

# Portland Labor Press

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## YEARLY CONTRACTS.

In an interview printed in the Journal of last Monday with a prominent member and the secretary of the Master Builders' Association, they each agree that the "yearly agreement plan won't work," for which most excellent reason their organization absolutely refuses to meet the committee from the unions and learn what yearly agreement is asked for. The sudden interest awakened in the hearts of these gentlemen in the workmen does credit to their humanity. This is particularly true of Secretary Gordon, who is well remembered by the unions as filling the same position two years ago. And in parenthesis it might be mentioned that the same president is in office at this time. In these interviews referred to above each gentleman takes very high ground based upon the fear that through the stupidity of the union's demands they may injure themselves and they don't propose to allow them to commit harikari. No, never, not if it exhausts every dollar they have gleaned from their previous labor and is now stored in the pockets of these noble philanthropists of the Portland Master Builders' Association. These gentlemen also fear that a raise of wages would increase their expenses. Wages have increased some in the past three years, though it is very little. Material has increased a great deal. Both these items taken together mean the cost of the finished building. Yet these contractors call this an increase of their expense and just go down in their capacious pockets and make the owner a present of it. That may be true, but it might be well to ask the owner if he has seen any of these bountiful gifts. Let us see how their present attitude compares with that of two years ago. We will make a comparison, that is why the writer referred above to the personality of their administration officers as being the same then as now.

At that time the unions had just gotten under good way a strong Building Trades Council, and the Carpenters' Union, with which they deal directly, was affiliated. Wages at that time for carpenters was any price the necessities of each individual forced him to accept—just the condition they want to exist today, and also the honest reason why they think "yearly agreements won't work." Yet in the face of these conditions, anticipating a busy building season and realizing that the unions were gaining in strength each day and that the Building Trades Council was becoming a power in the operation of the building industry, they, these same generous-hearted fellows, the Portland Master Builders' Association, proposed to this same Carpenters' Union that if they would agree to work for no one not a member of their association they would sign on behalf of their organization to pay a minimum wage of three fifty per day (\$3.50) and concede that eight hours should constitute a day's work, and to employ none but members of the Carpenters' Union (in good standing). This was a very tempting proposition and was brought before the Building Trades Council for its sanction and approval. The council refused to be a party to a contract which would have the effect of creating a monopoly in the hands of the contractors and have the further effect of robbing the investor. It might be pertinent to remark right here that a similar agreement was last spring entered into between these so-called masters and the lumber combine by which they were enabled to secure a rebate off their purchases denied to other builders. Proof of

this is found in the suit of Jenkins vs. the City Retail Lumber Co. But we digress: Another union a little later on entered into a similar agreement with their employers' association and this was taken in hand by the Building Trades Council after the agreement had been signed and the union was told to abrogate the contract or leave the affiliation of the council. They stayed by the council. Still later on another union, which could not stand against the honeyed words and cash temptations in the way of increased pay, signed an agreement of like import and the council refused them affiliation while their contract lasted. They withdrew because they had the bosses behind them. This lasted for quite a while and the investor suffered from their extortions. This combine could not agree very long and finally resulted in a strike upon the part of the union, which after fighting for several weeks the men had their necks twisted and went back to work.

These incidents are recent history, and every statement made here is positively correct and can be verified by those directly interested. The Building Trades Unions are willing to meet their bosses' unions and talk over a yearly agreement. How do they know it "won't work?" Is it as we think is clearly shown here, that they do not intend to tolerate unions, no matter what injury may be done the growth and prosperity of the city and community to which they are indebted for every privilege and advantage they enjoy?

It is well to remember, these things and it was a good work undertaken by the Daily Journal to bring about an agreement and insure peaceful conditions. If no more is accomplished it will enable all citizens to place rightfully the responsibility for any future disagreements which may arise. The unions have done their duty in the premises. They appointed responsible committees who visited the bosses' unions and were ignored. Let the future have in store what it may, we will endeavor to have it peaceful in Portland next year under right conditions, however, for the mechanic.

