
The Union Man, the Non-Union Man, and the Scab

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This *Magazine* has not hesitated in the past to go upon record with regard to the three classes of workmen named in the caption of this article — the union man, the non-union man, and the scab.

We do not hesitate to say that the union man is preeminently the superior type. In discussing the superiority of the union workingman, it is not required that we should assert that he is necessarily the most skillful, that he is a man of superior integrity, more honorable, and ' that, but his superiority is manifested in the fact that he has a profounder conception and a broader comprehension of the needs of workmen and of the power of organization to secure and maintain their rights.

The union workingman is essentially a philanthropist. His work is not entirely selfish, it includes the welfare of others, not only immediately but remotely. He lays the foundation of structures designed to protect and shelter future generations. His high ambition is to educate men to a realization that all laws and institutions which in any wise detract from the rights and privileges of workmen are to the last degree vicious, and should be discontinued. The union workingman is a student of conditions and of the causes which underlie conditions. He is forever asking the reason why of things as they exist. If there is peace and prosperity in the ranks of workmen he discovers the reason why, and approves. If there is poverty, oppression, degradation, unrest, discontent, and strikes, he would know the reason why; he would find the cause and remove it. He would agitate and protest. He would arouse public attention. He would carry the case into courts, into legislatures, into Congress, and everywhere battle for

the right. And here it should be said if in the world of labor there is to be seen any advance in the condition of the toiling masses, it is by virtue of the work of union men. The credit wholly belongs to them. They are the men who have battled and bled, they are the men who have gone down when the enemies of labor triumphed, they are the men who made the sacrifices and suffered, but when they triumphed, when they obtained an advance in wages, when they reduced the hours of toil, when they bettered their condition, and could live in better houses, have better clothes and more abundant food, they *were not the only ones benefited*. No; then the non-union men shared in the advantages, in the gain, in the profit, and all workmen shared in the good secured.

The non-union men, the men who stood aloof from the organization, who were wanting in courage, who would make no sacrifice, never contributed anything to advance the welfare of workmen. Nor will they ever have any part in the upward movement of the toiling masses or be in any way helpful to them.

They are not always content; they would have things improved, they would like to obtain better wages. They are not without ambition, but they are wanting in courage. They lack spine. They are willing to drift with the current. They are inert and irresolute, and without always designing it, they are on the side of those who oppress labor, rob it of its rights, and disgrace workmen.

If, in the ranks of organized labor, there are exhibitions of hostility to non-union men, the reason for such opposition and repugnance is easily explained, but its justification is not thereby established; in fact, it is quite clear that when this animosity is carried to the extent of denying employment to non-union men, it is clearly indefensible, and can never have the sympathy nor the approval of the public.

The absolute right of a workman to join or not to join an organization cannot be questioned, and the proposition to impose any penalty whatever upon this exercise of prerogatives is so definitely at war with every rational conception of justice, that the mere mention of it carries with it its condemnation.

No citizen, inspired by any rational conception of justice, can be told that union men are denied employment because they are union men, without expressing indignation for the outrage, and only the avowed enemies of labor will be silent when such a wrong is perpetrated.

Men have an inalienable right to organize, to form unions and Brotherhoods, and to impose any penalty whatever, directly or indirectly, because of the exercise of this right, is an exhibition of tsarism that should find no advocates in the United States of America. But the wrong has been inflicted time and again, and is still the policy of many employers.

On the other hand, to decline to join a labor organization is a right as absolute as the right to join such an organization. About this there can be no question, hence it follows, to impose any penalty whatever, directly or indirectly, for the exercise of this right is a wrong in all regards as flagrant as in the first case cited. There is no escape from the conclusion. In both cases the principle is fundamental — disregard it and confusion follows.

How stands the case? In the first place employers refuse to hire men because they are members of labor organizations and in the second place labor organizations, animated by the same species of hostility seek to deprive non-union men of their right to work because they are non-union men — forgetting that their maledictions upon employers for refusing to employ them can be, with equal propriety, leveled at them for doing, to the extent of their ability, the same wrong.

In both cases there have been victories. Employers have ostracized union men and union men have been able, occasionally, to put non-union men under the ban, and in both cases there has been public disapproval, but the severity of this censure has been more pronounced against labor organizations than against employers, because working men profess to be deeply concerned for the welfare of labor — and when they seek to exile non-union men from work they are at once in flagrant antagonism to their professions.

In this connection, the term *scab* should be properly defined, and it should be clearly understood that non-union and scab are not synonymous terms — but when a union man refuses to work with a non-union man he practically makes them equivalent. The injustice is glaring and never has, and in the nature of things, never can be conducive to the interests of organized labor.

It will not do to reason that because scabs are non-union men that therefore all non-union men are scabs.

A scab is a degenerate workingman. He is devoid of principle. These are general propositions and will hold good.

Are there exceptions? It would be strange indeed if there were not, but our purpose at this writing is not to point them out, it being suf-

ficient, if we succeed in awakening reflection and creating in any degree a more rational conclusion on the part of union men relating to the status of men who stand aloof from labor organizations.

Manifestly they ought to cast their lot with those who in storm and shine are battling for the welfare of laboring men. To win them by suasion, by ocular demonstrations, by appeals to their manhood is full of hope, but to inflict penalties for what may be considered obduracy is the climax of bad policy. It is to widen the breach and cultivate enmities. It plays directly into the hands of those whose ambition it is to prevent unification of working men and perpetuate oppression.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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