

In order to understand the political motives of president Cleveland's strategic move of the labor holiday from May Day, it's necessary to briefly review its historical context. The following is taken from the last paragraph of the Gypsy Scholar's "Labor Day: A Misplaced Federal Holiday" musical essay series.

The origins of Labor Day were based in the labor movement of the United States over one hundred years ago. Now, the celebration and honoring of the working-class has strayed from its original (radical) roots. Back in the late 1800's, major corporations had worked their way into the upper ranks of the US federal government. This corruption caused great division among the American people of the day who watched companies get larger and larger while individuals often suffered through long work days and work weeks for little pay. The increasing mistreatment of the workers by the corporations caused protests and riots among the people. These working-class folks were then shut down at the hands of US Marshals and other peacekeeping units. This led to a political movement among the working-class people, backed by the New York City labor unions. (Past

militant trade union struggles were led by anarchists, socialists, and communists such as Eugene Debs, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Farrell Dobbs, Carl Skoglund, and many others. It was the communists who organized textile workers in the South. It was the radical Left that built the Congress of Industrial Organizations.) In order to both calm the fears of the capitalist bosses and to appease the growing class of American workers (many of them immigrants), President Grover Cleveland had Labor Day introduced as a federal holiday. Congress passed it in six days.

The first Labor Day in the United States was celebrated on the first Monday in September (Sept. 5, 1882) in New York City. That year, railway workers in Pullman, Illinois, had gone on strike to protest wage cuts. President Cleveland sent in federal troops to end the strike. Strikers were killed, and their leaders were jailed. Thus, in the aftermath of the deaths of a number of workers at the hands of the US military and US Marshals during the 1894 Pullman Strike, President Cleveland put reconciliation with Labor as a top political priority. Fearing further conflict and the possibility of mass demonstrations on a nationwide

scale, legislation making Labor Day a national holiday was rushed through Congress unanimously and signed into law a mere six days after the end of the strike. (It should also be noted that when international May (Labor) Day seemed a little too international (read anarchist or socialist) for the Separatist, Capitalist United States, the first Monday in September was designated Labor Day in the US.)

In other words, the real motive behind this hurried legislation was Cleveland's concern that aligning a US labor holiday with existing international May Day celebrations would stir up negative emotions linked to the Haymarket Massacre of 1886.

And Cleveland's "Labor Day" Federal holiday has seemed to serve its strategic purpose, since most Americans celebrate it as nothing more than the end of the summer season or the start of the football season. And if there are speeches or political demonstrations, they are far more low-key than May Day Labor celebrations in most countries. One magazine, *The Veteran*, has denounced what they recognized as another attempt to minimize the traditional International Worker's Day: "Today's union 'leaders' whose early counterparts once stood closer to the interest of the working class, have now joined with the efforts

working class history.”