

Railway Employees and the Class Struggle

(February 3, 1906)

This article is addressed particularly to railway employees, among whom I began my career as a wage-worker, with whom I spent 27 consecutive years — the complete span of my young manhood — as co-employee, labor organizer, and union official, and for whom I shall have an affectionate regard of peculiar tenderness that will end only with my days.

The very relation I bear to them inspires me with the liveliest sense of obligation to that great body of brave and brawny men whose hands, as hard as their hearts are soft, first grasped my own in welcome as a recruit to the army of toil; whose honest faces, beaming with approval, first warmed my heart and stirred my blood, and whose applause, the first I ever knew, fired my boyhood years with high resolves. In every dark and trying hour these comrades of my early years stood staunch and true and pushed me on and raised me up that others might see my face and know my name, while they remained unnoticed, unapplauded; the soldiers of obscurity — the rank and file, the lower class, the common herd, who made and move this world and should be, and will yet be, its ruling aristocracy.

I believe it can be said with truth, as I am sure it can without vanity, that I personally know and am personally known to more railroad employees than any other man in the country; and with equal truth, I believe, that the great majority who know me — better than this, the whole body of them, with few exceptions, feel kindly toward me and may be claimed my personal friends.

In all my travels — and I have been touring almost continuously these twelve years past, over all the railways of the continent, especially since the railway corporations forcibly divorced me from their employees — in all my travels I never made a trip, nor ever expect to, without feeling many times the touch of kindness, oft in stealth, of my old comrades of railroad days.

It is not, therefore, because of any lessening of our mutual regard that I am no longer in active touch with them, but because of the stern decree of fate which commanded me to go where they might not yet follow for a while, but where they will be found in good time, united with their class, and battling manfully for freedom.

I could yet be the “grand” officer of a railway brotherhood, have a comfortable office, large salary, plenty of friends, including railway and public officials, and read my praises as an “ideal labor leader” in capitalist newspapers, but my convictions would not allow it, and so I had to resign, and having no choice about it, I am entitled to no credit for quitting a “good” position and plunging recklessly into “a career of folly, failure, and disgrace.”

It was not easy to resign and I had to insist upon it in a way that hurt me as much as it did the loyal comrades from whom I had to tear myself apart; and it has been the first and almost the only case of voluntary resignation from a similar position.

I had been with the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen almost from its birth; had organized the Brotherhood of Railroad Brakemen, now the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen, had helped to organize the Switchmen’s Mutual Aid Association, the Brotherhood of Railway Carmen, the Order of Railway Telegraphers, and other labor unions, and was now to organize, with half a dozen others, the American Railway Union, to embrace all railway workers, so that the engine wiper and section man might come in for their share of consideration as well as the engineer and conductor.

There is where I broke with the railway officials. They were perfectly willing that we should have a firemen’s union, but they were not willing for us to have a union that would unite all employees in the service in the equal interest of all.

This much by way of introduction. Now a word as to the purpose of this writing. I have something to say to the railway employees of America. It may not be considered as amounting much, but I think it of importance enough to ask the railway workers into whose hands, many of them for the first time, this paper will fall, to follow me through with patience and think over what I have to say at their own leisure.

You railroad men are told that I am too radical, that I am dangerous, that as a “leader” I am a failure, and a good many other things, but the time will come when you will know that from first to last I have been true to you, and that because of that very fact the corporations you work for warn you against me; and you will furthermore know that for the opposite reason most of your present leaders are not true to your best interests, that they are “popular” with the public, and your railway officials sing their praises on every occasion and tell you over and again how wise and good these “leaders” are and how lucky you are and how proud you should be to command their valuable services.

Time will tell and I can wait. I am not courting your flattery or evading your blame. I am seeking no office; aspiring to no honors; have no personal axe to grind. But I have something to say to you and shall look straight into your eyes while saying it. I shall speak the truth — as I see it — no more and no less, in kindness and without malice or resentment.

I should tell you what I think you ought to know, though all of you turned against me and despised me forever.

