
Speech to the 13th Convention of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen

Minneapolis — Sept. 18, 1886

[quoted excerpt]

by Eugene V. Debs

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Eugene V. Debs, the Grand Secretary and Treasurer, said:

All that is required is an honest analysis of the situation, to discover the remedy and to apply it. Thanks to the labor organizations of the country a better day is dawning for those who toil. Thanks are due to all brother organizations for this.

It has been said that there is no community of interests between the skilled and the unskilled laborer. I want to deny it. I believe that the interests of all classes and all organizations of laboring men are indissolubly interwoven and mutually dependent one upon another. I detest caste and I hate anything that looks like social classification. In my estimation a manly section-band is worthy to stand side by side with a director of a road. Why? Because he is equally essential to the railroad enterprises of the period. About the only difference that I know of is that he works harder and gets less pay for his work. [*Applause.*]

The most manhood is not always found on the side of the highest wages. Every man who does his level best is my brother. In the aristocracy of manhood the poor are the peers of the rich,

and a “God bless you” warm from the heart which throbs beneath the covering of honest toil may have all the beauty of sincerity which can be claimed by those who live in palaces, dress in purple, and feast like princes every day.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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