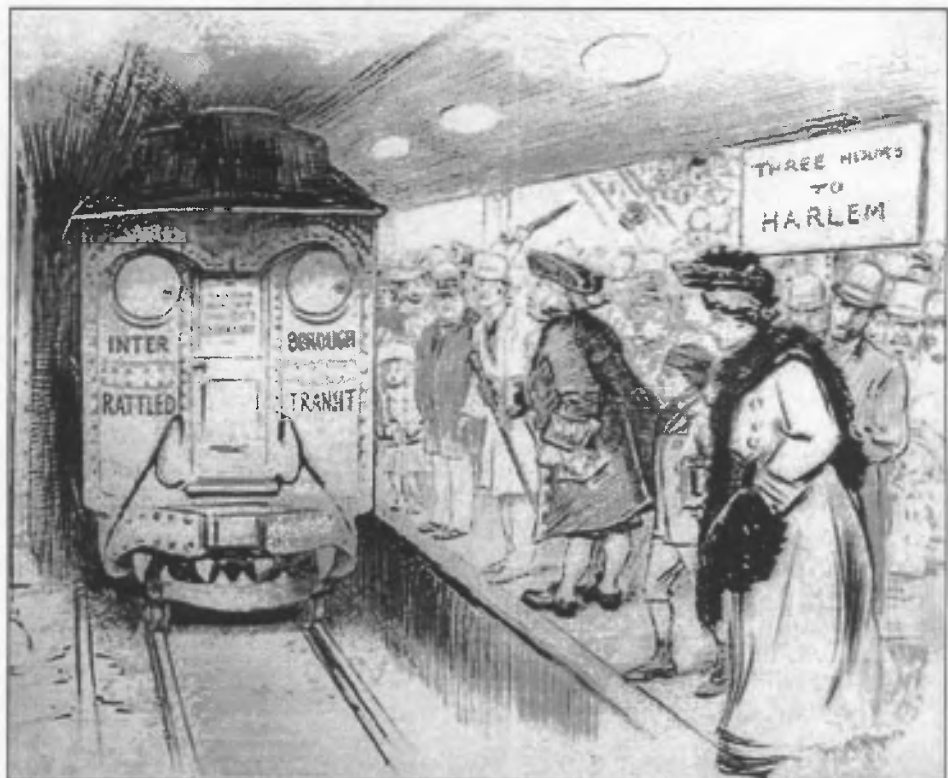
"I came from the ranks myself, was elected to office by men like you and understand the lives of men like you far better than most public officials possibly could.

### Favors Higher Wages

"Whatever your representative may tell you, I want you to know that I have no objection to your getting a better wage scale. In fact, I think you should have better wages, and if you will only take counsel from me you will find me making a persistent fight to get you a good wage scale. I would be untrue to my own life convictions if I took any other attitude.

"What is more, I am also interested in getting for you decent working hours and decent working conditions. I am against all kinds of industrial slavery. The kind of men who create industrial slavery are the kind of men that some of your leaders are now approving...

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The IRT didn't enjoy the best public image. Artist W.A. Rogers expressed the public's feelings in this 1905 cartoon from the *New York Herald*. The inscription on the car door says "Trains run at the co's convenience." The angry gentleman in colonial dress is Father Knickerbocker, a popular allegorical representative of the city citizenry. *Library of Congress*.

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"Did your leaders go back and report to you yesterday that I asked Hedley if he would give you the 50 per cent increase if the Interborough got 8-cent fares?

Did they tell you how Hedley replied? In case you don't know what happened, let me tell you.

### "Won't Meet Your Demands"

"I asked Mr. Hedley if he would meet the proposed wage scale if this city agreed to eight-cent fares, and he said 'No.' Remember that if Mr. Hedley gets eight-cent fares he couldn't give you that 50 per cent increase. God knows how much he will give you, but I guarantee that if they get the eight-cent fares they would give you as little as they could and give Wall Street as much as they could, so don't be fools.

"Mr. Hedley went further. He said that no matter how much income the Interborough had he still would not give you the increase your leaders ask for. It was right after this that one of your leaders said he would take Hedley's word as to the income of the subways rather than statements of the city's statisticians, and he made the remark, 'Hedley is good enough for me.'

"Hedley may be good enough for that particular leader, but when you come to understand all the circumstances, you will have a different idea about it. Mr. Hedley uses your 50 per cent increase demand to ask for eight-cent fares, and in the same breath says that if he gets them you won't get the increase you ask. This is the truth, and if your leaders tell you it isn't, I have a way of proving it. I am willing to meet the whole 15,000 employes at Madison Square Garden, or any other place you

designate, and tell you why you should submit the wage question to arbitration. Let me know if you want me to meet you, and I will do so immediately.