I am not wiser than you, but have had more experience with capitalists and more chance to study their system of fleecing and fooling labor than most of you. I am not better than you — not so good, in fact — for there is no better man on earth than an honest workingman. So I shall not preach to you, nor moralize you, nor even venture to advise you, but I shall put a few facts before you that may temporarily disturb your digestion, but if you will stick to them and assimilate them you will feel yourself growing stronger and you will thank me for having changed your mental bill of fare.

< Insert Ornament Here >

Taken in the aggregate, there is no division of the working class more clannish and provincial, more isolated from other divisions of labor's countless army, than railway employees, the workers engaged, directly and indirectly, in steam railway transportation. Nor is there a group or department in the entire working class that, outside of its own sphere of industrial activity, is more ignorant of the true essentials of the labor question or more oblivious of the class struggle and the fundamental principles and objects of the labor movement.

To verify this statement it is not necessary to refer to the unorganized, unskilled, and poorly paid employees; on the contrary, let a dozen engineers and the same number of conductors, picked at random, be put upon the stand and catechized from a primer on economics, and see what percentage of them can give even a definition of the term. They know how to run engines and trains and, as a rule, that is practically the limit of their knowledge. That is all the corporations want them to know and, from their point of view, all they are fit to know.

It is true that they read journals published by their unions in which a five-column account is given of a reception to some "noble grand chief" and as many columns more about babies born and brothers buried, but which may be searched in vain for a line of revolutionary economics to

nourish the brain, open the eyes, give cheer to the heart or aspiration to the soul of a corporation slave.

The several unions of railway employees, considered in any militant sense, are not labor unions at all. Warren S. Stone, grand chief of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, worthy successor of the late P.M. Arthur, is on record as having pledged his word to a well known railway manager that the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers should never go out on strike while he was its executive head. The same grand chief is on record as threatening John J. Hannahan, grand master of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, with keeping his engineers at work on the Northern Pacific system, virtually scabbing the firemen, if the latter went out on strike.

If the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers was a bonafide labor union instead of the fossilized tool of railway corporations its grand chief would be peremptorily impeached for treason to the working class.

The *Civic Federation Review* loves to print the portrait of Mr. Stone and idealize him as a "leader of labor" worthy to sit at the feast with, and at the feet of, August Belmont, Andrew Carnegie, Archbishop Ireland, and other millionaire labor exploiters who regard workingmen as sheep to be sheared and skinned and slaughtered, and asses to be harnessed and worked and whipped, and, from that point of view, the engineers and the rest of the railway unions are to be congratulated upon their astute leadership.

It is not that Mr. Stone is personally dishonest or corrupt; he may be, and I think he is, perfectly conscientious in what he says and does, and the same is doubtless true of the grand officers of the other railway unions, but that is not the question.

If workingmen are betrayed and defeated and made to suffer, it makes little difference if their misfortunes are due to dishonest or ignorant or competent leadership.

The question is not, are these leaders honest? Let that be conceded. The question is, are they true to the working class? If their official attitude does not square with the working class as a whole, then they are not in line with the true interests of their own union and not, in fact, the friends, but the enemies of labor; not serving, but betraying those who trust and follow them.

In saying this and making the further statement that the existing railway brotherhoods are of far more actual benefit to the railway corporations than they are to the employees who support them and that, in some essential respects, they are a positive detriment to their members

in teaching them to venerate a “grand” officer, subjecting themselves, bound and gagged, to his “official sanction,” and keeping them in economic ignorance — in saying these things it is probable that Grand Chief Stone of the engineers and other grand officials will take issue, and here let me say that nothing would suit me better than the chance to meet Mr. Stone before his engineers or any other grand official before his followers, at any time, or in any public place, to make good every assertion herein made, and more, too; and I shall not object if the grand officers invite their friends, the railway officials, to occupy their accustomed seats on the platform, but I will not guarantee that the menu will be as agreeable to their corporation palates as that served at the recent Chicago banquet of the Order of Railway Conductors, or at the average brotherhood convention.

