

HOW A STRIKE IS MANAGED.

BY HOLLIS W. FIELD.

[Hollis W. Field, author and editor; born Williamsburg, Mo., April 10, 1865; educated in the public schools of Missouri; began his career as a writer on the Kansas City Times, and afterwards became city editor of the San Antonio Express; removing to Chicago, he became connected with the Chicago Record, of which paper he became editorial writer and literary editor; writer of many articles for magazines and periodicals, chiefly on scientific and business topics.]

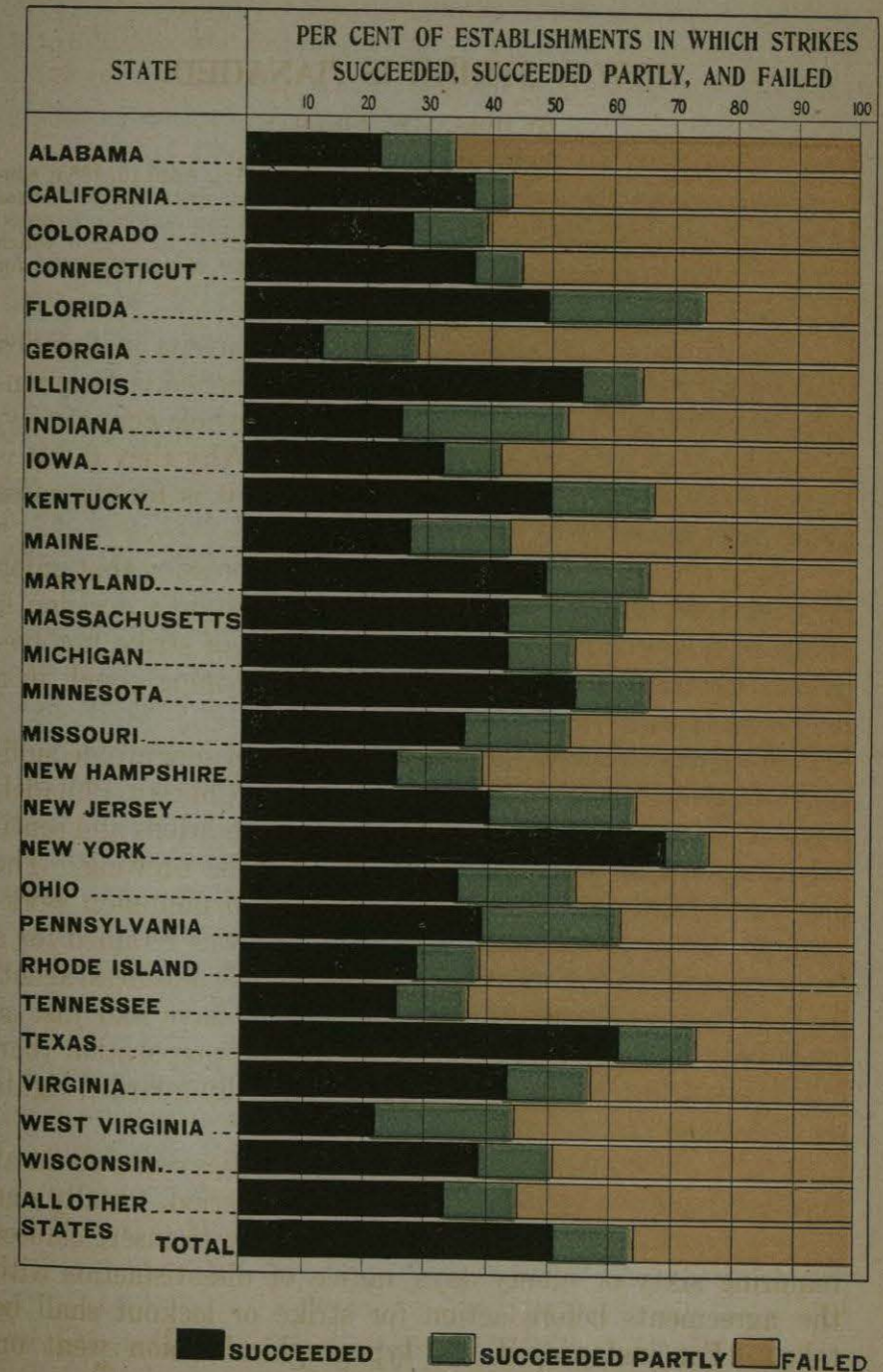
To the citizen of the average metropolitan city in America the news that some particular union is on strike is commonplace, save as it may promise to involve a whole community. Some union or some unions have struck. Why they did it is a matter of some interest. How they did it is for the most part an unknown procedure.

In the main it seems to be a growing impression that union labor for the least of excuses and at an instant's decision is likely to break out into the most intricate of strike involvements, something after the manner of whooping cough in a kindergarten.

