

UNIONISM A VITAL FORCE.

Ray Stannard Baker Vindicates the Virtues of the Closed Shop.

McClure calls it an extraordinary story of labor conditions in New York in which Ray Stannard Baker interprets the real significance to the American people of the "closed shop," the most vital industrial question of the day. So it is an extraordinary story—a story which labor papers and their readers only are familiar with, of the vast benefits which labor unionism confers upon the whole people, not excepting the upright employers, by its upbuilding and education of the working masses. Ray Stannard Baker, when detailed by McClure's Magazine for a series of articles on the labor situation in the principal American cities, started out with a prejudice against trades unions, and his earlier work was much marred by this prejudice and a disposition to rely upon the statements of unscrupulous employers. The more deeply he has investigated, however, the more his vision has broadened, and the more friendly he has become to the labor union cause, until his articles have come to have a greater value than any other outside contributions to the labor discussion.

In the current issue of McClure's, Mr. Baker takes the struggles and uplift of the garment workers of New York as his subject, and the history he writes and the logic of the conclusions he draws, vindicate the principles of unionism in fullest degree. He tells of the terrible conditions of child labor and sweat shop which formerly prevailed, and confesses that in the amelioration of those horrors not the church or the noble civic reformers, but organized labor has been the chief influence. He also credits the trades union with being the strongest force tending to Americanize and educate the swarms of immigrants or diverse nationalities who pour in an unceasing nonunion tide through Castle Garden. The marvelous and rapid elevation of foreigners from conditions produced by centuries of oppression, squalor and serfdom, to independent American citizens imbued with ambition and patriotic ideals is the work of the union closed shop. Mr. Baker defends the closed shop as a necessity, at least in some trades, and demonstrates clearly how deeply indebted the upright employer is to the helpfulness of organized labor. He likewise shows conclusively how closely the business man should be interested in upbuilding the cause of labor for better wages and living conditions.

"Unions, like governments, like society in general," says Mr. Baker, "are organized to deal with the dishonest and to assist the inefficient classes. If all employers were as broadminded as the best in the clothing industry, and all workmen were efficient, temperate, honest, there would be little need of unions—nor of any law or government. The union is the industrial policeman."

It was not because the "closed shop" or the domination of labor by the union was an "un-American institution" that the clothing manufacturers attacked it. Business is not that way; business cares no more for Americanism than for Christian science; business is for itself, for the main chance, and if a closed shop will increase its profits more than an open shop, then it espouses a closed shop—as the Building Trade Employers' Association has done in New York, as the master plumbers have done in many cities. Indeed, some of the clothing manufacturers of New York who are now fighting the union so bitterly on the "open shop" proposition were, a year ago, actually urging the union to press forward in the Rochester struggle and bring the manufacturers there—their competitors—to the eight-hour day. If the union had succeeded in Rochester, they did not succeed. Rochester went back to a nine-hour day and Philadelphia followed, thereby giving them an advantage as competitors over the New York manufacturers.

"Granting that the clothing manufacturers could utterly demolish the United Garment Workers—a design which they all disclaim—what would they gain? With the union beaten, wages would be lower and hours longer, sweat-shop work might even be surreptitiously re-established, but no one manufacturer would gain anything; they would all go down together in the competitive market. The only party to the struggle really profiting would be the public, which could clothe itself for a time more, at a very little more, cheaply—at the expense of the comfort, morality and Americanism of the East Side.

"The public certainly pays for unionism. Wage advances come, finally, from the pocket of the consumer. But the Americanizing of the East Side—and that is exactly what it means—through unionism, would be cheap at almost any price, and

not merely in a philanthropic or moral sense, but in a broader, social and even selfish business sense; for a high-paid East Side will live better, buy and consume more food, clothing, coal, furniture—make business for everybody.

