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# The CB&Q

## by Eugene V. Debs

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It may be true that our caption "The CB&Q,"<sup>1</sup> is becoming so familiar to our readers as to breed contempt; we confess to no little disgust ourselves, because it is the fruitful synonym of a long list of words every one of which relates to things utterly repulsive. Nevertheless, a nuisance must be denounced until it is abated. We do not suppose there is a corporation in any land that has earned such boundless stores of infamy. It is not surprising since it appears, according to the *Wall Street News*, that the corporation was conceived in iniquity, and from the hour of its birth has pursued the course of pirate and thief. According to the *News*, the CB&Q "occupies the peculiar situation of never having earned an honest dollar. It had no business which it did not steal from its neighbor, and then it robbed its stockholders to pay for the cost of doing the business. When the road was originally built, a rose-colored prospectus told how much money the road was going to make, and figured out a dividend on the stock at a very early date. The road was hardly opened when it became necessary to place an equipment bond upon the road, because the money had given out in construction, without leaving enough to pay for equipments necessary to run the road; and when that equipment was put into use debenture bonds had to be issued to pay the cost of using it. The more the equipment was used, the more money the company lost. And now says the *News*, the corporation has "been forced once more to propose a further loan at the rate of \$10,000 a mile, in order to take up a considerable floating debt." Such statements, made at the Wall Street financial center of the country, show that the CB&Q is on a downgrade and going to destruction at a speed eminently worthy of its detestable methods.

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<sup>1</sup> The **Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad**, commonly known as the Burlington or the "Q."

It appears, with all of the lying boasting of those who have the corporation in charge that its business, just at a time when it should show prosperity, the opposite is reported and verified. A statement taken from the daily reports of the Chicago papers, shows that from August 31, 1887, to August 31, 1888, the receipts of stock at Chicago, the cars of the CB&Q decreased 5,394, while the CM&St.P<sup>2</sup> increased 3,264 cars, and the CRI&P<sup>3</sup> increased 2,532 cars — and this it should be remembered represents but a single branch of the business of the company. But says an exchange, “this is just what might be expected under the circumstances. When stockmen can have a choice of two lines of railway at the same rates of transportation, and one of them is manned by careful and competent engineers, and the trains of the other are drawn by reckless hoodlums who have half the stock down before the journey is fairly begun, it would be strange indeed if they patronized the road that uses twice the time it should in making the trip and finally delivers the cattle in Chicago in an almost unmarketable condition.” Such statements indicate the real condition of the CB&Q, and show that the management could scarcely be worse.

The wreckage on the CB&Q goes on at a fearful rate, as reports before us abundantly prove. From Aurora, we have the intelligence, August 29 [1888], that engine 328 blew out a cylinder; that on August 31, live cars were smashed into kindling and engine 142 wrecked; that on September 1 a scab ran his engine over a man; that on September 3 the boys had a scab fined \$2 and costs, \$20, for vulgarity; on September 10 engine 143 got into 205, while scab on 205 was “sound asleep”; September 11 engine No. 17 “done up September 12 scab engineer drunk as “boiled owl”; and September 11 engine No 249 sent to the hospital for surgical operation. Here w'e have reports from one point of six engines disabled in twelve days and a smash up of freight cars.

From Lincoln, Nebraska, beginning with August 28, we have reports showing demoralization which staggers credulity: August 31 constables of Lincoln start out with twenty-seven attachments against scab engineers; on August 28 two mogul engines, 170 and 171 are

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<sup>2</sup> The **Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad**, commonly known as the Milwaukee Road.

<sup>3</sup> The **Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad**, memorialized in song as the Rock Island Line.

disabled; August 30 scab engineers so drunk that they have to be taken off of their engines; on September 1 the scabs put twelve freight cars in the river, and smash an engine; September 3 engines 54 and 118 disabled, while No. 5 was killed on the track; September 4 a switch engine "spraddled all over the yard"; September 5 another switch engine 171, burned. Things could scarcely be worse. Six engines disabled and a freight train drowned in the river.

