

Portland Labor Press

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GEO. E. McCORD, Business Manager

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RULE OR RUIN POLICY.

As we go to press the differences between the street car men and the company have assumed such proportions that a tie-up of the traction lines may occur at any time. The breach is due to a refusal of the company's officials to receive a committee from the union to review specific grievances. Since the big merger the company has established a policy to treat only with its men as individuals, and realizing the impotence of this system to secure redress for just complaints the men insist they have a right to consolidate their forces and negotiate their demands and complaints through representative agents and committees the same as the company is doing. General Manager Fuller has taken the position that he is willing for the men to organize a local union (a company's union in fact) but he refuses to allow his employees the right to affiliate with the International Union of Street Railway Employees. In fact in an attempt made by the company to unite the men in a local independent union during the past few days Mr. Fuller appeared before the men at the Piedmont and O. W. P. barns and assured them if they would withdraw from the regularly organized union and join the independent local he would grant them an increase in wages of 2 cents an hour above the 1 cent raise already given them and would reduce the time for receiving the maximum (27 cents an hour) from 10 years service to 6 years. In both places Mr. Fuller's offer was rejected, the union men deciding to stand by their organization. This is an arbitrary position for Mr. Fuller and his company to take for he knows, and the public knows, that the men have as good a right to affiliate with an international organization that gives them sick and death and other benefits as he has to operate the railway lines in this city for the profits upon outside capital.

When Mr. Fuller operated the Portland Railway Co. there was a union chartered from the International such as there is now, and he treated with them as such, and had been heard to say that the men had a right to their organization. It is not consistent to believe that Mr. Fuller has changed his mind in this respect for such a right an honest and liberal man must concede, but Mr. Fuller is acting in compliance with orders from higher authority than he, arbitrary in the essence of things and wholly un-American. If the policy of this aggregation of capitalist alienists persist in affronting the right of Oregon's people upon franchises illegally and irregularly acquired they will have to abide by the consequences.

Hardly had the signatures upon the documents of the big merger become dry before intolerable conditions were imposed upon the men before they formed a union. A barbarous system of forcing the men to have their photos taken for a company's gallery (black list) was inaugurated. A time schedule was installed that forced the men to violate the speed limit provided by the city ordinance and become law breakers. In addition to this the motormen were up against a clap-net fender that they could not operate. The lives of the public were constantly jeopardized and many people were killed. All accidents and fatalities were charged against the men whom the company hid behind to escape the law. The hospital fee being a graft the men chafed under it. Cars were used daily beyond their capacity and the conductors daily took their lives in their hands collecting tribute from the public for the company from the running boards of open cars. These things and many others were brought to the attention of the company by the men as "individuals" and were ignored. Finally the pressure of the "big merger" became so heavy the men decided to form a union. The organization was completed on the night of June 13. In less than a month the secretary of the union, a motorman whose services had been satisfactory in every way, was singled out and discharged without reason or explanation. Other men were called into the office and threatened with dismissal unless they recanted their unionism.

Realizing that the company was determined upon the destruction of the organization the men revolted and are determined to stand upon their rights. They do not want to strike. Many of them are old employees, men of families, have homes here, and are good citizens, but they know that their new masters are hard ones and they must keep together to protect their own.

The men have offered to submit the entire difficulty to arbitration upon equal terms and abide by the decision of the arbitration board. Mr. Fuller refuses to consider it or even to meet a committee from the union. Unless he recedes from his arbitrary stand there will be trouble and a bitter fight. The Labor Press, with the car men, deplors the situation, but the car men of Portland will fight for their prerogatives as American citizens, and they are battling upon the eternal grounds of liberty and honesty, untrammelled by the pitfalls of lawless operation as is accredited to their employers.

The Supreme Court of the State of Washington in a decided opinion last Wednesday sustained the eight-hour public contract law of 1899, and held also that the law of 1903 on the same subject is not inharmonious with the former statute. Judges Rudkin and Fullerton dissented from the majority. The case was that of the State of Washington, appellant, vs. W. H. Davis, respondent, from Thurston county for the construction of a bridge at Little Rock and was charged with working his men more than eight hours a day. The Justice of the Peace before whom he was taken found him guilty and imposed a fine of \$25. On appeal to the Superior Court a demurrer to the complaint was sustained and the action dismissed, on the ground that the law of 1899 had been repealed by the law of 1903. The Supreme Court says there was no repealing clause in the act of 1903 and the courts hesitate to affirm repeal by implication. It finds moreover that the laws are not inconsistent, notwithstanding the law of 1899 is a penal statute, while that of 1903 is not, unless the forfeiture of a contract on conviction can be regarded as penal. The case is remanded with instructions to overrule the demurrer and proceed with the trial.

The labors of a few industrialists in this city will avail them little, for their theory is impossible as it would be to reverse the law of gravity. Everything seeks its level, which is an immutable law that cannot be abridged in craft or industry. The bricklayer, the painter, printer, and in fact every trade is distinct within itself, and all the preaching and exhorting will not convince these men their interests are identical. The altruistic doctrine of fraternal responsibility and the brotherhood of man may be infused into their lives to a certain degree, but the respective interests of their calling will come first, for it is a part of them that nature has built up.

The United Typothetae is in session at Buffalo, N. Y., and its delegates are comforting themselves listening to the assurances of their president, George H. Ellis, that the "open shop" in the printing business is thoroughly established. It is indeed wonderful how easily some men can beguile themselves with their own association. The truth is that out of 45,000 employed printers 40,000 are working under the "closed shop," or whatever it might be called, and eight hours per day; and they ought to know for they are the ones who are doing the work.

