INFLUENCE OF TRADE UNIONS ON IMMIGRANTS.

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The influence of the trade unions among the foreign element employed in the packing business in Chicago is exceedingly interesting and throws a valuable side light on the whole question involved. The immigrant is, in the first instance, a wage reducer, either directly or indirectly, although the extent of his influence upon wages can not well be stated; but as a prospective wage reducer he is met by the trade union in self defence, just as the trade union meets female and child labor, except in this, the union seeks to organize the immigrants, while it seeks by legislation to prohibit or limit the work of women and children—that is, the union seeks the aid of the state to prevent wage reductions by means of female and child labor, and it seeks by organizing the immigrants to prevent reduction of wages by immigration. It makes no claim of undertaking any charitable or primarily civic education among the immigrants, but the secondary effect of the union on the immigrant is distinctively civic in character. It is the first, and for a time the only, point at which he touches any influences outside his clan. Even the progressive forces inside the nationality lines consider the immigrant hopeless and seek only to reach his children—as, for instance, the officers of the Polish National Alliance direct their effort toward getting the Poles to send their children to American public schools and to have them mix up with and become a part of the whole people. The trade union, however, must deal with the immigrant himself, and the immigrant, when he learns that the

union wants to raise his wages, decrease his hours of labor, etc., begins to see the necessity of learning the English language, of understanding the institutions he hears talked about in the union meetings, and other matters which interest him.

From 1880 to 1886 the nationalities employed in the Chicago stock yards, in the order of their numerical importance, were Irish, Americans, Germans, and a few Scotch. The great strike of 1886 disrupted the only organization of workmen in the yards—that of the Knights of Labor—and after the failure of the strike a notable exodus of Americans and the more active men among the Irish began. Whether this was entirely voluntary, or in part resulted from activity in the strike, is not germane to this subject. The Poles began to come into the yards in 1886, after the settlement of the strike, but not as strike breakers. This appears to have been a voluntary immigration, increasing in volume until by 1890 the most of the unskilled occupations were filled by Poles, who by 1894 had practical control of the common labor.

The Bohemians began to affect noticeably the situation in 1894, going first into the inferior positions, which they shared with the Poles. There were two minor strikes between 1890 and 1894, which in a measure aided in bringing about this result. There was some movement upward among the Poles—that is, from lower to higher occupations, but not so marked as among the Bohemians. The Bohemians, coming in later, began under the Poles—that is, took the lower positions as the Poles went up, and divided the entire unskilled labor possibilities with the Poles. The Bohemians, however, soon outstripped the Poles in the movement upward from unskilled to skilled occupations.

The strike of 1894 unsettled these movements temporarily. Negro labor was employed to break the strike and has been an element in the situation ever since. In 1880 but one negro was employed in the yards, and he worked in Armour's killing gang. While few of the strike breakers of 1894 were retained, yet that event marks the real beginning of the employment of negroes. At the beginning of the 1904 strike some 500 negroes worked in the yards, many of whom belonged to the union.

After the strike of 1894 was settled the Bohemians were introduced more rapidly, and this continued up to 1896. In 1895 the Lithuanians began coming in, followed by Slovaks in 1896, and this continued steadily until 1899, when the number began to increase rapidly. Two years ago an enormous influx of Lithuanians, Slovaks, and Russian Poles occurred, swamping the labor market in the yards. This was caused largely because of the threatening war between Russia and Japan, and the consequent rush of people to escape compulsory military duty. This has been appreciably checked within the last six or eight months.

The proportion of workmen of the various nationalities in the yards at the beginning of the 1904 strike was approximately: Irish, 25 per cent; American and Scotch, about 2 per cent; Germans, 15 per cent; Poles, 20 per cent; Bohemians, 20 per cent. The remainder were Lithuanians, Slovaks, a very few Krains, and, among the most recent arrivals, Finns and Greeks, the latter, however, not being appreciable in number. No attention has been paid in this investigation to immigrants having a representation fewer in number than the Lithuanians and Slavonians.

