
Industrial Peace

by Eugene V. Debs

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The Boston *Labor Leader*, of December 24th, 1892, publishes a number of contributions on "Industrial Peace." Among the contributors is Mr. Edward Atkinson, the inventor of the Aladdin oven, a writer of operas, a robust hater of labor organizations and probably the most ardent and uncompromising friend of scabs on the continent.

Mr. Atkinson is eminently spectacular. His self-importance could not be improved if he were a peacock or a turkey gobbler, but the real fun of the thing is the way he starts off. "Industrial Peace" acts like a plummet in deep sea soundings — brings up things that set scientists to guessing. Mr. Atkinson evidently believes he has discovered the key that lets him into the secrets of what constitutes "industrial peace," and as the Yankees say, he is "tickled;" as delighted as the small boy with a tin whistle or a kite, and is as satisfied with himself as were his ancestors when they hung a witch or whipped a Quaker.

One of the peculiarities of Mr. Atkinson is to introduce his discoveries in science and philosophy with Baconian profundities of diction which he intends shall overwhelm his hearers. When he discovered that a workingman could get a square meal on three cents (provided he cooked his radishes in his Aladdin oven), his utterances were characterized by explosions of knowledge of dynamite detonation, and the same was true when he told the factory hands of Rhode Island they were capitalists and employed the millionaire proprietors of the mills.

In discussing "industrial peace" Mr. Atkinson is equally deep, as for instance, he says "industrial peace is to be found in personal liberty," and "personal liberty is maintained when men and women work for whom they please, at such prices as they please and as many hours as they please;" that is to say, there should be no labor organization to dictate terms, all should be as free and independent as scabs. If

a union man receives \$2.00 a day it is entirely legitimate and in consonance with "industrial peace" for a scab to offer to do the work at \$1.00 a day, and for organized labor to kick is to create industrial war, which the state ought not to tolerate. Mr. Atkinson's idea is to organize a great union of scabs to strike down organized labor, which Mr. George E. McNeill, in the *Labor Leader*, characterizes as follows:

The project to form a trades union of men who will not unite upon the question of their wages and hours of labor, but will unite in a grand go-as-you-please scramble for place, reminds me of the military company that voted to parade in time of peace and to disband in time of war.

In this Christmas time our imagination is greatly awakened and the spirit of good will quickened, but I confess that in the wildest flight of dreams well told none can compare with the dream of a union of non-unionists. Toady workers can combine as toadies, tramps may operate in groups, scabs will appear in numbers where the virus of competition manifests itself on the putrid surface of an enterprise thieves do combine to steal, but a union of non-unionists can only find its parallel in Dante's Inferno.

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Liberty is not effeminate, not a toady, not even an Atkinsonian statistician. Liberty is not blind to wrong. Liberty is a spirit, a sentiment, a fact. It finds its best expression in the collective will of men organized for mutual welfare.

Mr. Atkinson evidently believes that industrial peace is industrial degradation; that peace means submission, and that organization means war, in all of which Mr. Atkinson is absolutely correct.

Mr. Atkinson knows several young men who are anxious to engage in the work of unionizing scabs for the purpose of securing industrial peace. If these young men can manage to buy a square meal for three cents, and can unionize scabs on that sort of a dietary platform it may be that the time is not distant when American workingmen will be able to eat garbage with a relish and beat the Dagoes and Huns at their own game.

Industrial peace will come with industrial victory. It will be brought about by industrial valor. It will not come by disbanding labor organizations nor in declaring that the strike, as a weapon, is to be wielded no more. Mr. Atkinson may be able to impress upon New England scabs the glory of that sort of "personal liberty" enjoyed by

those base born creatures who are willing to live on a square meal costing three cents, and to obtain the three cents agree to work for the special benefit of those who reduce them to slaves. But we surmise that even with a Dago constituency he will find his plans something less than a dazzling success.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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