Current Comment

The Builders' Laborers strike situation remains unchanged. The Bricklayers decided to remain with the Laborers, in view of the action of the Exchange in refusing to receive their committee. The Exchange, backed up by the unreasonable Employers' Association, does not give a rap for the welfare of the business interests of the city, and threat n to prolong the fight to the end of the season. This will mean bankruptcy for some of the contractors, hardship for the men and inconvenience for some of the business houses, which expected to get in their new quarters this fall. If the Laborers were asking anything unreasonable, there might be some excuse for the action of the Exchange. The facts of the case leads one to the belief that it is not so much a question of money as determination to bust the unions, no matter what the consequences to other interests.

* * *

The arrangements for Labor Day are now complete. A big day at Hanlan's Point is an assured thing with favorable weather. The lady bikers promises to bring out more candidates than last year, while the prizes for the games will attract many more entries. The prizes are on exhibition in Ryrie's window, and present an attractive appearance. The parade will be larger and better than ever.

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The Cigarmakers will distribute fans on Labor Day.

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Labor fakirs who will descend to forgery to attain their ends deserve to be locked up.

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Every labor man should be in the ranks on Labor Day.

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Mr. John A. Flett, president of the Trades Congress of Canada, is in the city this week on an organizing trip.

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The new organization of Furniture Handlers will likely take part in the Labor Day parade.

* * *

Don't forget that dancing will take place in the evening at Hanlan's Point on Labor Day.

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The Garment Workers' Convention will meet in Toronto next year. This decision was arrived at in their convention held at Buffalo last week. Mr. Sam Landers, of Hamilton, was elected on the Executive Board.

* * *

The Hamilton Bartenders held a very successful picnic on Friday of last week. A baseball match between the Cigarmakers and Barkeeps resulted in the Cigarmakers putting it all over their opponents.

* * *

The Lord's Day Alliance, to prevent Sunday cars at Kingston, are contemplating prosecuting the employees of the road.

* * *

The laborer who wrote in last Saturday's Telegram has a very poor idea to ventilate when he says that this paper is responsible for the setting of "men against their masters." Who ever delegated one man to be master over another. "He knows which side will lose" in the fight of the Laborers for fair wages. He kicks against the poor wages of the Laborers in one breath, and then hopes they will lose when fighting for something better. His ideas are so mixed that he don't just know where he is at, and we might just retort, it serves him right, too.

* * *

The outrageous rates charged and the misrepresentations made by some of the so-called "loan offices" call for investigation by the proper authorities. Some of these institutions, established on the "American" plan, and working their game through seductive advertising and arguments deliberately concocted to deceive, are nothing less than robbers. They should be subject to official inspection and every agreement made reported. And it is about time—as people will, or must, under present conditions borrow—that Toronto established a civic loan office. This should not be in the way of a charity, but on sound business principles. It would protect the needy from extortion and pay, as does the Mont d'Pietie in Paris.

* * *

Public Ownership is gaining the day in many of our smaller cities. Nearly every day sees a despatch stating that this city or that one has gone into the gas business or the electric light or water supply on their own account.

* * *

The police had better clean their own shirts before talking about the brutality of others.

* * *

Go to the Island on Labor Day. There are plenty of other days to visit the Exhibition.

* * *

You must have the permission of the Builders' Exchange before you can buy building material. Is this not a combination in restraint of trade? Another law which looks all right on paper but—

* * *

The bullet may be all O. K. for the Russians and Japs, but the good Canadian would do well to study the ballot as a much better weapon.

* * *

Some freak tells us that this industrial war is going to end in a civil war. We give the Canadians credit for more reasoning powers than this assertion implies.

* * *

"What we have we'll hold" should be the motto of all the unions, now that we are promised dull times in the near future.

* * *

The wages asked by the Builders' Laborers will not net them over $400 per year. Would some members of the Builders' Exchange like to live on this large sum?

TRADE UNIONISM IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE COUNTRY.

Argument of E. F. Lee.