To organized a union within a union is the question with the Portland street railway company. This was done in Seattle a couple of years ago and a strike of the men successfully broken. An attempt is now being tried here, but it looks like it would

HALF HOLIDAY MOVEMENT.
The Portland Branch of the National Consumers' League has taken the initiative in an endeavor to secure for the employees of the retail houses of the city a half-holiday on Wednesday afternoons during the months of August. A petition is being circulated by the League, and it is hoped that enough signatures may be obtained to bring success to the movement.

The time has gone by when it was possible for the employer to be indifferent to the health or the welfare of his employee. It is a short sighted policy which believes that any service is adequately paid for in money. The wide-awake employer is he who treats his employees as human beings, and not as machines. The exacting employer, who measures the work of those in his employ by the salary he pays them, rarely gets more than he pays for. On the other hand, the man who believes that his business success is partially due to his helpers, carries a capital that cannot be measured by cash.

In addition to the petition, several thousand letters are being sent to the shoppers, asking them to refrain from shopping on the afternoons mentioned. In case the petition is not successful, the letter will ask shoppers not to buy on Saturday afternoons or evenings. In none of the large cities of the East, are the stores open in the evening—Portland is still a country village in this respect.

In this matter, however, the responsibility rests with the purchaser, and the Consumers' League is confining its efforts to educating this purchaser. The women on the board have been investigating conditions for some time past, and they have learned, amongst other things, that in the candy and ice cream stores, the women employees work from 10 to 16 hours a day for seven days in the week, that in those department stores which keep open evenings, many of the employees do not reach home until 10:30 or 11 o'clock, having been on duty since 8 in the morning.

It does not follow that this condition is due entirely to the employer—with him it is simply the question of supply and demand. To lessen this demand that so many women shall give unnecessarily of their time and strength is the mission of the Consumer's League. If the women who put off their shopping until Saturday afternoon or evening, could stand behind the counters the long hours during these hot days, there would be no need for petitions, and the employers would close their doors. Let each one of us ask himself "Am I my brother's keeper?"

A QUESTION OF SANITY.
Eminent specialists have declared that not more than one person in ten is sane. Others have testified that no man is entirely sane. Without attempting to pass on the sanity of our fellowmen we are of the opinion that a great majority of the publishers in the United States and Canada are sober and conservative. The International Typographical Union declared for the eight-hour day for its members January 1, 1906. Of the total membership of 45,000 about 40,000 are now enjoying the advantages of the shorter workday. It does not require a specialist to pass on the sanity of the Crowell Publishing Company, publishers of "Woman's Home Companion." This firm is opposing the conditions that will create a higher standard of citizenship among the members of organized labor by employing imported strike-breakers. That the reading public is displeased with their attitude was proven when the Crowell Company sold their magazine to avoid financial ruin. The new manager severed his connections with the sinking ship and sought other fields. The sales of Woman's Home Companion have fallen off to such an extent that the management has been compelled to give the magazine to the news dealers in order that it may appear before the public. When the Crowell Company was at peace with organized labor their publication sold at ten cents a copy. In some localities it is being sold at present to the retail trade two copies for five cents. The Crowell Company is now trying to crush organized labor along sanctimonious lines. They have caused their magazine to be the "champion" of Anti-Child Slavery and with celestial fire and unctious pour forth reasons each issue why you should subscribe for "Woman's Home Companion" and save the children when, as a matter of fact, the conditions in

their own establishment not only makes child slavery possible but causes them to resort to such deceptive methods that no respectable citizen will countenance.

ANOTHER LINEMAN KILLED.
Another lineman, J. B. Mulliken, was electrocuted last Saturday morning while doing some work for the Portland General Electric Company at Oregon City. He was caught by a voltage of 2300 and horribly burned. It was some time before men could be secured to lower the body, and not until the station had been advised and the circuit cut off. Mr. Mulliken was a young man 28 years of age, and a member of the Everett, Wash., Electrical Workers union. He had been here about two weeks and had not yet deposited his union card in the local here. The deceased makes the third victim for the same company in about two weeks, and the seventh in two years. All of these fatalities are due directly to the system of wiring, and has been spoken of by Coroner Finley in his report upon the two unfortunate linemen preceding Mulliken. In the face of these murders, for they can be called nothing less, the City Council sits passive and indifferent and the company offers no protection or relief.

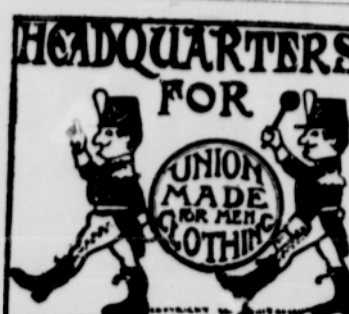
It has now reached a point that unless the company or City Council acts the men themselves will have to. A number of the best linemen are not working and contemplate leaving the city because they are afraid to work in Portland under the present system or wiring permitted by the city authorities.

SORRY SHE IS GOING AWAY.
The many friends acquired by Dr. Luema G. Johnson among the labor unions of this city, and especially the members of the Women's Union Label League, of which she was a valued member, are sorry to learn that that estimable lady has determined to leave Portland and take up her residence in Chicago. For many months Dr. Johnson has been an active worker and sympathizer in the union labor movement of this community, and many times she has done them valuable service. She is a conscientious believer in labor unions and has worked hard to teach the woman wage-worker that her emancipation lies in organization of unions and the use of the ballot box. She is an ardent advocate of woman suffrage and did heroic work during the late campaign. Dr. Johnson is a keen reasoner and fluent talker, and her good advice and valuable labors will be missed in the labor circles of this city.

A question of long standing was settled at the recent convention of the International Steel and Copper Plate Printers' Union, when resolutions were adopted declaring that it would be detrimental to them to affiliate with any union of plate engravers until all local unions of that trade are amalgamated under the banner of the American Federation of Labor.

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