

Editorial Page of The Canadian Labor Press



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 A WEEKLY NEWS LETTER

WORK OF LABOR JOURNALS

In a course given at Whitman college on the labor problem, a study of the labor press was made. For months every editorial was carefully studied and its contents made note of. Mr. William E. Leonard, department of economics, of that college after a brief summary, in which he comments favorably as a whole says:

"Many times we asked ourselves the questions, 'What does labor want?' Is it an increase of wages, shorter hours and an easier life? Yes, if we are to believe the labor press. But these gains, while important, are subordinate to something bigger and finer. This something seems to be the desire to secure right human relations, founded on justice, in which the workers will find opportunity for self-realization. In short, workers are struggling for happiness. Labor wants to become a prime factor in all vital matters connected with a progressive economic and social life. We find ourselves in sympathy with these aspirations.

"We were really surprised at the spirit, tone and character of the labor press. Its journals are published by men, often strong and capable, who, although without hope of financial gain for themselves, yet give to the cause of labor an untiring service with religious zeal. For their words of good counsel we should indeed be thankful. They are helping to educate a mass of workers at the bottom of our industrial system, who, without the aid of the organized labor movement, would surely be in a helpless situation. So long as the labor press retains its present sanity and vigor there is nothing to fear from it. In it there is vastly more good than evil."—Exchange.

UNION LABEL PROPAGANDA

That wonderful booster of the Union Label, J. J. Manning, hammers away in his usual vigorous style when he says:

Out of strife and struggle came the union label. It is a sacred gift to us from those early trades unionists who fought fearlessly and unceasingly that the workers who came after them might enter the ranks of labor better equipped for future victories. It is a priceless gift of power and helpfulness.

Therefore, we must be guided by the firm conviction that the label is of supreme worth to us. Bear in mind that it is the aim of the label to advance all those who toil. It stands for fellowship. It helps to encourage, to inspire and to uplift. It recognizes no obstacles except neglect.

Most of our troubles grow from a tiny seed—indifference. Cease to be careless and neglectful and learn to be constant. Cease to blame others. Take the matter home to yourself. Make use of every opportunity given to us to advance ourselves through the label.

We are not creatures of circumstance. We are creators. We make our own impediments and handicaps. All growth is from the center outward. To those who recognize the true scope and usefulness of the label, its value can not be overestimated. Keep this in mind when spending money, and then watch results. Experience will reveal what explanation cannot.

Remember, the value of the label is the use we make of it. Consider the present status of the label, and you will readily realize what is the cause. Then array yourself for battle and begin to create desirable conditions. Your purchasing power is your weapon. Learn to wield it.

SAFETY FIRST SLOGANS

Ben Franklin said—"Learning is to the studious and Riches to the Careful."—Learn to be Careful.

The Empty Sleeve. A few years ago this man earned good wages as a skilled railroad man. He now works for a fraction of his former wages.—Don't let this happen to you.

A is for accident, which you may meet, if you are careless crossing the street.

B is for Best, and it's best to take care, to see you are safe, when you go anywhere.

SOFT COAL MINERS STRIKE SEEMS CERTAIN

non-union yardstick applied to our standard of living," according to a statement issued at the headquarters of the union in this city. The statement then goes on to say:

"Coal operators are attempting to force the bituminous miners to accept a reduction in their wages which would place them on a level with the non-union miners of West Virginia, Alabama and other fields in which the union is kept out or driven out by armed gunmen and thugs in the employ of the coal companies. Mine workers in these non-union fields are helpless. They are unable to enter any protest against wage reductions or any other whim of their employers by which their standard of living is lowered. Wages always have been lower in the non-union fields than in the organized fields, because of this fact. Non-union miners have no protection and must take what is offered if they are to work at all.

"When two large and powerful groups of operators in the Pittsburg field and in Southern Ohio served notice that they would refuse to meet with the United Mine Workers this month to negotiate a new wage and working agreement they served notice in effect that they were out to break up the miners' union. Should they succeed in this attempt it would mean that the miners of those two fields would be reduced to the level of the wretched non-union miners of West Virginia. The United Mine Workers will not permit this to be done.

"In announcing their refusal to meet with the miners and work out a new agreement to take effect on April 1, these operators deliberately violated their written contract with the miners, which they signed in New York on March 31, 1920. In that contract was this clause:

"Resolved that any interstate joint conference be held prior to April 1, 1922; the time and place for holding such meeting to be referred to a committee of two operators and two members from each state herein represented, together with the international officials of the United Mine Workers of America."

"That agreement was as binding as any agreement ever signed by business men. Refusal by the operators to live up to this agreement was a shock to the public conscience and an assault on business morality. It was so indefensible that President Harding denounced their action and directed Secretary of Labor Davis to call upon the operators to live up to their agreement and meet with the miners in an honest effort to work out a new agreement.

"One of the prime objects of these operators in stalling their refusal and their violation of contract was to bust the union. But it must be remembered also that there are millions of tons of soft coal on hand, and a strike scare always boosts the selling price, thus giving the operators a fine opportunity to gouge the public pocket-book and clean up enormous profits. It has been done before, and why should it not be done now?

