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GOVERNOR CHAMBERLAIN'S MESSAGE.

A message from a governor to a state legislature is usually a lengthy document and of such an extremely dry nature that the average reader looks at the headlines and lets it go at that. There are occasions, however, when such documents contain interesting reading matter for the people, especially if the questions dwelt upon by the chief executive are of vital importance to themselves. In his message, delivered to the Oregon legislature, Governor Chamberlain threats of so many important matters relating to the state that its perusal will not only be interesting, but will be of benefit to everyone who has made his home here and is interested in the future welfare of Oregon and its people.

In his review of the industrial, financial and social conditions of the state, the governor shows that he has not been idle since occupying the executive chair, and it is evident that he has devoted considerable time to personal investigation of the state's affairs. Taxation, public schools, normal schools, the soldiers' home, state penitentiary, insane asylum, public lands, the national guard, Indian war veterans, salaries of state officials, and in fact every other subject of interest to Oregonians claims a part of the governor's attention.

Thousands of workingmen will read with pleasure the conscientious pains with which the governor discusses the labor question and the various legislative remedies which he wisely suggests for the amelioration of the working classes. Dealing with the question of employers' liability insurance, the governor says:

"The varied conditions of modern life, the rapid growth of corporations and associations of men employing vast numbers of laborers, have very recently resulted in the extension of the insurance principle so as to cover and protect against the legal liability which is ordinarily assumed in becoming employers of others. The employer under the law is liable to his servant for injuries incurred by the latter in the course of service and as a result of the employers' want of proper care, subject to the qualification, however, that the servant assumes the hazards which are incidental to his employment, among which are the servant's contributory negligence and the negligence of fellow servants. It was to lessen this legal responsibility of the employer which gave birth to employers' liability insurance. Contracts of insurance of this class have been assailed from time to time as against public policy in that they virtually lessen the penalties which follow negligence on the part of the insured toward those to whom he owes a legal duty, but unfortunately, it seems to me, this view has not received the sanction of the courts. These contracts of insurance have therefore become a part of our industrial life, and their status for good or evil is being gradually fixed by the courts of last resort. For a consideration paid by the employer (and sometimes it is charged, out of money deducted from the wages of the employee in the shape of his monthly hospital fee) to the insurance company, the latter contracts to discharge the liability of the former for damages sustained by the employee in the discharge of his duties. What is the result in actual practice? The employer is in fact relieved from one

of the penalties of his own carelessness, and, knowing this, in many instances at least, becomes careless in the conduct of his business, use antiquated machinery and in many respects fails even in the most hazardous business to afford his employees that measure of protection which in the absence of such insurance common prudence and self-preservation would dictate. Nor is that altogether the worst feature of this new contract of insurance. When an employee happens to be injured or killed, because of negligence upon the part of the employer, occasioned by the knowledge that in case of being compelled to pay the penalty thereof his contract of insurance protects him, the employer, at the instance of the insurance company, refuses to pay the most meritorious claim for damages and resists payment to the last ditch. The employer is the nominal defendant in such actions, the insurance company the real defendant. The attorneys for the employer, the nominal attorneys, those of the insurance company paid by the year the real attorneys. It is the policy of the insurer to keep from the knowledge of the jury the fact that it, and not the defendant, is the real party in interest, and so strict are the courts in empaneling juries that cases may and sometimes do arise where a stockholder, officer or agent of the insurer itself sits to determine the rights of the injured employee. To meet these new conditions, new legislation is demanded for the protection of those who are engaged in the development of our industries. If the employee is injured because the employer, secure in the knowledge that his policy protects him, is careless in failing to furnish a reasonably safe place to work, and reasonably safe material to work upon, he should be permitted to sue either the careless employer or the insurance company that offers a reward for carelessness, or both, as he may elect. Without some statutory provision upon this subject this cannot be done, and I earnestly recommend the passage of an act that will confer this right. But it is said such legislation will drive liability insurance companies out of the state. To this I answer that, without such right, it were better for the state that they leave than that the life and limb of the citizen be dependent upon the mercy of such institutions."