In arguing this question the affirmative does not have to show that there are no evils connected with trade unions. There are evils and imperfections found in trade unions just as there are are in every other human institution. All we have to prove is that these evils are more than offset by the good that trade unions have done. It will be shown that they have been a natural and inevitable outcome of our industrial life, and that they have in every way uplifted the workingman.

Organization is the law of civilized society. The savage alone is without it. It finds its justification and warrant in the fundamental principles of christian the fundamental principles of Christianity and the brotherhood of man. Why, then, should not brothers who have a community of interests, in that they earn their bread by the sweat of their brows, in a common calling, be permitted to unite? All other phases of our life are organized; then why deny the advantages of united effort to the poor laborer?

The labor union is a natural and inevitable outgrowth of our industrial life; natural because in all other phases; inevitable, because, without organization the laborer would have long since been reduced to abject poverty by merciless capitalists and colossal trusts. His economic, social and political welfare, and the welfare of society as a whole, for the laborer is the most fundamental factor of our industrial life, demanded organization, and it came. Recognizing the absolute necessity for the organization of labor, United States Commissioner of Labor, Hon. Carroll D. Wright, has said: "The organization of capitalists necessitates the organization of labor. Corporate existence is met by organized labor. There is no other way at present, and this is the only true way." The late Senator Mark A. Hanna, a year and a half ago in New York City, speaking of the greed of capital, said: "The natural tendency in this country and the world over has been to selfishly appropriate the larger share to the benefit of capital."

Why have we over 2,000,000 men who have thought it worth their while to join trade unions? It is because the conditions of modern industry to-day have forced them into organization.

With union they have come to enjoy those rights and conditions which have ever been denied them as individuals. Take the case of the shoemaker in the factories of Massachusetts. In those factories not one man, but 88, are employed in the manufacture of a single shoe; so that the individual shoemaker all day and the whole year round is confined working upon 1.88th of a shoe. In order for him to have a say in raising his wages he must combine with 87 other men before he can in any sense modify the conditions of employment.

In our cotton factories in New England to-day workmen entering the doors are no longer recognized by name, but on entering the factory they leave their names on the outside and become numbers 530, 690, or some other number. No one man of them dares protest that the wages are too low or the hours too long, or that the conditions under which he works are unsanitary. He, too, must combine with his fellow men before the demands of labor can be recognized. What were the conditions of the anthracite coal miners in Pennsylvania 15 years ago? A special committee appointed by Congress to investigate those conditions say: "From the anxious manner in which the men announced their wrongs, and from the subdued appearance of the population generally, there was a forcible reminder of the condition of affairs in Russia." Those men, combined because they felt that they could no longer exist under those conditions of employment, and you and I felt that when they struck in the great strike of 1902, they had the right to express their opposition to the wrongs they were suffering. As a result of that strike their conditions have been improved and they have succeeded in securing an increase of 10 per cent. in their wages. All this was due only to organized labor. The conditions in the coal mining industry are but an index to those that were 20 years ago found in many of the various other industries of our country.

In the first place, of what economic advantage have unions been to the laborers? This is easily seen if we remember that 20 years ago laborers were criminally poorly paid in many of the callings in which we find trade unions strongest to-day. Then the laborer had to work sometimes 18 and 20 hours for less than he gets for nine and ten now. The union also brings the advantages of collective bargaining.

The United States Commissioner of Labor, in his report for 1902, shows that in 197 occupations where labor was organized there was, for the most part, a steady increase in wages from 1891 to 1900, and states that these statistics do not include the unorganized trades, for they have caused a serious depression in earnings. Example after example might be given, showing a greater increase in the wages of union men than among non-union men. Take the case of the bituminous coal miners in 1897, when the first widespreading and strong organization of unions was effected. Their wages were increased from 30 to 40 per cent. Perhaps the most desirable thing that the increase in the wages of the laborer has resulted in has been his increased efficiency. As an illustration take the Typographical Union of New York City. With only one exception it supplies printers for all the printing houses of that city. The men get $21 a week, whereas formerly some of the non-union men received but $16. The employers say the work is very much cheaper now than when done by non-union men, because better methods are used and greater harmony exists among the men.

