

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

Reflections on Current Events by the Boarders.

"If the eight-hour day is but a side issue of the labor question," said Sinnott, "will some of you please tell me the real and ultimate aim of labor reform. I have heard you talk about land reform, about money reform, about Government ownership of railroads and about shortening the hours of labor. All of you seem to argue that the effect of each and every one of these reforms would be beneficial to the great mass of the people; you don't seem to underrate their importance, but after you have fully discussed them all you invariably close with the remark that after all they are but side issues of the labor question. This question has more side shows attached to it than a travelling circus; now, I want to see the circus. I want to know what all this racket is about."

"All right," said Brown, "don't get excited and I'll tell you all about it. Labor reform has but one purpose; its great aim is to secure to labor all that which labor creates. It proclaims that all men are born equal in respect to their rights to the soil and therefore demands free access to natural opportunities. We clearly understand that, as long as any man makes a profit on your labor, you do not receive all your labor is worth. Either that, or else the man who buys the product of your labor is paying more for it than it is worth; if he does, then he is being robbed, and if he don't, then you are being robbed. Profit, properly defined, is either unpaid wages of the producer or a forced tax upon the necessities of the consumer. I don't know what you would call it, but I call it robbery; legalized, no doubt, but robbery just the same. It must be abolished before labor can secure its own."

"Well, I can't see," said Sinnott, "how you are going to abolish profits. Another thing I can't understand is, what connection land and money reform, Government ownership of railroads and shorter working hours can possibly have with the abolition of profits."

"To the superficial observer it would seem so no doubt," replied Brown; "but just let us dive down a little deeper and investigate for ourselves. There must be some powerful cause which compels the laborer to accept less than what his labor creates and under which the difference finds its way into the pockets of another man as profits. What is this cause?"

"It seems to me," said Phil, "that the cause is to be found in the fact that the few—the wealthy—own and control the tools of production which many—the poor—must use in order to live; as you pointed out the other night, it is this ownership of the tools which the laborer must use which compels him to accept less than what his labor produces."

"That's true, to a certain extent," said Brown, "but the ownership of the tools of production is not the only cause. I claim that private ownership of land has just as much if not more to do with it than the ownership of tools. Let me illustrate this point, so that I may be understood. We will suppose a community in which the land is absolutely free and open to settlement to anyone who cares to cultivate it. We will also suppose a number of large manufactories in the same community. In this community, as in all others, there are some men who do not like factory life and these will settle on the land. There are also others to whom a farmer's life offers little or no attraction and they will prefer to work in the factories. Now, where land is free and open to settlement the same as in this community the whole product of the land will go to him who cultivates it as wages. Self-evidently, the wages in these factories will be an amount equal to what labor could procure from

the least productive land open to settlement; for if at any time less than this would be offered labor would leave the factory and apply itself to land which yields more. In spite of the manufacturer owning the tools of production he could not in this community force wages below this point. But let land ownership exist and rent arise and conditions will change at once. The whole product of the land now no longer goes to labor as wages, but only that part which remains after the payment of rent. This enables the manufacturer to reduce wages to that point which would still yield an equivalent to what labor employed on land could procure after payment of rent. And so, as rent of land increases in this community would the power of the manufacturer to reduce wages increase until they barely sufficed to buy the bare necessities of him who works for wages. This is the point which we have reached; and this is the connection between land and labor reform.

We realize that so long as some men are allowed to own and control the tools of production and others are allowed to own the land of the country, those who neither own part of one or the other are helpless in the hands of those who do. It gives one section the power to rob the other section and pocket the plunder under the name of profit, interest, or rent, and it compels those who are being robbed to submit to the operation. Under our present social system, which is the outcome of centuries of class rule, there is no redress for the victims; they must grin and bear it. We believe that individuals and private corporations must be shorn of the power which the ownership of land and the tools of production give, and that this power must be vested in the people and through their government administered for the benefit of all. Though it means the complete overthrow of the competitive system, it can and will be brought about gradually. Land reform, money reform, Government ownership and control of railways, telegraphs and telephones, abolition of the contract system on public works, the shortening of the hours of labor, all of these singly will not settle the labor question; they are but steps towards the total abolition of the wage system and must be regarded as such. Some other time we must take up currency reform and transportation and find out what relation they bear to labor reform and the abolition of wage slavery."

BILL BLADES.