"Broadly speaking, therefore, if an 'open' shop policy, rigidly pursued by the manufacturers (no matter what their abstract rights may be), disrupts the protective union and reduces the Garment Workers to sweat-shop conditions, drives them down the plane below that of decent American livelihood (and there is no question that it has this tendency), then it is a public wrong and a detriment to society."

"The union is not only a benefit to both workers and employers, but it has become, in our complex democratic civilization, an absolute necessity; and it should be as jealously protected by society as any other great institution. We may even find that a union shop or even a 'closed' shop in many unskilled or semi-skilled occupations would be a blessing until the workmen have been lifted to a plane of intelligence, having acquired a capital of skill where they can in a measure protect themselves, or until immigration is stopped or checked.

"Unionism, then, is a necessary, vital force in our life; but just as surely as it is a great power for good, it may also, unlimited and unrestrained, become a dangerous influence for evil.

"But if the undoubted right of the employer to hire union or non-union men indiscriminately is exercised without resistance, it means that the employers will gradually fill up their shops with non-union men—because non-union men, unprotected by organization, will work cheaper; and that ultimately means the end of unionism and all that unionism stands for.

"Hence the bitter opposition of labor unionists to the unrestricted operation of the right of the employer to hire non-union men. The Garment Workers insist that the union is the only barrier that stands in the way of a swift return to conditions approximating those of the old-time sweat-shop. Indeed the tendency of wages in an organized industry is to sink to the wage of the man who will work cheapest and live poorest. A poor wage, like poor money, drives out the good.

"Allow Chinese labor to compete freely in the American market, and immediately only Chinese wages would be paid, and the American workman would be forced to live like a coolie or starve.

"On the other hand, in industries where no unions exist, there is a tendency for all employers to grade downward to compete with the most merciless taskmaster in the trade. An employer who wishes to pay good wages, to share his prosperity, to be benevolent, cannot do it because his neighbor grinds his workmen down, and in order to remain in business the honest employer must stoop to the methods of the dishonest employer.

"The properly managed union enables the naturally upright employer to be upright, and it forces the dishonest employer to be upright."

The breakdown of the union would not only pull down the better, more ambitious workmen—those that have built up the union—to the level of the new immigrant, who is willing to work for next to nothing and live in crowded, dirty, immoral, un-American conditions, but it would let in also the piratical, dishonest, small employer, who, if he could, would return to the diabolical sweat-shop system and force the decent employers to follow, directly or indirectly. These are the inevitable tendencies; and the chief force that has appeared to withstand the industrial "grading down" is the union.

The union always has against it the unscrupulous employer, who sees in this organized force a hindrance to his plans for sweating a little more profit from the abject necessity of the workers. And it is only when the better class of employers perceive, as they have in many industries, the value of a good union as an ally in raising the standard of the whole trade, do we reach the amicably trade agreement stage in which the frequency of the industrial-conflict is reduced to a minimum.—Exchange.

WAR AGAINST TOBACCO TRUST.

Independent Dealers of San Francisco Organize to Fight.

Determined at any cost to monopolize the tobacco industry in San Francisco and on the Pacific Coast the tobacco trust is going to greater lengths in this territory than it has ever attempted to reach in the East.

The trust agent, Edward Wise, who was once a retailer in the East, but who sold out to the trust, is looking for more locations. He hopes to open his war in San Francisco with twenty stores.

It has been learned that the trust has brought into service a contract, which, had it been signed by the wholesalers on this coast as the trust directed, would have wiped out every cent of their profit upon an entire line of the trust's goods.

The methods which the trust employs to drain from the wholesaler every possible penny of profit is shown by this contract, which all the wholesalers in San Francisco except three refused to sign. A peculiarity of the contract is that it binds only the wholesaler. It is cast in the form of a mimeographed letter from the wholesaler to the trust. It is furnished to the wholesaler by the trust and when signed by him was to have been returned to the trust. The wholesaler did not have the signature of the trust to any agreement.

