

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

the Chinese. The Burlingame treaty with China was concluded July 28, 1868. In article 5 both countries cordially recognize the inherent and inalienable right of man to change his home and allegiance, and also the mutual advantage of the free migration and emigration of their citizens and subjects respectively from one country to the other for the purposes of curiosity, of trade, or as permanent residents. This hospitable mood was of short duration. In this same year (1868) 11,085 Chinese landed on the Pacific coast. In 1872 a San Francisco firm of cigar makers took on a number of Chinese. The number which came into direct competition with the work of any trade union must have been slight, except perhaps with the cigar makers, yet, as with the insignificant product of prison labor, it aroused instant hostility.

Much of the more recent state legislation concerning the label throws light upon its origin, as in Illinois, where it is held that a label upon cigars showing them to have been made by a first class workman, a member of an organization opposed to inferior, rat shop, coolie, prison, or filthy tenement house workmanship is legal, etc. Against the rat shop, coolie made cigars the California cigar makers first struck. But how should a sympathizing public know which were rat shop and coolie made cigars, and which the product of American labor with its superior standard? To meet this practical difficulty a label was adopted, not the blue label in present use, but a white one, to show the buyer that he was patronizing white labor. It was thus against the competition of a low class unorganized labor that this weapon of the label was first directed. Its appeal was to the smoker: Buy no cigars except from the box marked with the trade union label, thus you help maintain the white as against the coolie standard of life and work.

In 1875 another label appeared in St. Louis during a strike of the cigar makers against a reduction of wages. The color was changed from white to red. The fight was, however, strictly over the issue of organized and unorganized labor. Both were putting cigars upon the market. The trade union wished in this instance to win the support of the consumer for a product made under union conditions. To show this a red

label was used. There was at least success enough in this attempt to cause the counterfeiting of this label, upon which the trade union placed on the label its own seal. At that time there was no thought of legal protection against counterfeiting. At the convention held in Chicago, 1880, a dispute arose between delegates from the Pacific slope and those from St. Louis as to the color of the label. Let us, said an eastern delegate, take the other color on the flag, upon which the present blue label was adopted.

At this convention great stress was laid upon the fact that the unions were suffering not only from Chinese labor, but from the competition of the prisons and the tenement house. A further and more systematic use of the label was urged in order to strengthen the cause of the union against such competition.

The apparent success of the label among the cigar makers raised the question of its adoption with other unions in 1883 and 1884. The powerful organization of the hatters introduced it in 1885. The label is attached under the lining or sweatband of the hat. Its use has become so common in stiff hats that a visit to 12 New York stores (not the more fashionable ones) showed that 9 of them regularly kept the labeled hats. It is admitted by manufacturers that the influence of the label is increasing.

The label appeared in the ready made clothing trade in 1886 at a time when the Knights of Labor were in control of organized labor. It took the form of a small card tied to the garment by a thread. The present form of the label was adopted by the National union in 1891. It is of cloth attached to the inside of the garment, and costs the seller of the garment one third of a cent, the purpose being merely to cover its cost. The inscription on the label shows that it is issued by the authority of the general executive board of the United Garment Workers of America, and the garment is guaranteed union made.

From 1891 the label has been taken up by printers, bakers, wood workers, harness makers, iron molders, broom makers, coopers, photographers, shoemakers, custom tailors, mattress makers, horseshoers, brewers, egg inspectors, and

barbers (who display their label in the window). Labels are found even upon coal carts, indicating that union men only are employed in distributing coal.