THE TRADES COUNCIL.

Water Tax Question—Bureau of Statistics—Early Closing, ETC.

The regular meeting of the above Council was held last Thursday evening—L. Z. Boudreau, president, in the chair.

Credentials were read and accepted from Ville Marie Assembly, J. P. Coutlee and F. X. Boileau; Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, No. 666, J. B. Champagne.

The minutes of the last regular meeting were read and confirmed.

The special committee on water tax reported having held two public meetings, and recommended that three more meetings be held in different parts of the city, and that the Council vote a sum of money to defray the expenses of same.

On motion of Delegate Darlington, seconded by Delegate St. George the report was concurred in, and the sum of \$25 voted the committee to carry on their work.

The Widow Flynn Committee reported their intention to hold a grand drawing in aid of the defence fund. Delegates Darlington, Lafontaine and W. Keys being unable, owing to other duties, to attend the meetings of the committee, were replaced by Delegates R. Keys, Gus Gibbons and J. P. Coutlee.

The case of ex-Treasurer Ayotte was then taken up.

It was moved by Delegate Darlington, seconded by Delegate J. Brennan that the committee present a full written report at the next meeting. Carried.

Delegate Lafontaine having resigned as a member of the night school committee and Mr. P. A. Duffey being no longer connected with the Council, Delegates Boileau and Darlington were elected in their stead. It was then moved by Delegate Lafrance,

seconded by Delegate Fisher, that the question of the Bureau of Statistics be laid over till next meeting, and that Mr. A. T. Lepine, M.P., be requested to attend said meeting, and explain the progress made in this and other labor matters.

The motion was carried. It was moved by Delegate Coutlee, seconded by Delegate Thibault that the Council endorse the action of the Clerks' Association in their efforts to have the city charter amended to regulate and limit the hours of labor for clerks. Carried.

It was moved by Delegate Garrigan, seconded by Delegate J. Brennan, that the Council warn workmen against so-called employment bureaus. Carried. The meeting then adjourned.

WILL THEY UNITE?

The K. of L. Offer to Amalgamate With the American Federation.

The K. of L. convention discussed a highly important resolution offered by A. W. Wright to settle the differences between the K. of L. and the American Federation of Labor. They were finally adopted, 95 yeas, 5 nays. If these resolutions are accepted by the Federation it means that over 60,000 laboring men will be united in organized labor assemblies or unions.

The proposition embraced in the resolution is as follows:

1. In future all Knights of Labor working at a trade or calling shall recognize and respect the working cards of all unions of the same trade or calling attached to or affiliated with the American Federation of Labor or connected with any labor organizations who are parties to the agreement when such unions and their members shall in like manner recognize and respect the working cards of such Knights of Labor.

2. All labels the property of the Federation, or of any body attached to it, or of any of the labor organizations who are parties to the agreement, shall be officially recognized and indorsed by the Knights of Labor, and all Knights of Labor labels shall be officially recognized and indorsed by the Federation and the other parties to this agreement.

3. No person who is a suspended or expelled member of any union in affiliation with the Federation or of any other body a party to this agreement, or who is in arrears for dues or assessments or in any other way indebted to such union or organization, shall be admitted to membership in any assembly of the K. of L. without the consent of such union or organization, in writing, and in like manner no person who has been expelled or suspended by an assembly of the K. of L., or who is indebted, or in arrears for dues or assessments to such assembly, shall be admitted to membership in any union affiliated with the Federation or any of the organizations who are parties to this agreement.

4. The provisions here made shall be promulgated as soon as practicable, and go into effect on and after January 1, 1892, and so on.

Resolved that no other assembly of K. of L. shall form an alliance or affiliation with any body or organization that shall refuse to enter an agreement as above with this order, and be it further

Resolved that should the American Federation of Labor at its coming annual session refuse to enter into the agreement as outlined above it shall be the duty of the general officers of the K. of L. to issue an address to the workmen of America setting forth all the facts.

This afternoon the Assembly was in secret session, and it is said that the secret work has been totally changed to prevent expelled members coming in. In the case of J. J. Holland, of Florida, an expelled member of the General Executive Board, the expulsion was sustained.

In the discussion on this point it was charged that he and others hoodled the yellow fever fund sent by the General Assembly to the Florida K. of L. in 1888.

A proposition to admit lawyers to membership in the order was rejected.

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