Both Sides of the Present Labor Controversy

labor in the city of Omaha by an organization called the Business Men's association, while not involving nearly as many per sons as some previous struggles that have taken place in the industrial world, still has been quite costly, not only on account but further on account of the stagnation of business in Omaha for months. The unique character of the controversy, the desperate, willy and cruel methods adopted not only crush the unions and punish the participants and their sympathizers and deprive the members of the means of supporting themselves, forms a highly interesting chapter in the progress of modern commercialism. The beginning of this conflict may be said to have commenced about March 16, when the hod carriers made a demand for 21/2 cents per hour raise in wages. I am informed that quite a number of jobs paid the scale and the men were gradually getting work under the new conditions, when the supply of building material, except lumber, was shut off to men employing union labor. This continued for weeks, or until the Bricklayers' union undertook the role of strike breakers by going to work, June 15.

This action on the part of the material men resulted in an almost complete suspension of all union work in the city. Its use was a new method of lockout and boycott combined, enforcing idleness upon the men and almost complete paralyzation of the building industry. The brickingers, hod carriers, carpenters, plumbers, plasterers and electricians were federated in a body known as a Building Trades council, organized for mutual assistance. plasterers had made a demand upon their employers, but had, I am told, withdrawn such demand, to later reinstate it upon the advent of the lockout. The carpenters had made a demand for a minimum scale of wages of 50 cents per hour, an increase of 10 cents over the previous year, to cover in part the increased cost of living. The demand was made some time in January and was to go into effect May 1, thus giving the employers four months' time in which to apply the scale to all new estimates. The contractors did not reply until about the middle of April, and then submitted a counter proposition with terms substantially as follows:

First—A sliding scale of wages ranging from 35 cents to 50 cents per hour.
Second—Eight hours a day, four hours

Second-Eight hours a day, four nours
Saturday.
Third-Time and a half for overtime.
Fourth-Each trade to settle its own disputes without the intervention of other trades. Sympathetic strikes forbidden.
Fifth-The employment of nonunion men at the same scale of wages as union men.
Bixth-Arbitration between the journeymen carpenters and their bosses.
Seventh-An apprentice system.

Several conferences were held between committees representing the builders and journeymen prior to my arrival upon the field May 13. I immediately arranged for a conference between the two organiza- I was there visiting him the other day. tions, which was held at the Builders' exchange May 15. After discussing the mat- a half humorous smile, which, as I thought, ter at considerable length, I proposed a seemed to take little account of the seriousness of the situation. joint arbitration, board, consisting of repesentatives from the two federations, the Builders' exchange and the Allied Building Trades council, to settle all disputes going to call out our men." in the building trades then pending. 'This was agreed to and the two committees adside was to do its best to secure the adoption of arbitration as outlined. In the course of several days our union received a very curt letter from the secretary of the Builders' exchange stating that the exchange refused to recognize or treat with the Allied Building Trades council, out would treat with each trade separately. of the workmen to join in a federation of trades for mutual protection while exercising the right themselves. Later on a number of employes, representing the various trades, met a committee from the Allied Building Trades council, but could not reach an understanding as to the method of arbitration. I again resolved to make an effort at settlement and about June 17 I arranged for another conference between the carpenter contractors, myself and a committee of three conservative journeymen. We met Friday forencon, June 19. We had a very pleasant meeting and each side seemed to be willing to concessions. I am sure we were. We adjourned to meet the evening of June 20, our committee fully expecting to efa settlement, when to our surprise Mr. John Harte, who had not taken part in our previous conferences, stated that they, the committee, would not treat with the union as a union, but would treat with individuals. I asked if that was intended as an ultimatum and he repiled "Yes." I told him that I was not surprised that we had believed from the first that their purpose was to break up the union, and here is without earnings, lying idle by the tens was proof of it, and upon that ground we of millions, afraid to go into operations aside from the building field in the course would meet the issue. would meet the issue.

Since the last conference, at which our committee received from the contractors their ultimatum, a number of our members have received communications reading as follows:

Mr.—Sir: I have some work on hand now and if you wish to work for me, as an individual, in future I will give you 45 cents per hour, as this is what you are rated at by the contractors of Omaha, and we have agreed to pay you no less, but we will not settle with the union. Yours respectfully.

