
United Again

by Eugene V. Debs

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Through the power usurped by one of our former Grand Officers, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen was precipitated into the great strike of 1877 and as a natural consequence, a hatred for the organization was incurred by many railroad officials throughout the land.

As a means of retaliating for the injury sustained, they forced many of our members to withdraw from the institution, and thus succeeded in causing the downfall of some of our best lodges. This was especially the case in the Eastern country, where the Order was almost entirely swept from existence.

Of course this was very unjust on the part of the railroad officials, for they were placing the grave responsibilities of the strike and its direful results where they did not properly belong, for as an organization the Brotherhood had nothing to do with the origin or development of that strike nor any other. The only manner in which our Brotherhood was identified with the strike was that it had an officer at its helm, who gave it countenance without power or authority, and thus brought down upon it as much condemnation as though it had plotted and planned to give it life, and then used its power in contributing to its support.

It is a matter of fact that the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen have never yet been directly implicated in a strike. They have never destroyed one dollar's worth of property, nor struck one blow at a railroad company. On the contrary they have always counseled moderation and in many instances carefully guarded the property of the corporations. But deep and bitter as

was the prejudice entertained against us by many railroad officials, the last vestige of it has been obliterated forever.

We have letters from nearly all the leading managers, presidents, and superintendents of railroads in the United States and Canada and they speak of use, without exception, in the kindest terms. We have been furnished with annual passes for our traveling officers over thousands and thousands of miles of road, while many companies who could not, consistently with their rules, grant annual passes, have generously offered to furnish us with trip passes whenever we have an opportunity to use their respective lines. The letters we have of them are expressive of the deepest sympathy and warmest friendship for our Order and we feel free to say that we entertain the same cordial feeling toward them, and hope that this unison and harmony of thought and action between us may never be ruffled by any wave of passion or discord.

One of the very highest officials of the Pennsylvania lines writes us that our organization has his warmest personal sympathy, while another of the same standing politely informs us that his road is always at our disposal and that he will grant us, with pleasure, any favor he can within his official capacity. Still another, who until quite recently was bitterly opposed to us, has torn down the barrier that separated us so long and so much to our disadvantage, and tendered our Grand Officers a hearty welcome, assuring them that he hoped to see the day when all the men in his employ would be working under the banner of our Order.

Now that we have the friendship and cooperation of our superior officers, let us preserve them forever. Should any difficulty arise, whereby we should feel ourselves aggrieved, let us go to the heads of our respective departments, and respectfully appeal for a restoration of the lost rights. Let us go like men and we will be treated as such. The object of our institution is to make men out of the crude material, and when we have succeeded in that, there will be no occasion for strikes, for when we are fully qualified to receive our rights, they will always be accorded us.

It is no small matter to plant benevolence into the heart of a stone, instill the love of sobriety into the putrid mind of debauchery, and create industry out of idleness. These are our aims and if the world concedes them to be plausible, we ask that they find an anchoring place in its heart, and that in our humble efforts to carry them out, we will be beckoned onward and upward by those who have the power to assist us.

We wish to be as charitable to our members and their families as our limited means will permit. In the past two months we have sent the proceeds of our bounty into 12 little homes, to dispel the darkness and gloom that enshrouded them. Twelve widows have been relieved from the agonies of want and twice that number of little children have been rescued from the vortex of ignorance and vice, and placed within the sphere of morality, respect, and honor. Without our aid, they would have been reared in idleness and ignorance and thus have added to the shame and dishonor of the world. With it, they have been enabled to secure an education and thus learn the great principles of truth, honor, and justice. The little forms that were covered with the scanty garments of poverty have been made comfortable with warm and decent clothing, and their aching, throbbing hearts have been made light and happy in the knowledge that "Papa" was a member in good standing of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen when he was killed, and that they will see that his little children do not suffer for want of assistance or protection.

Then again we aim to strike, with all the force of which we are capable, at the horrible vice of intemperance. We are well aware that railroad men, as a class, use stimulants more freely than men of most any other calling, because of the fact that they are continually exposed to the weather, and have been taught to believe, in many instances, that with alcohol in their bodies they could more successfully cope with the wet and the dry, the heat and the cold of the elements. This fallacy we are endeavoring to counteract, and when men have fallen into the habit of soaking themselves with liquor we bring a moral suasion to bear upon them that will reform them if they are capable of reform. If after

repeated efforts we fail to bring about the desired end, the man is expelled from our ranks, because we cannot afford to have our good name tarnished by upholding drunkenness, nor hazard the sobriety of others by having them within its contaminating influence.

We regard temperance as the great moral factor that must be the salvation of mankind and we propose, with that portion of it with which we deal, to enforce a regard for it that will insure sobriety.

The last, but none the less essential, of our principles is Industry. We teach every man of our calling that it is honorable to do honest labor and that it is dishonorable to live in idleness, or at the expense of the industry of another.

Industry has no time to seek evil companions, foster bad habits, or commit acts of injustice.

Industry never steals or murders, and never goes to the penitentiary or to the scaffold.

Idleness is the foster-parent of every vice.

Idleness is intemperance, dishonor, crime, and death.

Idleness supports every penitentiary and erects every scaffold, for it is the fabric upon which are based all of the vices that curse mankind.

Every member of our Order must be industrious if he wishes to have the respect and esteem of his fellow-members and be classed as a leader in our noble cause.

These are our aims and everywhere they are being hailed with delight as well as recognition.

With the endorsement of the railroad officials in the East, we have been enabled to reorganize that portion of our Order, and thus we are *United Again* from shore to shore and coast to coast. New lodges are rapidly being organized and applications for charters are coming in at such a rate as to preclude the possibility of doing all of them justice. The coming Convention will represent at least 100 working lodges and the year following that event will open to us an era of prosperity seldom equalled and never excelled by any similar organization.

A word now in regard to our Chief Officers and we will close. The credit of bringing about a reconciliation between our superior officers and ourselves is due, in a very great measure, to the efforts of our Grand Master and Grand Instructor, the former with his pure and unselfish devotion to the Order and the latter with his untiring work and matchless abilities. Frank W. Arnold, our Grand Master, is an honor to our calling and we delight in paying to him a tribute of our esteem and respect. He reflects dignity upon his position, and with the loyalty of a true leader he has discharged every trust with a zeal and fidelity that have enlisted for him the love of all his followers. We can hardly venture to speak in praise of S.M. Stevens, our Grand Instructor, for we have not the ability to do him justice. Modest, unassuming, earnest, unselfish, and uncompromising in the interest of the Order, he is a living monument of the principles it represents. Everywhere he carries with him the dignity of his exalted manhood and sheds about him the benign influences of his generous soul. With such leaders, we have a right to anticipate many glowing triumphs for our Order in years to come.

Let every member nerve himself for the contest of the future. The banner under which we are struggling will shed the luster of honor and glory upon all who are enrolled beneath it, and we appeal to every lover of human happiness and progress to contribute by thought, word, or deed, according to opportunity, to the welfare of our Brotherhood.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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