The contract, which is so technical that some of the wholesalers had difficulty in understanding it, means when translated that the rebates which the trust allows wholesalers are paid to them only after six months have elapsed from the date of the purchase of the goods. Holding back the rebate is done to keep the wholesalers in line. If they are not "good" they lose the rebate.

Almost every cigar store has its slot machine. When it is an honest piece of mechanism the dealer figures that each cigar which he sells through the machine he sells at practically the price he pays for it. The usefulness of the machine lies in its powers as a trade puller.

The trust is against the machines. They get trade through their certificate and premium system. In Chicago they secured the aid of some clergymen in instituting a campaign against the machines.

Thirty-nine local retailers of San Francisco who are independent have already gone into the Pacific Retailers' Exchange, a weapon which they have taken from the trust's arsenal. They and others who will follow them into the system will give premium just as the trust does. The premium lists are identical. The independents who have already begun the use of the certificates have the advantage of having reached the field first. In the East the trust won many battles because it had the novelty of the certificates on their side.

A fact which will be of interest to retailers who think that they will better their condition by joining hands with the trust is the change that comes over the face of things after the trust has secured a hold upon the cigar industry in any city. Barring New York, in which city the United Cigar Stores have fifty-seven shops, the trust has not gone into a city in which it has not cut wages and reduced the number of its employees. In New York the trust won because the independent opposition did not give values.

In other communities where the fight was more equal the trust fought not only the independents but those dealers who went into its arms. In Kansas City the trust started with fourteen stores. There was plenty of employment for seceding independents and the seceders thought that everything was to be agreeable; but already ten of those stores have been closed. The remaining four are now to be compressed into two. Of course the surplus employees are out of jobs. In Chicago many of the trust leases have been given up. The same is true in Pittsburg and other Eastern cities.

In the East the trust thinks that it is paying a munificent salary when it passes out \$65 a month to an employee. Some of them get more to begin with, but the cut comes sooner or later. More often than not, it goes below \$65.

Why Courts Are Criticised.

Organized workmen are often criticised with bitterness for their low opinion of the courts. But have not the courts themselves gone a long way to earn this contempt? Recently the court of appeals of New York decided that the eight-hour labor law of that state, which makes all public work contracts subject to a condition that the contractor must observe the eight-hour labor day, invalid, because it restricts freedom of contract. Hardly had the wires ceased ticking the news of that decision against workingmen and in favor of freedom of contract, when an appellate division of the Supreme Court of the same state decided another case against workingmen and in favor of restricting freedom of contract. It held that a contract between an employer and his men for a "closed shop" was invalid because contrary to public policy. Don't these decisions indicate anti-labor bias rather than judicial balance?

If it is against public policy for an employer and his men to agree that none but union men shall work in that employer's shop, why is it not against public policy, especially when the Legislature so declares it, for an

employer to work his men more than eight hours a day on public work? If the Legislature cannot limit private contracting powers for labor on public work, how can courts limit private contracting powers on private work? If restriction of freedom of contract in the direction of protecting workmen from being ground between the under millstone of their necessities and the upper millstone of their employers' greed, is not against public policy, why is it against public policy to allow them to make contracts with employers for such protection? In a word, why did labor lose the second case, in which it stood for freedom of contract, as well as the first, in which it stood for restricting freedom of contract? Are workmen very much to blame if they suspect that they lost at least one of these cases because the court was less solicitous for legal consistency than to rebuke "labor" and weaken its power of organization?—The Public.

Representative Hearst has introduced a resolution in Congress, calling upon the President for all documents in connection with the removal of Cunningham and Kellar, mail carriers.

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Leaves Corvallis 6:00 A. M.
Arrives Albany 6:40 A. M.
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Train No. 3 for Detroit via Albany, leaves Corvallis at 6:00 A. M. and connects with the S. P. Albany-Portland local train leaving Albany at 7:00 A. M. Train No. 3 leaves Albany for Detroit at 7:30 A. M., arriving there at noon, giving ample time to reach the Breitenbush Hot Springs the same day.

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The Billboard

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