Discussing the fellow servant law, he says:

"There was passed at the twenty-second biennial session of the legislature an act entitled 'An act imposing upon railroad corporations liability for injury to their employees in certain cases.' This act is commonly known as the 'fellow servant law,' and as its title implies has application only to cases growing out of employment in the railroad service. All that was said in my last message in behalf of railway employees and in advocacy of the act passed for their protection applies with equal force to all who are engaged in every other form of hazardous employment. A general statute should be passed at this session applicable to all such employment. The laborer in the logging camp and the sawmill, the mine and the smelter has no voice in the selection of those with whom he is compelled to work to earn his daily bread. The careful and competent laborer in all of these and other similar employments assumes the risks incident to the business in which he engages, and one of these is the liability of injury to himself through the carelessness of a fellow servant. If he had a voice in the selection of his co-servants, or could without jeopardizing his position, protest against the employment of or retention in service of the careless or incompetent, there might be less reason for suggesting legislation in his behalf. We know from experience that the man who is compelled to seek employment can impose no conditions even for his own protection. If he undertook to do so he would soon be given to understand that he could work or let it alone, and the trend of modern legislation is toward statutory protection. The moral effect of the law modifying the fellow servant doctrine as applied by the court is most excellent, for it not only compels the employment of competent men and exacts a penalty in case of failure to do so, but inevitably leads to the adoption of improved machinery for safeguarding the lives and limbs of all employees.

I urge upon your consideration a general law upon this subject, which is all the more needed at this time because our state promises a more rapid development in the near future in all lines of manufacturing enterprise than it has ever experienced before."

There are other questions of much interest to organized labor which are dealt with in the document and which should be read carefully by every workingman who looks to his own future. Timely suggestions for the regulation of sailor boarding houses are offered and an appropriation is asked

for the purpose of making the child labor commission more effective. A large part of the message is devoted to the discussion of regulating the labor of Oregon state prisoners.

Taken as a whole, Governor Chamberlain's message is a document full of wisdom and shows statesmanship of a high order. From a labor standpoint it bespeaks a sense of equity and justice to all.

MORRISON STREET BRIDGE.

Whatever may be said as to the cost of the extra improvements made on the new Morrison street bridge, there is no doubt in anyone's mind as to the substantial manner in which the big structure has been erected. The completion of this immense piece of work and the turning over to the people of Portland of a structure that will compare favorably with any of its kind on this coast, is a silent tribute to the skill, workmanship and carefulness of the workmen who built it. Every union workingman who crosses the new bridge can feel justly proud when he knows that every bit of work done in its construction, from the monster piers that rest solidly on the Willamette's bed to the last nail driven on the planking, was performed by union men. During the entire ten months while actual work was in progress there was not a single accident of consequence recorded. When one considers the dangerous nature of such work, and the large number of men employed, it is little short of miraculous that not a single life was sacrificed during the process of construction. No better testimony to the high intelligence and carefulness of workmen could be given than this.

Altogether, the completion of the new bridge reflects credit on the contracting company and on the members of the Bridge and Structural Iron Workers' union, who worked all along in perfect harmony with the superintendent of construction, Mr. Butler.

There is no single movement which promises better results for the cause of organized labor in this city than the organization of the Woman's Label league. The women represent the real purchasing power and if they are banded together will form a powerful adjunct to the other unions. There are grand things in store for us if the enthusiasm displayed by the members of the league at its last meeting count for anything. That is the right way to go at it. It will not be long, if the Label league pursues that course, until its members are able to point to the existence in this community of a vigorous sentiment in favor of the purchase and sale of union-made goods.

There is probably no other organization that can be aided by the members of other unions so thoroughly as the broommakers, and the assistance does not cost a cent. If all union men will take the pains to instruct their wives, daughters and sweethearts, the broommakers can be given a wonderful boost. The manner in which this may be accomplished is very simple. Thousands of prison-made brooms bearing the label of unscrupulous business firms, are sold in Oregon, and are purchased by good union people who are under the impression that they are made under fair conditions. The best way to overcome this deception is to ask for brooms manufactured here, and to see that the name of the manufacturer is labeled on the broom.

The efforts of the committees now in the field for the purpose of securing five thousand additional subscribers for the Labor Press have not been without success. Already many unions have responded generously and favorable reports from others are expected by the first of February. In a future issue the Labor Press will take pleasure in publishing a list of all these. It will be a long one.

With the organization of the Officers' union, the Woman's Union Label league and the Ladies' Auxiliary, M. T. U., it would seem that Portland has made a pretty good start already this year.

When you buy a cigar take a look at the box, and if the long blue label is not there refuse the cigar, that's all.

The Packard Shoe is union-made, is up-to-date, fits fine, looks good, is fit for a king, and priced for a workingman.