Of these nationalities, excluding the Irish and Germans, which are not here considered as immigrants, the Bohemians are the most progressive, and have the industrial advantage in this, that many of the foremen are Bohemians and give preference to their nationality when taking on new men. There is no apparent surplus of Irish, Germans, Americans, or Bohemians in the labor market of the district affected, the surplus being composed of Poles, Slovaks, and Lithuanians.

Among all the immigrants mentioned, except the Irish and Germans, the clan spirit is at first all powerful. The Bohemians, while Catholics, are Bohemian Catholics, and the Poles are Polish Catholics. This is even more true of the Lithuanians and the Slavonians, who are the most clannish of all. No doubt difference in language has much to do with this, but it is by no means the most serious feature. Each nationality has not only its own church, but its own school system, the Lithuanian schools making no pretence of teaching English, some of the teachers not being able

even to speak it. The Slavs and Galicians have not as yet opened schools of their own. While the religion of these different nationalities may be said to be one, the associations are along exclusive nationality lines. They settle or rent properties by districts, and in branching out to occupy more territory one side of the street will first become Lithuanian for a block or so, and then the other side of the street will be occupied by the same nationality. The single men invariably board only in families of their own clan. Language has something to do with this, but really less than might be apparent on first consideration, and less than might seem to be true. When organizing building and loan associations it is done along strictly clan lines. The Bohemians have four of this class of associations, the Poles three, and the Lithuanians one. The Slavs as yet have none. There are other clannish distinctions, as Lithuanian Republican clubs, Lithuanian Democratic clubs, Bohemian Socialist clubs, Bohemian Democratic clubs, everywhere and always along the strictest lines of nationality.

It is currently reported that before the organization of the union this condition occasionally threatened riots along clan lines, owing to the fact that foremen showed such preference for men of their own clan. The union was organized by trades and departments, and the officials refused to permit nationality lines to be recognized. In the sheep butchers' union are to be found all the men connected with sheep killing, regardless of nationalities. So severe was the fight made upon this plan by the clan leaders—those who drew emoluments or secured social prestige as leaders of the various strictly clan societies—and so seemingly insurmountable was the objection raised by the Lithuanians to the union, that in 1900, when the Lithuanians were first organized, it was permitted in one case to organize a Lithuanian union. The experiment, however, was a signal failure. No subsequent experiments have been permitted.

The unions in the stock yards are controlled by the Irish, ably assisted by the Germans. As a Bohemian or a Pole learns the language and develops, he is elected business agent or other official. In the pork butchers' union, for

instance, there are about 1,800 members, 600 of whom are Irish, 600 Germans, 300 Poles, and 300 Lithuanians and Slavs. This union recently elected a Pole as president of the local. In their business meetings the motions made, resolutions read, and speeches delivered are usually interpreted in five languages, though in some locals in only three. All business, however, is transacted primarily in English, although any member may speak to any motion in the language he best understands, his words being rendered into English for the minutes of the meeting and into all the languages necessary for the information of members. It is here that the practical utility of learning English is first brought home forcibly to the immigrant. In all other of his associations not only does his own language suffice, but, for reasons that can be well understood, shrewd leaders minimize the importance of learning any other. The only notable exception to this is the National Polish alliance, and even here only the Polish language is used. There is no apparent influence exerted, however, to create the impression that the Polish is all sufficient.

In his trade union the Slav mixes with the Lithuanian, the German, and the Irish—and this is the only place they do mix—until, by virtue of this intercourse and this mixing, clannishness is to a degree destroyed, and a social mixing along other lines comes naturally into play. Not only is the Amalgamated Meat Cutters' union an Americanizing influence in the stock yards, but for the Poles, Lithuanians, and Slovaks it is the only Americanizing influence, so far as could be determined in this investigation. It is true this Americanizing is being done by the Irish and Germans, but it is Americanizing, nevertheless, and is being done as rapidly as the material to work on will permit, and very well indeed. Again, the reaction is good in its results. The feeling among the Irish against the Dutch and the Polack is rapidly dying out. As the Irish in Chicago express it, "association together and industrial necessity have shown us that however it may go against the grain, we must admit the common interests and brotherhood must include the Polack and the Jew." It is also admitted that when the speech of the Lithuanian

is translated in the meeting of the trade union the Irish and the German see in it the workings of a fairly good mind. Some of the best suggestions come from Bohemians, and mutual respect takes the place of mutual hatred.

