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EDITORIAL

RAILROADERS' UNITY.

By DANIEL DE LEON

DO the railroad clerks, who met at Faneuil Hall on the 19th of this month and who, according to the Boston *Herald* of the following day, moved for the unification of all railroad men, know just what they are up against?

Not strike of any importance has been won during the last fifteen years, or more, by the employes of any railroad department. To say that the strike was lost through the scabs is to utter a barren truism—as barren as would be the truism that a man found dead died for want of breath. In the instance of the corpse, the point of interest is what CAUSED HIS BREATH TO FAIL HIM. Similarly in the instance of these lost railroad strikes—WHAT GAVE THE SCAB-MICROBE ITS CHANCE? It will be found in each instance that the scab's chances would have been nil, or at least greatly crippled, if the kindred organizations of railroaders had not given the scab a “lift” by fetching him to the spot, not infrequently also by keeping the coming scab's place “warm” for him, that is, by either indirect or direct scabbery upon the railroad department on strike. In other words—the temporary scabbery of railroad departments themselves upon the one on strike was necessary for the permanent scabbery of the regulation scab.

This experience exposes a radical defect in the structure of railroad organizations. It exposes the radical defect in “Autonomy.” Each of these bodies standing out “autonomously,” like a sore finger on a hand, each can and is in turn defeated. And that is not the end of the dirge. As fast as each organization is defeated the standard of living of their respective members sinks. “Autonomy” in the Labor Organizations spells uniformity in their decline.

It can not be supposed that railroad humanity is so dull as not to have made the discovery. It did make the discovery. It sought to remedy the evil by consolidation. It succeeded in this direction so far, twenty and odd years ago, as to bring about a

sort of loose federation. But the federation, so far from leading, as was expected of it, to tighter consolidation, broke to pieces. Why?

A successful strike means better conditions for the workers, and simultaneously, conditions less good for the railroad owners. A higher wage, at one end of the line, means a lower heap of profits at the other. Translated into a language directly applicable to the railroad industry, the successive failures of the strikes of the railroad organizations left the heap of profits undiminished for the railroad owners; and, seeing that the autonomy of the organization did the trick, “autonomy” endeared itself to the Railroad Princes. The rest is obvious. Railroad Princedom set its cap against the consolidation of the railroad organizations—and, through the instrumentality of its labor-lieutenants among the railroaders, succeeded. The tentative federation went to pieces amid criminations and recriminations with the real disrupters fanning the flame of crimination, but keeping aloof, cool, concealed in the well tapestried offices of the Princedom, while their veteran labor-lieutenants were pensioned off with lucrative political jobs.

If the railroad clerks who assembled at Faneuil Hall have grasped the above sequence of facts, then they will realize that what they are up against is the expert capitalist side of the great Social Question; then they will realize that no petty tricks of “cleverness,” no new shuffling of the cards, will stead them. They will realize that the expert capitalist side of the Social Question can be combated only with the class-conscious side of Labor. They will realize that the “new blood” wanted must be pumped, not through the arteries of their men, but through the arteries of their organization. In short, they will realize that it is as easy to stab the tiger at its heart as to pull out any one of the hairs from his mustache—and they will then organize Industrially, proclaiming the necessity of proletarian unity on both the political and the economic field with the ultimate goal of overthrowing the Capitalist Reign of War and rearing the Industrial Republic of Peace.

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