

The Railroad Column

LABOR COSTS ARE NOT LABOR EARNINGS

By W. S. CARTER, Pres. B. L. F. & E.

From the viewpoint of the employer the cost of labor is the same regardless of to whom paid. In the performance of a certain class of work the employer is required to pay a fixed sum per hour, the fact that the service may have been performed at different times by different employees does not concern him in estimating his labor costs.

On the other hand, employees protest that any statement concerning the labor costs, prepared by or at the instigation of the employer, should be used as evidence of an employee's earnings. Without questioning the accuracy of a statement of labor costs, employees question the justice of using such statements in arbitration before wage tribunals or for the information of the public to set up the claim that labor costs and labor earnings are the same thing.

It has been because the innocent public and members of wage tribunals have not been able to analyze the statements laid before them that they have been convinced that the "average earnings" of railroad employees are as much or more than they deserve.

Not only have railroad employees fallen into this error, but governmental agencies, created by congressional acts, have apparently not yet discovered the trap into which they have been led by not distinguishing between labor costs and labor earnings. As evidence of this fact public documents emanating from such governmental agencies have classed as "average earnings" what, in fact, have been "average labor costs."

Employees protest that "average earnings" should ever be used as indicative of their real earnings. Some years ago a most estimable gentleman, a very high railroad official, in discussing the errors of averages, said: "Assuming that John D. Rockefeller is worth one hundred million dollars, then the average worth of Mr. Rockefeller and myself would be fifty million dollars." It does not take a mathematician, in developing the foregoing formula, to determine that the railroad official who made the remark was a very poor man, but the unsuspecting public may assume that the gentleman quoted was a very rich man.

Locomotive firemen and other railroad employees in past wage arbitrations have suffered greatly from this erroneous theory, because, perhaps, no other class of employees find their employment so precarious as firemen and brakemen. The "average earnings" per hour, per day, per month or per year for locomotive firemen that have been compiled from data furnished by the railroads in their reports to the interstate commerce commission have been grossly erroneous.

For instance, all of the persons employed as firemen on all of the locomotives on a given railroad earn an aggregate amount during a given period. If this aggregate amount, so earned is divided by the number of hours, or days, or months, or years in which all of these locomotives have been in service, the so-called "average earnings" are determined regardless of the well-known fact that the same firemen are not employed on these locomotives during the period of time for which the compilations are made. But by this process the public may be convinced that all of the firemen employed on these locomotives have "average earnings" greatly in excess of the true average. There may have been one hundred locomotives upon which one hundred and fifty different firemen have been employed during the period covered by the compilation, resulting in a true average earnings of 33 1-3 per cent less than the alleged average.

Some have adopted another method, resulting in conclusions no less erroneous as to the average earnings of locomotive firemen, which conclusions are based upon the reports filed by the railroads with the interstate commerce commission. Previous to June 30, 1914, "Annual Report Form A" showed the number of employees in each class was determined from the pay-rolls of the railroads "at the end of the year for which this report is made," although the number of firemen thus obtained may not represent more than 60 per cent of the actual number of firemen in the service during that year. Those who have prepared "evidence" against locomotive firemen have assumed to take this number of firemen who were in service "at the end of the year" and divide it into the aggregate labor costs of all firemen for the same year and thus produce an erroneous average earnings for the year. Had the railroads been required by the interstate commerce commission to report the total number of firemen employed on that railroad throughout the year, the average earnings by this process would probably be 30 per cent less than those usually presented for the truth.

Probably realizing the gross errors arising out of taking the number of employees on the pay-rolls on the last day of June each year, the interstate commerce commission revised its report form and required the railroads to give the number of employees, by classes, on the middle of each of the months of July, October, January and April of each year. But this did not greatly decrease the errors, for it may be that firemen who were employed in the middle of the following April, or had not been employed in the middle of the preceding April. If, during a twelve-month period, fluctuation of a railroad's traffic have been as great, as often occur, of the persons counted as locomotive firemen in the middle of October during heavy traffic probably one-half are entirely out of employment in the middle of the following April, when a majority of the locomotives are fired by other persons who were engineers in the middle of the preceding October. Thus the railroads, in their compilation of "average earnings of locomotive firemen," took all of the earnings of the firemen and all of the earnings of demoted engineers during a year for a dividend and the

average number employed as firemen on the middle of June, October, January and April for a divisor and shows an average earning of firemen perhaps one-third greater than the true average.

