

LABOR OMNIA VINCIT.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

AN APPEAL

To all Local, National, and International Trade Unions in America.

It is now generally admitted by all really educated and honest men that a thorough organization of the entire working class, to render employment and the means of subsistence less precarious by securing an equitable share of the fruits of their toil, is the most vital necessity of the present day.

To meet this urgent necessity, and to achieve this most desirable result, efforts have been made, too numerous to specify, and too divergent to admit of more than the most general classification. Hence it is to say, that those attempts at organization which admitted to membership the largest proportion of others than wage-workers were those which went the most speedily to the limbo of movements that won't move; while, of the surviving experiments, those which started with the most elaborate and exhaustive platforms of abstract principles were those which got the soonest into fatal complications, and soonest became exhausted.

In the face of so many disastrous failures to supply the undoubtedly existing popular demand for a practical means of solving the great problem, the query naturally suggests itself to many: "Which is the best form of organization for the people, the workers?"

We unhesitatingly answer: "The organization of the working people, by the working people, for the working people—that is, the Trade Union."

The Trade Unions are the natural growth of natural laws, and from the very nature of their being have stood the test of time and experience. The development of the Trade Unions, regarded both from the standpoint of numerical expansion and that of practical working, has been marvelously rapid. The Trade Unions have demonstrated their ability to cope with every emergency—economic or political—as it arises.

It is true that single Trade Unions have been often beaten in pitched battles against superior forces of united capital, but such defeats are by no means disastrous; on the contrary, they are useful in calling the attention of the workers to the necessity of thorough organization, of the inevitable obligation of bringing the yet unorganized workers into the Union, of uniting the hitherto disconnected Local Unions into National Unions, and of effecting a yet higher unity by the affiliation of all National and International Unions in one grand Federation, in which each and all trade organizations would be "as distinct as the billows, yet one as the sea."

In the work of the organization of labor, the most energetic, wisest, and devoted of us, when working individually, cannot hope to be successful, but by combining our efforts all may. And the combined action of all the Unions when exerted in favor of any one Union will certainly be more efficacious than the action of any one Union, no matter how powerful it may be, if exerted in favor of an unorganized, or a partially organized mass. The Brotherhood of Painters has, within a little more than one year, gained nearly one hundred subordinate Local Unions, and it has been largely enabled to achieve this remarkably rapid growth by the assistance of the Brotherhood of Carpenters, the Tailors, the Cigar Makers, and other affiliated Unions of the American Federation of Labor, thus furnishing another proof, if any further proofs were needed by Union men, that "in union there is strength."

We assert that it is the duty, as it is also the plain interest, of all working people to organize as such, meet in counsel, and take practical steps to effect the unity of the working class, as an indispensable preliminary to any successful attempt to eliminate the evils of which we, as a class, so bitterly and justly complain. That this much desired unity has never been achieved is owing in a great measure to the non-recognition of the autonomy, or the right of self-government, of the several trades. The American Federation of Labor, however, avoids the fatal rock on which previous organizations, having similar aims, have split, by simply keeping in view this fundamental principle, as a landmark which none but the most infatuated would have ever lost sight of.

The rapid and steady growth of the American Federation of Labor, arising from the affiliation of previously isolated, together with newly-formed, National Unions; the establishment of local unions of various trades and callings where none before existed; the spontaneous formation of Federal Labor Unions, composed of wage-workers following various trades in places where there are too few persons employed at any particular one to allow the formation of Local Unions of those trades, thus furnishing valuable bodies of auxiliaries and recruits to existing unions upon change of abode, this steady growth is gratifying evidence of the appreciation of the toilers of this broad land of a form of general organization in harmony with their most cherished traditions, and in which each trade enjoys the most perfect liberty while securing the fullest advantages of united action.

And now, in conclusion, you will permit us to express our acknowledgement of the very moderate amount of governing which has fallen to the lot of those who have the honor to address you. While much of this good fortune must be attributed to the nature of the federal form of our organization, our task has been immeasurably lightened by the assistance of a body of organizers, who, without hope of reward, except the consciousness of performing a sacred duty to their fellow workmen, have carried the propaganda of trade unionism into the remotest parts of the Continent. Much of our burden has been also eased by the generous co-operation of the Executives of National and International Unions, both affiliated and unaffiliated, the latter of whom have doubtless so acted from a conviction that within the lines of the Federation will be fought to the bitter end the fast-coming grand struggle between Capital and Labor, involving the perpetuation of the civilization we have so laboriously evolved. Deeply grateful as we are, for your fraternal support, we should be negligent of the duty we owe to each and all did we not urge the Local, National, and International Unions who have not yet joined the American Federation of Labor, to do so without further delay.

Yours fraternally,

SAMUEL GOMPERS, President.
DANIEL McLAUGHLIN, First Vice-President.
WILLIAM MARTIN, Second Vice-President.
GABRIEL EDMONSTON, Treasurer.
P. J. McGUIKE, Secretary.