

1919 Pittsburgh - Role Sheet

Name: *William Foster*

Allegiance: *Pro-Strike Faction (Union Leader)*

Role Context

You are a white, 38 year-old labor organizer, and you grew up in the slums of Philadelphia, becoming a temporary wage worker early on, and traveled across the country over the years. Eventually, you landed in Spokane, Washington, where you joined the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Samuel Gompers, president of AFL, became aware of your organizational talent and appointed you head of the AFL Steel Industry Organization Initiative. In August of 1918, a conference of twenty-four trade unions met in Chicago and established a National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers, naming you as the Secretary-Treasurer among other prominent names such as Samuel Gompers and John Fitzpatrick. The ensuing months saw the committee achieve remarkable success, particularly within the ranks of unorganized steelworkers. As a result of deplorable conditions, steelworkers were interested in bettering their economic position and joined the new steel union movement to force remedial action.

Motivations

On August 26, 1919, Fitzpatrick and yourself petitioned Judge Gary for a mediation meeting to resolve all the differences, following a stern warning to the steel companies that they were serious about their claims, his reply the following day declined to discuss with you any matters relating to employees. It is clear that an industrial struggle is in the making with steelworkers being rebuffed in securing what felt like legitimate demands, while Gary remained resolute in holding the line against the growing power of unionism. Although you are in favor of

an eventual strike, you fear if a strike breaks out too early, your organization will be unprepared and the strike may fail, resulting in even worse conditions for the workers at the mills.

Play Guidelines

Round #1

- You **do not support** the resolution in this round, as you fear it will heighten tensions even more and could provoke an early strike call.
- Prepare a 3-5 minute opening speech, describing the current situation and explaining what the National Committee is here to do

Round #2

- Challenge the anti-strike faction to explain their refusal to strike.
- Be aware of those who seek to spread false information, and of those who aim to associate you with the so-called “radicals.”

Round #3

- In the event, a strike was voted against, double down on efforts to bring about the strike by continuing to reach out to indeterminates to convince them of your cause
- In the event a strike is passed, devise a list of strike objectives to be achieved, as much as you want

favorable goals, ensure that most people agree to the terms so as to achieve a majority vote.

Victory Objectives

Round #1 Victory

Although there is no direct Victory Objective for Round #1 for your Faction, as one of the strike organizers, it will aid in your goal to stall the Strike, so that it may be better organized.

Complete Victory

Your Victory in the game is directly related to the success of the strike. A complete Victory will see you win Round #2, and obtain a majority vote in Round #3.

Partial Victory

Partial victory may also be obtained if you lose the vote in Round #2 but manage to achieve the 75% majority vote in Round #3, thus seeing a Strike occur, although in a weaker state.

Important Sources

- Source 3.1 - “A Correspondence between Union Workers and Elbert Gary”
- Source 3.6 - “The Daily Schedule of a SteelWorker in Homestead, Pennsylvania, 1919”