During recent years, because of these gross errors as to average earnings of railroad employees, the railroads have been instructed to count their employees four times each month, on this may eliminate some of the errors, but will not eliminate a great portion of them, because, as already stated, the men who are firing the locomotives in the middle of October may be entirely out of employment in the middle of the following April.

There is no rule or law now in effect that requires a railroad to report the total number of any class of employees during a year, which should be used as a divisor when estimating the average compensation of such employees.

It has been by these railroad "average earnings" of railroad employees that the public is prejudiced and wage tribunals influenced, for thus labor costs have masqueraded as labor earnings.

Nebraska News Notes

UNCLE PETE STARR OBJECTS TO PUBLICITY

BROKEN BOW—Uncle Pete Starr, aged 103, was in Broken Bow several days last week and most of his time was taken up having his eyes fitted for glasses and also preparing to break in a full set of teeth. He was afraid the glasses would make him look old, but he thought it was time to get a pair anyway.

The Broken Bow Chief gives the details thus:

"Uncle Pete Starr, Dunning's 103 year old resident, was in the city the last part of the week and, while here, betwought him that his eyes needed a pair of glasses. He accordingly visited the Carothers store and was given personal attention of the proprietor himself. After Uncle Pete had chosen a pair of lenses to his liking, he asked Mr. Carothers if any reduction in price would be made to a man 103 years old. The owner replied that he felt honored in serving such a patriarch and sliced off a generous profit on the glasses. Uncle Pete then happened to think of something:

"Say, this ain't going in the papers, is it?" he demanded.

Mr. Carothers gravely replied that if such an important piece of news was suppressed it would cost the centenary one dollar more on his purchase. The aged man wavered for a moment, then answered:

"Oh, well, let it go in. I guess it ain't worth a dollar to keep it out."

NEAR 8,000 CATTLE BRANDS REGISTERED

LINCOLN—Renewal of cattle brands registered with the secretary of state for a new five-year period has been completed. Between 7,000 and 8,000 individual brands are now registered, according to Secretary of State Amsberry, who declared that this figure does not represent all the brands in Nebraska.

The registration is conducted and maintained by the cattle owners' association, working in conjunction with the stockyards at Omaha. An inspector is stationed at the yards to inspect the brands of all cattle received at the market for sale. This inspector visits the secretary of state's office twice a year to check registered brands and obtain copies of new ones.

The purpose of the registration is to provide against sale of cattle at the yards with brands which do not coincide with the owner's selling the cattle. Unless the shipper can show a bill of sale for the cattle bearing different brands, payment is sent to the person who has the brand registered.

ARMED GUARDS ON MAIL TRAINS ARE WITHDRAWN

LINCOLN—Fifteen ex-service men, special armed guards on the mail trains of the Burlington system on the division under the charge of chief clerk J. M. Butler, of the railway chief service, and who maintained their headquarters in Lincoln, were notified that their services were no longer needed, in compliance with an order received from the postal department at Washington.

Burlington railway employees also heard rumors that the marines now on mail trains would also be recalled in a few days. It is believed that the action is taken in line with the new program of economy to which the postal department has pledged itself. The fact that mail robberies have decreased almost to a minimum since the arming of the postal employees, may also have been the cause for the action.

Shotguns and revolvers have been furnished every man in the railway mail service, according to Mr. Butler.

WANTS GOVERNOR TO SUSPEND ROAD PROGRAM

GENEVA—Representative George A. Williams of Fillmore county, has sent a letter to Governor McKelvie asking the governor to suspend the road building program in Nebraska. Mr. Williams has been out among the taxpayers and realizes the burden they are now carrying. Mr. Williams says, "It is true that the county and municipal taxes constitute the greater part of the burden but the people are looking to the state to set the example in reduction of taxes where the least harm will result and the counties must follow."

