
The ARU Strike

by J.R.T. Auston

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Organized Labor has been very much disturbed by the recent aggressive movement of an organization which claimed to represent all railroad labor, but which in fact, only represents a portion of it.

The throwing down of the gauntlet in the slave pen Pullman was a commendable act and it met with a hearty burst of sympathy from all classes of labor.

When this champion of labor, however, hurled a boycott into the yard of every railroad and issued orders that deprived thousands of employees of a livelihood in time of business depression; when it scattered couriers over all the ironbound highways, who vociferated in stentorian tones: "You must strike or be branded a Scab," it committed a grave mistake.

When it advised railroad labor to violate existing agreements, which were secured by other organizations after many years of effort, expenditure of money, and personal privation, its action was unreasonable, because it asked them to do exactly what railroad labor had censured railroad corporations for doing, i.e., the violation of contract.

A strike is not a toy; it is a boomerang. Sometimes it is justifiable and when it is Labor willingly accepts the injury inflicted, hoping that the injury imposed on the other side may serve as a check to avaricious methods.

In the recent strike men weighed their sympathy against their honor. They could not see how they could violate contracts entered into in good faith in such a summary manner. The result was that sympathy caused many to "go out," and calm reconsideration urged them to return to work in a day or so. They found the order to strike issued by the leader of the new organization did not meet with the unanimous approval of their fellow-workers. If it had, the result would have been the same. The control of such an aggregation of la-

bor would have passed into the hands of the advocates of violence an destruction — the mob — just the same. The strong arm of the law would have intervened and the situation would have been unchanged if every road in the United States had been tied up, and every work-shop closed.

The situation of today could only have been changed by a general uprising of labor against the federal government. Such an uprising would have been revolution. Such a revolution is not necessary. What the country needs is a peaceable revolutionary movement among the people. The people should use the ballot, not the rifle.

The editor of this journal has the highest regard for Eugene V. Debs, as he has for every man who possesses the courage to stand forth and battle for the rights of the people. It is methods that are objectionable, not the man. Brother Debs made a dashing move on the chessboard when he attacked Castle Pullman, but when he used his pawns to checkmate the wheels of commerce and industry in time of depression, it was a grave mistake and a deadly blow at labor itself.

Labor and capital have been taught a lesson, however, and it is to be hoped their future relations will be more harmonious. Neither can afford to resort to extreme measures, and the interests of both demand the settlement of disputes by arbitration, not by the boycott or the strike.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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