

PORTLAND LABOR PRESS

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A THOUGHT FOR TODAY.

To make the most of ourselves, human and divine, to help others to make the most of themselves, to recognize that we are not getting our best unless all our neighbors are getting their best, to create the institutions which will make it possible for all the people to lead this life together—this is democracy and Christianity. This democracy and Christianity are now moving forward to civilize and sanctify the largest of all the fields of human association—the common toll. This is the Religion of Labor.—Henry D. Lloyd.

WHY THE COMMISSION ELECTION?

The people of Portland are being asked to vote for a commission form of government to take the place of the old form, which has been in existence for many years, with a few patches here and there to keep it in repair. The request is not new. Last year two forms of commission charter were offered the people at a special election and both were voted down. Perhaps the special election had something to do with the determination of the people. Perhaps the same considerations will bring about the defeat of the charter offered at a special election to be held May 3.

Why all the apparent haste to change the form of government in Portland? Why has it been possible to work under the old charter all these years, and now, in less than six months, it seems necessary to hold two special elections in an effort to give the people a fundamental change in form of government? If the excuse be made, as has been the case, that economy demands the change, some people in official life have been negligent for many years, and have allowed the taxpayers' money to be frittered away when they knew such was being done. If the special election is an effort to "get by" with a commission form which will give real "one man" power in Portland the people should frown down on it in such manner that another attempt will be delayed for more than six months, at least.

If the proposed commission charter is an attempt on the part of the men who art "out" to get "in," the people should vote it down overwhelmingly. If it is a plan for those who are "in" to more firmly entrench themselves in the public service, if it is the plan of politicians to establish a second Tammany on the Pacific coast, the people should be advised of the attempt and the vote should forever settle the fact that the people of Portland are opposed to one-man rule, to political-machine making. In all the discussion that has taken the attention of the voters up to the present time the real merits or demerits of the commission form have apparently been overlooked to a great extent.

If the "Oregon System" means anything to the people of Oregon it should mean that the people have the right to elect their servants, and to say when and where they shall work. Under the commission charter the mayor would say where they should work but the people would say what salary should be paid—only. The right of the people to elect their executive officers should not be abridged. The right of the people to elect their legislative officers is not so important under the referendum. And the city council as now constituted, and the commissioners, as proposed under the charter now before the people, is and would be an executive body, almost entirely so. The legislative part of the council's work could be done by high school boys, in most cases.

Haste is always waste. If a plan will stand the test of scrutiny and time there need be no undue haste in offering it to the people of any civilized community. If the taxpayers have been the victims of extravagance and even crookedness they can stand it a few months longer, during which time they might be allowed to study the problems involved in a fundamental change in government. If conditions are so bad that a change has to be made right now, and at a special election, it might be a good plan to begin the study of the proposed change in the plan of government until the real facts were brought out.

And, by the way, the commission form of government has been tried in Multnomah county and from reports published in some of the papers printed in Portland it has not proved altogether satisfactory. The county commissioners come in for a lot of criticism from some sources. In many of the counties of the United States the commission form has been in existence for many years. It is not an experiment, but in the hands of crooked men it has been

proved an efficient scheme of handling public funds.

Then there is another feature of the commission campaign of "education." If a commission is the only salvation for the City of Portland, why not try it on the school district? As a matter of fact the commission idea has been in effect with the educational interests of the country for years, and there is more or less criticism all the time in some quarter. As a matter of fact many of the people of Portland are not satisfied with the operation of the commission idea in the school board.

If the commission plan would mean so much to the taxpayers of Portland why not broaden it and make a Department of Education in addition to the departments proposed in the charter? If the city government had charge of the schools there might be a chance for economy and effective work by the placing of the responsibility on one man, as the advocates of the commission urge as the remedy for a number of evils in the public service. Why not make Portland's charter broad enough to include the schools, and in this matter, if in no other, give the people of the whole country a lesson in commission government that would really mean something?