As a matter of fact, the strike that is of magnitude sufficient to be felt in the streets of New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, or Boston is the creation of growing conditions and sentiments that are, perhaps, weeks and months brewing. The primary cause may have been that a single nonunion workman adjusting plumbing in a \$2,000 house was retained for a week against the protests of a local union's business agent. But the disrupting strike that follows will have had just as much and no more sober consideration and preparation than the strike that may involve the most sacredly guarded rights of unionism.

Most of the great strikes of the great cities come about at the end of a certain definite agreement period, usually one year. In such agreements it is customary to insert clauses requiring sixty or ninety days' notice of dissatisfaction with the agreements before action for strike or lockout shall be taken. For instance, if the typographical union went on

RESULT OF STRIKES, BY STATES, 1881 TO 1907



strike in January, 1906, it was after the national body's expressions for an eight hour day talked in the convention of August, 1904, and after its second discussion in the session of August of the following year. Thus the employing bodies will have had sixteen months at least for consideration of some of the aspects of the situation.

Striking the average of all strikes all over the United States it requires twice as much time to prepare for a general strike as that general strike will last. A strike lasts 23.8 days; preparation for the strike of any magnitude will require sixty days before it is in effect, even after the first strike move has been undertaken.

The typical union of any great city involves as integers the locals which are related to that union's district or joint council, as the spokes of the wheel are related to the hub. In ten years in the United States more than 1,400 separate causes for strikes have been taken from the disaffection that arises within the territory of a local union.

Within the territory of this local, some infractions of an agreement occurs sufficient to cause disaffection. The disaffected members of the particular union in some particular establishment bring the matter before the local body at one of its meetings. A business agent is asked to come to the disaffected plant and consider the two sides of the matter. This agent ordinarily is an old tried member of the union, chosen for his knowledge of the organization and its business relations with employers. He has no written credentials. He has no arbitrary powers. He has been recognized individually by the employers as a man recognized by the union to treat as amicably as possible between the two forces of capital and labor. Among the employees of the establishment is the steward—an officer of the local union—with whom the business agent comes in direct touch on the one hand, and on the other side of the controversy is the employer.

The matters in controversy, however, cannot be settled through the business agent's diplomacy. Perhaps neither employer nor employee will recede a hair's breadth from the first position of estrangement. The next recourse is for the local union to carry the matter to the central district council.

In this body the representation is on a senate basis, each local having its fixed number of representatives regardless of the number of its members. Before this central body the differences between the single house and the group of union employees in that house are brought up and canvassed. If the central body is impressed sufficiently, the question of strike or not to strike is submitted to a vote there. This may be a secret ballot of the membership, or it may be a yea and nay vote, put by a calling of the roll.

The result is the calling of a strike against that certain house. The business agent is instructed to visit the plant at a certain time and call the strike. He goes, appearing before the steward in the establishment, and through this official the union members are ordered to walk out of the place, reporting at headquarters of the union. There enough of the members of the local on strike are selected for picket duty around the plant. Squads of pickets are told off under captains selected, and these are posted around the struck establishments to use influence against the places of the strikers being filled with nonunion workers. Perhaps some of the members of the firm are engaged in other lines of industry. Having become unfair, disaffection arises in these places of business and the strike spreads through sympathy. At a meeting of the district council it becomes evident that to make the strike effective, all members of all local unions must be ordered out. This is voted and by the same general procedure the working members of all local unions are called out of all establishments employing that particular class of men.

But in the meantime, in all this preparatory work for the interests of unionism, the national executive board of the union has been kept in touch with the merits and possible demerits of the controversy. Before the final order has gone out for a general strike of the union in Chicago, for instance, the national board has been appealed to for ratification of the strike, and this executive board has passed favorably upon the move. Only when this national body has given assent does a strike become of distinct significance and bearing, but after this ratification such a strike becomes active, promising, perhaps, to involve every district council in the United States

unless somewhere on one side or another the necessary concessions shall be made.

Occasionally within the territory of a single local union there may be a gross violation of all agreements made by some particular employer, at which the union men employed in the establishment may drop their tools or work of whatever kind and walk out without the sanction of even the district council, But these are sporadic examples of strike measures, usually quickly settled.

Necessarily the question of money for carrying on the general strike is of first importance. In many ways this necessity is anticipated in times of prosperity in a union where the benefit insurance system, forms of membership dues, and the like are resorted to; while in the emergency of a strike assessments upon the working memberships of the union and even measures for raising money by entertainments, by solicitations at lectures and such become matter of fact necessities.

In the small territory of a local union appeal may be made to the district council asking for aid from the other locals for the local strike. Under such circumstances the district council investigates and makes its levy as the situation seems to demand.