Japan wants an open door in China, but thinks it no more than right that she should stand at the door and take tickets.

It is all right to go back to the farm, but don't make the trip unless you are prepared for hard work at the end of it.

THE PARSON'S CORNER

By Rev. B. J. Misort, Pastor of the First Baptist Church, Alliance

WHY THERE ARE INFIDELS.

The Good Book says that "Whosoever believeth in Him both eternal life." Did you ever ask yourself, why are there infidels, and is there any real cause for infidels? We make the statement that there are certain reasons why so much infidelity exist today. Now let me say that the infidelity spoken by John is not the infidelity that the world speaks of so today. The infidel of John believed in a God in the prophecies of old. Yet he was an infidel. John said that the Jews that crucified Jesus were infidels. In John's way of looking at it, any man that denies the Divinity of Christ was an infidel. Now he might believe in the Sermon on the Mount, he might believe in the unusually good moral life of Christ, he might believe in the uplifting influence of the church, and that the Bible is a good book, he might be a good moral man, benevolent and kind; but if he disbelieved the divinity of Christ he was an infidel. Now please note that I am saying that John, or God through John, said this. This is not my interpretation of the matter. We must take it as it is. But what is a interested in is what causes so many good people to not accept Christ, and to disbelieve in Christ as Divine?

First I might mention the fact that Christ is often misrepresented to the world. Oh, no, I am not talking of doctrines now although there is too much of that. The misrepresentation of Christ by his professed followers will go much farther to create infidelity than all the Robert Ingersolls in the world. The real enemies of the church are not on the outside, but on the inside of the church. A man who claims that Christ will enable a man to overcome his hitherto bad habits, and yet yields to them repeatedly is a man who belies his religion and Christianity suffers for it.

The most unanswerable, convincing argument in favor of Christianity is a one percent life. The church is, or I

ought to say, Christ is misrepresented by his friends, inconsistencies to such an extent that it is a wonder that He has any followers at all. If the life of the christian with all of his boasts about what religion will do for him differs nothing from his non christian neighbor, he is an obstacle to the progress of Christ and His kingdom. We may sound our faithfulness in high sounding words but unless our life shows the genuineness of the Christianity we are a stumbling block to those who would otherwise accept Him.

Another source of infidelity is an ignorance of the Bible teaching. Ignorance of history, both in the whole and the minute, in and out of the Bible. Many are infidels today who would not be so if they investigated the claims of the Bible. They take it for granted it is not true without looking at it.

Still another reason or source of unbelief, is self-conceit. The man who refuses to believe what he "cannot see." Now of all the reasons for refusing Christ, this is the most foolish and illogical. That same fellow will believe in electricity and Mars, and a thousand other things of which we know little or nothing, but when it comes to Christianity he "will not believe what he cannot understand."

Of course if he will not accept what he cannot understand, he would accept but little, either in this world's goods or the spiritual. However, the real reason that most folks refuse Christ, is of might be put in one word, sin. Sin in some form or other is the real reason in most cases.

Christianity is not only exact, but exacting. It demands a clean, pure life, and we back here, because of some sin we fancy we cannot do without. Sin blinds men's eyes to the truth of the Bible and makes its religion appear foolish. Sin breeds sin, and the longer we refuse, the deeper we drift in sin, until we find ourselves miserable slaves to some unclean and harmful habit. Sin is at the bottom of all the suffering of the world.

Sin is the creator of anarchism. Sin fills the suicide graves. Sin fills the asylums, the jails and penitentiaries. Sin was the real cause of the world wars and will be the creator of other wars. Sin is the most costly

thing in the world, and affects every home in America. Every bawdy house is an eloquent testimony to the power of sin. Sin baffles the church, the courts, the schools and the governments. Sin is the serpent that cannot be kept out of the family. Sin creates the family closet and opens it whenever it gets ready. Sin is the chief jailer of man. Sin is hell.

