

Losing the Cop.

By Albert Reid



The European wage-earner could never hope to become a landowner. In the Massachusetts colony only landowners were citizens, but to keep good workmen in the colony, grants of twenty acres or more were made to numerous blacksmiths, carpenters and others. The citizens of Haverhill raised a subscription to purchase a house and land which they gave to a blacksmith on condition that he remain there at least seven years and work for nobody but the 20 subscribers. In 1656 the town of Lowell gave William How 24 acres on condition that he set up there as a weaver, thus laying almost three hundred years ago the foundation for the great textile industry which has made Lowell one of the important manufacturing centers of the nation.

In Virginia so many wage-workers left their trades to become farmers that laws were passed to keep them in the towns. Wages were paid in tobacco instead of money. In 1660 a court order fixed the wages on a certain job at 20 pounds of tobacco a day, which at the then prevailing price amounted to about 30 cents.

The beginnings of prohibition are found in old court orders of that period, forbidding employers to compel workers to accept wine as part of their pay, since that is "a great nursery or preparative for drunkenness."

The reason for high wages in America then, as always, was the scarcity of labor, as compared with the demand for labor's products. In 1618 a man sentenced to be hanged for murder was reprieved because he was a good carpenter and carpenters were scarce! England began the practice of sending criminals to the American colonies instead of to the highest bidder for a term of years. Even their working conditions were better than prevailing in England, according to contemporary records, for they did not have to work before sunrise or after sunset. No landless man could make a living with his bare hands in Europe on such short hours as that.

LURE OF AMERICA ALWAYS HIGH WAGES

Labor Department Sheds Light on Earnings Here 300 Years Ago.

By CALEB JOHNSON. Ask the man who was born in Europe why he came to America. You know the answer before he speaks. Nine times out of ten it is the simple one, "To make more money."

sounds so much more "classy" to say that they came to America in search of religious liberty and to escape the tyranny of kings than it does to say that they found it hard to make living in the Old Country. Both motives for emigrating did obtain, but the religious and political tyranny which they sought to escape would not have been so unendurable if it had not, in many cases, taken the form of depriving the man who disagreed with authority of his chance to work.

layers, Sawyers and Thatchers shall not take above 2 shillings a day (45 cents) and 16 pence (32 cents) if they have meate and drinke, nor any man shall give more under paine of 10 shilling to taker and giver; and that sawyers shall not take above 4 shilling sixpence the hundred for boards, att six score to the hundred, if they have their woode felled and squared by them, and not above 5 shilling sixpence if they fell and square their woode themselves. . . . Laborers shall not take above 12 pence a day for their worke and not above sixpence with meate and drinke under paine of 10 shilling."

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