Now to another branch of the question. According to the report of the interstate commerce commission there were, for the year ending June 30, 1904, a total of 1,296,121 employees on the railways of the United States, as against 1,017,653 in 1900 — an increase in four years of 278,468. How many thousands of unemployed there are, ready to take jobs when they are offered, in event of a strike, or otherwise, the reports do not say. Since 1904 there has been a great increase in railroad activities and it is probable that the total has since reached 1,400,000. In 1894 the number was 779,608. That was during the last period of “hard times.” In the ten years since, from 1894 to 1904, from “panic” to “prosperity,” the number of railway employees has been almost doubled, the actual increase being 620,392, an average of over 60,000 a year. Fully 500,000 new railroad men have been made in that time and they have swelled the brotherhoods to unprecedented limits.

Now keep your eye peeled for the signal for the return trip from “prosperity” to “panic.”

That is not a matter of guess, but of arithmetic.

It may not come next month or next year, but it will come, and the longer it is coming the longer will be the backward trip.

Railway employees, as a rule, do not know why there are alternating periods of “panic” and “prosperity,” panic that paralyzes but prosperity that does not prosper, except for the plutocrats, and the reason they do not know is that they are ignorant of working class economics, which are not discussed by their leaders, nor in their journals, and this accounts for the further fact that nearly all of them vote these sufferings upon themselves, as non-political labor unionists uniformly do, while their unions, vaccinated by the corporation doctor against politics, become

parties to “grand balls,” such as the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen has given in Chicago, and the “grand banquet” just held by the Order of Railway Conductors in the same city, where the “grand march” is led by the capitalist mayor and a “grand” officer and “grand” officials of the railroads beam approvingly, while the “grand” corporation politicians disport themselves in huge diamonds and swallow tails and “grand” speeches are spouted about the “brotherhood of capital and labor” — the choicest lobster on the bill — the whole “green goods” affair being concocted by a tool of the corporations who belongs to the union and who, as a smooth politician, is on the payroll at the city hall, or the state house, or capitol. Such nauseating exhibitions — planned by sycophants and patronized by plutocrats — are given to hoodwink the common herd and keep them forever in the capitalist corrals of wage slavery.

Political conspiracy is the term to apply to these doings of the henchmen of capital, masquerading in the garb of labor, who are so fearful that their dupes will wake up and go into politics.

But to return for a moment. Keep your eye open for that signal! When Wall Street says the word you’ll see the signal, but it will not prevent you and your little union from going into the ditch. The signal and slump will come together.

Several hundred thousand of you will be left high and dry — no jobs, but plenty of time to tramp and think. What next? Sweeping reductions of wages. Next — strikes? Probably! And then? Defeat and disaster!

That’s the history of all the “panics” of the last thirty years. They have all been ushered in with widespread railroad strikes and when the crash has come the brotherhoods have burst like bubbles and been crushed like eggshells, utterly powerless to give their members the least particle of protection. This is what has uniformly come to the unions that waste their time at such child’s play as “exemplification of secret work” and studying signs and passwords, as if every union did not have a corporation reporter to inform them of every move worth knowing.

And so it will be again. Mark it! Make a note of it! Ask your grand officer about it and make a note of his answer. Don’t allow him to dodge by calling me a calamity howler. He will help you after the lightning has struck your job by certifying that you are entitled to another, but you will have to hunt it alone, and in the meantime the “brotherhood of capital and labor” will have suspended and cannot save your wife from eviction nor your child from starvation.

Think it out. Don’t let go till you do. Don’t take my word: rely on yourself. I can’t help you railway slaves. You can only help yourselves.

No one else can. If you don't even know that you are slaves in the existing capitalist system, the gods have mercy on you, for your blindness is complete; your condition is pitiable and there is no hope for you but death.

The most pathetic object to me is a corporation slave with a dazzling diamond or a constellation of brass buttons to decorate his deformity and hide the hollows in his grey matter. He swells like a toad as he talks about the good wages "we" are paying; he is a part of the corporation, just as a pimple is part of a plutocrat. He has hinges in his knees. He fawns like a spaniel at the feet of an official, but snarls like a cur at the car inspector or track man. He believes in the "brotherhood of capital and labor;" he is "conservative;" is opposed to politics in the union or the journal; talks about his masters as "our superiors;" is proud of his pusillanimity; does with alacrity what he is ordered to do and asks no questions; is a scab at heart, if not in fact; has no trace of manhood, no self-respect, no honor — craven-hearted and stony-souled — and when he dies Judas Iscariot will have another recruit for his army of the damned.