By means of their employment bureaus trade unions keep their members to secure continuous employment, and through the official journals of the unions information as to where employment can be had is easily obtained. The unions not only help men to positions, where they may help themselves but they do a vast amount of benevolent work in helping members who are disabled and unfortunate. Something of the extent of this kind of work which unions are doing is shown by such enterprising unions as the New York Typographical Union. It purchased 100 acres of good land in New Jersey and placed 50 of its unemployed and disabled men upon it. This trade colony proved so successful, for many years enabling the compositors to regain their health and at the same time do something towards making their own support. The International Typographical Union also maintains the Childs-Drexel Home at Colorado Springs for sick and infirm members, and this property is now valued at about $150,000. From 90 to 100 worn-out printers are cared for in this home. The Bricklayers' Union alone has spent $1,500,000 for such purposes. Nearly all the unions are rendering most valuable aid to their members through the establishing of insurance, sick and accident benefits.

Socially, what have unions done for the laborer? They have given him more time for the recreation of his body and the development of his mind, and so raised his social status. Says the report of the Industrial Commission: "The concentration of effort to secure shorter hours by the American Federation of Labor for the past 15 years has already accomplished notable results. The general effort, beginning 1886 is believed to have reduced the day's labor of the working people of the United States by fully one hour. The cigar makers were the first to secure an extensive adoption of the eight-hour day, and their success dated from 1886.

Twenty years ago trade unions found women and children of tender age working 12 and 14 hours per day, for unreasonably low wages in our mines and factories where there were utter disregard for proper sanitary conditions and proper protection against machinery. Trade unions, in many instances, have eliminated all these conditions and kept employers from destroying the chief source of labor by securing legislation restricting woman and child labor. Our United States government and 30 of our states have eight hour laws and testify that the eight hour day gives better results than the ten hour.

Trade unionism takes the laborer away from the hand to mouth sort of life and helps him to a more rational existence. It enables him to educate his children and live like a white man. It improves him further socially by providing places where the wage worker can go in his working clothes and spend an hour or two among friends. I speak of the club rooms and libraries of the unions. These are wholesome resorts and have largely displaced the open saloon, into which doubtless many would go that do not, were there no trade union clubs. The Baltimore Bricklayers' Union has spent over $1,000 on its library, and at present the members tax themselves $1 each to maintain it. Here they read the hundreds of magazines and periodicals which are published by the unions, as well as those from various other sources. Professor Ely, of the University of Michigan, has said that "Trade unions are among the foremost of our educational agencies, ranking next to our churches and public schools in their influence upon the culture of the masses." Mr. Palmer, a great contractor of Chicago, said: "It cost me considerably more than $1,000,000 to learn that there is no labor so skilled, so intelligent, so faithful, as that which is governed by an organization, where officials are well-balanced, level-headed men. In most of our northern states trade unions have secured the compulsory education of children between the ages of 8 and 12 years, thus giving our workers at least the rudiments of an education.

By bettering his condition economically and socially, unions have been enabled to do much for the laborer morally. They have raised him to a more enlightened morality by replenishing his purse and cultivating his brain. Unions have always promoted temperance. "Stop your drinking" was the advice given on all occasions by a noted labor organizer. All this and more, too, are unions doing for the toiling masses, and trade union strength is increasing with marvellous rapidity. The number of unionists has trebled in the last five years, and to-day men are still flocking into the union ranks.

The gentlemen of the negative may raise the objection that unions have proved hurtful to the best interests of the non-union element. They will tell you how strikes have wrought havoc to the welfare of the non-union element. Let us face the issue as it really is. Carroll D. Wright has said: "Strikes grow out of increased intelligence. Fools," says he, "do not strike." It is only men who have intelligence enough to recognize their condition that make use of this last resort as a remedy. Who is this non-union man, any way? In what rank is he found? He is not among the millions of farm laborers, for among that class no unions have been organized, so that there can be no union to oppress him. The non-union man is not to be found in the organized trades. He is that man who refuses to join the union in the trade in which there is a union. He makes the 5 per cent. of engineers not in the brotherhood, and the 9 or 10 per cent. not in the other organized trades. It is on an average the 90 per cent. of the union men in the organized trades who have determined the history of trade unionism. It has been the men in the organized trades who have given us higher wages, shorter hours and better sanitary conditions, and not the one-tenth or non-union element, who do nothing toward uplifting the workingman. We know there have been some strikes, but did you know that 75 per cent. of all the strikes for the past 20 years have been caused by a demand for higher wages and shorter hours?