"One of the excuses the operators gave for refusing to enter a conference was that the miners would demand an increase in their wages, and that, therefore, it would be useless to hold a conference. But the miners did nothing of the kind. They do not ask for an increase, but they do ask that the present scale of wages be continued in effect for another two years. They did not earn a living under the present scale in 1921, but they are willing to take the chance with it for another two years. They pin their faith to the hope for a revival of industry and business in the next two years that will afford them steadier employment and thus enable them to make a living.

"Bituminous mine workers in the union fields were employed only an average of about 125 days in 1921. This is about 40 per cent. of full time. As nearly as it can be ascertained at this time, they earned an average of approximately \$700 in 1921, which is about \$13.50 a week. Every person who has to buy food, clothing and everything else for a family at present prices knows that it is impossible to keep a family above the poverty level on \$13.50 a week.

"Statistical experts say an annual wage of \$1,870 is necessary to keep a family of man, wife and three children in health, decency and a minimum amount of comfort in the bituminous coal mining fields of the country. Mine workers earned less than half that sum last year. Yet the operators propose to reduce their wages.

"In the six year period from 1913 to 1918 (and in 1918 more coal was produced than ever before and all records were broken), the average annual earnings of bituminous mine workers throughout the country were \$873.74. Surely, it cannot be said that the miners are earning too much money at the present rate of wages.

"Coal miners are not responsible for the high retail price at which coal is sold throughout the country. J. D. A. Morrow, vice-president of the National Coal Association, commonly known as the "Operators' Union," testified before the Interstate Commerce Commission a few weeks ago that the average selling price of bituminous coal in the United States in October, 1921, was \$10.41 a ton, and that the miners received \$1.97 a ton for producing it. In other words, the miners got \$1.97 for producing a ton of coal that was sold to the consumer for \$10.41. Who got the other \$8.44? There is a gouge, but the miners do not get the money. If the public is interested in bringing down the selling price of coal they must look beyond the miners for the way to do it, for the miners are not to blame for the high prices.

"Coal companies have sought to arouse a prejudice against the United Mine Workers of America because the convention of the union declared for the six hour day and the five day week, and the position of the miners on that issue has been both misrepresented and misunderstood. Operators say the miners want more pay for less work. That statement is not correct. Working steadily thirty hours a week, the miners can produce more coal than the country can possibly consume. They say they prefer reasonably steady employment six hours a day rather than irregular and unsteady employment eight hours a day. If they can dig all the coal that is needed in six hours why should they be required to work eight hours, they ask.

"They want the assurance that they will have the opportunity to work steadily six hours a day. In that way they can make a living. But they do not and cannot make a living under present conditions.

"The check-off is another issue involved in the present controversy between bituminous miners and operators. The check-off is not generally understood by the public. Operators have at-

tempted to make the public believe that through the check-off they are compelled to contribute to the maintenance and upkeep of the miners' union, and that, therefore, the check-off is a sinful practice that should be abolished. The coal operators do not contribute a single cent to the union. The check-off does not mean anything of the kind. Here is what the check-off means: A member of the United Mine Workers of America authorizes his employer in writing to deduct from his pay envelope a small part of his wages, already earned, to pay his dues to the union. The operator makes the deduction and remits the money to the union, just as he deducts other sums and pays them to the doctor, the grocer, the landlord or any other creditor. An operator has no right to deduct any money from the miner's pay envelope without the written order of the miner. It is not the operator's money that he sends to the union. It is the union miner's money.

"The public is asking: Will there be a strike by coal miners on the first day of April? It would be more accurate if the public were to ask whether there will be a suspension of work in the coal mines on April 1st. There is a vast difference between a strike and a suspension. Whatever happens on the first of April, it cannot be properly designated as a strike. When workers go on strike they do so in protest against some wrong, and because they have a grievance. But a suspension is an entirely different proposition. If the miners refuse to work on the first of April it will be because they have no wage agreement whatever with their employer. They want to know what they are to get for their labor and under what conditions they are to work. They want to know these things before the first of April. If they do not find out and they refuse to work on the first of April it will be a suspension and not a strike.

"The United Mine Workers of America do not want a suspension. They want to work. They must work to live. They have done and are doing every honorable thing within their power to avert a suspension. If the operators deal fairly with them there will be no suspension. But there is this difference between the miners and the operators: the operators want a suspension, while the miners do not."

URGENT SCHOOL ATTENDANCE LONESOME?

Chicago.—"We must find some way to stop wholesale withdrawals from school," said Dr. Franklin P. Graves, New York educator, in an address in this city.

"It is intolerable," he said, "that 30 per cent of our young people should drop out before they are 14, and 60 per cent before they have completed the eighth grade. Our compulsory attendance laws and the dragnets necessary to enforce them must be greatly strengthened in most of our states."

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STATES HAS BUILDING BOOM

The value of buildings for which permits were granted last month in 141 United States cities far surpassed that of any previous February in the country's history, the total amount being \$122,644,719, it was reported today by Bradstreet. This figure was a decrease of 5.3 per cent. from the longer month of January this year, during which the total reached \$129,335,404, but it was a gain of 66 per cent. over February, 1921. Only one group of cities, those in New England, reported a decrease compared with February of last year. Those in the northwest showed the heaviest gain, 142 per cent. higher than the corresponding month of 1921.

WONT ACCEPT COSSACKS

Baltimore.—Organized labor's opposition to the Cossack system has alarmed the backers of this plan who are urging the state legislature to

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