< Insert Ornament Here >

In his address to the joint committee of the several brotherhoods of railway employees that called at the White House on November 14, 1905, to plead in behalf of the railway corporations, President Roosevelt, among other things, said: "I would be false to your interest if I failed to do justice to the capitalist as much as to the wage-worker."

The President was much impressed by the delegation and the delegation by him. The president was really addressing his own brethren, for, like themselves, he was a brotherhood man, and had the grip, sign, and passwords, all up to date; and they were all agreed that no injustice must be done to the poor capitalists. The latter were not in evidence. Their President and their brotherhoods would see that no harm came to them.

In his message to the banquet of the Order of Railway Conductors, given at Chicago on December 31, 1905, in behalf of the railroad corporations, and presided over by Major (?) B.B. Ray, paymaster USA, in recognition of his faithful services in lining up railway employees in support of the corporation ticket on election day — and as smooth a politician as ever came down the avenue — in his communication to this corporation auxiliary, regretting his inability to mingle with the railway

presidents and managers who were in attendance to point around at the conductors as evidence that the working class in general, and the railway slaves in particular, were opposed to rate legislation — in his telegram of regret Vice President Fairbanks, once himself a railroad attorney and now a magnate, said:

The Order of Railway Conductors ... recognizes in full degree the right of both employer and employee and understands full well that in a large sense the interests of one are the interests of the other, and that the interests of neither can be disregarded without harm to both.

Precisely! “Our interests are one,” exclaimed the fox, after devouring the goose. “Same here,” answered the hawk, with the feathers of the dove still clinging to his beak. “I’m with you,” said the shark; and “I congratulate you upon your wise political economy,” was the amen of the lion as the lamb’s tail disappeared down the red lane.

Toastmaster Ray, the mortgaged major of the railroads, read another telegram of regret from President “Jim” Hill, of the Great Norther, and then President Delano, of the Wabash, was introduced and proceeded to orate on “Opposition to Railroad Rate Legislation.” The dummies are reported to have nodded in hearty approval every time he looked at them. President Delano might have stayed at home and used a string to operate his puppets.

Upon this important point of “identity of interests” between lion and mutton, President Roosevelt, Vice President Fairbanks, and all the railroad presidents, corporations, and brotherhoods are a unit.

The railroads furnish the lion and the brotherhoods the mutton.

It is upon this false basis, this vicious assumption, this fundamental lie, that the railroad brotherhoods are organized, and in that capacity they are of incalculable value to the railroads, the very bulwarks of their defense, and the sure means of keeping the great body of railway employees in economic ignorance, and, therefore, unorganized, divided, and helpless.

Such unionism means organized strength for the railroads and organized weakness for the employees. And the latter foot the bill. No wonder their grand officers get annual passes and their delegates free trains. The stupid employees pay for them all a hundredfold.

And to what base purpose the railroad magnates put these brotherhoods to still further entrench their power and perpetuate their reign of robbery!

At this very moment they are using them as political pokers to stir up the fire of public sentiment against rate legislation. And the poor dupes that pay the dues don't even know that their unions are in politics, corporation politics, the dirtiest kind of politics.

On their own account the unions are forbidden to have anything to do with politics — that would fracture their delicate diaphragm — but when the corporations need them as political tools — ah, that's different; that's what they are for!

Can not you hoodwinked railway slaves begin to see something?

In all the history of organized labor, from the earliest times to the present day, no body of union workingmen ever served in a more humiliating and debasing role than that in which the railway unions appear at this very hour before the American people and the world.

It is a spectacle for the gods, and future generations will marvel that such an exhibition of servility was possible in the twentieth century: union workingmen, rallying round the robbers of the working class and defending them against their own people!

It is true that there is nothing in rate legislation for the workingman, but the incident loses none of its significance on that account.

