
ARU Purposes and Procedures:

Introducing the American Railway Union to *Transportation Magazine* [May 1894]

by Eugene V. Debs

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In writing of the new order of railway employees known as the American Railway Union, at so early a date in its history, only purposes in view can be set forth, and these, since the space at our command is limited, must be severely epitomized.

The value of organization need not be discussed. It is conceded. The present is an era of organization, of the unification of forces. Workingmen comprehend its essentiality and adopt it as a means of progress and protection. The American Railway Union is in full accord with such a plan of campaign.

Consulting the highest official authorities the railways of the United States, Canada, and Mexico require about one million employees of various classes to carry forward their operations. Of these employees, to say that 150,000 are members of organizations would be a liberal estimate. This would leave 850,000 to be provided for, and the mission of the American Railway Union is to provide for, and the mission of the American Railway Union is to provide these unorganized employees with an organization which will meet every requirement.

It has been written that the present generation knows more than all former generations, because, knowing all that former generations knew, the present generation has added indefinitely to the general

stock of knowledge; hence I hold that the American Railway Union, having before it the achievements of all other organizations, is in a position to take advantage of whatever may be deemed wise and advantageous, and to remedy the more glaring defects which are forced upon the attention of the students of labor problems.

The American Railway Union will seek assiduously to devise methods of economy in its management. The great body of wage-earners are poorly paid, and for organizations to indulge in extravagance of any description upon revenues extorted from the membership is wrong, the flagrancy of which increases the more it is investigated.

Salaries out of all proportion to abilities, or services rendered, are conspicuous among the crying errors that have crept into organized labor. To eliminate such imperfections and to introduce economical methods of management will have the attention of the American Railway Union in every measure proposed. Economy begets simplicity of machinery, while extravagance is the prolific parent of pride and ostentation, fundamentally at war with progress and the prosperity of those who are taxed to maintain the display. Multiplied thousands of workingmen, railroad employees, have joined organizations, which they have been compelled to abandon because of excessive taxation.

The American Railway Union will be protective in its policy, but it will advance upon the lines of error without issuing pronouncements filled with gasconade for the purpose of demoralizing the authors of wrongs; on the contrary, having boundless confidence in logic, truth, and common sense, and believing in the American idea of fair play, its striking machinery will be adjusted in a way to secure justice, if possible, without a resort to war, nor as a last resort will it declare war unless victory is assured in so far as all conditions can warrant such a result.

To accomplish its purpose the American Railway Union will avail itself of every means at its command to educate its membership out of old ruts and twilight environments into higher and smoother pathways and a broader light. It will institute a new order of diplomacy which, if concessions and compromises can smooth the corrugated brows of contestants, it will be done before and not after battles have been fought and untold sacrifices have been made, acting upon the principle that

Peace hath her victories

No less renowned than war.¹

The American Railway Union will have the courage of patience and prudence, and knowing the right will seek for it with becoming diligence, and will have the courage to stand firmly for it and by it when emergencies require action.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport

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¹ From "To the Lord General Cromwell" (May 1652) by **John Milton** (1608-1674).
The section of the poem reads:

And Worstes laureat wreath; yet much remains
To conquer still; peace hath her victories
No less renown'd then warr, new foes arises
Threatning to bind our soules with secular chaines;
Helpe us to save free Conscience from the paw
Of hireling wolves whose Gospell is their maw.