
**“In Unity There Is Strength”:
Open Letter to the *Chicago Evening Press*
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Theodore Parker¹ said, “The books that help you most are those that make you think the most;” and, in so far as thinking is concerned, circumstances are like books. A circumstance that makes one think is valuable in many ways. Just now there are numerous circumstances which have forced a whole country to “thinking,” and none more intensely than that portion dependent upon wages for subsistence. The present is the time for workingmen to think. Goldsmith wrote that “those who think govern those who toil.” The thought power and the money power govern the world. These two powers in alliance command the military power, and this trinity of powers bears down all opposition. Exceptions are few and far between, and when found strengthen the rule.

In the United States it may be said that a new army of thinkers has entered the field. this army, as yet untrained and undisciplined, is sufficiently vigorous to create disturbances in the old currents and tides of thought that have ruled the country, particularly in industrial affairs.

Undeveloped Brains.

These new thinkers, with rare exceptions, though possessed of independence and courage, have not as yet got their mental powers under full control; hence, though thinkers and toilers, they are still the victims of those who think more methodically. This is not strange. They are only partially emancipated. They repeat in a sort of an idle way, “In unity there is strength,” but when unity is proposed they lose sight of the conquering philosophy of the maxim and split up into factions and furnish the world with the paradox that their boasted strength is weakness; and their organizations, instead of scouring victories, invite disaster. Such circumstances are fruitful of thought. Capable men say there must be readjustments, new departures. We have followed this trail far enough. We need not retrace our steps, but we must get out of the jungle. We must advise other thinkers that we are capable of organizing a campaign of victory.

How shall this be done? What is the new departure required? I do not regard such questions as abstruse. On the contrary, they simply suggest the maxim, "In unity there is strength," and impress upon all, who think at all, the imperative character of the demand to unify forces for the simple purpose of securing victory, not for one, but for all. And it is just here that the circumstance comes into view that victory for all is the one thing about which labor organizations have thought little and cared less. There have been few victories over envies, jealousies, and selfishness. Every organization for itself and "the devil take the hindmost" has wrought its debasing work until at last corporations entertain feelings towards organizations scarcely one remove from contempt. Organizations in numerous instances aid in defeating organizations and the circumstance is not only fruitful of thought, but of serious doubt as well. If unification can not be secured, then why continue the struggle? Why court defeat and humiliation? Far better disband, blow out all the lodge fires that have ever been lighted, and go back to unorganized chaos. If, as is seen every day, men are to continue to abandon the right for a "mess of pottage" and accept the ultimatums of those known to champion the wrong, why longer, with banners befouled with blotches of cowardice and degeneracy, advertise to the world that organization is a sham and a delusion possessing less protective power than so many herds of wild asses?

Higher Organizations.

Such circumstances confront organizations of workingmen with startling defiance. Can they be overcome? If, for example, the 900,000 railroad employees of this country can not, by virtue of their thought power, be brought into harmonious alliance, then their doom is fixed, irrevocably decided. Is that to be the conclusion? Not yet. What is the supreme demand? Unification of thought — oneness of purpose — one grand central idea: Justice to the humblest worker. We must get away from the duke and baron curse in labor organizations, the aristocracy of \$4 a day which beats down the man who gets but \$1 a day, and keeps him in the ranks, as financiers would say of debased coin, something subsidiary, weak, dependent, and forever wearing the stamp of inferiority. Is it possible to get out of such a degrading rut? I think so. But to accomplish a purpose so elevating and disenthraling, the thought of the organizations of workingmen must be of a higher and a bolder type than now prevails.

In writing upon such topics it is always my purpose to be practical, and I can conceive of nothing more in the line of practical though relat-

ing to the future of labor than for workingmen to unify their power. Simple organization does not now and never will answer the demand. Non-union men are too numerous; alienation is too rampant. There is, therefore, a demand for leaders broad enough and unselfish enough to grasp the situation and secure unity. This done, the way is clear; omitted, and the fate of organization is sealed.

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¹ Theodore Parker (1810-1860) was a prominent Unitarian minister and public supporter of the Abolitionist movement.