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# An Appeal to Labor

by Eugene V. Debs

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Men and Brothers:—

The Pullman strike, under the auspices of the American Railway Union, has created an issue which, while it has resulted in the arrest and indictment of the officers of the American Railway Union, places on trial, as never before, organized labor of the country. In other words, the trial of the officers of the American Railway Union is absolutely the trial of organized labor.

## **The Necessity for Funds.**

In the coming trial every thoughtful member of labor organizations will appreciate the fact that labor will be confronted by organized railroad capital, representing billions.

Against this formidable array of money, and the power of money, stands organized labor on trial, because the organization known as the American Railway Union unfurled and flung to the breeze the banner of resistance to wrongs, which, the more they are contemplated, the more monstrous they appear.

The defense of the American Railway Union officials, which is but another way of stating the fact that organized labor is to be defeated, requires money, and a large amount of money, to enable organized labor to grapple with organized capital and maintain successfully its standing before the tribunals, where, by the fiat of the court, it is to plead.

## **The Amount Which Should Be Raised.**

In making this appeal to organized labor, and the friends of organized labor throughout the land, I do not hesitate to aver my belief

that *one hundred thousand dollars* should be contributed. The amount, at first glance, may seem large, but it dwindles to insignificance when the magnitude of the issues involved are considered.

### **What Are the Issues?**

I answer: The eternal right of workingmen to organize; to demand their rights; to resist oppression; to confer together in all matters relating to their welfare, and finally, as the last resort, to strike. These unalienable rights are in peril. The American Railway Union voiced them and championed them, and when they were attacked, corporations cheered and sustained by the money power, the American Railway Union protested, proposed peaceable adjustments, and, failing in all propositions, finally gave its endorsement of the strike, which is impressing upon the national mind the fact that wrongs must be redressed if peace and prosperity are to succeed the storm.

For this defiant and patriotic attitude of the American Railway Union, in the interest of organized labor and the welfare of the country, its officers have been indicted, and with them there will be a trial of organized labor. In the contemplation of ultimate verdicts, the few men who have been indicted, as compared with the thousands whose interests are involved, are of comparatively little consequence. If the verdict of the jury stays the hand of vengeance, if corporate power is humbled by the fiat of justice, if the indicted defenders of workingmen's rights go forth free to proclaim that law and liberty are still in alliance, then in that case organized labor will take on new strength and courage, drooping hopes will revive, and faith in the perpetuity of free institutions will stretch forth its hands to grasp the fruitions of labor redeemed by the genius of justice. If, however, the money power of corporations shall be able to debauch jurors, if the verdict dooms the men to prison who dared, when labor plead for the reinstatement of its rights, to stand forth, regardless of consequences, in the van of the conflict, then in that case the doom of organized labor is sealed.

### **The Battle is On.**

The corporate enemies of organized labor, with all the appliances and equipments of war, are scheming for strategic advantages, and the preliminaries of the battle are seen in every direction. To meet them and thwart their schemes money is required. In making this appeal

for contributions to the defense fund I am not playing the role of mendicant. I simply say that, in the persons of the indicted officials of the American Railway Union, the rights of organized labor are indissolubly linked. No power can disunite their destiny. Hence, such contributions as may be made are for the emancipation of organized labor from aristocratic, plutocratic, and corporate thralldoms, the contemplation of which fills the mind with alarm.

Only those who are deeply imbued with the conviction that the rights of organized labor are in peril are asked to contribute, and if these give a fraction, even a tenth of one day's income, I do not doubt we shall be able to send out, all over the width of the land, Perry's immortal dispatch: "We have met the enemy, and they are ours."

*Eugene V. Debs,*  
*President, American Railway Union.*

(Friendly papers please copy.)

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

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