
Federation

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The motto of the United States is, *E Pluribus Unum*, which means "one from many," or "one out of many," or "one composed of many." It brings into prominence the maxim, "In union there is strength."

The term "Federation," has numerous synonyms, such as "league," "alliance," "coalition," "union," "combination," "compact," etc., but the term "federation," as we shall use it, embodies in the fullest sense our idea of a union of brotherhoods of certain railroad employes for purposes of strength when union is required to secure a righteous settlement of controversies which relate to their welfare.

Just here we desire to place upon record for the hundredth time, more or less, the fact that the *Locomotive Firemen's Magazine*, since it has been under our editorial management, has advocated such fraternization, such harmony and unity of organizations of railroad employes as would lead ultimately to federation.

To our mind, federation has not been a dream, a vague, undefined, or illy-defined theory. It has not been a whim, a mere vagary, but rather a necessity, which would ultimately come to the front and demand action. We are fully of the opinion that organization leads to federation by laws in human affairs as certain in their operation as the laws of attraction and gravitation. The tendency is always and steadily in that direction. This, we think, will be admitted even by those who have not been able or willing hitherto to comprehend the logic of events.

Organization has its origin in the idea of the strength of united effort. Single-handed, little can be accomplished, while united effort bears down opposition, removes obstacles and achieves victories.

The tendency in the United States among workingmen, is to organize, and the reason for this, is easily found. Here the workingman is a citizen, clothed with sovereignty and with all the rights and privi-

leges that belong to other men without regard to condition, profession or calling. Notwithstanding these things, for years past the condition of workmen in the aggregate, has steadily grown worse. We speak of the rule, not of the exception, and of the exceptions it should be said, their better condition, with little effort can be traced to compact organization.

As a general proposition, organizations of workmen begin with trades, that is, particular trades organize — form unions, or leagues, or orders or brotherhoods. These organizations have in view not only the maintenance of fair wages but include social and benevolent features of great value to society and to the state. By exacting small dues they provide against many ills and sorrows incident to human life. They care for the sick, bury the dead, and provide for widows and orphans — in doing which, they illustrate many of the divinest precepts of Christianity, and to the extent that such things are done, our civilization is richly adorned.

One of the great benefits which such organizations have secured, has been the education of their members in matters pertaining to financial and economic questions. They have investigated the question of the relations between capital and labor, taxation and revenue, earnings on the one hand and profits on the other hand. Nor have they been unmindful of the fact that they have been the victims of unrighteous and oppressive laws and of the decisions of corrupt and venal judges. They have seen men pleading with uplifted hands for so much of their honest earnings, as would enable them live, as become American citizens, to provide for themselves and their dependent wives and children the simple necessities of life, thrust aside by arrogant and soulless corporations and made to suffer the penalties of death and imprisonment for their temerity.

Such things have indefinitely expedited the organization of workmen in the United States, and with organization has come boldness of speech and considerate investigation as to what other steps could be taken to still further improve their condition.

It so happens — fortunately, we think — that when men are hesitating to take an advanced step, those of all others most opposed to a new departure do the very thing which makes it inevitable. It brings into prominence the fact that “behind a frowning Providence” a “shining face” is often hidden,¹ to beam forth upon the men of cour-

¹ Extracted from the lyrics of the Christian hymn “God Moves in a Mysterious Way” (1774), by **William Cowper** (1731-1800).

age who dare to stand for their rights when fortune and fate seem to have combined against them, and who are ready to lead a forlorn hope and make one more effort to wrest victory from the jaws of defeat. In the CB&Q strike the soulless corporation had, as they thought, prepared for every emergency. They knew the strength of the engineers and firemen, they counted noses, and believed after a little delay they could supply their places. We speak of what the corporation thought, not of the fact; and it is true that to a certain extent the corporation did supply the places of the engineers and firemen and switchmen. There was an alliance from the first between the engineers and firemen, and subsequently the switchmen came in. The strike and all of its attendant circumstances as one of its compensations, has brought into the boldest possible prominence the unqualified importance of federation, because now it is seen if from the first there had been federation between engineer and firemen, switchmen and brakemen on the CB&Q, victory for the right would have been achieved in a day.

It is not our purpose in this article to suggest the methods by which federation is to be accomplished; these will require deliberation, consultation and legislation. That the question will come up at the Atlanta convention is a foregone conclusion, and we hail with undisguised approval the advent of the question in the deliberations of our brotherhood. We see in it the harbinger of a new era, fraught with untold blessings to workingmen. It is at once a fortress and a lighthouse. It is the olive branch of peace. It voices arbitration, concession and compromise on the one hand, and if this will not win, then it means such a federation of forces as will secure victory and command approval.

Nor will federation end with the brotherhoods we have named. It is as the voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way for the triumphant march of labor to its rightful place in the affairs of men and of governments. To the toiling masses, federation is to be like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, and it will be to us ever a source of inexpressible satisfaction that in our day and generation we had an opportunity to bear some humble part in advocating its establishment in the industrial affairs of the country.

Edited with a footnote by Tim Davenport

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