Among the cigar makers, hatters, and printers the label is an influence of very considerable importance. The label of the printers, for example (adopted November, 1891), is in use in more than 200 cities in the United States and Canada. Several cities have gone so far as to pass ordinances requiring all city printing to bear the union label. The state of Nevada requires all state printing to be done in union offices and to bear the trade mark of the union. This recognition of the trade union by the municipality is the boldest step yet taken. The city thus becomes the model employer, accepting frankly the principle of the trade union wage, and endeavoring, to the extent of its patronage, to uphold the standard of hours and wages, conditions for which the union stands. The action taken by Josiah Quincy, when mayor of Boston, is so significant that the paragraphs from an address to the city council are given in full:

"For a number of years the typographical union has been endeavoring to secure the recognition by the city of the organization of the printing craft through the appointment of some member of the union as superintendent of printing. I stated a year ago that in some foreign countries organizations of wage earners take a constant, active, and intelligent interest in municipal questions, and some of their members occupy important positions and render useful service in connection with city governments, and that similar co-operation might well be encouraged to a greater extent than in the past in American cities. After mature consideration I concluded that it would be advisable, in pursuance of the policy thus indicated, to place in charge of the city printing some member of the typographical union thoroughly qualified to fill such a position, and that this step would be in the public interest; I am now entirely satisfied that this has proved to be the case. It seems to me highly desirable to make organized bodies of intelligent wage earners feel that they are directly represented in the management of public business, particularly such as pertains to their several trades.

"The city printing has been done for the last twenty years under a contract made in 1876, and allowed to run on without change since that time. About \$70,000 a year is now paid out for composition and press work alone. When the present superintendent of printing took office I instructed him to examine carefully into the expenditures for printing, and to report to me whether the city could not with advantage establish a plant for itself, to do a part or the whole of its own printing. After careful investigation, both the superintendent and myself have become satisfied that the city should take steps in this direction. The continuance of the contract referred to stood in the way of adopting this policy, as it gave the contractor all of the printing of the city. As it was originally made through the joint committee on printing of the city council, at a time when it exercised powers since vested in the executive, it seemed necessary that action for its abrogation should be taken by this committee, as well as by the superintendent of printing, and this has just been effected.

"Typographical unions have for many years urged the establishment of public printing plants for the execution of public printing, and the printers of this city have warmly favored the proposed establishment of a municipal plant. The new policy will be inaugurated in a careful and conservative manner. Probably only a portion of the city printing will be undertaken at first, and the work of the municipal plant only gradually extended. In the meantime the present contractors will continue to do such portion of the city printing as the municipal plant is not ready to take. It should be stated, in justice to them, that both the quality of their work and the manner in which it has been executed have been found satisfactory."

It is hardly open to doubt that such action on the part of municipalities would greatly strengthen the use of the label, at least until such time as the experiment was found to fail. Upon its theoretic side the label stands, primarily, for better pay and for improved conditions of labor. As will appear later, this is thus far but slightly realized in practice. Its practical and immediate purpose is, of course, to strengthen

the union. The label is the chosen symbol of work done under union conditions. Any open and distinct recognition of the union and its principles of collective bargaining must so far help their trade mark. Some of the local and college settlements take the same step, not merely of dealing with unions as distinct from individuals, but expressly recognizing the label. The Prospect Union, carried on in Cambridge, Mass., as a kind of college settlement, expressly recognizes the label of the typographical union, which does work on the co-operative plan with good measure of success. The aim is, moreover, to make the label in this instance stand for excellence of workmanship, restoring something of the ideal of the craft guilds in their better days. That this has not been done more generally with the label is clearly a weakness, especially if appeal is to be made to a larger purchasing public. It has been usual to claim for the label that it represented merely that the work was done under strictly union conditions. So far as these conditions—wages, hours, sanitation, etc.—stand for higher excellence (as in many cases they do) it may be claimed that the label also represents a better quality of work.

Further than this very indefinite claim, the label can not be said to stand for excellence of workmanship or of product. The cigar makers usually admit this, although they have an organization of extraordinary completeness and efficiency. A sort of minimum of quality is, however, set, as will be seen in the following extract from their constitution, sec. 154: "In no case shall the union label be used in any factory which pays less than \$6 per thousand; nor shall it be allowed on any cigars sold for less than \$20 per thousand." This action of the international body does not, however, cover the procedure of local unions, which may allow a label on cheaper cigars.

In the case of the hatters, it is even more difficult to trace any relation whatever between the label and quality or improved conditions. Many shops conspicuous for the high character of their product, wages, and entire circumstances under which the laborer works, have never used the label, nor is there any likelihood of their so doing.

