
Call It the American Railway Union: The New Organization Will Endeavor to Abandon Strike Methods

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The American Railway Union was the name under which the railway men in session at the Leland Hotel [Chicago] organized yesterday [Feb. 9, 1893]. They met at 10 am with George W. Howard in the chair and S. Keliher as Secretary. Twenty-four names responded to roll call.

The Committee on Constitution and Principles asked further time. The Chairman [Howard] said: "We should proceed slowly. We want to lay the foundations of the order on correct lines. It will require at least a month to properly do the work."

The committee consists of E.V. Debs, L.W. Rogers, and S. Keliher.

A committee was appointed to secure and furnish headquarters in Chicago.

It was decided not to effect a permanent organization until the next meeting, which will be called by Chairman Howard in Chicago within a month. At that meeting the Committee on Constitution, as well as minor committees, will report, permanent organization will be effected, the headquarters will be opened, and the union will begin active work, organizers will be at once put on the roads, the journal of the union will begin publication, and the work of organization will be pushed as rapidly as possible. In the meantime lodges will be instituted.

The conference adjourned at 2 pm yesterday. The rest of the afternoon was given up to a reception to the scores of railroad employees of Chicago and elsewhere who dropped in at the Leland to ask the promoters of the new order further details as to the plan of organiza-

tion. These visitors were about equally divided between members and non-members of existing unions.

Eugene V. Debs, one of the leading spirits of the new movement, said:

“We have made a start. We antagonize no one. We will organize closely for protection. We have asked for legislative reforms in the various states in matters affecting the interests of railway employees. They have been refused and laughed or bought out of the legislatures. By a compact union we can make our voice heard in state capitals. Look at the number of men killed annually while on duty in our business whose lives could be saved if we could secure even humane legislation in our behalf.

“We will strip our union of the secrecy which has so greatly retarded many labor unions. We will invite the press to hear us talk of our grievances and proposed reforms. Our cause is just. We have nothing to fear from an open discussion of our condition. We propose to conduct the union on simple business principles, keep expenses down, charge small dues, have no beneficiary features, and live simply for mutual protection and the bettering of the condition of all our members.

“Strikes as labor weapons are obsolete. We have advanced to a higher scale. With the Australian ballot system and a good, clean, compact organization we have reason to hope for magnificent results from the American Railway Union.”

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