

Portland Labor Press

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H. G. KUNDRET, Editor.

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BIAS OF THE PRESS.

Several editorials dealing with the labor difficulties existing in Portland at this time have appeared in the daily papers of late. In not one of these articles has exact justice or fairness been done to the unions. It seems to be impossible for any of these writers to put themselves in the "other fellow's place." They can only see the employer's side of the question. However much they labor, and some of them have labored hard to get down to the level of actual equality between the two contending forces, their environment and natural leanings toward the almost divine right (?) of dictation by the employer can be discerned. Has not the laborer who has the labor for sale the right to name the price and conditions under which he will sell his own? If he cannot make this right effective by himself and alone, has he not the right to induce his brothers to join with him in enforcing their just right to sell their labor collectively? Under the system without the labor union, one man's necessities and responsibilities, in the individual bargain, are made to compete with another man's needs and wants. This bargain is made singly at the factory gate where competition is made keenest.

Under the labor union, the collective bargain is made in the office under conditions equal and fair to both parties, as other products are bought and sold. The greatest question waiting the solution of economic students and statesmen today is this question of labor and capital and it has two sides to it. It cannot be brushed aside with an argument from either one side or the other, but both sides must be considered. Therefore, to write understandingly, the newspaper must have as much knowledge of one side as the other. To undertake to mold public opinion with the ingrained prejudice of the employer to lean on would be mistreating the employe.

All editors will speak of labor troubles at all times as strikers' difficulties, as having been brought on by strike, as this union is out, or that union is out on strike, when, did they know the facts, it was the employer who was on strike by refusing to pay his men reasonable wages; or by, as in one instance at present in this city, violating his signed agreement.

Is the employer entirely innocent of responsibility for this state of affairs? Could not he have prevented this, by not striking against his men? Take the planing-mill strike. There are six mills affected. Are not those six men in some measure responsible for the strike? Did they not strike against granting their employes a nine-hour instead of a ten-hour day, and lock their men out of the mills? Are these men to be held guiltless and the strike be attributed to their employes? Why would it not have been right to have brought the pressure of public opinion to bear on these six men, instead of holding the 2500 men in the building trades amenable? Is it because these six men have money and the 2500 have no money? This must be the age of commercialism, when all and every high and lofty aim, every unselfish effort for the betterment and uplifting of humanity, must give way to the power of money.

In the difficulty between these men and their employes, which side have occupied the fairer position before the public? The employes have at all times been in favor of arbitration; the mills have opposed it. Have the great innocent sufferers, the public, the business community, if you please, brought to bear any pressure to force these men to arbitrate? They have not. Have you heard of any public meetings held for the purpose of expressing their sentiments upon this arbitrary and cruel stand taken by the mill owners?

You have not. Now let us ask you what do you think would have happened were the positions reversed? Had the union said "they had nothing to arbitrate," and would permit no dictation from any one, and the mill owners stood ready for arbitration, can you imagine the storm which would have arisen around organized labor? Public indignation, meetings would have been held, and the papers would have been full of editorials on the arbitrary stand taken by labor. And, by the way, the Portland Board of Trade would have called these indignation meetings, too, though they refuse to take the initiative now. The labor leaders would have to leave the town. It would become so uncomfortable for them. It makes a difference which side you are on, when you discuss this question of labor. With the exception of one exactly fair treatment of this strike matter by the Oregonian several weeks since, every single writer has exposed his bias when attempting to discuss the subject. And the Oregonian has been trying to make amends ever since. It is just as well to know that the laboring people are learning these things and are getting a better knowledge of the position they hold in the community. This knowledge will not tend to convince them that it is best they give up their unions; on the contrary it will convince them of the wisdom of unity, and they will stick all the closer and stand all the more solidly together. We are brothers in fact. Organized labor has come to stay, and it will live and grow and increase until its power will be supreme.

WOODWORKERS' STRIKE.

An official notice has been issued by the Building Trades Council declaring the boycott against the six unfair planing mills off, and hereafter the material from those concerns are fair, so far as the building trades are concerned. This action was taken after due deliberation, and a careful survey of the premises. Notwithstanding the action of the Council Monday night, on Tuesday morning the Woodworkers held a meeting and decided to stand as a unit in their demand for a nine-hour day. Of course the Woodworkers feel that the Carpenters' Union have shifted the burden of the contest, and the Building Trades Council felt reluctant in passing it up to other unions who are less able to stand the brunt. Besides this, the strain upon the public and the attitude of the daily press has practically absolved the employers from any part in the controversy, unless it be that of the injured party. No matter how just the position of the wage earners, and how misleading the statements of the members of the Millmen's Association, the press persistently leans to the employers' side and forces the responsibility upon the men who are striving to better their condition by devoting one hour less to their machines and one hour more at their homes with their wives and children.