Thus we see that nearly all the strikes have resulted directly from a desire to improve the conditions of the laborers. Did you know that on an average each workman engaged in such occupation as is subject to strike has lost considerably less time than one of his possibly working days each year for the last 20? The American workman during the past 20 years has spent less time in striking than celebrating the 25th day of December. Looking at this matter broadly, is it not better that the nine-tenths of the workers shall be elevated, shall secure something of the principle of democracy in industry, even though the one-tenth is put to some disadvantage?

We know that trade union members as human organizations have made mistakes, have committed in some instances acts of violence; but while we are aware of this, still we are not blind to the great good that unions have done in dustry and labor. Granting that they have sometimes caused a little strife, b t ter a little strife than servile submission to the extortional demands of capital. Strife is often an index to progress. The evils connected with trade unions are temporary, not inherent, and they have been greatly magnified.

I have shown how organization is a natural outgrowth of our industrial life, how it has enabled the working man in every way to better his conditions and get a just share of what he produces. How the shorter hours of labor have made him a better citizen in that he now had more time to study and know what is being done outside his own occupation, and not only this, but his resting time has been greatly increased and as a result the laborer of to-day is a happier and more contented workingman than the one of 20 years ago. He has more money and can buy better clothes, more wholesome food, more books, and lives in a better house, and gets more time for the service of God, and a better chance to educate himself and his children.

If the laborer had been denied the right to have a say to what his conditions of employment should be, what do you imagine would have been the history of this country for the past 20 years, if he had been denied this right and gradual method of getting what he knows belongs to him? There was but one method open to him, and that the revolutionary method.

Argument of C. J. Harrell.

Now, we have just pointed out to you what the predominating tendency of trade unionism has been for the past 20 years so far as the workingman is concerned. It has been the workers of America, joined together, demanding a larger share of the wealth which they produce, more of the opportunities of modern civilization, and better conditions of labor. My colleague has called your attention to the various benefits the workingman has derived from organization, and how he has progressed in the past 20 years; how the various labor magazines have given him a knowledge of the industrial and social problems; how he has increased wages and shortened hours, giving him a happier home and more time for the cultivation of his moral and intellectual nature; how trade unionism has tended to abolish child labor; how it has given the laborer more sanitary conditions of employment. It has still further been shown that all these changes have been due to the efforts of organized labor; that it has been the policy of capital to get as much work as possible for as little pay as possible. I think that even the gentlemen of the negative will agree with us when we say that beneath all this labor movement for the past 20 years has been the desire of the laborer to keep space with modern progress; to obtain some of the better things of life.

To do this he has been demanding higher wages, shorter hours, and better conditions of employment. I think that his demands have, to a large degree, been successful. So we contend that the predominating tendency of trade unionism for the past 20 years has been to uplift the workingman, and by uplifting him it has given a new impetus to industry, and strengthened the whole social fabric of America. We have seen what it has done for the workingman now let us see what this uplifted workman, this product of trade unionism, has done for the country at large.

Perhaps the gentlemen would argue that by shortening hours, increasing wages and raising the standard of living, the laborer has thrown something of a damper over the industrial interests of America. But when we look at the naked facts we soon realize that such a conclusion is far from right. The age of brute force has passed. It is brains and skill that count to-day. Indeed, the work of trade unionism, which is to obtain better conditions for the laborer, has for these past 20 years increased the efficiency of industry. No better illustration of this fact is needed than the report of Mr. Peck, Labor Commissioner for New York, who says that all the strongest unions in that state have obtained shorter hours and in nearly every instance where hours were shortened wages were afterwards increased. This, he adds, is the invariabl answer to the question, "Do shortened hours increase the efficiency of labor?" This is an example taken from one of America's leading industrial centres. Has not the demand for New York's products increased during these 20 years? Do you need a better illustration that shorter hours and higher wages increase the efficiency of capital?