Help bust the trust by using crackers made by the Western Baking Co. There may be other canned goods, but there is only one "Monopole" brand. See that you get them.

The Portland Mattress Company has the best facilities for the manufacture of mattresses, couches, lounges, etc.

LAUGHS.

Mr. Knocker (observing a copy of The Labor Press at a neighbor's home): "What! Ain't that paper busted up yet? Why, I quit takin' it over a year ago."

Bill owned a billboard and owed a board bill. The board bill bored Bill until he sold the billboard and paid the board bill.

The Duel Was Abandoned.

An Irishman traveling in France was challenged by a Frenchman to fight a duel, to which he readily consented and suggested shillelahs as weapons. "That won't do," said the Frenchman's seconds. "As challenged by you have the right to choose the weapons, but chivalry demands that you should decide upon a weapon with which Frenchmen are familiar." "Is that so?" replied the Irishman coolly. "Very well, we'll fight with guillotines."

A New Union.

The flat dwellers and householders of Chicago propose a union, the object of which is stated to be the regulation of rents and exposure of rent raising conspiracies; furnish legal advice and defend members in litigation for right; agitate for civic rights; enforce ordinances relating to sanitary conditions; to work for street improvements; compel landlords to live up to their leases, supply heat, and make promised improvements, and to co-operate with labor unions and other organizations working in the interests of the landless class.

Hands Him One.

Secretary Job, of the union smashers, wrote President Bicknell, of the Chicago Bureau of Associated Charities, stating that the employment bureau of the Employers' Association would give employment to any workmen sent there by the charity bureau. President Bicknell is credited with having made the following reply to his Joblots: "I have learned that you are fighting organized labor. If the bureau sends any men to you they will be first informed of the situation. We rarely have application for relief from union men. The unions take care of their own people. The union men also make better wages than the non-union, because they do better work."



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IT IS AN EASY MATTER TO ABOLISH SWEAT SHOPS

Did it ever occur to you how easy it would be to abolish the sweatshop, that disgrace to our industrial life? The abolition would be prompt and lasting if purchasers would always demand the union label and insisted on getting the union label. There are hundreds of young girls whose employment in sweatshops is nothing short of absolute slavery. It is true the Siberian taskmaster is not there with his knout, the whip of the slave-driver cracks not, but it is slavery just the same. If one of the operatives happens to look up from her machine a menacing shout assails her ears from the ever-watchful floor walker. The girl realizes that should she repeat this dereliction the week's pittance will come her way no more in that shop, and she will have to seek another slave pen. There is, happily, a shade of brightness in the sad picture; the work of unionism has in many instances alleviated these conditions. Many girls have been educated to a realization of the material benefits of unionism as opposed to scabism. And these converts to the true faith are doing noble evangelical work among the oppressed and deluded workers in the sweatshops.—Baltimore Labor Leader.

Law to Be Enforced.

The enforcement of the child labor laws of Illinois was begun recently in all the coal mines in the state. The courts have sustained the interpretation of the law by Factory Inspector Edgar T. Davies, that no boy under 16 years of age should be allowed to work in the mines. Accordingly the order has gone forth that the children employed in these places should be sent to their homes. It is estimated that the enforcement of the statute will take more than 2000 boys away from employment under ground.

Lawlessness of Capital.

We hear so much in the capitalistic press about the lawlessness of unions that it might be well to call their attention to the Slocum disaster where 1022 lives were lost, the Iroquois fire, where 700 perished, and the 15,000 people killed on the railroads last year all through the utter disregard for the laws by the corporations. The crimes of unionism look too small to mention when compared with the crimes of men who think only of putting high dividends in their pockets at the expense of thousands of lives.

Those crimes and hundreds of others due to corporate greed, cannot be charged to unionism and they are a million times worse than any ever committed by the men who have to fight to keep from starvation. Before you condemn the unions, think of the crimes of capitalism and perhaps you will be silent from the sense of decency and fair play.—Union Labor News.

He Wouldn't Wear Them.

It is related of a Portland printer that a few days ago he visited a tailor shop on Washington street that advertises union-made clothes only. The printer wanted trousers, and was shown a pair that suited all right as to the price, but when he looked for the label it was not to be found. He spoke to the tailor about it, who replied that it was certainly union-made, saying that a young lady, sitting at a machine nearby, had made them. The printer said the only way to prove to him that they were union-made was to put the label on them. This caused the young lady to remark that she supposed she would have to join the union. And the printer replied: "You will have to join the union if you want me to wear your pants."

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