An investigation disclosed the influence of the union in teaching the immigrant the nature of the American form of government. The records, independent of this, show that during an investigation of building and loan associations a few years ago information from the Bohemian, Polish, and other clannish associations of that character could be obtained only through the services of an interpreter. It was found that as soon as a Bohemian or a Pole heard the word government, or government agent, he closed his mouth, and it was impossible to secure any information.

This has been true in other investigations, notably in collecting family budgets; but with an intelligent interpreter, using their own language, the nature of the work was explained, and no further difficulty experienced. The union is breaking down this trait of character in the foreigners of the nationalities mentioned. This it is doing not as a matter of philanthropy, but from a selfish necessity. The immigrant must be taught that he must stand straight up on his own feet; that the ward politician is dependent on him—on his vote, etc.—and not him on the ward politician. In this way he first learns that he is a part of the government, and while this is done by indirection, in a large sense, there is no other force that is doing it at all. The Pole, the Bohemian, the Lithuanian, the Slovak, and to a much lesser degree the Galician, have inherited the feeling that somehow government is a thing inimical to their natural development—a power forcing itself upon them from afar; an intrusive power for repression, taxation, punishment only; a thing which they must stand in awe of, obey, pay tribute to, and wish that it had not come among their people, even if they did not secretly hate it—a thing, in short, which ought not to be. Being weaker than it they must be silent in its presence, and if forced to speak, lie, as for them to tell the truth would mean imprisonment or death.

It is not necessary for these things to be true in order that the illiterate peasants should have believed them for generations. Seventy five per cent of the stock yards immigrants are of the peasant and agricultural laborer class of Europe, and comparatively few of them can read or write in their own language. To make such a people feel that the government is their friend, that they are a part of it, that development and education, not repression, are its objects and its purposes with and for them, is an enormous task, and one which a trade union single handed and alone can not be expected to accomplish by indirection in a few years, with the flood of new ignorance that has been brought in by the high tide of immigration into the stock yards.

In every trade union, however conservative, there are members who will occasionally get the floor and advise their hearers to vote high wages and shorter hours at the ballot box. As the groups of Slovaks gather around after the business is over to have these things explained to them, many get their first real idea of what the ballot and election day means, and the relation of these to the government itself. In their own home countries the two essential, if not only, elements of the peasant and agricultural laborer's mind is to believe and obey, or follow. Advantage is taken of this fact here by clan politicians, as well as the clan leader in every department. Once the leader can make these people believe in him, he thinks for the entire group, and insists that their duty consists in following his lead implicitly. Necessarily, the trade union, in order to get them to break away from the leader that opposed the union on industrial lines, would be compelled to urge them to consider their own personal and group interests as wage workers; to think and act for themselves along lines where they knew the real conditions better than anyone else, and certainly better than their leader in a child insurance society, or something else as remote. Here, too, are the first germs of what may be called the departmental thinking implanted in their minds—that is, that while a leader may be worthy of their confidence in one thing, it does not necessarily follow that he is so in some other class of interests.

It is doubtful if any organization other than a trade union could accomplish these things, for only the bread and butter necessity would be potent enough as an influence to bring these people out of the fixed forms and crystallizations of life into which they have been compressed. Certain it is that no other organization is attempting to do this work, at least not by amalgamation, which is the only way assimilation can be secured among these various foreign elements. The drawing of these people away from their petty clique leaders and getting them to think for themselves upon one line of topics, namely, the industrial conditions and the importance of trade organization, result in a mental uplift. The only way they can pull a Slovak away from his leader is to pull him up until he is gotten above his leader along the lines of thought they are working on. The very essence of the trade argument on the immigrant is—unconsciously again—an uplifting and an Americanizing influence. The unionist begins to talk better wages, better working conditions, better opportunities, better homes, better clothes. Now, one can not eternally argue better in the ears of any man, no matter how restricted the particular better harped on, without producing something of a psychological atmosphere of better in all his thought and life activities. If better food, better wages, or even better beer, is the only kind of better one might get a Slovak or a Lithuanian to think about, then the only way to improve him is to inject the thought of better into the only crevice to be found in his stupidity.

