
William P. Daniels, the ORC, and Locomotive Engineers

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The two orders of Railway Conductors now in full operation, are the Order of Railway Conductors and the Brotherhood of Railway Conductors. The Grand Chief of the ORC is Mr. E.E. Clark, and for the B of RC, G.W. Howard occupies the position of Grand Chief.

We have only kind words for these gentlemen. G.W. Howard, GC of the B of RC, has been from the first a champion of protection. He saw the many and grievous wrongs to which conductors were subjected, and that the order of which they were members, by virtue of its laws, could furnish them no relief whatever. He saw that the ORC had at least two Grand Officers who were ceaselessly at work to maintain a position for the Order which humiliated and degraded them. We refer to C.S. Wheaton, Grand Chief, and to William P. Daniels, Grand Secretary and Treasurer of the order. As for Mr. Wheaton, if William P. Daniels is to be believed, he is one of the most despicable characters that ever held any position in an organization of railway employees on this or any other continent. The intimate associate of Mr. Wheaton was William P. Daniels. Daniels confesses that he knew of Wheaton's treachery, hypocrisy, mendacity, and other acts, if possible, still more offensive, which he kept to himself, and gave no sign of any superior integrity. He simply waited for an opportunity to kick a dead lion. Having made such confessions, his vituperative assault upon his associate in office has operated as a boomerang, and in the estimation of honorable men has done Daniels far more damage than fell to the lot of Wheaton.

William P. Daniels is now not only Grand Secretary and Treasurer of the ORC, but Manager of the *Railway Conductor*, and we feel assured is the author of two articles in the November issue of that publication, captioned, respectively, "Where it Stands," and "Mr. How-

ard's Assertions," both of which refer, more or less directly, to federation.

The articles in question, we assume, were written by William P. Daniels.

It will be remembered that the ORC, at Rochester, by an overwhelming majority, struck from the laws of the order what was called the "anti-strike clause." Previous to the action of the Rochester Convention the ORC was known to be opposed to *strikes*. It submitted to wrongs such as were never piled upon the members of any other organization of railway employees, and William P. Daniels not only did not protest against degrading oppressions, which the members of the order were subjected to, but advocated and urged the members of the order to *scab* on all occasions when locomotive engineers were on a strike and battling for their rights.

But referring to the action of the ORC at Rochester, in eliminating the "anti-strike clause" from the constitution, it was immediately given out that the order was not on a strike oasis and that it had not changed its principles (?) — in a word, that it could not strike, that although the "anti-strike clause" had been abolished, the order could not be regarded in the light of a striking order, and as a consequence, nothing had been gained in affording the members of the order such protection as other orders of railway employees were constantly affording their members. It should be borne in mind that there has been no convention of the ORC since the meeting at Rochester.

If the official declaration made by that body, that the order was not on a "strike basis," by virtue of the elimination of the "anti-strike clause" and that it had not changed its principles, how can it now be on a "strike basis," seeing that since the Rochester Convention there has been no meeting of the order having the authority to make any law or regulation upon the subject?

To show the low cunning of the writer of the article captioned, "Where It Stands," and the deception still sought to be practiced upon the members of the order and the public, we copy the following:

The order is not now upon a strike basis if the words are to be understood as meaning going around with a chip on its shoulder, daring everyone to "knock it off," and talking of what we will do if they (railroad officers) don't come to time. It is, however, on a strike basis if these words are understood to mean that its members will no longer submit to injustice and injury under a

mistaken belief that they “are tied up” or under teaching that they can’t do anything.

After reading the foregoing, the verdict will be that Mr. William P. Daniels is totally without convictions, or, if he has convictions, that he is too cowardly to express them. What he says, is simply word jugglery, and a most clumsy performance at that. Such jargon is eminently worthy of a man who had personal knowledge of scandalous acts on the part of an official with whom he was in intimate official relations, but for the *good of the order*, remained as silent as an oyster, and shouted “fire” only after the building was destroyed. Daniels is of the opinion that as matters stand, the “executive of the order would not only authorize, but would advise a strike, should occasion require it,” but “the writer” asserts “that there have been times in the past, when, had he possessed the authority, he would have ordered a strike.”