Freight rates on the chief commodities shipped from the East will be materially advanced January 18, the advance being made by a general agreement among all transcontinental lines and by the organization known as the Transcontinental Freight Association. The new rates will affect not only the Pacific Coast, but will affect it from Vancouver, B. C., to San Diego, Cal. The increased rates will be made on shipments from New York and common points, from Chicago and common points, from Omaha and Missouri river points, and from the St. Louis territory. In short, all shipments from the Missouri river east to the Atlantic will cost about 10 cents more for each 100 pounds brought to the Pacific Coast. The roads that will comply with the new rate agreement are the Northern Pacific, the Great Northern, Union Pacific, Southern Pacific, O. R. & N. and Santa Fe. These roads represent the Hill, Harriman and Rothschild interests and control the transcontinental business entirely. And yet, according to statistics compiled by the Journal of Commerce, of New York City, dividend and interest disbursements to be paid in January next by the leading railroad and industrial companies, local banks, trust companies and traction corporations, also interest payable on the government debt, will reach a total of \$134,000,000. This sum is about \$2,000,000 greater than the total payments of January, 1903, but a decrease compared with the semi-annual payments in July last, which were \$136,000,000, the highest on record. Interest payments by railroads would have shown much heavier increase had it not been for what seems to be a general effort to make payments on new issues falling due at some other season of the year, this undoubtedly to avoid disturbance to the money market. The next thing we will hear is that these roads have decided to declare a reduction of 20 per cent in wages.

In reply to the utterances of Angus M. Cannon, a prominent official of the Mormon Church, who, in the course of an address in the Tabernacle at Salt Lake, Sunday, stated that the Utah Fuel Company wanted to hire several hundred men to take the places of striking miners in the coal mines of Carbon county, and advised young Mormons who had previous experience in mining to accept these places. Con Kelliher, national organizer of the United Mineworkers of America, has issued an address to organized labor, and says: "Union men must be aroused to the true situation, and defend themselves and appeal to the national labor organizations throughout America to assist in unseating Senator Reed Smoot, who is a member of the controlling board of this church, and who would be a dangerous foe to labor in congress." Kelliher has also sent a telegram to



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John Mitchell, president of the United Mineworkers, in which he states that the Mormon Church has openly declared war on organized labor in Utah, and suggests that in self-defense union labor should do all in its power to prevent the seating of Senator Smoot, "as a rebuke for its interference in this industrial dispute."

The tempted and fallen walking delegate, who has been so generally exploited by the newspapers of our country, has been given a great deal more notoriety through the columns of the subsidized press than would have occurred if there had not been a tacit understanding to blazen his defections for the purpose of bringing impugny upon the whole labor movement. Either that or a criminal walking delegate is so rare as to cause wholesale surprise. Sheriff O'Brien of New York, in speaking of the Sam Parks affair, said: "In my official capacity as sheriff of the great City of New York, throughout my full term of two years, I have been required to take but one or two labor men to prison for 'grafting,' whereas something like thirty-five lawyers have been taken over for the same purpose, as well as half that many preachers, yet we have heard nothing of stopping the profession of law, although quite a bunch of that profession went to pay penalties for crookedness, nor have we seen 'one word in the papers that preaching shall cease because quite a number of that craft found their way to a certain state institution, and why we have been told labor organizations should cease to have business officials because one or two have gone wrong is a mystery that needs further explanation."

The lumbermen's combination of the Pacific Coast has fallen out of bed, and hereafter there will be an individual scrap for patronage. Some of the companies got mad because the combine restricted their output, or compelled them to surrender the profits of the excess above their allotment. Others charged that they were not receiving a fair share of the trade, and wanted more. The whole thing was unsatisfactory to the California operators and they drove in the plug that split the lumber. Now it is war and slashing of prices, and a threat has been made that wages will be reduced so as to enable them to fight the better. We shall see. If they can't get together upon anything else they may do so on the poor wage-earner who barely makes a living now. This would be a master stroke. If they can't become a unit on the decrease of wages they will be up against it. Since the railroad combination has determined to increase freight rates 10 per cent, adding that much more to the cost of living, any appreciable decrease of wages of any kind on the Pacific Coast is liable to be accompanied with serious objection. We predict that capital will have to forego a little of its profits first.