At Kansas City, August 31, the scabs smashed two engines and kept up the work of destruction; September 4 the scabs wreck a train and disable an engine. Three engines sent to the repair shops and a wreck in one week show how the scabs manage things at Kansas City.

Quincy, Illinois, August 31, engine No. 21 disabled.

At Chicago, September 3, the scabs were so drunk that they knocked down a house — the wreck cost the company \$6,000.

From Galesburg we have reports of two wrecks August 30, and the wreck of two engines, 65 and 152, on September 1.

From Beardstown, reports have it, that a scab was killed August 31; on September 3 a collision was reported; on September 8 reports show three engines disabled. Nos. 359, 330 and 81.

At Ottumwa, Iowa, August 30, an engine, 398, and a train of cars were all smashed up.

At Pacific Junction, Iowa, September 10, we have reports of a collision, wrecking two engines and two freight trains, with an estimated loss of \$10,000.

From McCook, Nebraska, come reports August 31, of two disabled engines, Nos. 109 and 161, and September 3 another engine, No. 134, had to suspend operations. The scabs are doing their part to help Stone destroy the road.

News from Wymore, says, September 4, engines No. 39 and another, number not given, disabled; September 13 a collision reported with two engines totally demolished, while still another collision was providentially avoided.

At Omaha the wrecking continues. Engine No. 183 went to the bow-wows August 31, and August 30 an engine was paralyzed. Two engines disabled in two days.

At Albia, Iowa, September 3, engine 337 was wrecked and a lot of freight cars were smashed, and at Thayer, on the same day, a freight train was wrecked and an engine disabled.

From Atchison, Kansas, September 4, comes the news of a collision between two freight trains, and the wrecking of two engines be-

sides the killing of livestock and scattering merchandise over the road; on September 11 a scab turned his engine upside down, destroying its beauty and for a time its usefulness.

From Creston, Iowa, comes the report, September 1, of a bad wreck, smashing 16 cars and an engine, and on the same day a wreck at Stanton, Iowa, in which 20 cars were sent to the ditch, killing cattle by the score; on September 3 a wreck is reported smashing cars and demoralizing engine No. 337; on September 4 two wrecks are reported, disabling engines and smashing cars.

Brookfield, Missouri, September 3, reports an engine disabled; on September 12 two more engines. Nos. 5 and 77, used up.

From St. Joseph, Missouri, reports have it that September 6 engine No. 62 was disabled, and on September 13 a \$25,000 wreck is reported, including a disabled engine, smashed cars and damaged merchandise.

From Hastings, Nebraska, September 4, an engine went dead before the scab engineer found out it was sick.

In the foregoing it will be seen that from August 30 to September 13, both inclusive, 15 days, 19 wrecks are reported on the CB&Q system and the more or less disabling of 46 locomotives. In addition to this, from every locality come reports of drunkenness and demoralization, which accounts for the disasters and the loss of life and property. Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that the "Q" is losing business and credit. Travelers, as they become familiar with the management of the road, will avoid it, and shippers, when it is possible, will seek other tracks for the transportation of their property.

The "Q" corporation has tried the most desperate expedients to fortify its position and retain the respect of the public, but has signally failed, and in the attempt to blast the good name of the men who left its employment, and the brotherhoods of which they were members, it has not only met with ignominious defeat but has loaded itself down with ignominy. The dynamite plot is a contemptible fizzle and excites only disgust. It is said of Stone who has engineered the downfall of the "Q," in comparing him with T.J. Potter, that the latter rose to prominence "by the force of his genius," and the former "by marriage." That doubtless explains in some measure the situation. Stone, directing the affairs of the "Q" by calling to his aid the Pinkertons, is a spectacle which, however agreeable to Stone, must be regarded by those who are feeding his vanity with their money, as expensive, while to the great public, including the brotherhoods, who

won't down at his bidding, the show, while sufficiently *outré* for laughter and ridicule, becomes exasperating when it is remembered that it means ceaseless disasters along all the lines of the "Q," involving perils to the lives of passengers and the destruction of property.

*Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport*

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