

# Jane Addams and the Pullman Strike

Jane Addams, the practical idealist, acted-sometimes successfully, sometimes unsuccessfully - as an arbitrator in labor-management disputes. She was a member of the Citizens' Arbitration Committee named during the Pullman strike, an event which brought Eugene Victor Debs, Clarence Darrow, and Governor John Peter Altgeld of Illinois to national prominence. She knew George M. Pullman and the pride he felt in the model town he had built for his employees on the southern outskirts of Chicago, but she also knew Pullman, Illinois, as a town dominated, governed, and owned by George Pullman. The Citizens' Arbitration Committee failed in its efforts to arbitrate the issues between the Pullman Company and the American Railway Union during the strike. Even though Miss Addams was merely an appointed arbitrator in this strike ...she and Hull House were criticized, and both lost friends. But she insisted that the settlement's demands for social justice and social order committed it to an effort to understand and, as far as possible, to alleviate the pressures brought about by the industrial system. (Weinberg, *Some Dissenting Voices: The Story of Six American Dissenters*, p.159-160)

## Questions for Group Activity:

1. Why do you think Jane Addams tried to end a strike when it just brought her criticism?