### Urges Talk at Home

"Take my advice boys, and go home and talk this all over with your women folk. They have good sense. They have to bear at least half of the burden of the strike. Read this over with them and ask them if they don't think that you ought to submit the wage and other questions to arbitration..."

\*\*\*

## New Yorkers Shocked by Deadly Stillness of Their Noisy City

It was the deadly stillness of everything that first put a chill into the heart of

New York early yesterday morning. It seemed as if a vital cord had been severed and the spark of life had flickered out. People living blocks away from the "L" and the subway felt that something was amiss, while those near enough to have the friendly rumble and rattle in their ears day after day had a definite sense of loss. Their noisy city had lost some of its vitality, its distinction. They had a sense of resentment that grew as the day advanced, and the vague unrest of the early morning hours merged into the distinct annoyance and anxiety of the afternoon and evening.

But on the whole, good temper and good humor triumphed over inconvenience. Wit was rampant, for there was much to laugh at and genuine amusement neutralized some of the more serious aspects of the strike. Every one thought it a fortunate circumstance that New York's reversion to the transportation of another era took place on a Sunday - a dismal Sunday at that, with gray skies, whiffs of scurrying wind,

blow street corners and intermittent showers. Few people wanted to leave the shelter of their homes unless they had to. Excursions were out of the question. There was no business pressure of any kind. Even a good many worthy churchgoers curled themselves up in cosy lounges and read the Sunday papers with never a thought of the blue Monday stealing upon them.

### Wait for Worse to Happen

A good many were calmly waiting for worse to happen. Some thought the worst had already arrived as they were jostled in the street cars and found umbrella spokes stuck dangerously near their only pair of eyes.

Perhaps in the street cars more than any where else the strikers were blessed in accents neither gentle nor mild. There was little moderation in the crowds that swarmed on the snailing surface cars, but the Fifth Avenue bus preserved its customary calm and refused to accommodate one passenger too many.

All the vehicular peculiarities that a city like New York can master were abroad in the streets and there was a wealth of color and human interest for the curious, in spite of the drab tones of the day. The "ansom" and the cabby were in their element. The almost forgotten horse became an object of interest again.

Bicycles were produced from cellars and borrowed from messenger boys. Great unwieldy trucks put up some scaffolding and proceeded to take on crowds. Every one was glad for any kind of lift. The motor, no matter what its age or make, was easily the ace in the pack.

### New Form of Salutation

A new form of salutation came into being when the wheels of the magic sub and "L" stopped revolving.

"How did you get here?"

Apparently no one expected that any one else could get anywhere. A journey of ten blocks successfully achieved was something to exclaim about.





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The real unfortunate were the visitors from out of town. They were to be found in hotel corridors wailing over the fact that they had come to swift New York and found the city speedless.

"Whee! Some greenhorn," remarked the saucy bellboy in one of the big up-town hotels as a man with a grip and raincoat dashed madly toward the subway entrance only to be checked by a "no admittance" sign.

### **Brooklyn Laughs at Manhattan**

Brooklyn laughed in its cheek at the gyrations of Manhattan yesterday. It didn't mean to be nasty about it, but had to grin when it remembered its tribulations of a week ago. And, after all, the only accessible place in Greater New York at the moment is Brooklyn, so it can afford to laugh.

But, on the whole, New York kept amiable in spite of its weary stretches of untraversed thoroughfare. It sighed a little that men must strike. It grinned a lot at its own expense. And it longed a whole lot for the familiar roar and rattle and rumble that are seemingly an indispensable part of its daily life.

\* \* \*

From the pages of the *New York Herald*, Monday, August 18, 1919.

### **TIE-UP of I. R. T. SUBWAYS AND "L" COMPLETE;**

### **SURFACE CARS AND B. R. T. TUBE KEPT RUNNING**

### **STRIKERS IN TURBULENT MEETING DENOUNCE MAYOR AND UPHOLD THEIR LEADER**

Asserting that the Interborough Rapid Transit Company employes have lived on starvation wages for more than two years and that they can continue to starve until their demands are met, P. J. Connolly, acting president of the Brotherhood of I.R.T. Employes, and a score of other speakers kept the enthusiasm of approximately one thousand strikers who crowded New Star Casino at a high pitch for ten hours yesterday by speeches in which Mayor Hylan was scored severely.

Forced to dig into their own pockets to hire a hall in which they might meet and maintain a strike headquarters, the striking employes started to crowd into the casino soon after seven o'clock in the morning. They continued to drift in and out in groups of fifty and one hundred until five o'clock in the evening, when they were compelled to leave, as the hall had been rented for Italian grand opera.