Certainly all history has shown that the more intelligent the workman is the more is his product in demand. Why is American product in greater demand to-day than that of any other country? It is because her working people enjoy more freedom and greater prosperity and are therefore more intelligent than the workers of any other nation. That explains why two out of three of all the sewing machines made in the world are American product, why the new Trans-Siberian railway is being built with American material, why we hold the finest locomotives in the world, why we have the greatest steel works, why the output of America in one year exceed those of any other two countries, why one industry, Spain, was compelled only a short time ago to buy 600 railway cars from us. In other words, the higher standard of the American workman explains why America has become the important store of the world.

But we need not compare it with other nations altogether. The very history of the organized and unorganized sections of America have a lesson in themselves. The worker in a Massachusetts factory gets 27 per cent. of what he produces, while the unorganized laborer in South Carolina gets only 13 per cent., yet the Massachusetts laborer produces in one year $115 more for his employer than the laborer in South Carolina. There is an illustration of what trade unionism is doing for industry, lifting the standard of both the employer and the employee. Compare the two and you will see why northern commerce has been more extensive for these 20 years than that of the south. We have depended too much upon ignorant labor rather than skill and intelligence. In the north trades unionism has been playing an important part, lifting the whole industrial system to a higher standard.

It is needless for me to continue to give illustrations and comparisons. It stands to reason that intelligent, skillful men with a purpose in view, can do more and better work than a poor fellow who is only striving to live. You can easily see that commercial supremacy depends upon high-grade goods; that high-grade goods depends upon high-grade workmen.

What force has been developing high-grade workmen during the past 20 years? It is not capital, for the tendency of the employer has been anything else than helpful; it has been to strenuously appropriate the larger share for the benefit of capital. When did legislation ever do anything for the benefit of the laborer, except when prompted by trade unionism?

No; it has been the work of the organized workmen of America, demanding and obtaining for these past 20 years higher wages and better conditions of employment, and, as already pointed out, becoming, through these better conditions, more skillful and efficient workmen. Had it not been for their efforts industry could have never made the progress it has. With these facts before us we can but conclude that trades unionism has lifted the standard of the workman, and, as a natural consequence, lifted the standard of industry.

Trade unions have promoted interests in America more valuable to the advancement of civilization than mere dollars and cents. It has been a continual process of bringing capital and labor upon common grounds, where they can see and understand the situation of each other. Mr. Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, says that in all his experience he has never seen the institution of a labor organization that did not advocate the policy of trying to arbitrate before striking. Trade unions have ever stood for arbitration. But if stands to reason that there could have been no arbitration had it not been for organization.

So the next place there can be no arbitration until the power of the two parties involved equal or nearly equal, for, unless it is the stronger will force the weaker, and that is no arbitration. Certainly no one can deny that the tendency for the past 20 years has been to strengthen the unions and bring them more upon a level with capital; and it is very interesting to note that in the well organized unions that is, comparatively speaking, no disputes. Take the Brotherhood of Engineers. In these 20 years it has not had a strike. Compare these conditions with those of the miners, who had previously organized, and you can account for the great strike of 1902. Capital did not think that the miners had strength enough to make their desires a reality, and therefore did not think it worth while to arbitrate until its error was proved.

And to arbitrate it is not only necessary that there shall be equal power, but that one party shall know the situation and conditions of the other. And here is where trade unionism has been play-

(Continued on page 4)

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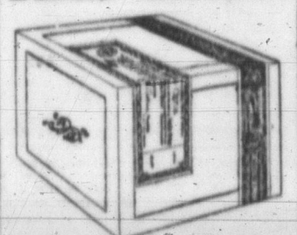

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