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# Furious Fanatics

by Eugene V. Debs

Unsigned editorial in *Locomotive Firemen's Magazine*, vol. 18, no. 4 (April 1894), pg. 396.

We have been deluged with communications during the past few days in reference to the editorial on the American Protective Association which appeared in the March issue of the *Magazine*. A peculiar feature of this correspondence is that in every instance where the writer condemns our utterances, he does so anonymously. There is not an exception to the rule. Several of them demand that their communications be published, but in accordance with a well known rule of the *Magazine*, they have all found their way to the wastebasket. The *Magazine* is avowedly in favor of fair play, and its columns are open to all sides of a question, but it does not under any circumstances publish anonymous communications.

The editorial alluded to contains the opinions of the editor, and he alone is responsible for them. He has no apology to make for such utterances. If the persons who criticize and condemn him have the courage of their convictions and desire a hearing, they can have it, and the *Magazine* is open to the; but they cannot be permitted to play the role of sneaks and shoot from ambush. Let them have the manliness to step to the front and give expression to their honest thought and, right or wrong, their course will challenge respect and admiration.

One correspondent who addresses us as "Father Debs," demands retraction, and coupled with the demand there is a covert threat of assassination. An anonymous writer is, as a rule, a sneak, and a sneak is always a coward, and the coward who makes this threat is convincing proof of the truth of the article in question.

We care nothing about the American Protective Association except in so far as it is forced into labor organizations, is made to set brother against another, divide the membership, destroy the strength that unity confers, and reduce the whole mass of workingmen to the insufferable level of slaves. And that is what is being done with the

APA, and we know it of our own knowledge. We do not speak upon hearsay. We know of scores of lodges, unions, and divisions that have perished all but in name under the blighting curse of such persecution, and if suffered to continue it is only a question of a short time when labor organizations will be exterminated as if by the ravages of a plague and then wages will go down to the starvation point, rights will be cloven down, and the sun of American labor will set in universal gloom. It is such calamities that we would avert, and this and this alone prompted us to sound the warning. We do not doubt there is bigotry and fanaticism on the other side. But one wrong does not justify another and it will not do to follow a vicious example.

The APA naturally enough does not show its hand among the wealthy and influential — the ruling classes. As a matter of course it does not disrupt plutocratic relations nor array corporations against each other — they have too much sense to be divided upon any such proposition. It is left for the poor devils who are already half starved and more than half enslaved to take each other by the throat and in the interest of their masters bring on their self-destruction. And, singular enough, not one in fifty of these insane bigots who are so exceedingly sensitive on the subject of religion could, to save his soul, repeat the ten commandments or the Lord's prayer.

We are not and never have been Catholic. We hate a bigot of one denomination as much as another. We have no choice of fanatics. They are found in all creeds and all denominations, and if they had their way the reign of the wheel and the rack and the thumbscrew would again be inaugurated and the music of groans would fill the land.

Let us have done with persecution because of opinion's sake, and, above all, let us show ourselves possessed of hard sense enough to know that in introducing sectarian war into our labor organizations we are carrying out the designs of our masters to enslave and rob us.

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

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