\* \* \* \* \*

Hylan is so clever," continued Mr. Connolly, "why doesn't he take the conspiracy out of me which he says is in me? Hylan thought I represented a lot of dock rats. Hylan thought I was a liar. Hylan cross-questioned me, but he didn't finger-print me. There is a breaking point to human nature, and when Hylan insinuated that I wasn't on the level I told him he'd never get a chance to do it again."

[an injunction was then served on Mr. Connolly obtained from Justice Richard P. Lydon, which was served upon the various delegates as they appeared]

### **STRIKE GOES INTO EFFECT PROMPTLY, FOLLOWING SCHEDULE OF THE STRIKERS**

The Brotherhood of Interborough Employes carried out their threat to strike at four o'clock yesterday morning with perfect order. Without a sign of violence the men finished the runs on which they

were engaged when the strike hour arrived and then quit their jobs. Two hours after the strike was in effect not a train was stirring on the "L" or in the subways of the Interborough system - which means the Second, Third, Sixth and Ninth avenue lines of the "L" system and the Seventh avenue-Broadway and Fourth-Lexington avenue subways and their branches. Only the Brooklyn Rapid Transit subway, running south in Seventh avenue from Broadway and Fifty-seventh street, and the surface car line remained in operation.

As the last trains pulled out of the various stations the sale of tickets stopped. The strike order was carried into effect with precision. The last train to leave the Bronx Park station of the "L" at 197th street left at three minutes to four o'clock. At the subway station at 180th street and Boston road the last train left at five minutes to four. One hundred and fifty policemen were at the latter terminal

### **LAST DOWNTOWN TRAINS.**

In the Lenox avenue subway the last downtown train passed the 125th street station at twenty minutes after four. An Interborough special officer was aboard and announced at various stations through a megaphone "This is the last train downtown."

The last downtown train on the Lexington avenue line left Jerome avenue station at five minutes of four, and went to Atlantic avenue, Brooklyn. The last train on the west side line passed Times Square northbound at five o'clock. After these trains passed ticket agents stopped work.

Two policemen were on duty at each elevated and subway station after the strike was in effect. At seven o'clock, following the shutting off of the power by the walkouts from the Interborough power houses, the New York Railways Company had to discontinue its service on all lines except Broadway and Columbus avenues and Broadway and Amsterdam avenues.



Half an hour later the service was resumed, power having been obtained from the Fifty-ninth street power houses, from which also the B. R. T. obtains power for the Manhattan sections of its Broadway subway.

Brooklyn Rapid Transit officials declared at nine o'clock that they were running their subway trains in Broadway at a regular Sunday schedule today unless additional power was forthcoming. The company was endeavoring to arrange for power from the Edison company.

### FEW PASSENGERS WAITING.

When the last southbound train on the west side subway reached

Times square there were only a dozen passengers waiting on the platform. As the train was leaving, two women carrying large bundles came rushing down the stairway by a guard, who called to the motor-man to a stop to accommodate the two last minute passengers.

At eight o'clock one train was run from the Interborough terminal at 137th street and Broadway and carried over the entire system. It was explained that this was done in order that the company might comply with the terms of its franchise, which requires one train a day to run, on penalty of forfeiture of the contract. No passengers were carried on the run in question.

Not a single subway or elevated train arrived at South Ferry station after four o'clock. Traffic was diverted to surface lines and because it was Sunday there was not the slightest congestion of traffic.

At ten minutes to six o'clock the power was shut off in the houses feeding the Second and Third avenue "L" lines, the Lexington avenue subway and the signal system. All the power houses of the company were running in the Bronx.

Two Interborough power houses, at Fifty-ninth street and Seventy-fourth street and the New York Edison Company plant at Sixty-sixth street and the East River supplied the power which was used during the day by the surface lines and the Manhattan branch of the B.R.T. subway.

### Attempt to Run Train Fails.

Early in the afternoon there was an unsuccessful attempt to operate an "L" train of three cars from the Eighth avenue and 155th street station of the Ninth avenue line. It was announced that the train would leave and a few minutes later the train dispatcher announced that the crew had backed out and would not take the train out.

Last Thursday it was estimated the fifty thousand persons struggled for admission to the Polo Ground. Yesterday there was somewhat of a contrast. Three hundred men, most of them living conveniently nearby, gathered in the stands to watch the Giants and the Cubs play. At half-past one o'clock the announcement was made that the game had been postponed.

There was no confusion at the Brooklyn terminal of the Interborough, at Flatbush and Atlantic avenues. Station entrances at the terminal and entrances at the intermediate stations from Borough Hall and Brooklyn Heights were roped off, and a policeman was on guard at each station.