Mr. Jackson could violate every rule of social propriety in wedding another woman before the remains of his first wife grew cold in her grave, but the millworkers should be absolutely above reproach, and if they committed an error, or made a false step, or in any manner stumbled and lost ground, the error was to be blazoned in the wake of the Oregonian's editorials upon high ground, and the cost charged to the poor devils who are up against the profits of their own labor in the hands of unscrupulous agents, backed by an unfeeling press.

The Laundry Workers, the sawmill men, the woodworkers, and every demand made by organized labor this year has been fraught with consistency due to the increased cost of commodities. Since the revival of industrial activity and profits the acquisition of benefits to the wage earner throughout the land will not exceed in the aggregate 15 per cent, while the cost of living has increased more than 30 per cent. Even the increase to the wage-earners is still short by half, and the advance to labor has been procured by incessant difficulty and repeated hardships. The press takes "no sides in the controversy," but invariably winds up by laying the burden of proof upon the laboring men.

Men in the labor ranks are not unlike people outside—they can be persuaded. And the success or failure of each industrial dispute depends upon the internal strength of an organization. The external pressure cannot hope to accomplish much unless it finds a weak point. However, the advantage is gained under these circumstances, it is not a fair test of strength. If the press would handle the question impartially and enter into the merits of the controversies, there would scarcely be any doubt as to the outcome of nearly all industrial controversies. The people are persuaded against themselves, and close observers, lacking principle, take advantage of this fact. Thus the character of labor difficulties becomes twisted, laborers themselves ignorantly take sides against themselves, and the press takes advantage of the fact and insists that the interest of the public is at stake and the matter should be settled—at the expense of the men who can scarcely support themselves and families.

In commenting upon the miners' strike in the coal fields, Hearst's great daily at Chicago, The American, says: Lawbreakers, monopolists and extortionists banded together in a union for mutual profit—these are the men who have the unspeakable impudence to deny to workmen the right to unite for the protection of their interests! No wonder the coal trust has refused to go before the civic federation and state its case for arbitration. No wonder that it has turned away from Archbishop Ireland and Bishop Potter with a contemptuous shrug and the scoffing exclamation that "anthracite coal mining is a business and not a religious, sentimental or academic proposition." The mercy that owners of coal mines, frozen out, and independent operators, crushed by thieving railroad rates, have received, is the mercy that the miners, helpless if not united, would get from this all-grasping coal trust. The miners are right to struggle for the existence of their union. And in that struggle they will have the active sympathy of all who desire laborers in this republic to be free men and not slaves.

The meeting of the Salem Federal Union Thursday evening, says the Evening Journal, was well attended. The spirit of unionism seems to have permanently established itself in Salem, judging from the enthusiasm that is apparent at all of the labor meetings, and the success that has attended all attempts to effect an organization. After the consideration of routine business last night, the pending Portland street-car strike was discussed, and the following resolution was adopted:

We, the members of Salem Federal Labor Union, send greetings to the street railway employes of Portland, and extend hearty encouragement to them in their present strike, believing their demands to be only just and for the reasonable safety and dignity of the car men and traveling public. We assure them our hearty good will, and pledge financial support to the extent of our ability, if the same becomes necessary.

Advices from Dawson City state that the labor market is overfull, and unless there is a considerable reduction in the number of men before the winter sets in many will suffer and perish. It is alleged that transportation companies are responsible for this, and by their glaring and taking advertisements many laborers continue to flock into the Dawson district.

"Wages of all kinds," says the Herald, "will have to advance in Astoria if the price of living continues to advance. Already the carpenters have demanded \$3 per day after July 1. It is impossible for a man to support himself and family on the small wages paid."

DISTINGUISHED VISITORS.

Official notice has been received in Portland that a meeting of the Executive Board of the American Federation of Labor will hold a session in San Francisco July 21. A number of the officers will visit this city en route and on their return home. The labor leaders will arrive in Portland in two parties, the first July 19, and the other August 4. The first party will be composed of Vice-Presidents James Duncan, of Boston, Mass., and Thomas I. Kidd, of Chicago, Ill., and Treasurer John B. Lennon, of Bloomington, Ill. The officers coming August 4 are President Samuel Gompers and Vice-Presidents James O'Connell, of Washington, D. C., and Max Morris, of Denver, Colo.

