
Solidarity of Western Miners Essential

III.

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Solidarity is one of the principal lessons to miners in the Leadville strike. The engineers, being separately organized and having no immediate grievances, did not act with the miners, and in the course of developments became an important factor in their defeat. Had all been members of one organization there would have been complete cooperation and the cause of the strikers would have been indefinitely strengthened. The mine managers were not slow to see this opening and take advantage of it. They at once began to commend the organization of engineers for its "manly and conservative course" and to cultivate the goodwill of the members with the result that a wide and impassable gulf of hate was created between the miners and the engineers, and the latter became as zealous as the mine managers themselves in opposing the strike and defeating the miners.

The shrewd manager has always found a way of dividing workmen at the critical time, when concert of action was required to win the day for labor. This has been all the easier because of the minute division of organized labor. If there is only a "corporal's guard" engaged in some given occupation and it varies just the slightest from some other occupation, a *grand international* and *independent* movement must be at once launched and in this way numberless organizations of every conceivable character have been set afloat, and these are not infrequently in conflict with one another. While disputing about questions of jurisdiction or other trifling matters, the ever-vigilant enemy is at work, and when the hour strikes for action, the corporation is in readiness to the minutest detail, while the workmen find that from one cause or another they are in no shape for the contest. Then comes defeat, and another turn is given the wheel of oppression, and thus the process goes forward, day by day, while the lot of the toiler becomes steadily harder until he is finally reduced to helpless, hopeless servitude.

Again and again has one branch of labor been used to accomplish the defeat of another, and this was a commanding feature of the Leadville strike. And when defeat comes those who were "used" against their fellow workers are kicked for their thanks. While the strike is on and their services are needed they are flattered and made to believe that they are the chosen people, but as soon as the strike is broken and they are no longer needed, they are treated with scorn and contempt. If they dare complain they are promptly discharged. I have seen this very thing time and time again and could, were it required, cite any number of instances that came under my personal observation. Workingmen may set it down that employers have no use for those who can't be used for tools to do their dirty work, and when men consent to be so used they are certain to receive the reward their cowardly and contemptible conduct invites.

The course to pursue to overcome these evils is so plain that scarcely a suggestion is required. Every man of whatever occupation who works about a western mine should be admitted to the Western Federation of Miners. All should be united in one and the same organization. Instead of having men grouped according to occupation and subdivided into various class organizations, "each for himself and the devil for the hindmost," I would have them all in one compact organization ready to act together in all things requiring concert of action, the grievance of one being made the grievance of all, and the shibboleth being "each for all and all for each."

The miners of Leadville, as elsewhere, should in my judgment adopt at once this plan of organization. Let the past be forgotten, or at least forgiven. To nurse hatred for those who were against us because, largely, the creatures of circumstances, can do us no possible good, while the interminable hostility will create still further dissension in the ranks and ultimately disrupt the organization and make broad and smooth and downgrade the road to slavery. A wider scope for the organization, making it possible for all men who work in or about a mine to become members, a more liberal and progressive policy, is among the needs of the miners' union and I do not doubt these matters will have the earnest and intelligent attention of the delegates to the approaching convention at Salt Lake City.¹

Meantime every man must do his duty. Defeat in a hard-fought struggle is one of the severest tests to which men are subject. The weak give up in despair and lament about the "lost cause." The brave and strong, they who are made of "sterner stuff," buckle on their armor and fight again and again till finally victory crowns their cause. The Leadville miners have

been temporarily overcome, but they are not vanquished any more than the revolutionary patriots were subdued at Bunker Hill.

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¹ Reference is the 5th Annual Convention of the Western Federation of Miners, held in Salt Lake City from May 10-19, 1897. The last eight days of the gathering were held in non-public session, which reelected Edward Boyce of Warner, Idaho as President.