
Labor's Reward

by Eugene V. Debs

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Skilled labor of all kinds is the great demand of the age. In these later days it is a practical, universal principle that every man must depend upon his own efforts for subsistence. The skilled labor of railroad employees is rendered, by this fact, more necessary and important than in any other case. The greatest interests of humanity are continually centered in their hands. There is no man who is so often as the railroad employee has complete charge and control of the lives and fortunes of so large a part of humanity. Every impulse of nature and reason unite in loudly demanding that the railroad employee be preeminently a man of the very best good principle and good habits. This is as plain as the noon-day sun, and the man who does not know and recognize it must be asleep or dead.

Labor, thanks to progress and common sense, is the good, broad, high way of this latter day and generation that leads to honor and greatness. This, at least, must ever remain the fact in this country. Industrious, skilled labor, with confirmed good habits of sobriety, order, and industry, is the grand free road that will lead all railroad employees to all that is desirable, or to be desired in this life, for any man in any station and at any time. The road for a railroad employee is as good to rise by as any other. It is certain and safe, and those who travel it are sure to reach the summit of their ambition. It becomes every man of good sense to travel it.

The road to wealth and fortune, said our own great philosopher Franklin, is as plain as the nose on a man's face, if you desire to travel it.

Besides the other great advantages offered by this route, it is more pleasant than any other. The truth of it is, that waste of time, drunkenness, and all those things that are usually called bad habits, do not *pay*, in a business sense. There is not enough fun in them to commend them to our consideration. The best enjoyment of life is to be

of some account and no man can get the best out of life, and have the best it has in store for him, unless he is of some account, and does the best he knows. We all have sense enough to know what is best for us, and no man is bound to take second class passage, and no man should do it.

It is, by far, more pleasant to be honest, honorable, sober, and industrious than it is to be otherwise. We believe in getting the good out of life. That is what we are here for. All these great facts being so plain, it becomes important that every railroad employee should ally himself with those associations and relations that will more effectually recommend him to the great and common interests of all the people. No man lives, or can live to himself in this world. Our interests are all common, and we all have an interest in each other. The base of all our great interests rests on industry, and what helps one laborer will help another. If one laborer, of whatever kind, is prosperous, we are all benefited by it. The managers of all our great corporations know this as well as anybody. The mission of the railroad employee is one of peace. He goes to his employers with an olive branch in his hand. Their interests are his interest, and his interests are theirs. There is every reason why they should work together in unison and harmony. By that means each can the most effectually advance his own interest.

The field of free and open business competition is *wide*. There is many an empire of wealth and honor to be conquered in it, and no matter what a man can accomplish with law and honor on his side, he has a *right to do*; nay! he *should* do — it is his *duty*. There is no end, no limit to what the employees of railroads accomplish for their own good, if they will only combine, and organize, and *stick together*. All other interests are organized to advance their welfare, and why should not *they*? There is no better organization for furthering the interests of railroad employees, and putting them on the way to success in its best sense, than the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen. It embraces every interest that is theirs, and inculcates by its principles and laws all that will lead them to success and prosperity. This same Brotherhood is certain to be the leading power in advancing and securing the interests of all laborers, more especially of its own members.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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