It has been necessary to divide the committee into two groups so as to properly cover the country, and the itinerary of both groups has been arranged as follows:

Route of President Gompers and Vice-Presidents O'Connell and Morris, to and from San Francisco—President Gompers, July 3, Cincinnati; July 4, Lexington, Ky.; July 6, Chicago. President Gompers and Vice-President O'Connell, July 7, Omaha. Gompers, O'Connell and Morris, July 10, Denver; July 11, Colorado Springs; July 12, Pueblo; July 13, Leadville; July 15, Salt Lake City; July 16, Ogden; July 18, Sacramento; July 20, San Francisco; July 20, San Jose; July 31, Los Angeles; August 2, San Francisco; August 3, Sacramento; August 5, Portland; August 6, Tacoma; August 7, Seattle; August 9, Spokane; August 10, Missoula; August 11, Helena; August 12, Butte; August 14, Chicago.

Route of Vice-Presidents Duncan and Kidd and Treasurer Lennon, to San Francisco and return—Kidd and Lennon, July 10, St. Paul; July 11, Minneapolis; July 13, Butte; July 14, Helena; July 16, Seattle. Duncan, Kidd and Lennon, July 17, Tacoma; July 19, Portland; July 21, San Francisco; July 31, Los Angeles; August 3, Salt Lake City; August 5, Denver; August 6, Omaha; August 8, Chicago.

The letters request that arrangements for public meetings be made, and that the dates scheduled can positively be relied upon. Should anything occur to change the programme, telegraphic notice will be given.

It is not often that an opportunity of this character presents itself to our brothers in the labor movement of the West, and it is earnestly hoped that their visit may be productive of great good in the interests of our noble cause.

LITTLE CHANGE IN STRIKE SITUATION

Marine Engineers and Ship Carpenters Are R-fused An Increase of Wages and They R-fuse to Work.

The strike of the Amalgamated Woodworkers remains intact, notwithstanding the removal of the boycott from the unfair mills by the Building Trades Council. The Woodworkers recognize that the success of the contest devolves upon their own individual efforts and they do not shirk the responsibility. On Tuesday morning a vote was taken, which resulted in an almost unanimous vote to continue the fight. It is a well-known fact that the men the mills expected to get from the East failed to materialize, and they are practically without mechanics to do their work. The mill owners claim that they are little inconvenienced and are running to good advantage, but this is not true. The crews of the six unfair mills are composed of many of the best mechanics on the markets, and were obtained only through years of experience. These mechanics are amongst the best union men in the ranks, and will not return to work unless they are granted concessions. Already many of these men are securing employment elsewhere. The Universal Milling Co. has removed its plant to Astoria, and will run upon the nine-hour basis. Albert Dooley, a member of the Portland union, No. 66, is in the city, and has engaged about 20 woodworkers, who will go to work next Monday. Mr. Dooley is going to demonstrate that a planing mill can be run on a union basis at a profit. The Schmitt mill, East Eighth and Taylor streets, is running a half crew on a nine-hour basis, three hours overtime to catch up with the orders now in hand. In a couple of weeks all of the machinery will be in place, when two shifts will be employed at nine hours each.

Hepp & Gay, East Morrison and Seventh streets, are running 16 men on a nine-hour day.

The Enterprise mill, East Water near Yamhill, are working ten men on union basis, and will soon employ more.

The Schwartz mill, East Morrison and Grand avenue, employing six men, and a mill on Tenth and Flanders, 12 men, and several other smaller mills in the city, are working under union conditions and making money.

It is only the Nicolai Bros., Northwest Door Co., Hand Manufacturing Co., J. A. Martin Co., North Pacific Planing Mill Co., and Ainslie Mill Co., who cannot afford to give nine hours to their employes for a day's work.

Since the boycott has been removed the woodworkers' label will be put into use, which in time will prove quite effective. While these six mills have won a partial victory, they will fail to get their old crews back again, which will cost them many times more than it would to have granted them the nine hours.

The strike situation on the P. C. & O. remains practically the same. The boys are standing as solid as the rock of ages. Various rumors have been started with the view to discourage the boys, but all such efforts have proven futile. The boys have confidence in each other, and have the undivided support of the public in Oregon City and all along the line. They are running boats on the river to accommodate the public and very little inconvenience has been experienced. The P. C. & O. has gone out of existence and merged into a new concern called the Oregon Water Power & Railway Company, which also includes the Oregon General Electric Company, that was incorporated about a month ago. The merger is controlled by the same officers and under the same management. Superintendent Tiffany is retained, but Dispatcher Stuart has resigned.

Discharge notices have been issued to all of the striking employes, requesting them to call for their time and deposit. The object is to get the boys to surrender the fight against the old company and put in their applications under the new. The boys are too wise to be hoodwinked, so they stay away and continue the fight.

Since Stuart's resignation, the only contention remaining is Tiffany. If the company will remove the latter obnoxious personage away from direct contact with the men and re-employ all of the boys who went out, there will be no further bone of contention.

