

Saskatchewan Labor's Realm

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THE SASKATCHEWAN LABOR'S REALM

Weekly Labor and Social Reform Newspaper.

Justice, Truth, Fraternity.

"Labor Omnia Vincit."

HUGH PEAT

EDITOR.

Canadian Labor Party

Address by Honore J. Jaxon--

Denounces Special Privilege

Mr. Jaxon opened his remarks by commenting upon the apparent impossibility of a labor man ever getting out of the harness. Twenty two years before, when he had scampered southward over the international line with his coat tails streaming out behind him, he had dreamed of the North-West as a happy land to which in later years and after the subsidence of the passions aroused by the war of '85 he might return and take rest amid hunting and pastoral scenes as a solace and means of recuperation from the toils of labor reform into which he had plunged on his arrival in the domain of Uncle Sam. Now, however, that he had returned, he found that the North-west had developed to about the same point in the industrial struggle in which he found the United States in '85; and the result was that instead of finding the North-west a place for vacation and rest he was constrained to keep right on in the same old fray.

The fact, however, that the labor question in even this new country and was thus claiming a front place in public attention and the fact that working men were constrained to assemble in public meetings such as the present to consider ways and means of resisting oppression was the proof that here as everywhere social conditions were diseased and imperatively called for a remedy.

To study these conditions and search out a remedy was the duty of every good citizen whether already a member of organized labor or not.

Far from being despised or antagonized laboring men should be encouraged and co-operated with in their endeavors to find a solution for this problem of economics which was so seriously affecting all society. In addressing oneself to this problem it might be considered a logical course of procedure to first grasp the general nature of the social trouble and to then seek not only for the direct causes of that trouble but also for some explanation of just why, in the evolution of things, these causes have come into operation.

From a study of the causes of social trouble one might reasonably expect to find a suggestion of a remedy, and from an understanding of the cosmic reasons for the existence of those causes one might get a hint as to the spirit in which to apply the remedy.

By the time a full view had thus been obtained not only of the trouble but also of the methods by which to cure the trouble one would then be in a position to form a sound and reasonable judgment as to the desirability and merit of this great social movement which was endeavoring to remedy the trouble.

Persons unwilling to thus make a conscientious study of the social field had no right to sit in judgment upon these laboring men who were trying to do something for the common good.

Perhaps the most striking feature on first examination of present social conditions was to be found in the fact that those who did the real work of producing the things demanded by mankind got the least share of them, while those who were most conspicuously free from any suspicion of performing actual toil were revelling in possessions beyond the dreams of avarice. A thousand babes go supperless to bed that one monster's brat may spew on silk."

Now, since all real wealth, that is, all things desired for the support and material development of mankind are the product of two things only—on one side, namely of the raw materials of the earth which are created by nature and are therefore the property of all mankind, and not of particular individuals, and, on the other hand, of the labor of hand and brain actually expended in the planning and making and superintending and exchanging of these objects of human desire and human necessity, it followed that if one man takes out from the general product more than he puts in then one or more of the other contributors to this general product must necessarily take out less.

It was probably impossible for a man by pure and unadulterated labor expended in legitimate effort of hand and brain to produce in a whole lifetime more than \$10,000 worth of wealth in excess of that which he and his family would consume; and since hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of the products of human toil were to-day in the possession of men who could not possibly perform more than an infinitesimal fraction of that toil in even a hundred years of continual effort, and since, as a matter of fact, these persons were notoriously free from any possible accusation of doing even the brain work of superintendence or book-keeping, or of anything more than the mere clipping of the coupons or signing of the cheques in which their dividends took form, it was quite sufficiently evident that their superabundance of possession must convey the explanation of the dire poverty of the great mass of their fellow citizens. Evidently they had by some means feloniously gotten it away from their fellow citizens. Their possession of the plunder was the proof of their crime. The first question was to determine just how the burglar had broken the lock.

In addressing oneself to this question a certain amount of light could be obtained from evidence contributed in a moment of candor by a now deceased financier of the United States. This gentleman, who was none other than the late lamented Jay Gould, had once frankly given out the dictum that the way to make money was to find out the pathways in which the people were of necessity compelled to travel, "and then plant toll gates over those pathways." And, sure enough, just as soon as anyone might make intelligent scrutiny of present day processes of production and exchange, it becomes abundantly evident that every avenue in which the people travelled in order to produce goods, and likewise every avenue they travelled to obtain goods, were all alike beset by toll gates at which they were compelled to give up everything except that amount of product required by the lowest possible standard of life which they were willing to adopt, and yet continue to work and reproduce their kind.

In other words, and to use another illustration, the fellows in possession of the plunder had evidently gotten their plunder by obtaining a vantage ground in the centre of the circle of production in such manner that in the first place their fellow citizens must come to them and beg for the opportunity to produce anything at all and as the price of such permission must give up whatever they might thus produce to the masters of that favored central position and at the price dictated by the masters, and in the second place must again come to these same favored mortals whenever they wished to exchange for the products of other workers the pitiful remuneration received for their own products, and in this last transaction also

find themselves at the mercy of the masters, and therefore compelled to pay the price dictated by the latter just as formerly they had been compelled to accept the price dictated by them. They were caught in the trap coming and again caught in the trap going. Under the present system the clothing worker might be producing a suit of clothes side by side with the leather worker who was producing shoes. The product of each was estimated at the lowest possible value when turned into the storehouses of the possessing class, but the very moment that the cloth worker sought to buy the pair of shoes and the leather worker to buy the suit of clothing, the values of these respective articles were found by some subtle alchemy to have been increased many fold.

