

editor of the labour paper *The Voice*, found himself appointed to the Parks Board in February of 1919. Then in April, as a result of the amendments to the Act, labour aldermen A. A. Heaps and E. Robinson became Parks Board members along with three other aldermen.<sup>12</sup> But what could have been a formidable labour block on the board was scuttled when Arthur Puttee, surprisingly, did not support the General Strike. As a result, Puttee was the only one of these members who regularly attended Parks Board meetings during the strike and its aftermath. Heaps, in particular, had other things on his mind. He was arrested as a strike leader in June. So the pro-strike members never had an impact on the board's voting patterns, but they did make their influence felt.

This was most evident when, after the strike had been crushed, a matter of great symbolic and practical importance to supporters of the strike came before the board in July of 1919. James Law of the Winnipeg Defence Committee made a formal request to the board that his committee be allowed to use Victoria Park as a public meeting place. The committee had been created after the defeat of the strike in order to support the leaders who had been charged and to raise funds for their legal defence.<sup>13</sup> In spite of the labour members, the board was still dominated by businessmen like F. W. Drewery who had

been bitterly opposed to the strike. After the arrest of the strike leaders in June, the board had passed a motion authorizing the Chief of Police to take whatever actions necessary to enforce the Parks Act and board by-laws in Winnipeg parks. As the by-laws gave the board wide latitude in preventing "disorderly behaviour", the police could then break up the kind of large public meetings that had so effectively kept up the morale of the strikers.<sup>14</sup>

Now the Defence Committee wanted the matter settled once and for all. Could public meetings be held in Winnipeg's public parks? The board did not immediately refuse the request; outright refusal might have sparked a riot during a time when the city was returning to a kind of jittery normalcy. Instead, it was decided that the Defence Committee could meet in the park, pending a re-evaluation of the status of Victoria Park itself and of board policy on public meetings there. That decision came down in October



*Victoria Park, c. 1900. Although it was very attractive and well used, the fact that the CPR back-up track ran along the park's section of the river bank was considered a serious flaw. The striker's use of it during the 1919 General Strike put the last nail in Victoria Park's coffin. The park was sold to Winnipeg Hydro in 1924 and became the site of Hydro's Amy Street Steam Plant. PAM N11900.*

when the board moved that: "during the pleasure of the Board, public speaking and public meetings be permitted in this property..."<sup>15</sup> But the catch was that a formal application would be required which would include the speakers' names and the purpose of the meeting. The Parks Board by-laws entitled the board to clamp down on disorderly activity after it had occurred.<sup>16</sup> By the new ruling, the board set itself up as the vetting authority on what subjects and speakers would be permissible in public parks.

The controversy seems to have put another nail in the coffin of Victoria Park. Since