We doubt if there was ever a time in the past when William P. Daniels would have ordered a strike under any circumstances. He has not buttered his bread that way.

We desire to put this man Daniels on record so that railway employees may know the material of which he is composed. We doubt if a more deadly foe of organized labor breathes. The idea that William P. Daniels favors either strikes or federation is simply preposterous except he were influenced by such arguments as are used by Jay Gould when he wants the use of a judge or a legislature.

When the Grand Division of the ORC met in the city of Toronto, May 8, 1888, William P. Daniels presented his annual report, portions of which he sent as advance sheets to the principal railroad officials of the land.

It will be remembered at the time this document was sent out, the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen were engaged in one of the most serious conflicts for right and justice that ever occurred on this continent between a labor organization and a powerful corporation. It was the engineers and firemen against the CB&Q.¹ William P. Daniels was cognizant of all the facts, and yet he deliberately put upon record declarations of hostility to the engineers of unparalleled venom and circulated them

¹ The Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad, which was the subject of a bitter strike lasting from February 1888 to January 1889.

broadcast; the purpose being not only to defame the engineers but to urge conductors in all cases of a strike to act the part of scabs.

Mr. Daniels, in that report, said:

To place the matter clearly before the conductors of the United States, it may not be out of place to give a few instances of the actions of the members of this “holier than thou” organization. In the first place, It is built up and owes its strength, not to the *intelligence, skill, or knowledge* of its members, but wholly and entirely upon the ignorance of railway officials and the public in regard to the qualifications of an engineer.

After this, Mr. Daniels proceeds to cite numerous instances when the engineers have outraged every principle of justice and honorable dealing, and paints the order as black and repulsive as he was capable of doing. Mr. Daniels proceeds to arraign the engineers for a multitude of mean transgressions and then says:

Behold them now on their knees to the Switchmen and Brakemen’s Associations It is time for conductors to teach railway officers what the engineers themselves already well know, and are anxious to conceal, that nine-tenths of the conductors of the United States are capable and trustworthy engineers. The conductors on the CB&Q have already demonstrated this, *and they are ready to do it on other roads, and I sincerely hope that the time is close at hand when they will not only be ready but willing to do so all over the United States.*

We use italics that our readers may note just why the advance sheets of Daniels’ report were sent to railway officials. It was to tell them that members of the ORC, in case of a strike, would take the engineers’ places and run their engines, and it was asserted that the report of Daniels had the effect to reinstate many discharged conductors in various sections of the country.

This man Daniels carried his hate of engineers to extremes, so far that he exhorted conductors never to “pass an engineer under any circumstances.”² “It is bad enough,” says Daniels, “to subject yourself to dismissal for violation of rules in passings conductor, but don’t do it for an engineer, who is always ready to down you.” Such is the re-

² That is, to allow an engineer to ride for free as bearer of a non-existent travel pass — regarded as theft of services and possible cause for dismissal by the railway companies.

cord of William R. Daniels, who now talks glibly about being in favor of federation and strikes, and who avers that “the report that the members of the B of LE and the Order (Order of Railway Conductors) on the C&NW³ system had formed an alliance is true.”

The report of Mr. Daniels to the Toronto Convention was exhaustively discussed: the epithets applied to the members of the B of LE were reiterated and justified by Mr. Daniels; scabbing against engineers was boldly commended, and then the report was adopted.

Is it to be presumed that Mr. Daniels has changed front? Does the leopard change its spots? Hardly; and yet Mr. Daniels seeks to make the readers of the *Railway Conductor* believe he is in favor of federation and of strikes. There may be higher heights and deeper depths of gall and guile than such professions indicate, but we beg leave to doubt it. We presume that Mr. Daniels is as ready now as at the Toronto Convention, to say:

I believe Bro. —— is one of those who demonstrated the ability of the conductors by taking an engine and running it successfully (on the Q⁴), and I honor him for it and congratulate him on the appearance of his name in this list, which will soon be, with the intelligent public as it is with me, a roll of honor.

