

The Sentinel

A Weekly Newspaper With Plenty of Backbone

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FRIDAY, APRIL 25, 1919

WHO OWNS INDUSTRY?

"Industry no longer belongs exclusively to those who have their money invested therein."

This is a statement made by E. W. Miller, superintendent of the Palmett Lumber company, at the rally of the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen Saturday night.

If this statement were quoted alone and unaccompanied by further statements by Mr. Miller, many might cry, "Why, that fellow's a bolshevik or an anarchist!"

But Mr. Miller is neither one. Undoubtedly he believes that capital has certain rights that must be respected just as labor has certain rights that must be respected. From his talk we gathered that he believes that the employer is under obligations to the employee to conduct the business in the most economical and business-like manner, to the end that labor may be paid a fair wage, in return for which the employee is obligated to do his work in such a manner that capital may make a reasonable profit upon its investment.

That is neither socialism or anarchism. That is merely putting the golden rule into practice.

Were all business conducted upon that basis we would hear nothing of labor troubles and nothing of socialism or I. W. W.-ism, provided, of course, that the public, the third party concerned, gets a fair deal.

A dispatch from London states that through newspaper publicity the public has learned of tremendous profits made by the coal operators during the war, while the employees, often kept underground for months at a time, were kept from striking through the pressure of government influence. The price of coal got so high and the grumbling of the employees so loud, that a commission was appointed to get at the facts. The commissioners saw the huge profits of many of the mine owners coupled in some instances with imperfect machinery and inefficient management. They saw wasteful competition running up the price of coal to the consumer. They saw mines badly situated and badly equipped. They saw employees keeping down wages to enable their least efficient brethren and worst mines to make a profit. With wages so depressed, of course, people saw the richer and better managed mines heaping up wealth so fast that some of the employers sought means of camouflaging their gains.

This is what the limelight reveals on the one hand. On the other it showed a great number of hard-working men, pursuing one of the most dangerous and unpleasant forms of labor in the world, living in conditions unfit for the lower animals. Poverty, wretched housing, overcrowding, life devoid of beauty and pleasure, and long tramps to work and back.

Under the Miller philosophy, such conditions as these must cease. Industry is no longer the property of capital to such an extent that it can impose conditions such as these upon labor while it takes a profit so large that it must be camouflaged to evade discovery.

Under the Miller philosophy capital has no right to grind down the wages of labor to cover the waste of inefficiency and bad government and the losses of wasteful competition shown in the report of this English commission.

Is one a bolshevik or an anarchist to say that such reasoning is sound?

Rather, is it not that kind of philosophy which is going to save the world from bolshevism, I. W. W.-ism and anarchism?

In this country we have thousands who live lives of ease and indolence because of fabulous profits made in industry, and the supposition is that the employee suffered that the employer might lay up these vast fortunes.

Vast accumulations of wealth have made possible many industries which have lessened the cost of living.

Vast accumulations of wealth have made possible the development of many articles of commerce that might not otherwise have come into general use, thereby creating millions of jobs.

Vast accumulations of wealth have made possible quantity production, and quantity production has made it possible for every farmer to have a gasoline tractor and an automobile.

But whatever the benefits of accumulated wealth, that wealth is entitled only to a fair profit, or, at least, no fabulous profit should be taken until after labor and the public have both been fairly dealt with, and no man nor any set of men have any God-given right to live lives of indolence. If their wealth permits them to do so, they owe it to their fellowmen to employ that wealth for the benefit of others. When they do not do so, they encourage socialists and anarchists to say that such wealth should be taken from them.

If we follow the Miller philosophy correctly, capital has no right to take from the employee a profit upon his labor so great that young sons of wealth can live without work, follow lives of indolence and do nothing for society.

It is easy to philosophize, but it is not so easy to say how that philosophy shall be put into practice.

The Sentinel believes that the tendency of capital is to want a good profit, and that tendency does not change when a former employee becomes an employer, yet by far the great majority of em-

ployers grant that the employee is entitled to a wage well above the cost of living.

The Sentinel believes that the tendency of labor is to want as high a wage as it can get and that this tendency is not changed when a former employer becomes an employee, but that the employee as a rule grants that capital is entitled to a very fair profit, that it may be encouraged to invest in industry and produce employment.

Associations of employers have done much to provide for a fair profit for capital.

Likewise associations of employees have done much to provide for a fair wage for labor.

The Sentinel is of the opinion that both a fair profit for capital and a fair wage for labor can only be secured through such associations, and the cooperation of such associations.

That is why The Sentinel believes the Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen, in which both employee and employer are admitted to membership, is the greatest thing that has ever happened for the lumber industry of this section.

But when such organizations are completed we can not rest under the assumption that all troubles are forever settled.

As an example, read what Mayor Ole Hanson says about the great strike in Seattle:

"Green and his henchmen had expected the business men to turn over their business to them piece by piece—actually had expected this to happen. But Green and his anarchists had to flee."

"Now I didn't break that strike. Tom Murphine didn't break that strike. Chief Warren didn't break that strike. It was the clean, loyal union men whose internationals had never sanctioned the strike that did the most to end it."

This shows that we can not hope that organization is going to bring to labor all its rights, nor hope that with organization labor will respect the rights of others as religiously as it hopes to have its own rights respected, but it does show that the hope of the country and the successful development of the philosophy promulgated by Mr. Miller depends upon intelligent organization directed by men who can not be led astray by passion and prejudice—men who can see the rights of others as well as their own—men who will stand firm for the right as they see it, no matter what the temptations may be to do otherwise—men who realize that justice for themselves is dependent upon their being just to others.

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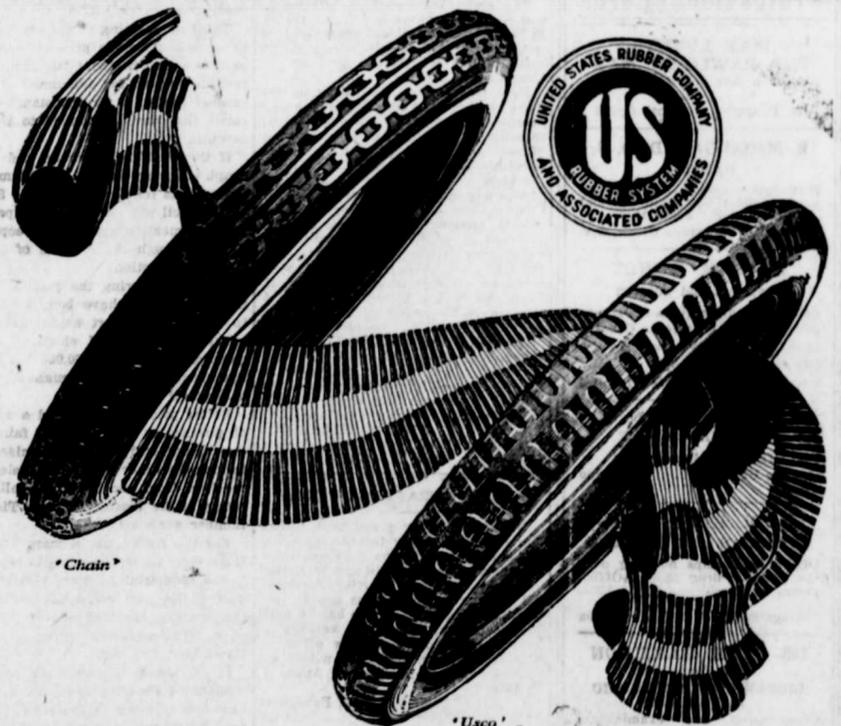
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