But in the modern strike, as in the modern war, the question of success has become in great measure a question of money. War is becoming more terrible to the civilized nations, not because it is killing too many thousands of men, but because it is costing too many millions of money. A great strike costs its millions now and then, but whether it is to become obsolete because of that fact, as is predicted for war, is still a proposition subject to a wide difference in opinions.

HOW LABOR UNIONS BENEFIT THE WORKING-MAN.

BY FREDERICK F. INGRAM.

[Frederick F. Ingram, born Barry Co., Mich., 1856; educated at high school at Hastings, Michigan, and Olivet college; learned the telegraph business, and later became a clerk in a drug store; in 1877 bought a drug store for himself, borrowing the capital, and a few years later established in Detroit a small wholesale drug business which has developed into one of the leading proprietary manufacturing concerns in the country; in his few spare moments has made himself an authority on municipal and labor questions and has contributed several articles on this subject to periodicals.]

What has society or civilization gained by the organization of labor? That is a question that must be answered according to each individual point of view. If we say that it has improved social conditions we must look for the proofs in a better relation of man to man. If we say that it has advanced civilization we must take note of the successive stages of progress.

Wherein has organized labor benefited society? In the elevation of morals and the exaltation of the home. The pillars of true society are anchored to the brain and brawn of the workers of the age. Upon men who earn their bread in the sweat of their brow must society depend in all ages for its preservation. Privilege, the breeder of idle leeches, is the cankerworm that has destroyed past nations and civilizations.

A society that is built upon the uncorrupted homes of unpurchasable producers is the society that we must depend upon to preserve our liberties, make our country truly great, and protect us from the greed of those who are able to live without working and at the expense of others who, as a consequence, must work without living. Organized labor has been a benefaction upon the humble homes of the toiling masses, enlarging their comforts, widening their intelligence, strengthening their morals, and upbuilding their sacred ties.

Organized labor has advanced wages and shortened the workday not only for its supporters, but for the nonsupporters, its competitors in the labor market. It has striven that all workers may have respite from toil to improve their minds

and cultivate the graces of social intercourse. The almanac and household receipt book that formerly comprised the home library have been succeeded or superseded by well chosen and well bound volumes of poetry, history, economics, and fiction.

Organized labor has broadened the great doctrine of universal brotherhood that an injury to one is an injury to all. It has succored the oppressed, girded the loins of the weak, and helped right to overthrow might in contests for simple justice. It has brightened the homes of millions by its self invited contributions to relieve the sick and feed the hungry. It has erected homes for its weak and superannuated members. It has endowed hospitals, built churches, contributed to charitable institutions, and scattered with prodigal hands those seeds of kindness which afford shelter and rest to the weary and heavy laden. Its principles are grounded in sympathy; its aims are benevolent; its ideals are illumined by the overshadowing nimbus of eternal justice. If it sometimes errs in choice of agencies or weapons to carry forward its campaign for the amelioration of its oppressed, that charity which thinketh no evil should shield it from carping criticism and vindictive denunciation.

As did its ancient prototype in past centuries, organized labor has made its impress upon the political progress of the century just closed. The ancient guilds demanded and forced from the reluctant hands of their rulers rights and concessions that redounded to the good of all the common people. They secured and preserved their liberty by appeals to the reason and conscience of the masses. Similar forces in 1610 wrung from a reluctant king the declaration that private monopolies were against the laws of the realm and commanded his courtiers not to presume to ask him for any more, followed 13 years later by parliament resolving that all monopolies are altogether contrary to the laws of this realm, and so are and shall be utterly void and of no effect, and nowise to be put into use or execution.

Now, after the lapse of centuries, private monopoly, new in form, but even more sinister in purpose, has again re-established itself.

Organized labor has again sounded the alarm and assumed leadership in a demand that monopoly rule must be dethroned and majority rule re-established.

We are not infrequently admonished by philosophers and economists that there is going on betwixt capital and labor a war for existence; an irrepressible conflict; a something fierce and dreadful that aligns labor in uncompromising hostility to capital; a clash of interests that has been and will be perpetual—an endless battle for the supremacy of the arena of production.

The picture of these embattled hosts, as painted by the average academician, alternately sways us from emotions of pity for the principles to despair of the future. We discern in the perspective forbidding shadows of an impending bloody revolution in which established institutions will be wrecked, government will be overthrown, society disrupted, and our homes shattered. In short, an uprising of the toiling masses in which anarchy is finally to triumph and all law to be overthrown.

With such a horoscope of the future I have small patience. It is narrow, mean, and wicked. It assumes that the Almighty is responsible for present conditions, which are, therefore, unchangeable. On the contrary all laws and all conditions that oppress labor, all laws that are unjust and unnatural, are man made. Repeal them, change them, and the bloody revolution will become a peaceful emancipation. I have naught but pity for the cynical prophets of an irresponsible conflict; nothing but compassion for the lachrymose croakers who predict industrial discord and discontent as the heritage of our children. Like barnacles to the ship, these nightmare dreamers impede progress toward industrial equality.