Passengers coming in over the Long Island Railroad and downtown on the Brooklyn lines flocked to the B. R. T. subway.

Policeman William Brown, on strike duty, was injured in the afternoon when a passing trolley car struck him as he was riding on the running board of a bus at Madison avenue and Forty-eight street. Brown suffered a fractured rib and was sent home after being attended by Dr. Gillette of Flower Hospital.

## STRIKE MEANS BIG LOSS TO MERCHANTS

The money loss to merchants, hotels, theatrical and restaurant proprietors, excursion boat operators, not to mention the heavy loss to the Interborough company and the employees on strike, will be counted in the millions, even if the present strike lasts only a few days. All of the nearby shore resorts, notably Coney Island, for which the rapid transit lines in Manhattan act as feeders, will be seriously affected.

While shoppers in Manhattan can use the surface cars to get to the big stores, or the improvised jitney lines, it is not expected that fifty per cent of the usual weekday crowds will be in the stores during the strike. Thousands of women from the Bronx and other outlying districts, who prefer to spend their dollars in the

Manhattan store, as well as those who are accustomed to come from Brooklyn, are expected to be discouraged and not make the trip.

## JUDGE BETWEEN US, SAYS FRIDIGER

Characterizing the report as a "damn lie," Louis Ridiger, counsel for The Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees, denied last night a report that the Amalgamated had offered the Interborough the use of 1,000 of its members to operate trains on their lines. The report gained wide circulation yesterday, and was discussed at the headquarters of the Brotherhood in the New Star Casino.

"My organization would never be guilty of conduct such as the Brotherhood has displayed," said Fridiger. "We grasped eagerly at Mayor Hylan's offer of arbitration. The public can judge between the attitudes taken by the two organizations. I never knew of a labor union to act as the Brotherhood has."



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### **MR. NIXON ACTS TO KEEP TRAFFIC SAFE**

The Public Service Commission, by direction of Commissioner Nixon, has stationed more than one hundred engineers and electrical equipment and transit inspectors at power houses, car barns, terminals and other focal points on the Interborough elevated and subway lines. Observations as to service and equipment were constantly made all yesterday. These inspectors worked under orders authorizing them to take such steps as they might deem necessary to provide that any service operated should be safest and most adequate which could be finished. They will remain on duty in day and night shifts for the duration of the strike.

### **FULL SERVICE BY BROADWAY SUBWAY PROMISED BY B. R. T.**

At the offices of the B.R.T. in Brooklyn last night it was said the Broadway (Manhattan) subway lines would be kept in operation today and that everything possible would be done to handle the crowds.

One of the officials said: - "We expect to be swamped tomorrow." In fact we know we will, but all we ask is that the public be as patient as possible and we will make every effort to get them downtown, via Broadway. We will have every car available in service on our Broadway local line and we also will be able to handle thousands from Fifty-ninth street down to Canal street, on our Fourth avenue subway lines.

"We have just been assured by the I.R.T. officials that they will be able to furnish enough power tomorrow to keep

our lines operating up and down Broadway."

From the *New York Herald*,  
Tuesday, August 19, 1919.

### **CAR STRIKE SETTLED; TRAINS AGAIN RUNNING; MEN GET 25 PER CENT INCREASE IN WAGES**

#### *Commissioner Nixon in Role of Arbitrator Brings About Quick End of Big Car Strike*

With Active Support of Governor  
Smith  
He Counsels Company Head and  
the Brotherhood Chiefs and  
Agreement He Formulated  
Is Signed for Submission  
to Men.

#### **WORKERS UNANIMOUSLY RATIFY AND VOTE TO ESTABLISH SERVICE THIS MORNING**

Nothing Regarding Increase in Fare is  
Considered and It is Stated That  
the Five Cent Rate Will Be  
Continued Indefinitely.

#### **Agreement Which Ended the Strike.**

The men to be called to work  
immediately after the submission to a vote  
of the Brotherhood.

#### **TO BE CONCEDED.**

First - A flat increase of twenty-five  
per cent of the rates of all the wages paid  
over and above those paid August 1, 1919.

**Second** - All other questions to be negotiated between the brotherhood and the company and in case of failure of such negotiations to be arbitrated as provided for in the constitution approved by the directors.

**Third** - All members of the brotherhood of the I. R. T. employees to be restored to their former positions and each to retain his individual seniority in the service.

The strike on the subway and elevated lines of the Interborough Rapid

Transit Company, which had held the traveling public of Manhattan in a grip of congestion and unprecedented discomfort since Sunday morning, was settled last night. The chief arteries of the rapid transit system of the borough will be opened to normal flow of traffic this morning.

