

TRADE UNIONS AN INFLUENCE FOR INDUSTRIAL PEACE.

BY JAMES DUNCAN.

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The time is fast approaching when the great majority of corporations, as quite a number have already done, will realize that the proper and business like way is to meet the representatives of organized labor to discuss and agree upon properly defined working rules and carefully prepared wage scales. Distrust and misunderstanding are the two greatest disorganizers of modern industry, and as long as the two great factors, capital and labor, stand aloof and fire at long range, that long will indiscriminate and unfriendly acts be perpetrated by each toward the other. Trade unionism stands for peace and prosperity. In crafts where it is strongest and best administered, conditions for the worker are the most desirable and the greatest amount of industrial tranquillity is obtained. Capital is there found to be in its soundest realm. Great financial bonanzas may not be visible, but neither do we find the misery and despair of the poorly organized worker or of the nonunionist.

No contract should be more sacred than the trade agreement of organized labor. It is a matter of honor between the contracting parties, that is circumscribed neither by surety companies' bonds nor by compulsory edicts which enslave the body or dwarf the mind. It is regrettable that in too many instances these principles are violated both by the unscrupulous employer and by ignorant or unadvised workmen; but such mistakes should not be viewed as failure of the labor movement any more than the collapse of a business venture should be considered a slap to civilization. The bar has mem-

bers with a peculiar itching in the palm of their hands, which only unearned greenbacks will soothe; the church has within its fold men who fall by the wayside or hear the voice of God calling them to a larger salary, and the labor movement has its bribe takers. The more is the pity that such should exist, but those who expect the trade union to be perfect, while to that extent complimenting it, are expecting too much for the time in which we live.

Again, asserting that the economic movement is one of honor, words fail to express sufficient contempt for the official who barter the confidence of his fellow workmen, either for lucre or for other personal preference. Such a man may revel in notoriety for a brief time, but honest and practical procedure will assert itself and, distrusted both by bribe giver and by his old constituents, the dishonored official will be relegated to the rear and will be remembered only as one recalls a disease. So much for the individual. No organization can long maintain the respect necessary to success, a majority of the members of which permit an agreement to be openly violated or even casually disrespected, and in the trade union movement the young organizations, which have not yet learned to follow the lead of older unions in that particular, cannot do better than pattern after such of them as have by experience proved that a fair and square observance of craft settlements is an essential and fundamental principle of the labor movement.

That such violations sometimes occur is true, but it is also true that in every such instance a great mistake has been made. Sometimes the cause is found in hasty action by the oppressed or overzealous workman, but often employers in a mad desire to outdo some competitor, inflict unbearable conditions on workers which arouse their antagonism and retaliation, and thereby violate the spirit of the agreement as fully as the other case, and both causes are equally reprehensible. This feeling will be in evidence on both sides as long as either retains the idea that the other has no rights to be respected—but if the up-to-date method fostered by trade unionism and advocated by the civic federation, of each conceding that the other has inherent rights and that both should meet and adjust

their differences in conference if possible, and if not by arbitration, is followed, ninety per cent of the labor disputes causing suspension of production and inconvenience to the public would be prevented. Along this line of thought the moral effect of such a body as the industrial department of the civic federation, standing as preceptor for the logical, rational, and pacific adjustment of commercial affairs, will go a long way toward bringing otherwise discordant elements in unison. It is not only essential to provide or suggest a way to adjust affairs of this kind after trouble has ensued, but they will be statesmen indeed, of the highest rank, who can formulate and put into use either customs or rules which will bring employers and representatives of labor together to formulate new arrangements a month or more before the expiration of the old ones. Men's minds are then cool and calculated to reason well, but when the excitement of a change is at its height, ill digested advantage takes the place of better judgment and less satisfactory settlements are obtained.

Unless in a few instances where physical endurance is at stake, organized workers do not limit production. In their collective bargain they declare for a minimum wage rate and leave the individual to produce what he can. Too often, however, the minimum rate in the bargain is considered a maximum rate by the employer, and the public is thereby led into a misconception of conditions, and trade unionism is again required to bear a burden which should be on the other fellow's shoulders. If law will continue to tolerate the sweating system, for instance, sapping the vitality of men, women, and children in their effort to earn a mere pittance, it becomes a question of practical consideration if trade unionism should not supply the deficiency, as it does others, by seeing to it that human beings shall not be treated as mere machines, and be ground to death at the behest of a false commercialism.

THE TRADE UNION LABEL.

BY JOHN GRAHAM TAYLOR.

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No sign of a trade union label has been found by the writer earlier than 1874. It appears to be wholly of American origin, nor is any evidence at hand that unions elsewhere, except in Canada, show special interest in it. The chief reason for its adoption here is doubtless in the intenser and more embarrassing forms of competition under which labor unions suffer. Many devices, both good and bad, to which the American trade union has been driven, find their origin in the exigencies of this severer competition. If the distinctively race element is included, no single factor in this competition is so powerful as that of immigration. It is not merely a question of numbers. It is not merely a question of multitudinous unskilled labor. It is also a question of race. All a priori theories of liberty and brotherhood yield quickly before the actual competition of different standards of living in a common market.

The Australian trade unions were powerful enough practically to exclude the yellow race. The unions there, as in England, are overwhelmingly of the same race. This fact makes the competitive struggle relatively a simple one. The attempt to understand the American trade union is incomparably more perplexing because of the racial effects. The constant pressure, through immigration, of a great multitude of half skilled laborers, representing far lower standards of life and at the same time introducing race antagonisms, has driven the trade union in this country to catch at every weapon of defense. The label is one of these weapons. Its first appearance was in California during the sand lot agitation against