It is said that Tiffany's fort is in herding men on construction work. He is everywhere almost at once and his profanity and abuse keeps the average navy going, but when it comes to passenger work, he is like a pig in a china shop. He lacks refinement and decency, and this, together with his incompetency, made him very unpopular with the public and his men. Stuart, they say, is a pretty nice fellow, but he was under poor instruction and too new at the business to be train dispatcher.

So soon as men are put in control who can guarantee a reasonable degree of safety to the lives of the employes and the public, the men are willing to return to work, as they have no grievance outside of that already made known.

It is due to the care and vigilance of the men alone that there has not been a large number of casualties under the management of Tiffany. In one day there were 14 instances where two cars met on the same track, and the reports were sent into the office. Another wonder is that some one hasn't broken Tiffany's head for the abuse that at times he has heaped upon his men.

The Ship Carpenters gave notice that on July 1 eight hours would constitute a day's work at \$3.50 per day. As this is the scale in all of the harbors on the Coast with the exception of Portland, the carpenters considered their demands just. This scale is already in operation in Government and city work, and also several of the yards. The demand only affects a few private firms and it is thought the matter will soon be adjusted. There is a considerable demand for ship carpenters in San Francisco harbor, and unless the scale requested is universally adopted in this port, the carpenters thrown out will leave for the Golden Gate city.

The Marine Engineers asked for a raise in wages to take effect July 1, and upon its being not granted, many of the boats are tied up. Ten years ago engineers on first-class river boats received from \$125 to \$150 per month. The wage was lowered to \$100 during the hard times, and has never been raised since, though prosperous times have returned to everybody but the steamboat men. Now they purpose to have a share of the good times, and have submitted a schedule of wages as follows:

On the steamers Potter, Hassalo, Thompson, Ocklahoma, Lurline and Bailey Gatzert, chief engineers are to receive \$110 per month, and assistant engineers \$85 per month.

On logboats, Willamette River boats, Columbia River boats and Snake River boats, chiefs to receive \$100 per month, and assistants \$75 per month.

On smaller boats, such as the Iralda, America and Republic, engineers to receive \$90.

The owners claim that they are unable to pay these wages, and besides they want the right to say when the advance in wages to their men should be made and how much. The engineers are afraid if it is left to their employers they will not live long enough to enjoy the benefit of their employers' philanthropy, so they took the matter in their own hands. The difference is being discussed in conference, but as yet no agreement has been reached. The engineers have the situation well in hand, as they are all licensed men.

Facts for Advertisers.

Printers' Ink, the recognized authority on advertising, after a thorough investigation on this subject, says: "A labor paper is a far better advertising medium than an ordinary newspaper in comparison to circulation. A labor paper, for example, having 2000 subscribers is of more value to the business man who advertises in it than an ordinary paper with 12,000 subscribers."

SANTA FE BOILERMAKERS STRIKE.

The Boilermakers' Union, of San Bernardino and Needles, Cal., have issued a circular setting forth the facts concerning their differences with the Santa Fe Railroad Company. The circular sets forth that the demand was for the abolishment of the blacklisting system and a raise of wages to \$4 per day. These towns are very undesirable places to live, and it is set forth that they are about the dearest places to live in in the United States. Board and lodging costs \$34 per month. Provisions: Flour per 50 pounds, \$2; potatoes, 5c a pound; sugar, 12 pounds for \$1; butter, 35 cents per pound; eggs, 30c per dozen; bread, 10c a loaf; gasoline, \$2 per five-gallon can; coal oil, \$1.75 per five-gallon can; stove-wood, \$12 per cord; coal, per ton, \$11.50; ice (absolute necessity), 1 1/2c a pound; water, \$2.50 a month; house rent, \$15 and up per month. These quotations are the average retail prices for the year, and give a conservative estimate of what it costs to live in that hot, sandy locality.

The wages asked for are not unreasonable. The Southern Pacific Railroad Company pay boilermakers \$4 per day at Tucson, Ariz., and El Paso, Tex. The Texas Pacific Railroad Company pay boilermakers \$4 per day at El Paso, Tex. The Rock Island Route pay boilermakers \$4 per day at Alamogordo, N. M.

The Santa Fe Company's tariff rates are 5 and 6 cents per mile to local points through this desert. The merchants have to pay the company an average of \$2 per 100 pounds for freight from Los Angeles or San Francisco (first and second class), which shows the grasping and extortionate methods of the company. And when a mechanic asks to be paid the prevailing wages paid by their competitors under like conditions, they are greatly shocked at such an unreasonable (?) demand. Their policy is to extort the maximum rates of transportation from the public and grind their employes down to the lowest possible pay.

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