The men were ordered back to work immediately after the strikers had accepted the offer of the Interborough of a twenty-five per cent increase in wages just before nine o'clock at a meeting at strike headquarters. Service was resumed a few minutes after midnight and was increased gradually throughout the early morning. It was promised that approximately full schedules will be maintained during the morning rush.

It was said last night that a meeting of the Amalgamated Association will be held tomorrow night and that a strike on the green car lines will be voted unless men discharged for union activities are reinstated.

According to officials of the Public Service Commission it was clearly understood by the heads of the Interborough company in reaching the agreement with the Brotherhood of Interborough Employees that no attempt should be made to increase fares in order to meet the advance in wages. The agreement calls for arbitration of an added increase beyond twenty-five per cent and all other matters between the Interborough employees.



## STRIKE!

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### State Officials Attend Conference.

The settlement was reached at a conference called by Lewis Nixon, Public Service Commissioner, at the offices of the commission yesterday afternoon. Governor Alfred E. Smith, John Mitchell, chairman of the State Industrial Commission, and representatives of the Interborough and the strikers participated with Mr. Nixon. No representative of the city administration took a part in the negotiations.

Speaking for the Interborough company, J. L. Quackenbush, chief counsel, declared last night the twenty-five per cent increase in wages for the employees he felt safe in saying that the company would not go into bankruptcy before January 1. He said that the wage increase meant an additional \$4,800,000 a year to the charges against the company. He said that by January 1 the company would be short \$5,686,460 of meeting fixed charges but that he hoped the security holders would advance the sum to offset the deficit and avert a receivership.

While the conference was in progress Mayor Hylan summoned District Attorney Swann, Police Commissioner Enright, Corporation Counsel Burr and other city officials to his office at City Hall to discuss the matter of alleged conspiracy between the brotherhood and the traction company to secure an eight-cent fare. The Mayor announced after the conference that positive evidence of such a conspiracy had been obtained and that District Attorney Swann would present the evidence to the extraordinary Grand Jury tomorrow. Fifty subpoenas had been issued for witnesses, it was stated. The District Attorney said that the settlement of the strike would in no way interfere with the Grand Jury investigation.

The settlement agreement was in substance that formulated by

Commissioner Nixon, as had been the form of agreement offered by him and accepted in the recent Brooklyn Rapid Transit strike. The strike leaders and public officials concerned in the peace conference gave the Public Service Commissioner undisputed credit for the adjustment of the controversy, F. J. Connolly, acting president of the Brotherhood of Employees, declared after the enthusiastic meeting of the strikers last night that "Nixon was the best man in New York." The strikers gave the Commissioner a rising vote of thanks.

It was stated that the constitution referred to in the agreement was that of the brotherhood which contained an arbitration clause that had been approved by the directors of the Interborough. The men struck in violation of this clause, it had been contended.

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### SUBWAY AND ELEVATED TRAINS START SOON AFTER MIDNIGHT

The old familiar grind of the ticket chopper began to function spasmodically in the hundreds of subway and "L" stations soon after midnight. The sound echoed and re-echoed through vacant tunnels, however, for the public was not out in force sufficient to give the resumption of service the gala celebration it deserved.

Following the reaching of an agreement by the Brotherhood and the Interborough orders were issued for the resumption of service at midnight and shortly before that hour the ticket sellers and ticket choppers throughout the system took up their old places and most of them seemed glad to be back on the job. The windows were opened for the selling of tickets at midnight and at that hour or within a few moments of it motormen and conductors began to run trains out of the various termini about the system.

Shortly after midnight trains left the Bronx and Van Cortlandt Park terminals of the west side subway and began their journey toward Atlantic avenue, Brook-

lyn. At the same time service was resumed on the Lexington avenue branch and the trains started from 159th street terminal of the Sixth and Ninth avenue "L" lines.

The first trains on the various divisions started as follows: -

Broadway- Seventh avenue, left Van Cortlandt Park at four minutes after twelve o'clock.

Lenox avenue left 145th street at nine minutes after twelve o'clock.

Bronx Park three car "L" trains left for South Ferry at twenty minutes after twelve o'clock.

There was not the usual homegoing midnight crowd to be seen, however.

This was especially noticeable at the Times Square station of the subway, where the west side, Grand Central shuttle and B. R. T. subway lines meet. Usually this point is a mass of humanity around the midnight hour, but the combination of circumstances last night gave the Times square station an almost deserted appearance, even after the trains had been running. The rain, the actors' strike and the transit tieup was a combination that few cared to brave.

Different was the scene at the 149th street station of the Third avenue "L," when about one hundred persons, waiting on the sidewalk for emergency means of conveyance to take them to downtown points, caught sight of an "L" train speeding into the station. Most of the crowd had not known of the strike settlement, and they greeted the train with a cheer, then made a dash for the ticket booth.