Apparently, William P. Daniels has changed front. He fought the engineers when they were struggling for their rights; advised conductors to scab that the engineers might be crushed, and with them every other order of railroad employees. He sent his vituperative slang to railroad officials, and boasts that it was a benefit to the order; and now he favors federation with engineers, and professes to have been, from “way back,” a champion of strikes.

In spite of Mr. Daniels’ influence, the members of the ORC struck down the anti-strike clause in their constitution, and elected a Grand Chief Conductor, Mr. E.E. Clark, who is in favor of federation, and of strikes as a last resort, to protect conductors against the outrages perpetrated by corporations — and if Daniels is, in any sense, a convert to federation; if he no longer advocates *scabbing*; if he would strike, under any circumstances, it must be because he sees that his bread and butter depends upon a change of base.

³ The Chicago and North Western Railway, a road operating out of Chicago and covering the states of the Upper Midwest.

⁴ “The Q” was contemporary slang for the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy.

A man who could seek to “down” engineers and firemen when engaged in a strike for their rights, when contending against a powerful corporation, by advising conductors to *scab*, and to gain favor with corporations, send advance sheets to railway officials — base treachery to principle — is not to be believed when he changes front under compulsion and professes fealty to a policy of which he had been an unrelenting foe.

Mr. E.E. Clark, the present Grand Chief of the ORC, we believe is sincerely in favor of federation, and of bringing the order of which he is chief executive into line under the banner of national federation. He will do well, however, to study the character of Daniels, and note particularly his treatment of Wheaton, his predecessor. Between Wheaton and Daniels the indications were that the most amicable relations existed, but all the time Daniels, by his confession, shows he was preparing his schemes to “do up” his associate in office; that he was arranging a dead fall, to be sprung when conditions were favorable to sacrifice his superior, and thereby save himself.

Moreover, who knows the character of the secret circulars Daniels may even now be sending to conductors of the ORC, who he says have “formed an alliance with the members of the B of LE on the C&NW system?” Who knows that he has not sent “advance sheets” of reports to the officers of that system, intimating, that in case of trouble, regardless of the “alliance,” members of the ORC would take the places of engineers, and thereby increase, what he (Daniels) is pleased to call, the “roll of honor”?

Whatever may be the secret schemes of William P. Daniels to “down” the engineers, we are persuaded that he has lost his grip upon the great body of Railway Conductors, members of the ORC.

There are thousands of Railway Conductors, members of the ORC, who are as honorable men as can be found anywhere, men who are courageous, independent and self-respecting and who despise chicane in all of its vulgar exhibitions, and who, we doubt not, are keeping their eyes on Mr. William P. Daniels. They were the men who eliminated the “anti-strike clause” from the laws of their order, and condemned in convention the course pursued by Daniels in sending out advance sheets of his report to railway officials, by virtue of which every manly conductor was humiliated and degraded.

We have outlined something of the career of William P. Daniels, showing his inveterate hostility to engineers and to all other organizations of railway employees who are organized for protection, this im-

placable hostility was carried to the extent of bringing the ORC to the verge of disruption, and in our opinion is as pronounced now as ever before, and is quiet, only because of the fact that federation, in the face of malignant and unreasonable opposition, has demonstrated its feasibility and wisdom and has won a victory on every occasion when a righteous grievance was presented.

It is not our purpose to widen any real or supposed chasm between the B of RC and the ORC. The B of RC exists because of the attitude which the ORC occupied in regard to protection, and the fact is too self evident to require argument. George W. Howard, as we have said, saw the difficulty, and proceeded to apply the required remedy, and for his splendid efforts to inaugurate a change of policy is deserving of the highest commendation.

In spite of the implacable hostility of such men as William P. Daniels, the ORC, under the leadership of such men as E.E. Clark, Grand Chief, has changed front and is now contending for protection and advocating federation.

That the Supreme Council of the Federated Orders affords the most certain remedy for well defined injustices we do not doubt. Only prejudice stands in the way of a triumph which would make the future one of steady progress for the organizations of railway employees, and we do not permit ourselves to believe that prejudice, jealousy, envy, and bigotry can long withstand the conquering march of reason, truth and honest conviction.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport

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