

the ultimate and nominal status of the worker being that of independent producer.\* In the second place—and this fact accounts also in part for the slow growth of labor organizations down at least to 1842—the English Common Law brought to America treated as indictable conspiracy the combination of laborers, and the promoters and members of labor organizations were liable to prosecution accordingly. Until 1825 the Unions were merely local and tentative. There was no attempt to unite with organizations whose members worked at other callings or in other places; nor was there at this time any particular necessity for such a step, for competition among laborers was at its minimum both on account of the difficulty of mobilizing or importing labor, and on account of the fact that the highly specialized individual skill required by the more complicated operations—to simplify which minute division of labor and the use of automatic machinery had not been introduced—made very difficult a diversion of labor from one trade to another. The first instance, probably, of a strike in the United States is that of the sailors of New York, who, in 1802, struck to enforce their demand for an increase in wages from \$10 to \$14 per month. The combination and conspiracy laws, however, enabled the authorities to arrest and imprison the leader of the strike, which then came to an end. Until 1822 there were no unions outside the state of New York; but in that year a Society of Shipwrights and Caulkers was formed at Boston and incorporated in 1823, whose avowed object was that of a benefit society.

After 1825, the wage-earners began to regard themselves as a distinct class, whose interests were in many respects not identical with those of the rest of the population. This belief having impressed itself upon them, it was natural that class action should strongly recommend itself. As an advocate of their views appeared, about 1825, the *Workingman's Advocate*, the first labor journal in the United States, and, during the years 1829-1841, the Labor party having joined forces with the Democrats, exercised a potent influence on politics, and were even able to elect a representative to Congress. About this time central unions were organized, including all workmen within a certain locality. The earliest of such organizations was that of the General Trades'

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\* Ely—Labor Movement in America, Ch. 3.