The first train on this branch left the Bronx Park terminal at six minutes after twelve o'clock, under charge of Fred Meister, motorman. It carried no passengers, being sent down the line to clear the tracks. The first passenger train left at twenty minutes after twelve o'clock, and carried one hundred passengers when it had gone a few stations.

Interborough officials had gathered enough men together at midnight to guarantee normal service by one o'clock, they stated.



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### INTERBOROUGH TO TAKE 8-CENT FARE PLEA TO LEGISLATURE

In discussing the settlement of the strike last night, J. L. Quackenbush, chief counsel for the Interborough who with Frank Hedley, general manager, represented the company in the final negotiations, declared that they intended "to try every means to secure an increased fare."

"We will try to put a bill through the Legislature," said Mr. Quackenbush, "giving the Public Service Commission the authority to act in cases such as ours. We expect to continue to use sweet reasonableness with the city officials."

Asserting that the Interborough would not have to go into the hands of a receiver before January 1, despite the \$4,800,000 added to the fixed charges by the twenty-five per cent increase in wages, and that then he hoped the bondholders would advance the amount necessary to cover the deficit, he further said in regard to the effect of the settlement on the finances of the company.

"The report of the examining engineers who investigated the condition of the company shows that with a continuation of present conditions, or, I should say conditions as they were before the strike, at the end of the five years the company would be \$5,000,000 behind. Now comes an added yearly expense, under the strike settlement, of nearly \$5,000,000, which means \$25,000,000 must be added to that \$15,000,000, increasing our deficit at the end of the next five years to \$40,000,000. The meeting of this deficit is the problem which the Interborough is facing now for which it must find a solution if it is to escape a receivership."

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As reported in the New York Tribune, Tuesday, August 19, 1919.

### Traction Strike Ends; Trains Start at Midnight; Men Get 25 Per Cent Increase, Possibly More Later, Gov. Smith and Lewis Nixon Effect Compromise.

Mayor Hylan Barred From  
Conference at P. S. Commission  
Office on Strikers' Demand

### Conspiracy Charges To Go to Grand Jury

City Suffers Worst Day of Street  
Congestion in Its History and  
Business Men Lose Heavily

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New York's transportation strike is over. The Interborough has agreed to a 25 per cent increase in wages and the strikers were ordered back upon subway and elevated trains at midnight. The remainder of the 50 per cent increase demanded will be arbitrated.

It was expected normal service on both systems would be given by 4 o'clock this morning. Before early morning workers for the downtown district to-day the most peaceful car strike the city ever has seen will have passed into history.

A three-car elevated train bound for South Ferry, was the first to leave the Bronx Park terminal since the strike was settled. It got underway at 12:20 a. m. at 149th Street the cars were well filled. Cheers greeted the train at every station. The first train in the Lexington Avenue subway reached 125th Street at 12:12 this morning.

All trains had to start from the northern terminals, having been laid up there when the strike was called.

### WHAT THE INCREASE MEANS TO I. R. T. MEN

The following table shows the present hourly wages of the I. R. T. man and what the twenty-five per cent increase will bring them

Class of Labor	Present Scale	New Scale
Motormen, 1st year	.50	.62 1/2
Motormen, 2d year	.53 1/8	.66 4/10
Motormen, 3d year	.56 1/4	.70 3/10
Motormen, 4th year	.59 3/8	.74 1/10
Motormen over 4th year	.62 1/2	.78 1/10
Conductors	.45	.56 1/4
Guards	.41	.51 1/4
Towermen, 1st class	.49	.61 1/4
Towermen, 2d class	.46	.57 1/2
Switchmen	.46	.57 1/2
Special officers	.36	.45
Platform men	.35	.43 3/4

Rapid Transit Net Home

The Third Rail Home

next 



## STRIKE

The Interborough Strike of 1919  
by Gregory J. Christiano

The first train in the Lexington Avenue subway reached 125th Street at 12:12 this morning. All trains had to start from the northern terminals, having been laid up there when the strike was called. Consequently the northbound traffic was an hour or more later in getting under way.

The conference that brought about the unexpected conclusion of the strike was called and handled by Public Service Commissioner Lewis Nixon. Governor Smith, a committee of ten of the striking brotherhood men and officials of the Interborough Company, each group occupying a separate room, participated in the conference. Commissioner Nixon plied between the rooms and interpreted the varying demands.

### *Mayor Hylan Not in the Conference*

Mayor Hylan was not invited to attend or take any part in the parley. It was at the specific request of the brotherhood representatives, with Acting President Connolly as their spokesman, that the Mayor was excluded. Mayor Hylan still was busily engaged in plans for operating army buses in the streets when he was told of the settlement.

