

The Groan and Fight at Youngstown

(Continued from Page 5.)

during these periods have begged for the privilege of obtaining even this much employment, besieging the gates of the company plants morning and evening and pleading with company agents to save their families from destitution.

"At the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company's plant, which for more than eight years has earned dividends of 5 per cent on its capital stock, and since July, 1913, has paid dividends of 12 per cent, on a basis of \$10,000,000 of common stock, the privilege of working three days a week during these years of slack operation was doled out as charity might be after investigation had shown that the man's family was in need. To supplement the boon thus granted, baskets of food were distributed to the most needy, and the cost of the food was later deducted from the husband's or father's wages. The company also donated \$1,000 a year to the Charity Organization Society. The Republic Iron and Steel Company gave \$500 as its annual contribution. The management of the Carnegie Steel Company, a member of the United States Steel Corporation, refused to give anything. The authority for the foregoing statements is General Secretary Hanson, of the Charity Organization Society.

"During all these years the men lived in squalid, crowded rooms. Overcrowding and poor diet aided the rapid spread of trachoma, a disease always associated with dire poverty. The epidemic became so threatening that the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company became alarmed lest it would close its plant, and spent thousands of dollars to check the disease and restore the human part of its equipment to efficiency.

"Not only are the homes of the workers overcrowded, but they are surrounded by piles of exposed garbage, and open privies stand near the doors. Indescribably filthy are the yards, streets and alleys adjoining them, in which the children of the workers play. General Secretary Hanson, of the Charity Organization Society, told the writer that the administration of the health laws has been notoriously lax for at least eight years, being in the hands, he said, of a health officer whom he regarded as incompetent and who appointed ignorant and untrained men as inspectors. My investigation showed that a law prohibiting the exposure of garbage was wantonly and generally disregarded within a few blocks of the business center of Youngstown.

"In East Youngstown there are 9,000 inhabitants and but 450 voters. The city administration is controlled by the

liquor interests, represented by twenty-two saloons. There is not a church in East Youngstown, according to my observation and the word of Mr. Hanson. The conscience of the community at Youngstown may perhaps be personified in Mr. Hanson, general secretary of the Charity Organization Society.

"Hanson admitted that during nearly half of the eight years he has spent in his present position the steel workers have been given employment only three days a week; he described the system of relief established by the largest company to keep its employees alive; he admitted sanitary conditions are bad and the infant mortality rate is excessive.

"Yet, in spite of his daily contact with the misery and degradation wrought in Youngstown by poverty, Hanson declared his conviction that low wages had nothing to do with it. "Have you or your society ever made an investigation to determine the cost of living for steel workers?" Hanson was asked.

"We have not," he replied. "We have never felt that the poverty here was caused by low wages. I have been sure that the wages were high enough. The heads of the steel companies are progressive, high-minded men. In investigating applications for charity we find that practically all of the cases of destitution can be accounted for by bad management or drink."

"After Hanson's attention had been directed to the excessive infant mortality, the wretched sanitary and housing conditions, and the fact that a man working three days a week, during much of the time, for \$1.92 or \$2.30 a day, could not possibly support his family, he admitted that wages had something to do with it, and agreed that an investigation should be conducted to determine the relation between destitution and wages."

The report sets forth several family budgets of workers interviewed by the writer, showing that the men interviewed were in debt to the grocer and butcher and could not meet the family expenses.

Discussing the labor policy of the Steel Corporation and the independent manufacturers, who follow its lead, the report says:

"The maintenance of an industrial force that during half the time is twice as large as the force that can be utilized must be attributed to something worse than disorganized and anarchic conditions in the steel industry. It must be attributed to the deliberate policy of the Steel Corporation and those that follow its lead of maintaining two men for every job in order that the workers shall have no choice between accepting the wages offered and starving."

"After the business revival of last

summer and fall, the Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company let a contract for a large extension to its plant. Inserted in the contract was a clause that the contractor should not pay more for unskilled labor than was being paid by the company. For, while the steel workers are recruited from immigrants with large families, which chain them to the community in which they settle, and to which home-building schemes with the installment feature rivet them still more securely, construction workers are migratory and able to take advantage of every increase in the demand for labor. The steel company feared the contagion of higher wages. But they could not conceal from their employees the fact that unskilled labor was in demand.

"This realization came to men who had labored to the point of exhaustion ten or twelve hours a day; who had lived in squalid, crowded rooms where their families suffered with them, and their babies died; who faced endless debts and misery, or ran from them and found escape in whiskey; to whom leisure meant the enforced leisure of part-time employment, with fear, starvation and the shame of charity as its accompaniments.

"They became aware that, for the first time in years, they might quit their employment without facing starvation; that they might stand on their feet as free men and defy the boss; that they might register their protest and give vent to the resentments that for so long had been smothered by the pangs of hunger and the fear of starvation.

"This was the realization that prompted the strike. It was the amazing new consciousness that more than one man wanted their services that gave them courage as they crowded about the bridgehead leading to the company's plant at East Youngstown on that Friday evening.

"What followed the massacre by company guards was the action of a mob already flaming with resentment and infuriated by the sight of blood and the death or wounding of their companions. All the rebellion and bitterness of years flamed up, and among

those who had saturated themselves with whiskey or rum in celebration of the Greek Catholic Christmas the lust for destruction knew no bounds."

Summing up the strike, the report says:

"Your investigator finds that the strike at the Republic Iron and Steel and the Youngstown Sheet and Tube plants won a 10 per cent increase in wages not only for 14,500 strikers, but for all of the employees of the Steel Corporation, so that it will eventually benefit directly nearly 300,000 men.

"Neither the strike at the Republic plant nor at that of the Youngstown Sheet and Tube plant was instigated or in any way directly brought about by the American Federation of Labor, although the campaign begun three years ago by the American Federation of Labor, with the object of reaching the unskilled and helpless steel workers with the message of organization, undoubtedly had considerable influence.

"After the strike began at the Republic plant, organizers for the federation were sent to Youngstown and formed local unions, including a Federal union of unskilled workers with 1,000 members. Officials of the Republic company met with committees elected by these unions, and when the strike was settled they promised not to discriminate against union men. Thus, there now exists in the Republic plant the nucleus of a strong organization.

"In striking contrast with the death and destruction that accompanied the strike at the Sheet and Tube Company's plant was the orderly and peaceful progress of the strike of the employees of the Republic plant. At the former plant organizers for the American Federation of Labor were prevented from hiring a hall and addressing the strikers on the day of the riot, in order to counsel moderation and orderly conduct.

"Prosecuting Attorney Henderson, of Youngstown, declared publicly after his investigation that organized labor had nothing to do with the strike and riot at this plant, although its representatives did try in vain to reach the strikers with restraining influence."

TODAY Is Child Labor Sunday

(Continued from page 7.)

cotton mills, the canning factories, the glass factories, the paperbox factories, the factories and the mines are endless." So endless, that the passage of the federal child labor bill establishing an eight-hour day and age limits of wage earning children becomes imperative. Then the consumer can buy his canned goods, glass, coal, stockings and gloves with a free conscience.

ple through the control of interstate commerce has been demonstrated.

State regulation progresses so very slowly and State laws at present are so totally lacking in uniformity that forty Legislatures would have to act in order to meet the minimum standards set by this federal bill. The snail's pace at which some States improve is interesting. "It took seven