
ARU Proclamation from Woodstock Jail

[excerpt, circa August 1895]

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vol. 29, no. 9 (Sept. 1895), pp. 807-808, which intimates Debs' authorship.

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We do not hesitate to say that so far as the old Brotherhoods are concerned, they are either disgraced or dead, or both. They were active allies of the railroad corporations in crushing workingmen in the great [Pullman] strike. Murder will out. Their treachery to labor will bear its own fruit. They cannot escape the consequences of their treason. Organized labor has repudiated them, and many of the corporations, having used them as tools to do their dirty work, have no longer any use for them. Their schedules are abolished, their wages are reduced, and their member who were most "loyal" to the company last summer [1894] are being discharged right and left without cause. They are cowed and intimidated. They dare not move hand or foot. They are reaping what they have sown.

A member of the ARU may be without a job and in hard straits, but he need not be ashamed to look his fellow men in the face. It is an honor to be an ARU man, and it will be more and more an honor when history records all the truth regarding that memorable conflict. On the Soo line the engineers and firemen are engaging in a disgraceful quarrel, and the other orders are more or less implicated in it. It is due wholly to class selfishness and class prejudice, which are fostered by class organization, and which will exist as long as class organization endures. And yet they talk about federation! As if any man of sense could be caught by such idiotic twaddle! As well talk about federating fire and powder.

On the Cotton Belt the schedule of the telegraphers has been summarily abolished. Just now the papers are filled with reports that

the ORT, backed by the Cedar Rapids Federation, will tie up the Cotton Belt, and that the strike will extend over the entire Gould system. Let us see! We predict that there will not be any strike. The truth is, the old orders could not inaugurate a strike. Their own members, realizing that it would mean suicide, would refuse to obey the order, and they could not call out a corporal's guard. Thousands of their own former members are swarming all over the country, waiting "to get a crack at them."

The ARU is for all organized labor, and will never prostitute itself to the base purpose of forming an alliance with railroad corporations to crush and defeat and imprison and starve workingmen, members of another organization.

The "grand" officers of the old brotherhoods, in their secret meetings, condemn the ARU and malign its officers, but *they dare not meet them on the platform*. In their official organs they allude to the ARU by cowardly innuendo. They talk about a "rival" organization and its "emissaries," but they lack the manliness to name either. They well know that these "emissaries" are simply trying to open the eyes of the railroad men to the fact that the old brotherhoods are robbing them — taking large sums of money from them for which they do them no earthly good, but on the contrary keep them in a state of helplessness, under the easy control and subjection of the railway companies. The federation, so-called, makes it impossible for the organizations to use what little power they do have, and that is why the railroad officials "wink the other eye" and encourage the old brotherhoods, give their grand officers free passes and the members abundant taffy. It is the old case of "the spider and the fly," that men of brains clearly see and well understand. The grand officers of these orders are very courageous behind barred doors. They paw the earth in denouncing the ARU. Will they meet the officers of the ARU on the public platform in the presence of the railroad men of the country? When the members of these brotherhoods tell you what their grand officers said, ask them if their grand officers, individually or collectively, will meet a single representative of the general union before an open meeting of railroad men? We will soon be out of jail and open to engagements, and if one or more of these gentlemen can be induced to meet us and we do not wipe him or them from the face of the earth, we will agree to retire from the labor field. This is a fair proposition. Let the railroad men of the country hear both sides and then decide which organization

stands for labor and which is in league with the corporations to perpetuate their slavery.

Let words of good cheer be voiced all along the line. We will soon again be on the field of action. The skies of the future were never so bright as now. Every true man will do his full duty.

Yours fraternally,

Eugene V. Debs,

President.

Sylvester Keliber,

L. W. Rogers,

James Hogan,

R.M. Goodwin,

M.J. Elliott,

William E Burns,

Board of Directors.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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