The free use of the brotherhoods by and for the corporations at election time, when the legislature meets, when Congress is in session, whenever and wherever required — that is the point.

How smoothly this emergency appliance works!

The corporations sniff danger; they send for their officials — the officials for the “grand chiefs” of the brotherhoods — the “grand chiefs” for their decoy ducks, and presto! a joint committee — and it is a “joint” committee — serves notice on the President and the country that the million and more railway employees want no interference with the divine right of the railroad robbers to hold up the people.

Then another set of political tools of the same robbers take their cue and bound to their feet in the capitalist congress and in a serio-comic burst of paid-for passion, exclaim: “Don't you see, gentlemen, that organized labor, the horny-handed nobility of the land, the muscle and sinew, the very backbone of the nation, recognizes this measure as a menace to its ‘full dinner pail’ and interposes its righteous indignation? Gentlemen, we dare not make such an assault upon the dignity, the sacred rights, aye, the very life of honest toil!”

That settles it! The trick is done. The Goulds and Vanderbilts and Harrimans on top, their slaves at the bottom, and their “identity of interests” once more triumphantly vindicated.

I propose now to deal briefly with that ghastly lie itself.

In what way, Mr. Railroad Slave, is your interest identical with that of Jim Hill, your master?

He owns the railway system that you workingmen built and now operate.

He pulls every dollar of profit out of it for himself he can and leaves you not one dollar more than he must.

If you don't suit him he discharges you, and you then have to pull up stakes and hunt another master. He gets the lion's share; you get what's left, and in the aggregate that is fixed by what is required to fill your dinner pail, cover you with overalls, and maintain a habitation where you can raise more wage-slaves to take your place when you are worn out and go to the scrap heap.

The Jim Hills live out of your labor — out of your ignorance — for if you were not densely stupid you would not be their dumb-driven cattle.

Now they and their politicians and preachers and "labor leaders" tell you how bright and smart you are to flatter your ignorance, and keep you from opening your eyes to your slavish condition, and, above all, to the wage system, that is, the cause of your poverty and degradation.

Your interests as wage-slaves are not only not identical with, but are directly opposed to, the interests of the Jim Hills and the railroad corporations, and I challenge any of your "grand chiefs" to deny it in my presence on any public platform in the country.

You have got to get rid of the capitalist leeches that suck your hearts' blood through the quill of "identity of interests."

They are in the capitalist class; you are in the working class. They gouge out profits; what's left you get for wages. They perform no useful work; you deform your bodies with slavery. They are millionaires; you are paupers. They have everything; you do everything. They live in palaces; you in shanties. They have abundance of leisure and mountains of money; you have neither. Finally, they are few; *you are legion!*

Poor, dumb giant, you could in a breath extinguish your pigmy exploiter were you only conscious of your overmastering power!

The workers made and operate all the railroads; the capitalists had and have nothing to do with either. They pocket the proceeds on a basis of watered stock and other "stock," in the form of employees, and then issue fraudulent reports to show on what a small margin of profit they are actually doing business.

In this connection it should be said that the railroads pad their “operating expenses” outrageously to deceive their employees and the general public, and their reports can be shown to be full of duplicity and fraud. They are not required to itemize their “operating expenses” in their reports to the Interstate Commerce Commission; this they only do in the reports of the directors to the stockholders, and an examination of these will disclose the swindle and show how much reliance can be placed in the public reports of private grafters.

Mr. Railway Slave, to resume our interview, you are not in the same class with the Jim Hills of the railroads. You don’t visit at their homes, nor they at yours. You don’t ride in their private cars and yachts and automobiles. Your wives don’t wear the same kind of clothes and jewelry and move in the same circle with theirs. You don’t join them in their luxuriant travels to Europe when they are received by the crowned heads of other parasites and given a private audience by the pope. You stay at home and sweat and suffer to foot all the bills; they do all the rest.

To sum up: They are in the capitalist class; you in the working class. They are masters; you slaves. They fleece and pluck; you furnish the wool and feathers.

That is the basis of the class struggle.

Upon that basis you have got to organize and fight before you can move an inch toward freedom.