The composite conscience of the great common people whom Lincoln said, "God loved so well because he made so many of them," is the final arbitrator of labor-capital disputes, and it will prove neither dishonest nor biased. Under informed leadership of experience and training, the industrial inequalities of the future will be gradually resolved into fair play and fair pay.

The rise of labor unionism in this country may be briefly noted in order to understand the present situation. It is of comparatively recent origin, and we must go back to colonial times if we would learn why it was retarded. In 1607 a party of British adventurers, looking for land, debarked from their ship where now is Jamestown. With them were craftsmen and professional men, but very few laborers. There was nothing much for professionals and craftsmen to do. The soil was the raw material upon which they must work. To cultivate tobacco, laborers must be had. To recruit the feeble force of laborers word was sent back to England to ship them. Magistrates and jailors of English cities and ports undertook to supply the demand by secretly selling to press gangs such criminals as had been sentenced to death or imprisonment, and by kidnapping boys on the streets, to be hurried aboard ship for emigration to America. Thus was introduced the first involuntary servitude, and it will be noticed that the slaves were white men. Nine years later a Dutch war ship, having on board 20 negroes captured from Spaniards, put into port for supplies, and the negroes were exchanged for tobacco and provisions. That was the beginning of black servitude in this country—a servitude that endured for three centuries, only to be uprooted and destroyed by a war that cost more blood and treasure than any other of modern times.

We know that it adhered to the body politic of this country until Lincoln emancipated the slaves as a retaliatory war measure. He who said, "Capital is the fruit of labor, and could not exist if labor had not first existed. Labor therefore deserves the first consideration;" gave the slave labor consideration at the opportune time. Five months after the slaves were freed there was organized the brotherhood of locomotive engineers. The cigar makers, bricklayers, and printers subsequently organized unions, and they quickly took on the character of national bodies. In the northern states there had been unions long before.

The panic of 1873 came just as many newly formed unions were building up. A long period of idleness and industrial inertia ensued. The pendulum of activity which had swung so far toward prosperity in the years following the war swung

back again, and remained suspended at a standstill. Union members, on account of hard times produced by speculation, could not meet their dues, and as a result most of the infant organizations were obliged to disband. In the year 1873 an attempt to federate the young unions had collapsed. Then secret societies sprung up, the most conspicuous of them being the Knights of Labor, a vestige of which organization yet remains; but it was badly counseled, and disintegrated from inherent weaknesses.

Eight years later, at Pittsburg, was made a successful attempt to federate the existing unions. There were in the convention 96 credentialed delegates, representing a quarter of a million of wage earners. After free and open discussion the constitution of the American Federation of Labor was formulated. The new organization did not include all labor unions, but it has since affiliated most of them. It is the towering master of all, and the most potential labor organization in the world. Its jurisdiction now extends to over 114 national unions, and to more than 2,000 subordinate unions, with a total membership of 2,000,000 breadwinners.

It is the representative labor organization of this country, if not of the world, and without doubt wields greater influence upon legislative and economic conditions than any other. Its president is Samuel Gompers, a man of great executive ability, shrewd and wise, and the members of the federation look upon him as a tower of strength to the cause of unionism.

Labor can do without capital. If all capital were destroyed in a night, labor, nevertheless, if free, would soon be better off than before, for then labor, having unrestrained contact with all the God given and natural resources of the earth, would soon reproduce capital, and each, unshackled from the exaction of idle, luxurious drones, now possessing a monopoly of natural resources and exchange, would receive its just reward.

It is not more room at the top of the ladder, where we are told there is plenty of area, but more room on the bottom rungs that justice and equality demands. Not one in a thousand, or in ten thousand, ever gets to the top, while those there often injure the rank from which they rise by depriving

it of its most energetic workers. If there were more area on the lower rungs of the ladder there would be smaller concentration of wealth in the hands of the few at the top, and a larger diffusion of wealth at the bottom.

Comfort would be universal, long hours of ceaseless toil would be no longer necessary in any occupation, and the wide gap that now separates the worker and his employer would be closed.

While the changes in the methods of production have made new adjustments necessary in industry, yet present conditions are far from the desired golden age.

Organized labor at all times has been the one kopje that withstood the assaults of greed, cunning, bribery, and cajolery in its constant warfare for economic justice and industrial liberty, and though it has made many mistakes, has often met with defeat, in my judgment it has greatly advanced the cause of civilization, has been and is a potent factor in preserving our liberties and increasing the comforts, diminishing the worries, and broadening the intelligence of the common people.