Is not this communication proof nonlive that the purpose of the Business Men's association is not only to crush the unions. but to dictate the terms under which the men shall work? We were told by the contractors that they purposed making a list of all the carpenters in the city and assigning them such wages as they deemed them worth, starting with 35 cents per hour. I was not informed whether each man was to be numbered, as are the convicts in a penitentiary, but like the ox or mule to all intents and purposes he was to be labeled. He, the worker, was to have no voice in the conditions under which he was employed. The only essential difference between the free man and the slave lies in the right of the free man to refuse to work unless he can be a party to the terms under which he labors. The chattel slave performed coerced labor. His master fixed the conditions under which he should labor without the slave's consent, and whenever the employer can fix my wages and my conditions of employment arbitrarily then I am a slave-no amount of sophistry can change it. Thus the labor unions can charge that the Omaha Business Men's association and its agents and allies are introducing into Omaha a system of despotic slavery, as subversive of human liberty as was ever chattel slavery in the south. It the same old battle of the dollar versus the man. The trade union has incurred the displeasure of the business world because it has undertaken to establish a high standard of living for its members and to cure for them ample remuneration. The trade union has brought God's sunshine into the aweater's den and has rescued the bodies and souls of our children from slavish conditions in shop, factory and store, all this interfering with unlimited profits, and this is at the very bottom of

the crusade against the labor unions. The matter or wages has never been a serious issue between contractors and our We have ever stood ready to make reasonable concessions, and to meet the bosses half way. Had we been willing to pretense in many of the difficulties forced throw down the other trades and break our 'upon employers; it is often a war between bligations and pledges to them as the brickiavers did, no doubt settlement would the lines and receives the fire from both

Two Papers on Strike Questions-One by Na- workman, to refuse to work with any man tional Organizer Sidney J. Kent Speaking for the obnoxious to them. The union is opposed Carpenters of Omaha-The Other Condensed from to the sliding scale of wages scheme be-Article Contributed to the New York Inde- always slides downward. They stand ever pendent by President John S. Stevens of the Na- not of the ilon and lamb kind, when they of the loss of time of hundreds of men, tional Association of Builders.

> have been easy. The bricklayer was raised and the strike is broken. It is because the less than the bricklayer. Under a just down rather than builds up. Not many system the carpenter ought to get more years ago women pulled the cars instead of wages than the brickinyer. Year by year, mules in the coal mines of Great Britain. under the specialitization of the trade and Did the nonunion man raise his hand to the use of the labor-saving machine, his rescue them? No. He was too busy lookand limb greater. He works faster. The them? No, indeed. He put them there belabor cost of his product is less today than cause there was money in it. The physical, ever before. Through organization his per moral or spiritual welfare of men, women faster than his per diem wages. Even at union man because he can be used as a \$4 per day seven months in the year, he will tool to stiffe the ambitions of the worker not wear many diamonds, own many brick who seeks by association to be something blocks, take many trips to the seashore or Europe or buy many automobiles,

The contractors of Omaha had ample notice of the men's demands and no doubt figured the increase of wages on all new jobs. The nature of our trade is such that our men can employ themselves if they can secure the rusterial. Our men were employing themselves when all at once they found the doors of the lumber yards closed against them. The lumber men had temporarily gone out of business, and yet lumber finds its way to friends of the Business Men's association. Never in the world's history was there a more despotic boycott than that now used to prevent our men from honestly earning their bread by working for themselves.

The purpose of this boycott is in my opintractor and business man and build up a has proved so disastrous to the material intion and become slaves of the combine.

Much has been said during the controversy about the nonunion man and how have brought the union man to his knees the Business Men's association wants to and compelled him to return to work as an protect his interests. I notice, however, individual. they seldom raise his wages, only when they can use him in time of strikes and never questioned the right of the employer usually his wages are reduced when he to hire nonunion men. Its members simply has pulled their chestnuts out of the fire reserve the right, inherent to the free

The time came at last when timorous

impending had become a set battle.

reached its climax.

perity.

power felt by trades unions, an intoxication

which, in the building trades at least, has

Labor has never been better note in the history or the human family than it is in

the United States today; yet there has rarely been such "unrest." The two facts

must be taken together if we desire any

just estimate of the situation. We have

labor threatened with starvation in the

midst of unexampled plenty, while capital

most obvious results of the "unrest" that

men have a quiet, often unacknowledged,

sympathy for the working nan who is mak-

using the old-fashioned strike; but the old-

fashioned, fair and square strike has be-

come obsolete. In its place we have some-

thing else-the so-called "sympathetic

Georgia, Brown and Robinson must have

a quarrel in New York or San Francisco.

That is the logic of the sympathetic strike.

expressed by a cartoon in a recent number

of a well known comic paper, where an

an ostensible excuse-not an appeal to the

Chicago builders, two years ago, recog-

nized the danger involved in the sympa-

thetic strike, and, by joining hands, sup-

pressed formidable revolts and procured

the abrogation of some highly mischistous

and unjust rules. The lesson appears to

have been lost upon workmen elsewhere

Demands acceded to grew by what they

their adherence. The situation has since

"Betterment of labor" is no longer the

grown steadily worse.

them the words, written on a placard:

as the sympathetic strike."

being acted upon

As Viewed by Employers

to \$5 per day. The carpenter with his big nonunion man is a negative force that the ago kit of tools, was only asking for \$4 or \$1 berees love him so well, because he pulls employment is less steady, the loss of life ing after self. Did the business man rescue diem compensation in some cases is more and children cut but a sorry figure when than formerly, but his annual earnings are weighed alongside of profits by business Rent and living expenses increase men's associations, and they love the non-

more than a hewer of wood or drawer of

water. The trade union is the only true

friend of the nonunion man. We took 50,000

of them into our organization last year.