You have got to unite in the same labor union and in the same political party and *strike and vote together*, and the hour you do that the world is yours.

The railroads will oppose this; they want to keep you divided and at their mercy. Your grand officers will oppose it; they want to keep you divided and draw their salaries.

When you have a little time figure out the amount annually paid to the grand officers of the railway unions in salaries and expenses and you will be amazed; you will also understand why railroad employees will never get together as long as their grand officers can prevent it.

By the way, why do you persist in calling your officers “Grand Chiefs” and “Grand Masters?” Are they “grand” because you are petty?

The working class, the rank and file, are *grander* than all the labor leaders, good and bad, that have ever lived.

A “Master” implies slaves. It is bad enough to be slaves without glorying in it. A “Master” is bad enough; a “Grand Master” is the limit, especially if the title is voluntarily conferred by the slaves.

There was a time when I did not realize this and many other things I do now. The difference is that I have learned to think and can now see these things as they are.

The capitalist class! The working class! The class struggle! These are the supreme economic and political facts of this day and the precise terms that express them.

These are the grim realities in the existing capitalist system, and the sooner you drop your brotherhood toys and deal with the labor question, to which most of you are strangers, the better will it be for you.

What is the labor question?

It is the question of the working class organizing to overthrow the capitalist class, emancipating itself from wage slavery and making itself the ruling class of the world.

Can this be done?

Anything can be done by the working class.

Labor has but to awaken to its power. Then the earth and all its fullness will be for labor. Now the exploiters of labor have it; and they must be put out of that business and into useful service.

First of all, you railroad workers, you million and almost a half of slaves, must wake up; realize that you are a part of the working class and that the whole working class must unite, close up the ranks, and present a solid front, every day in the year — election day, especially, included.

As individual wage-slaves you are helpless and your condition hopeless.

As a *class*, you are the greatest power between the earth and the stars. As a *class*, your chains turn to spiderwebs and in your presence capitalists shrivel up and blow away.

The individual wage-slave must recognize the power of class unity and do all he can to bring it about.

That is what is called *class-consciousness*, in the light of which may be seen the *class struggle* in startling vividness.

The class-conscious worker recognizes the necessity of organization, economic and political, and using every weapon at his command — the strike, the boycott, the ballot, and every other — to achieve his emancipation.

He, therefore, joins the union of his *class* and the party of his *class* and gives his time and energy to the work of educating and lining up his *class* for the struggle of his *class*.

You railroad men may think you are doing this now, but you are not. You are wasting most of your time and money for that which will bring no returns.

Let me tell you a few of the things the railroad corporations and your leaders, between whom there is an “identity of interests,” are having you do to occupy your time and keep you chained to the kennels of your masters.

First— They have you divided into petty groups, each trying to be *it*, and not one having any real power for working class good.

Second— They have you quarreling about jurisdiction and about an “open door,” and the corporations smile serenely while you play with these toys.

Your jurisdiction squabbles never will be settled, but grow worse. At places the BLE and BLF are at swords’ points, and the ORC and BRT are ready to fly at each others’ throats; and so intense is the petty craft jealousy that they are ready to scab on one another.

And if they ever go out on strike, particularly the BLE, their own former members, victimized by them, will rise up to smite them.

The other day I met a man who had an official position that paid him \$5,000 a year. Said he to me: “I will quit this job but for one thing, and that will be to take an engine when the BLE go out on strike.” He used to belong to it.

There are any number of men scattered over the country, most of them its own former members, waiting for the BLE to strike. the day is not distant when the BLE will reap the crop it has sown.

Third— You are kept apart from other workers, for it would be dangerous if you affiliated with them and got an idea above the roundhouse or caboose or cab you work in. Besides, you might get class-conscious and that would endanger your slavery.

Fourth— You spend hours in the lodge room “riding the goat,” getting the secret work “down fine,” giving “passwords” and “signs,” and unpacking job-lots of “secret work” that any railroad official in the country can have any day he wants it.

These are bibs and rattles for mental babies, and the more time you amuse yourselves with them the less danger there is of your thinking about anything that will break your chains and set you free.