Now, since it is evident that free and intelligent human beings would never permit such a state of affairs as this to come into operation, it was obvious that the system from which we are thus suffering must have been established by force or cunning. And, indeed, just as soon as with this initial cue we make a study of the development of human society we find that every means by which the people are thus brought under coercion is simply a special privilege of some sort or other—such privileges having either been seized in ancient times by open and brutal force and made respectable by sheer lapse of time, or having been obtained by bribery from dishonest legislatures or by cunning from foolish and ignorant ones.

Special privilege being thus the cause on one hand of the affluence of the class which produced only schemes to get title to wealth, and on the other, of the poverty and degradation of the infinitely larger class which by labor of hand and brain produced the wealth itself, it was obvious that the remedy lay in abrogating these special privileges. As a preliminary to such abolition it would of course be very naturally asked just what these special privileges are. To answer this question and make such a catalog as that called for would be altogether outside the limits permitted by a single afternoon's talk, and to do so would moreover deprive the speaker's audience of the much more thorough knowledge and understanding of these gateways of plunder which they would acquire by studying them out for themselves in the educational meetings which the speaker understood to constitute an important part of their future program. For the present, therefore, he would not attempt such a catalog but would turn instead for a moment to the consideration of the conditions responsible for the rise of special privilege.

In this field of inquiry the first fact which presented itself was the circumstance that prior to the event of any special privilege there has always arisen a boss or tyrant who by cunning or force has created and seized him. The display of egotism and disregard for one's fellows involved in such an act as this is naturally an outcome partly of the animal selfishness of the boss, titled or untitled, in asserting his claim, and partly of the animal selfishness of the victims of the special privilege as manifested in the cowardice or laziness through which they permitted the special privilege to be seized.

When it was once perceived in this way that the animal selfishness of mankind is responsible for the industrial sufferings of mankind it becomes also obvious that these sufferings must be intended to so arouse and educate mankind as to drive men upward and out of this stage of animal selfishness and into those higher and spiritual realms of thought and action which would naturally present themselves as the next and necessary advance if for a moment we would stop and consider the

evolutions of nature from the mineral to the vegetable, from the vegetable to the animal, from the animal to the human, from the physical and primitive instincts of the human to the intellectual attainments of mankind as at present evolved; and, if we would further consider the central import of all these great messages which, from the time when men first

attained a status which enabled him to comprehend the simplest of them have come to this world in succession of ever increasing beneficence, and have demonstrated their emanation from the great spirit of life—from the One will which guides and molds and controls all things and actions in this universe—by the effect which they have produced upon the course of history and in the hearts of men—an effect utterly beyond the unaided power of the merely human intellect, an effect which cannot be permanently dimmed by even the persistent priestcraft which from this same animal selfishness of human nature has ever sought to turn these divine messages to the account of private profit and aggrandisement.

The grandeur and beauty of life to which these messages point the way were beyond the power of comprehension pertaining to our present stage of intellectual advancement, but our inability to fully grasp this glorious future was no proof that it was not on the way. The fact that the mineral world could not grasp the finer and more complex organization which was destined to evolve from it, the fact that the vegetable world could not comprehend the still more complex and wonderful animal life which came into existence after the vegetable had paved the way, the fact that the animal world cannot grasp or comprehend the processes of our human life which in like manner have developed upon the foundation provided by the animal existence, all this succession of inability to comprehend has not prevented or even retarded the admitted succession of actual improvement; and we are therefore barred from assuming that our inability, in our turn, to comprehend a higher life than that which we now enjoy is going to interfere with the coming of that higher life. We are all bound to the wheel of fate. All are destined to reach the higher planes; and since the cause of our troubles was to be found in the selfishness of our animal natures, and since the central thought of the divine messages has been to cultivate that spirit of unselfishness which inspires us to shove things to others rather than to grasp them for ourselves—in other words, to find our highest happiness in the mutual service of kindly comradeship—it must be obvious that for the successful applying of the remedy for special privilege we must do the applying in a spirit and by methods which display unselfishness rather than perpetuate the selfishness which is the cause of our troubles.

This means that in our methods of organization we must studiously avoid that self-seeking which kills comradeship and produces dissension. We should carry out the functions of our organization through the agency of volunteers regarding their work as a labor of love rather than through officialism and appointed committees and we should shrink with horror from anything like logrolling or wire-pulling for the advancement of our individual selves to official positions. For a reformer to ask a fellow reformer to either nominate him or vote for him was equivalent to a combined bribe and threat, and as such should be resented by the person of whom such service might be requested. The practising of such undignified methods by one would incite others to follow the same evil example and the movement tolerating such practices would find itself divided into as many

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