In the meantime, why not vote on a fundamental change in government at a general election, not on a day when people's minds are confused with petty primary politics?

WHERE SEATTLE STANDS.

In discussing editorially the loss of the charter of the Seattle Central Labor Council, the Seattle Union Record says: "In the hall of the Central Labor Council of Seattle and vicinity is a bare spot where once hung the charter granted eight years ago by the American Federation of Labor.

"The charter was taken away because the Council dared, in the face of the mandate of the International officials of one of the greatest labor organizations in the world, to stand by an organization of wage workers which was in the midst of a death struggle with the most hated enemy of organized labor in the country. The Central Labor Council refused to unseat the Reid Electrical Workers by a vote of 80 to 18. The story is in another column.

"Discontent is rife if the Local Unions affiliated with the International Unions affiliated in turn with the American Federation of Labor. For the past twenty years we have been building up, step by step, law by law, a system of centralization of power in the hands of our International Officers which has at last brought revolt.

"It was not for nothing that the vast majority of delegates in the Central Labor Council voted with the Electrical Workers—nor was it for sympathy with the Electrical Workers—it was because of a burning sense of injustice and incompetence on the part of International Officials of many other than the Electrical Workers' unions, who have year after year continued to take their toll of per capita tax from the great northwest, all the while leaving the unions here to their own resources to build themselves up.

"The vote for the Electrical Workers is an earnest of the growing sentiment that the salvation of the labor movement lies in the Central Bodies in the industrial centers. That the only way in which unity of action may be attained is by a merging of the interests of the rank and file of the workers in any given community. That effective action may only be secured through a more complete local autonomy of individual unions on the one hand and a more extended range of action for the local Central Body to which they are attached. In other words we must be organized that we may take immediate and united action in any city on any matter, without the necessity for trying to secure an international sanction which if received is usually too late to be of any use.

"The Central Labor Council of Seattle has not died with the return of its charter. We will be at the same old place and doing to same old work, and doing some of it better. We are sorry to lose the charter, and we hope and expect its return in the very near future, but we welcome the prospect that the injustice of the withdrawal of the charter has opened up of a more united local movement than we have ever before had in the city. We are still a part of the great labor movement and we will be a part until that movement has accomplished its purpose."

MUNICIPAL THEATRES.

The American lump is slowly but surely being leavened with the ideal of civic support of the drama as an educational agency worthy of maintenance at public cost. When a movement gets the backing that enables the Drama League of America to announce such a program for its third annual meeting as participants in next week's conference in Chicago will enjoy, when city after city becomes the center of experiment with theatres that follow ideal ends and that are supported by public-spirited patrons, and when universities and colleges adjust their courses of study and instruction so as to prepare students either for play-seeing or play-writing, then it is only a question of time when what is now a privately initiated affair will become a public charge.

How long that time may be, who can say! It will vary much with localities, with their respect for traditions and their general attitude toward education and taxation. Northampton, Mass., is well on the way now, thanks to the generosity of a citizen who has provided a theatre which saves the taxpayer the largest item of municipal expense. With Wisconsin University enlisted as it is in development of

dramatic talent among playwrights and players of the Badger state, it is only a question of time when an educational process will have been finished that will lead some community or communities to put the town recreation hall beside the town school and library. Time was when collective action and taxation for each of those agencies of education was questioned. Even now in large sections of the country there are no public libraries.

This comment has been provoked by the announcement that the Legislature of Iowa is inclined to authorize local elections to determine whether communities shall tax themselves for local theatres or places of amusement. How many towns stand ready to do this is not stated. But that the demand exists is clear, else no such scheme would have been urged. As an innovation it is the more remarkable when the source of the demand is considered. Iowa is not a center of play production, and its people are not of sects hitherto inclined to look with favor on multiplication of playhouses.