These are a few of the things; I have not space for more. The hundreds of columns of stale stuff rehashed for years in your journals that might be called goose gossip would, perhaps, be excusable in the

official organ of some feeble-minded institution, but it is woefully out of place in a working class publication.

Now let me say a few more things — and space will allow only a few of the many that might be put down — that you may think about at your leisure.

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers is 42 years old and has never won a railway strike of any consequence in all its career.

It is called a success because the corporations make some concessions to it so as to use it as a battering ram against other employees in the service; and this is substantially true of all the brotherhoods.

Then, again, the brotherhoods are used against each other.

The union switchmen on the Denver & Rio Grand, at Pittsburgh and other places; the engineers on the CB&Q; the telegraph operators on the A&P, MK&T, Great Northern, and Northern Pacific, and the machinists on the Santa Fe are but a few of the long list of the “dog-eat-dog” method of unionism, a quarter of a century behind the times.

But the grand officers of the several unions attend one another’s conventions and join in solemn chorus in telling the delegates of each other’s unions what wise grand officers they have, how kind the corporations are to them, and how proud they ought to be of their noble brotherhoods.

In the next few years locomotive engineers will become motormen and firemen will disappear. It is safe to say that in another 20 years locomotive firemen will be practically of the past. They can then cling to their last straw — the insurance policy — and that is the main thing that holds them together today. But for that they would soon cave in, and that is true of them all. They are then, primarily, coffin clubs and not labor unions. They care for the sick and bury the dead — a good thing, incidentally, for the corporations. To get the full benefits it is necessary to be maimed or killed.

It is well to bury the dead, but the living are infinitely more important.

One effective blow to break the chains of wage-slavery is better than a century of attention to dead bodies.

Class-consciousness is better than corpse consciousness.

< **Insert Ornament Here** >

A great deal more that should be said must be omitted for the want of time and space.

It is my hope that the facts here presented will lead the railroad workers to study the real labor question. A few of them only know what socialism is and they are socialists. The rest are opposed to it because the little they know about it is not true. No honest workingman understands socialism without embracing it.

The railroad workers, if they want their eyes opened, must read class struggle literature. The paper in which they are reading these articles, the *Appeal to Reason*, with a circulation of almost 300,000 copies, can be obtained for a trifle — 50 cents for a whole year — and if they can't afford that, they can send 10 cents for a trial subscription. They cannot afford to remain in ignorance of the class struggle, or of what Socialism really means.

A mighty social revolution is impending — it is shaking the earth from center to circumference and only the dead may be deaf to its rumblings. Revolutionary education and organization is the vital need of the working class.

Let every railroad employee who is alive enough to want to know how the working class can emancipate the working class and walk the earth free, and enjoy all its manifold blessings, subscribe for a revolutionary paper and read it for a year; and he will then find himself with the rest of us, in class-conscious array in the struggle for freedom.

The *Appeal to Reason*, already suggested, will make an excellent beginning. There is a long list of other papers and magazines that can be read with profit.

Drop a postal card to W.E. Trautmann, National Secretary of the Industrial Workers of the World, 148 West Madison Street, Chicago, and ask him to send you printed matter explaining this great and growing industrial union; ask him also to send you a copy of *The Industrial Worker*; its official paper, which every workingman should have.

Drop another card to J. Mahlon Barnes, National Secretary, Socialist Party, 269 Dearborn Street, Chicago, asking him to send you printed matter in regard to this working class party, and also to send you a list of socialist papers and magazines, and a catalog of working class books and pamphlets.

Great is the privilege we enjoy in being permitted to take part in this mighty historic struggle. The base and cowardly will sneer and sneak to the rear, but the brave and true, though Hell itself gap, will do battle with

all the blood that flows in their veins, and write their names on the shining scroll of *Labor's Emancipation*.

Serialized in *Appeal to Reason*, whole no. 530 (Jan. 27, 1906), p. 2, and whole no. 531 (Feb. 3, 1906), p. 3. Reprinted in pamphlet form as *You Railroad Men!* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, n.d. [1906]).