

Office of the Grand Lodge
Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen.

Terre Haute, Indiana, Nov. 17th, 1891.

R. E. Clark, Esq.,

Grand Chief Conductor O. R. C.

Dear Sir and Brother; -

I duly received your communication of the 2nd inst. and read it with interest.

I am constrained to believe that the controversies resulting from the action of ^{the} Galesburg Convention of the B. of R. T. are but in their incipency; indeed, it cannot be otherwise. A great and vital principle is at stake. It has been ruthlessly trampled upon, struck down in a great deliberative body, under circumstances sadly unfavorable, not only for the triumph of the right, but for any hearing of those who are devoted to the truth, to honor and justice.

Labor has had many conflicts.--It has often been beaten down, and made to "bite the dust." Against it has been arrayed forces of extraordinary power--and yet, it has held, with unyielding grasp to bed-rock principles and has won many notable victories. And now I fearlessly challenge the record for any blow organized labor ever received from its most relentless and implacable foes equal to that inflicted by the Galesburg Convention of the B. of R. T. when, with deafening cheers and every possible testimonial of approval, the conspiracy on the Northwestern Railroad was en-

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dorsed.

I notice with peculiar sensations that you admit that "he (Wilkinson) went farther than he should have done." How much farther? He went into a conspiracy. Would you have done that? Does he deny it? As well might Brutus have denied that he stabbed Caesar; as well might Benedict Arnold have denied that he betrayed his Country, his native land. That is the one "damned spot" that cannot be washed out by cheers and congratulations.

In such matters we could multiply words ad infinitum. We could plead personal friendships, fraternal courtesies, comradeship, and all that, until the frosts of a century came down upon us, but they would avail nothing when confronted by the irrefutable fact, that the man we loved and admired; that had won the confidence of his order, had gone so far astray as to conspire with an enemy of labor to strike down, without warning, four hundred innocent men.

It may take time, (how much time I do not know, nor do I care to conjecture) to remedy the wrong inflicted by the Galesburg Convention of the B. of R. F., but there are voices that will never be silenced until, in some way, the stain of the indorsement of treason is washed out. The discussion will go forward. Palliatives

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will be introduced and applied, but the cancer will grow at the vitals of the victim, nevertheless, until its blood poisoning roots are extracted.

I note all you say about the action of the Supreme Council. The verdict of guilty of conspiracy was unanimous. In the matter of penalty, I had my views and expressed them. Grant all that may be said of the mistake, it in nowise condones the crime charged and proved, nor could it be regarded as a reason for an indorsement of the crime of conspiracy.

And it is the crime of conspiracy, and the infamy of scabbing which is certain to keep alive the discussion until the right triumphs.

I most cordially reciprocate your generous allusions to the fact that a difference of opinion need not involve personal hostility.

In discussing the conspiracy of the B. of B. T. on the Northwestern I include only the guilty parties. I am disposed to be generous in my estimate of the delegates who voted an indorsement of the crime, as I am not unacquainted with the processes designed to obscure facts and warp judgments. But, such things are not final. The great heart of railroad men does not beat responsive to the

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machinations of conspirators, and the better judgment of men will eventually triumph.

I shall always be glad to hear from you, and shall hope to meet you some time in the future and exchange views more fully than can be done on paper.

I have faith in the "sober second thought" of the people" and do not entertain a doubt of the final outcome of the rank and file of the membership of the B. of F. F.

Fraternally yours,