Possibility of increased fares was not considered at any of the strike conferences. The traction company's end of the financial situation still is to be considered.

The only statement made by any representative of the Interborough concerning this phase of the question was that of James L. Quackenbush, its general counsel. He said last night that unless there was an increase of fares, or the bondholders agreed to assist the road through its present difficulty, it would be forced into the hands of a receiver by next January.

The conclusion of the strike followed a day of transportation chaos such as New

York never before seen. Everything that moved on wheels or floated in water was pressed into service to transport Manhattan workers from and to their homes.

### *Crowds Left Standing on Every Corner*

In spite of these emergency arrangements, men and women labored through the rain for from two to four hours of traveling from the Bronx to the Battery. Surface cars, crowded to twice their normal capacity, left crowds standing under umbrellas and improvised shelters at every corner.

Congestion in the streets was most serious during the evening rush hour, when downtown skyscrapers simultaneously emptied themselves of their million men and women workers. Special assignments of traffic policemen charged with the duty of keeping vehicles moving about City Hall Square, over Brooklyn Bridge and up the crowded streets to Harlem and The Bronx, seemed almost incapable of making a dent in the streams of vehicles awaiting passengers.

In spite of the unusual increase in wages granted the strikers, and the possibility that an arbitration board may increase their award, the men did not return to work with a feeling of victory. They protested that they were given too little and demanded, on first hearing of the terms, that they were rejected.

At the New Star Casino, 107th Street and Park Avenue, where the terms were considered, news of the increased wages was greeted with charges that the men had been "sold out." It was not until the brotherhood officers had argued at length that the terms were accepted by acclamation.

### *Strikers Agree to Accept Terms Only After Leader's Firm Appeal*

News of one of the biggest wage awards ever made to traction employes at the conclusion of the strike was greeted

by the Interborough strikers with hoots and demands that it be rejected.

As many of the strikers as could crowd into New Star Casino, 107th Street and Park Avenue, greeted the Brotherhood officers' reports of their efforts toward peace in that manner at the opening of the "victory" meeting at 7:30 in the evening.

Nearly 3,000 striking carmen were packed into the Casino when the delegation of ten filed into the structure amid cheers of welcome. President Connolly headed the delegation, smiling broadly at the groups of workers who approached him with outstretched hands.

But the committee did not immediately offer its report. The sixty-two delegates to the meeting were summoned into a rear room, where they remained in executive session for more than two hours. The delegate body agreed to the tentative terms at 7:20.

Then the seventy-two men emerged and approached the platform while another storm of cheers greeted what was declared to be a complete victory for the strikers.

### *Calls Offer Good News*

"We've got good news for you boys!" shouted Connolly.

The cheering and stamping of feet increased in volume.

Then Connolly, followed by Anthony J. Remagna, attorney for the brotherhood ascended the platform.

"This has been the cleanest strike the city has ever seen," he begins. "We have proved that a strike can be conducted without violence or disorder.

"At the meeting we just held downtown with Mr. Nixon, of the Public Service Commission, and several other officials, several propositions were made to us...."



## Terms of Agreement On Which Strike Ends

THE TERMS of the agreement under which the Interborough employes returned to work are:

A flat 25 per cent increase on wages paid August 1, 1919.

All other demands including that for an additional 25 per cent wage increase, to be discussed with officers of the company, and, in the event of failure of such negotiations, to be submitted to arbitration.

All brotherhood employes to be restored to their posts and to retain their seniority in service.

## Smith-Hylan War Blazes From Strike

### Open Conflict Now On Between the Governor, Backed by Murphy, and Mayor, Aided by Hearst

War between Governor Smith and Mayor Hylan, which has been brewing for some time, was declared yesterday. Behind the Governor stands Charles F. Murphy and most of the rank and file of Tammany Hall. William R. Hearst is Hylan's ally.

Governor Smith took the step which constituted a tacit declaration of hostilities. He went to the Public Service Commission yesterday and conferred with Commissioner Lewis Nixon on some way to bring about a settlement of the Interborough strike. He did not ask Mayor

Hylan, or any of his associates who have been striving to bring about a solution of the traction problem, to attend.

Those conversant with state and city politics interpret this action of the Governor as a deliberate affront, a throwing down of the gauntlet to Hearst and Hylan.

"The war is on," members of Tammany Hall asserted.

### Quarrel Gradually Grows

The present split in the ranks of the Democratic party here has been of gradual growth. No love has ever been lost between Smith and Hylan. It has been no secret that while Smith was at City Hall as President of the Board of Aldermen he held the Mayor in little esteem. For some time now neither has spoken willingly to the other.