Nowhere better than among the hatters can the matter of fact side of the label be seen. It is, like the strike or the boycott, an instrument of warfare. The published literature of the hatters' union is filled with evidences on this point. No printed matter on this subject is so wholly frank as to the primary objects to be sought through the label. It is of course assumed that the mere fact of labor organization implies of itself higher wages and better surroundings; otherwise there is singularly little pretense that quality of work, for example, or sanitation enters into their calculation.

A movement to strengthen the ideal character of the label, to help make it what many unions claim that it is, grew out of the activities of the Social Reform club in New York. The first announcement of the club, signed by its committee on organized labor, is as follows:

"The working people have an answer of their own to these perplexing questions. They advocate the use of the union label—the workingman's trade mark. Placed upon goods by the workers themselves, this mark assures the buying public that these goods were made for fair wages and under healthful conditions.

"This device, invented by American labor, is still new, but it promises a quiet adjustment, through business methods, of these ethical difficulties which are now troubling the minds of consumers. People who are anxious to help in mending matters can do so by asking for the union label on the goods they buy. The undersigned committee holds itself ready to give full information concerning the various labels, and what are the best methods of advancing the movement."

The club has begun the publication of a series of leaflets to make the idea, the history, and possible use of the label known, not only among members of trade unions, but also among the general public who may wish to know effective ways in which the unions may be strengthened.

The first leaflet issued said:

"To promote the use of the union label means, then, to unite with the workers in their struggle to make the conditions under which work is done more sanitary, the conditions of the worker safer, and the products of better quality.

"The union label, therefore, appears to be the only means of helping the workers in the factories to help themselves. For this reason, and because of the benefits to the public as well as to the workers for which it is guaranteed, the support of the union label is strongly urged by the committee on organized labor of the Social Reform club.

"The committee regards the label as the only sign which indicates that the work has been done under suitable conditions and with any consideration of the rights of the employees, and therefore urges the conscientious public in making purchases to ask for articles bearing the union label."

In the second leaflet issued, the point is fairly made that the general public has had its attention called chiefly and inevitably to the dramatic side of trade union life and effort. It has heard constantly of the violence and strife. It has known far less, or not at all, of the educational and peace-making tendencies in the unions.

"The label brings us to the union when it is in another mood, and we find it a peace loving association bent upon improving society through improving the conditions of work among its own members. It is an enthusiastic reformer. Here is no contradiction; none ever fight with so much fervor as those who fight for ideals.

"The label has resulted from that steady constructive effort toward improvement which is carried on by wage earners through the many months or years when they are not at war. It has great interest for every one who loves fair play, self help, and equal chances for all. Its capacity for affecting trade seems likely to produce rapid changes, and consequently the principal labels, how they are applied, just what they signify, and whether they may be misused, are matters that really concern our whole community."

Certain weaknesses of the label are frankly recognized:

"Plainly the scheme is not without its dangers and drawbacks, such as are inherent in all man's dealings. The danger of counterfeiting is the same as with any other trade mark. The label is copyrighted and a strong union protects its own label; the label of a weak union scarcely attracts counterfeiters. Treachery among the men is more difficult

to meet. The label sometimes is sold out. But a fraudulent label is so injurious to the union that the evil is soon detected and likely to be quickly corrected. These are misfortunes incident to all trade."

The leaflet concludes:

"This, then, is the union label, a mere business device of the American workingman, invented to protect himself from broken promises and crooked dealing in the business world of bargains and competition. It originated without sentiment and without consciousness of having anything more than the most sordidly practical of uses. But like all sound business methods, it is notably well fitted to help along the progress of humanity. Considerably to its own surprise, it proves to be an object for enthusiasm. To any one who realizes the underlying significance of the trade union this is no surprise, however, and the practical good sense of the device becomes its strongest claim to confidence. Though the trade union does not always handle it well or wisely, and there are plenty of unavoidable inconveniences and imperfections in its actual use, nevertheless the label has great possibilities, and closely concerns others as well as the men who planned it. To these men it means stable advantages in wages, hours, surroundings, honesty, and fair competition. Its right to receive these things is sometimes questioned, but this leads into the whole economic argument about trades unionism, which has no place here. Its actual value to the craftsman in securing him the sort of life he needs is clear enough.