Of course, many object to attempts to improve these people because the immigrants from Lithuania, Slavonia, and Russian Poland are better off here than they ever were or could be in their own countries; that, left to themselves, they would not only be perfectly satisfied, but delighted with their improved condition; that the union must first produce discontent and dissatisfaction with what would otherwise be entirely satisfactory before it can get these immigrants even to talk about joining the union. Again, it is urged that at home these people do not expect to eat as good food as other people, nor to dress as well, nor to live in as good houses;

that, as peasants, they never compare themselves with other people or classes of people.

In opposition to all these things, the union begins by teaching the immigrant that his wages are not so good as another man's, doing practically the same kind of work, while it neglects to tell him he is not doing it so well, so intelligently, nor so much of it perhaps; but the union gets him to compare himself not with what he was in Lithuania, but with some German or Irish family, and then stings him with the assertion that he has as much right to live that way as anybody. The union attempts to show the immigrant that he can live better only by getting more money, and that by joining the union he will get it. If left alone he would be entirely satisfied, perhaps, with what he was getting before. It is perfectly true, probably, that in most cases the union does not care for the Lithuanian in the first instance, the real purpose being to protect their own wages by getting the immigrants to demand high wages for their labor. So later on some degree of fellowship is engendered, but self defence is the real motive.

The union point of view is that for a Lithuanian peasant to be contented, satisfied and happy with the Lithuanian standard of living in America is a crime, a crime not only against himself but against America and everyone who wishes to make individual and social development possible in America, and that whatever the union's motives for creating discontent, the fact that it does create a discontent among the immigrants —which is the first step toward their improvement and ultimate Americanization—renders the union so far a public benefactor.

Many persons were interviewed in securing information along these lines—bankers, professional men, and all classes. One gentleman, in the banking business in the stock yards district for many years, said that the Slavonians and Galicians have been buying homes within the last eighteen months to a most remarkable and unprecedented extent, and that this is in a measure true of the Lithuanians, but not to such a marked degree. He testifies that the union has given these people a sense of security in their position. By mixing up the nationalties in the union meeting it has made them acquainted with

each other and dispelled an undefined dread of pending race war or struggle between nationalities in the yards. Formerly most of the Slovak and Lithuanian immigrants were a floater class. About the only ones who return to their homes now are the Galicians, in whose country a more or less representative form of government prevails. Others testified in a similar way, although some thought the union had done little except to agitate for higher, higher, and higher wages, regardless of economic conditions.

On the police side of the problem, a sergeant of the twentieth precinct, in Chicago, that known as back of the yards, which is crowded with the Bohemian and Polish elements, said that there had been the greatest improvement since the union was formed, in 1900—less disorder, better living, more intelligence, and more understanding of American institutions and laws; that they employ fewer policemen in the district, and that less crime is committed than prior to 1900.

The studies of the various nationalities involved in the 1904 meat strike brings out some valuable points relative to the restriction of immigration. Among them there seems to be an unalterable opposition to laws excluding those who can not read and write in their own language, and their argument is that the peasant population of central and eastern Europe, from which they came, have more rugged morals, simpler lives, and fewer vices than the inhabitants of the cities and towns who can read and write, as a rule. They consider themselves not responsible morally or politically for the fact that Russia has fewer schools than Illinois and spends less money on education in a year than does that state. They assert that their ignorance is not of the kind that is synonymous with vice or with crime; that they are as innocent as ignorant, whereas a far worse town and city population would be admitted without question under such laws. They have some peculiar ideas about prohibiting absolutely any immigration for a specific term of years and then allowing only a certain percentage to come in each year thereafter; but the main point they make is as to the illiteracy of the peasant class, the most desirable we can secure, and the literacy of the criminal classes of the great cities, which could come in under such restrictive legislation.