County Engineer Develops Plan for Heading Off Ravines

It has been the style in too many Nebraska counties to build big bridges over draws and ravines, according to the engineering specialists of the Nebraska Agricultural college. There are rough sections of the state where the county bridge fund is putting the taxpayer in a sad plight but they still build bridges. They have not investigated to find out if each big ravine really needs a 60 or 70 foot bridge. They have failed to take into consideration how much land drains under said bridge.

Mr. Relf, the county engineer of Richardson county, did take into consideration some of the things which have been mentioned here and was able to save some money for the county. A ravine twenty-one feet deep, draining only forty acres, had cut its way across the road and had been spanned with a sixty-two foot wooden bridge which was a constant source of expense to the county. Approaches had to be added from time to time as the washing continued. Soon the young canyon would have been eating its way across the farm above the road. Mr. Relf removed the old bridge and replaced it with box culvert four feet square with the upper end raised so as to make a soil-saving dam out of the road grade. Thus he eliminated a constant source of expense to the county, for concrete does not rot away nor does it have to be painted. He also prevented further cutting of the ravine. This is good common sense engineering.

There are said to be 23,000,000 surplus women in Europe, and continued talk of aggression leads us to suspect that there are also a few surplus men.

HISTORY OF WATER PROJECTS PLANNED

LINCOLN—A history of all the water-power projects in Nebraska, those abandoned as well as those now under operation or in construction, is expected to be completed in about a month, Dr. George E. Condra, director of the commission, announces.

Tabulation of all the power projects, as far back as there is record, the time the plant was installed, its power and vicinity of service, date abandoned, if so, those now in operation, their service, and those under construction or contemplation, as well as a short sketch of each project, is the aim of the survey. Dr. Condra is obtaining much of his information in co-operation with pioneers in the various sections of the state in which the plants were located.

In the Blue river valley between Maryville, Kan., and as far north as Seward, more than 20 power plants now are in operation. Dr. Condra states, many of them serving a large radius with light and power. A project at Grand Island at the present time, Dr. Condra says, is serving power to a territory comprising 5,000 square miles.

A CROP FAILURE.

The suburbanites were boasting proudly about their respective crops of parsnips, although why one should boast about a parsnip is beyond human imagining.

"Last summer," observed the optimistic looking man, "I grew parsnips so big that I had to hire a steam derrick to get them out of the ground." "My crop was a failure," said the pessimistic looking man sadly. "Started off like world beaters, but sickened and died. All of a sudden, too."

"What was the matter?" "We didn't find out for a long time. It was because the ends of the roots had been eaten off by rabbits in Australia."

A woman's ability as a debater is not to be judged by her powers as a logician, but by the results of the controversy. She never loses.

What has become of the old-fashioned family that used to pass long evenings listening to one of its members read aloud from a good novel?

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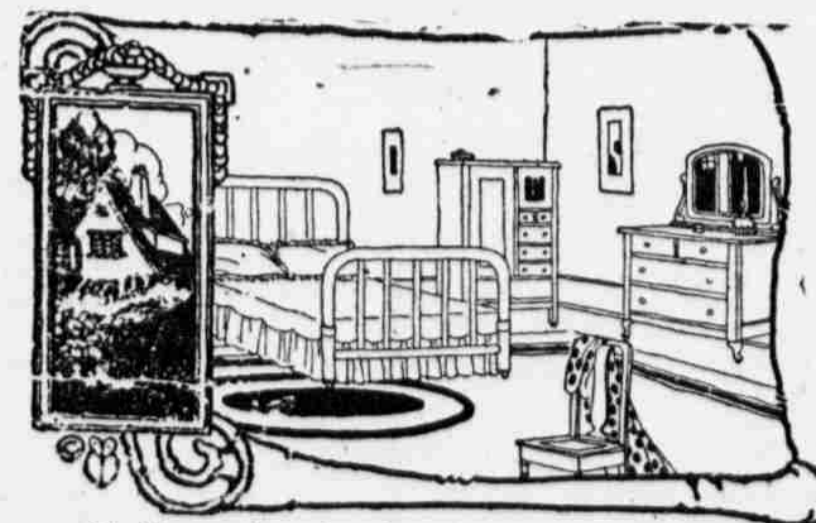
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