"As for the buyer, on whose demand the success of the label's work depends, its value to him, though less evident, is quite as great. He, as well as the employer and the worker, may find positive advantage in using the union label. The evidence and proof of this are matter for another discussion."

The occasional selling out of the label and other abuses here referred to are true and constitute a real weakness in the history of the label. A perfectly fair criticism, however, admits some extenuation. The abuses will be found at those points (as among garment and cigar makers) where the struggle of organized labor is very intense. Here, as in any fight

which waxes hot, principles suffer. The high phrases in political platforms do not deceive us. We allow for a very wide and sharp difference between the printed ideals and the compromises which mark the actual work of party warfare.

It would not be fair to hold cigar or garment workers to stricter responsibility. The awful struggle which goes on in the clothing industry is marked by broken faiths, in the case of the manufacturer, contractor, and laborer alike. It is too much to expect under these circumstances that the label should come off unscathed. It has undoubtedly been often used and allowed under conditions which violate every principle for which the label stands.

The conditions against which the cigar makers (and even more the garment workers) have had to contend are not overstated by Helen Campbell in her *Prisoners of Poverty*:

"A block or two beyond, the house entered proved to be given over chiefly to cigar making. It is to this trade that women and girls turn during the dull season, and one finds in it representatives from every trade in which women are engaged. The sewing women employed in suit and clothing manufactories during the busy season have no resource save this, and thus prices are kept down and the regular cigar makers constantly reinforced by the irregular. In the present case it was chiefly with regular makers that the house was filled, one room a little less than 12 by 14 holding a family of seven persons, three of them children under ten, all girls. Tobacco lay in piles on the floor and under the long table at one end where the cigars were rolled, its rank smell dominating that from the sinks and from the general filth, not only of this room but of the house as a whole.

"Two of the children sat on the floor stripping the leaves, and another on a small stool. A girl of twenty sat near them, and all alike had sores on lips and cheeks and on the hands. Children from five or six years up can be taught to strip and thus add to the week's income, which is far less for the tenement house manufacture than for regular factory work, the latter averaging from \$8 to \$12 a week. But the work if done at home can be made to include the entire family, and

some four thousand women are engaged in it, an almost equal but unregistered number of young children sharing in with them. As in sewing, a number of women often club together, using one room, and in such cases their babies crawl about in the filth on the wet floors, playing with the damp tobacco and breathing the poison with which the room is saturated."

In the case both of cigar makers and garment workers, it is incontestable that the additional strength which the unions have gained by the use of the label has made conditions like those described above somewhat more difficult in a few centers. Theodore Roosevelt is reported as saying at a public meeting, "I have visited these pest holes personally, and I can assure you if smokers could only see how these cigars are made we should not need any legislative action against this system."

This trade mark is first and last a weapon with which to defend the union. Sanitary and other improved conditions are of secondary consideration. If the pressure of competition is too great, there is naturally no thought of any end except to induce the employer to maintain a strictly union shop and thus insure the payment of members' dues. Even in the constitution of the International Cigar Makers, section 160, it is said: "In localities where the open shop system is in existence it shall be optional with local unions to refuse labels to manufacturers (who employ no hands) until they have been members one year." Section 154 says: "Where the manufacturer deals in Chinese, tenement house, or scab cigars, it shall be optional with local unions to withhold the union label from such firms."

It is recognized that much elasticity is necessary in applying principles. Where competition is too strong or the union too weak, abuses have shown themselves, or no attempt has been made to enforce rigidly the broader principles of the label.

Even at present, in an organization as powerful as the cigar makers, there has been great license in granting the label. It is distinctly maintained that the label is a guaranty against tenement made goods and against goods made under insanitary conditions. This is clearly the aim of the unions;