Tammany by yesterday's open break has been placed in a somewhat delicate position. Scores of the members of the wigwam are holding office under the Hylan administration. The war is going to make things decidedly uncomfortable for them.

Smith's chief ally, Murphy, has been unwilling, it is understood, to bring matters to an open break. Younger men in Tammany Hall, who see in the Governor the future leader of the organization, have been eager for some time to begin hostilities against Hylan and Hearst. Now

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that these have started, Murphy will unquestionably support Smith. Hearst will, as undoubtedly ally himself with the Mayor.

### Hearst Support Lukewarm

During Smith's campaign for Governor the Hearst organs were only lukewarm in their support of him. They actually joined his banner only after a Hearst representative had obtained a mild endorsement from Smith of the Hearst plan for the municipal ownership of all public utilities.

The Legislature completed its first session without any display of enthusiasm on the part of the Governor for Hearst's pet idea. Meanwhile the Hearst papers were outspoken in their approval of the Hylan administration, and the Mayor and the publisher were on intimate terms.

The clouds began to gather when Governor Smith, disregarding the protests of Hearst, appointed Robert E. Luce to the Supreme Court bench. Immediately the Hearst papers opened fire on the Governor with editorial and cartoon, censuring him for the appointment of a former attorney for the New York Central, and following up this attack by lampooning him as a friend of the Milk Trust and the slayer of babies of the poor who had been deprived of their milk.



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## STRIKE

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### Tammany Upholds Smith

A few days ago, when Tammany decided on its city and county slate, it was Hearst's expressed wish that Just-icc Luce be kept off the country ticket. Tammany's reply probably inspired by Smith, was to name him.

In the meantime Commissioner Nixon had advocated an increased fare for the Interborough. This brought forth more hostile editorials and cartoons in the Hearst papers. Mayor Hylan, backed by Hearst, opposed an increase.

At the meeting to avert the strike held in City Hall Saturday a representative of Hearst was on hand, and during the proceedings held a whispered conference with Hylan. At its conclusion the Mayor asked Frank Hedley, general manager of the Interborough, if he would turn his lines over to the city, since he had testified they were financially "busted." Hedley said he would not.

Since then Hylan and Hearst have been charging that the strike was a conspiracy between employes and employers of the Interborough to get an increased fare.

### A word about Mayor Hylan:

John F. Hylan [b. 1869 - d. 1936]  
96th Mayor of NYC (1918-1925)

It is quite evident after reading the above articles concerning the 1919 transit strike, that Mayor Hylan wasn't a very popular civil servant. Mayor Hylan always wanted a city-owned and operated transit system. He wanted the I.R.T. and the B.R.T. to go out of business so the city could acquire all subway and elevated systems. Part of his plan was to undermine the existing elevateds and build subway lines near or directly under the els. (i.e. the Eighth Ave. and Sixth Ave. subways). The Second Ave subway, was of course, never realized.

Besides his personal grudge against the B.R.T., having been fired while a motorman for the company, he got part of his wish after the Malbone Street disaster on Nov. 1, 1918; the B.R.T. going into receivership. The B.R.T. eventually became the B.M.T. in 1923 and Hylan continued his attacks in his feud with B.M.T. chairman Gerald Dahl. Hylan made every effort to acquire the franchises but he was voted out of office in his bid for a third term. His bitterness was eventually relieved somewhat in the late 1920's when his wish came true. With the building of the IND and expansion of the other subways, it signaled the demise of the Ninth and Sixth avenue els which were subsequently demolished soon after the construction of these subway lines. The Second and Third avenue lines followed thereafter. And by 1940 the City unified all systems under its control. Hylan was, therefore instrumental in completely changing the structure of rapid transit in New York

### A word about the I.R.T. Brotherhood

The Brotherhood of Interborough Rapid Transit Employees ("Brotherhood") was formed by the I.R.T. as a company union to fulfill the terms of the New York Railways surface lines agreement as it would apply to the rapid transit employees of the I.R.T. The surface agreement was a result of the NYR surface strike of August, 1916.

The New York Railways strike had been spearheaded by the Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees of America, A.F.L. ("Amalgamated")

The I.R.T. would undoubtedly have liked to keep their employees from having any opportunity for organization and independent representation, but it didn't appear they would be able to pull it off. New York Railways and the I.R.T. were separate corporate entities, but the management was substantially the same.

The I.R.T. gave its blessing to the formation of the Brotherhood in the hope of keeping its employees from the "clutches" of Amalgamated.

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More from author Gregory Christiano  
at [MyRecollection.com](http://MyRecollection.com).

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