Despite the fact that there has been alleged concentrated effort to discourage and annihilate trades unionism, the New York State Department of Labor, in its bulletin issued for the quarter ending October 1, reports a great increase in membership and in unions established. The bulletin says: "At the end of September the Bureau of Labor statistics registered 2582 trades unions in this state, this being an increase of 235, over the number six months previous. The total membership was 395,756, an increase of 38,634. New York City gained 24,361, or 11.3 per cent in membership. The principal increases were in the building and transport trades, while the clothing trades lost 4665 members. The volume of immigration at the port of New York continues to swell beyond the record-breaking figures of last year. In July, August and September 129,809 steerage passengers landed in New York, as against 108,800 in the same months in 1902."

A gigantic postal fraud has been discovered in New York City right on the heels of the scandal at the department at Washington, D. C.

The New York office has been acting as a clearance depot of crookedness for the offices of other cities involving thousands of dollars. As the efforts of the inspectors have only resulted in disclosures so far it is to be hoped that justice will be meted out to the criminal parties soon. The theft of a postage stamp by an unfortunate person who didn't have the price would have set the federal courts in motion long ere this. The distinction seems quite marked between a petit thief and a political thief, even by the government.

The beneficent work of the Salvation Army, while constantly felt, was distinguished on Christmas day. Thousands of poor people were fed and clothed and made happy in the cities throughout the land upon this festive day. There never was a sect that followed so literally the doctrine of the Great Reformer, who came upon earth to save the souls of men and show them the way to eternal life. Like Christ the Salvation Army labors amongst wretchedness and poverty, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and singing Psalms. 'Tis a glorious mission unknown in the temples of the rich.

Outside of remedying the tax law, or re-enacting the old one, the special session of the legislature could not have done a greater service to the state than the passing of the Celilo canal bill. It will be the means of relieving the inland producer of our state of a large transportation tax that has heretofore found its way into the strong boxes of the combined railroads, which will be invested in the improvement of the farms and increase the acreage and output of the state. It will open up vast resources heretofore untouched and restrained by railroad schedules.

Senator Bacon, of Georgia, has introduced a resolution requiring a secretary of commerce (and labor) to furnish information relative to what classes of goods manufactured in this country are sold or offered for sale in foreign countries, or for export to foreign countries, at prices less than is charged to home consumers. This will be interesting reading for those who have been induced to believe that high tariff is necessary to maintain home industries and protect American labor against the invasions of foreign capital.

The mysterious disappearance of the anti-gambling bill at Salem during the special session of the legislature is the result of a loose system of transferring bills from one house to the other, taken advantage of by dishonest servants, bribed by lobby corruptionists. From all appearances the bill never left the house. Whether a bill is a good or bad one it should be allowed to take its course, and a severe penalty should attach to any party or parties apprehended in the attempt to steal or waylay them.

During the holidays the members of organized labor in the city deferred their union meetings and the transaction of business. Now that the season is over they should take up their work with renewed energy, not forgetting to be temperate in all things. There is need for greater organization, more harmony, and constant vigilance. A general demand for the union label is one of the essentials to insure success.

The Labor Press wishes its many readers a Happy New Year, and during the twelve months and years to come unlimited, prosperity.

Mayor Jones, of Toledo, Ohio, has announced to his workmen that one hundred shares of stock in the S. M. Jones Company, of a par value of \$100 each, has been set aside to create a "golden rule trust," to be administered by a board of seven employees of the factory. The dividends on the stock are to be used to "perpetuate the golden rule idea" and to make the company an educational as well as a manufacturing concern. If the plan proves successful, the stock, instead of only the dividend on it, will be turned over to the trustees for the employees and an opportunity given to men in all departments to acquire more stock.

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