A municipal theatre, like a city school or library, could become spoil for the politician and grafter; and because it could, some citizens will argue that it would better be forbidden. More sensible would be the shaping of law so that, when legalized, the theatre could be administered as most public schools and public libraries are, namely, under the direction of unpaid public-spirited citizens, with ideals. It is thus that the Northampton theatre has made its way.—Christian Science Monitor.

BROOKS SCENTS TROUBLE.

We are on the eve of a great war in the United States—a war with ignorance. This is the impression one gains from reading John Graham Brooks' "American Syndicalism," which is the first authoritative study of this movement in America.

Only a few years ago the average citizen dismissed the subject of socialism with a deprecating remark about its foreign origin. Syndicalism is a recent importation from France. Still it menaces the United States even more than it does the country of its birth, because conditions in this country offer a most fertile field for syndicalist propaganda.

The syndicalist movement of this country, the International Workers of the World, does not seek converts to its cause from among middle class Americans. It leaves them to the progressive movement. Nor does it seek converts among the fairly well to do but politically dissatisfied masses of working people. It leaves them to the socialist movement. The International Workers of the World, according to Brooks, "taps labor strata" lower than either of these. It makes its appeal to the great masses of the uneducated foreigners who do the unskilled work of the country.

There are, it is estimated, some 15,000,000 immigrants employed in our large industries. They live in shacks or hovels near their places of work. They shun Americans fully as much as they are shunned by them. Their view of government is that it exists for oppression. No one has taken the trouble to acquaint them with the nature of republican government and institutions, and they are as mistrustful of them as they are of the autocratic officialdom of their native lands.

These millions of workers have grievances. Numerous government investigations of conditions in the big industries conducted recently prove that. If they are too helpless to seek to remedy the abuses from which they suffer themselves, they will welcome any man who brings them a promise of something better. Now the man, or movement, who will come to these workers and advise them to seek relief through governmental channels, through legislation, will have a good deal of prejudice to overcome. It requires much education to bring a man who has been accustomed to consider the government his enemy around to the view that the government is not only his friend, but his servant.

Ignorance, no matter how bulky, no matter how large its legions, has never accomplished lasting reforms. In fact, it has always defeated itself. But it has never failed to act as an explosive. It has never failed as a destructive force. But under control of the masses of the people, who are always on the right side, the situation offers no cause for alarm.

INDIANA'S CRANK LEGISLATION.

Indiana has entered the list of States which would muzzle the press. An effort has been made by legislators to save themselves from severe criticism by the papers of the state. Indiana has a new law against the publication of any false reports, letters or comments that expose legislators or candidates for office to contempt and ridicule.

It is strange that the Indiana legislature should have passed and the governor signed so vague and dangerous a statute. No fit newspaper will claim the right to make false statements about any person; but the libel laws afford sufficient protection against such statements. If they do not, they can be revised and made adequate. But to talk too generally in a statute about falsely charging legislators or candidates to ridicule is to play into the hands of gangsters, tricksters and hoodlums. The most responsible and clean papers in Indiana are attacking the new law because of the weapons it places in the hands of the worst enemies of public interests. If it is not unconstitutional, a sober second thought should cause the legislature to repeal it. Demoralizing and demoralizing journalism can be fought effectively without muzzling the honest press or

undermining the foundations of good government.

UNION SHOP, NOT CLOSED SHOP.

One of the "common errors" committed by some very well-meaning trade unionists is that of using improper terms in discussing activities of labor unions. The term "closed shop" is frequently used, but is a misnomer, from a trade union standpoint.

The American Federation of Labor stands for the "union shop," not the "closed shop." The only closed shops to be found are the shops that are closed to union men.

Union men do not "close" union shops. The doors of unions are always open to all who are eligible. Any one discussing the ethics of labor unions, no doubt, desires to use the proper terminology in the discussion.

The "closed shop" is not a synonymous term with the "union shop," although used by many writers to convey a similar meaning.

The term "union shop" and not "closed shop" should be applied to all shops where union men are employed.—Exchange.

THE COMMISSION HABIT.

The commission habit has grown upon the American people. When a sore place is discovered in government or social condition we slap a commission on it.

Sometimes the poultice works well. Sometimes it doesn't work at all. Sometimes it serves to conceal the sore and postpone the remedy.

The anthracite mine commission gave some good results. The commission investigating insurance funds was well worth while. But to enumerate the commissions and investigations that have arrived nowhere would fill many volumes.

There are two varieties of the wrong kind of commissions. One is futile and the other fraudulent. The first fails because we fail to provide means for putting its learned conclusions into effect. The other fails because it is created for the purpose not of expediting, but on the contrary, of impeding, action.

The former are not very harmful. The latter are expensive and vicious. When we have learned to know them we shall have made a long advance toward effective reform, and shall have removed the chief defect of the commission habit.

ENGINEER TO SERVE PEOPLE.

George W. Stitt Announces Candidacy for Council Job.

George W. Stitt, who is seeking the nomination on the Republican ticket for Councilman in the Tenth Ward, is a native son, and has lived for 25 years in Portland. Mr. Stitt had to start out for himself when quite young, and has worked hard and been successful. He was with one Portland firm for eight



George W. Stitt.

years. He has traveled through every Western state, Alaska, Siberia and Mexico, and was superintendent of a large wood-working plant at Mexico City for some time.

Mr. Stitt is not only a staunch friend of organized labor, but is a union man, holding membership in Stationary Engineers No. 87.

Among the many important issues that Mr. Stitt is interested in he has mentioned in particular, and will work for, the Interstate Bridge across the Columbia River; the handling of all matters pertaining to the expenditure of money in an economical manner; progressive and business-like administration for the city in general and the Tenth Ward in particular; a sanitary city; more parks and playgrounds; the eight-hour day; a living wage; enforcement of law and at all times special attention to the interests of the working people.

Garment Workers Secure Agreements.

General Organizer Mary C. Daly, of the Garment Workers, has gone to Tacoma, after having spent three weeks in Portland in the interests of the union. She was successful in signing new agreements with Neustadter Brothers, Wolf & Sons and Ray Barkhurst. Mrs. Daly was well pleased with conditions in the labor unions and the Central Labor Council and spoke briefly on the campaign of education which the Garment Workers are carrying on. She was made an honorary member of the Portland Label League and of the Eight-Hour League.

Label League Meets.

The Portland Label League held the regular meeting at Carpenters' Hall, on the East Side, April 16. A large number of new members were received and matters of importance to the labor movement were considered. A committee was named to lead in the work of the league that the organization may be built up rapidly. The regular meet-

ings will be held the first and third Wednesdays of each month. The invitation is extended to every one interested in better conditions to attend the meetings.

Political Speeches a Feature.

The local Garment Workers were favored at their last regular meeting with a number of addresses by candidates for office at the primary, May 3. Mayor Rushlight, James Maguire, W. A. Burke and W. H. Fitzgerald, a member of Mayor Rushlight's executive board, spoke briefly. About 200 persons were present. After the speechmaking light refreshments were served by the ladies.

Eight-Hour League Meets.

The Eight-Hour League held a meeting at the Labor Temple, April 15, to discuss legislation. The league will hold meetings every Tuesday evening at the Labor Temple. Every one interested in the shorter workday for women is invited to attend the meetings.

Unfair Stove Factories.

The Stove Mounters' International union has issued a list of unfair stove manufacturers, where the organization is involved in strikes. The list includes the Excelsior Stove and Manufacturing Co., Quincy, Illinois; Favorite Stove and Range Co., Piqua, Ohio; Indiana Stove Works, Evansville, Indiana; Southern Stove Works, Evansville, Indiana; Evansville Stove Works, Evansville, Indiana; Crescent Stove Works, Evansville, Indiana; Thoele-Phillips Stove Co., Florence, Alabama.

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C. L. McKenna, Supreme Secretary.