We raised their wages, helped to educate

their children and made them broader and

better citizens. What did the Business Men's association do for them? It is not my purpose to say that trades unions are perfect, for nothing formed by human hands is. They are, however, essential to our civilization and have come to stay. They may perhaps be destroyed in Omaha, but more powerful ones will rise in more of you to love." their stend. Nor will I say that all employers want to reduce wages. Some of our carpenter contractors are fair-minded said Governor Richard Yates of Illinois to men, and if left free to act we could settle the little daughter of his host. them. Our men, citizens of Omaha, most of them with wives and children, ion, just as much to destroy the small con-deeply deplore this condition of affairs that and listened to his watch tick. business men's and contractors' monopoly, terests of your city. It shows to what exas it is to starve our members into sub- tent some of these men will go who think jection until they give up their organiza- they have the working men on the run. Read their articles in the country press. Like Shylock, how they gloat when they

The Carpenters' union of Omaha has

cause experience shows them that the scale ready to accept arbitration, providing it is are expected to be the lamb. They welcome an apprentice system, and were the contractors left free to deal with them without the interference of outside parties a settlement could have been effected long SIDNEY J. KENT.

National Organizer Amalgamated Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners.

PRATTLE OF THE YOUNGSTERS. "Tommy," said a father to his incor-

rigible offspring, "I didn't know until today that the teacher whipped you last week." "Why, I knew it all the time," said

"Tommy," said the mother of a preco clous youth, "why did you take two pieces of cake instead of one, as I told you?" "Because," replied Tommy, "I was playin" make believe I was twins."

A 3-year-old youngster came home from Sunday school, and, upon being asked whom he saw, said promptly: "I saw ever'body I knew 'cep'n God."

said small Tommy, "does mamma love you more than she does me?" "Of course not, Tommy," replied the

"Well, I think she ought to." rejoined the small philosopher, "'cause there is so much

What a beautiful mamma you've got, "Yes. When there's a party," replied the golden-haired one as she settled in his lap

"Mamma, has Mr. Brown's eyes got feet?" asked little Elmer. "Certainly not, dear," replied the mother

But why did you ask? "'Cause I heard sister say Mr. Brown's eyes followed her all around the room at the party last night," replied Elmer.

The late Rev. Hyatt Smith of Brooklyn used to tell this story of his little daughter: While walking along the street one day the child, who had the happy faculty of looking on the sunny side of things, saw a

wagonload of sheepskins. 'What are those things, papa?" she asked. Sheepskins, my dear.

"But where are the sheep, papa?" The father explained that the sheep had been killed for food. Looking after the "I'll have to call a strike on you," said sides. Indeed, it has sometimes been the wagon, with the tails of the sheepskins "Weil, paps, the sheep may be dead, but the tails seem to be having a good time

When Appendicitis Pays.

"I don't understand how E. H. Harriman

"Oh, well, your time was not so valu-On its other side, the crafts doctor in the group had been silent.

"Why, the appendix was full of un-

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Brussels\$23.00 Velvet\$21.00	9x11 Brussels \$18.50 19-6x12 Brussels \$18.60	6x9 feet
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fed upon; no rate of pay, no principle of sciousness of power which the demonness management, appeared ever to stration affords will cause, in some minds, bring settled conditions. In 1888, the second a desire for reprisals for injuries inflicted year of the Master Builders' National asby brutal and unjust strikes in the past sociation, that body took its first step Should they come it will be justification to looking to the formation of permanently say that the workmen, by their arbitrary organized bodies whose object should be acts, have brought retribution upon themselves. The thing to be considered will conciliation. Everything that could be done to secure some fixed principle or method then he whether the very independence of of dealing with labor has since been tried. American labor is not itself in danger. One year ago the National Association of The backward swing of the pendulum, from Builders made a most careful and thorthe present excesses of the unions, may oughgoing effort to organize conciliation in be far; those who wish well for their coun-New York, employing its secretary. Wiltry and its people must hope sincerely

> The unions, by meeting the situation in a spirit of fairness, by the abolition of violence, of boycotts and the sympathetic strike, can avert their danger, JOHN S. STEVENS.

an uninvited visitor to the office of one of attempt of one union organization to force wagging as they dangled over the side, the my New York building trade friends while upon others the acceptance of the sym- child remarked; pathetic strike. The building trades are, "Oh, what's the use?" said my host, with perhaps, the best example of far reaching ramifications in business. Upon their good or ill fortune depends the welfare of millions of capital and of hundreds of thou-"Well, our union ain't satisfied with some sands of men beyond their boundaries. The got up about two weeks after his operaof the conditions on your work. We are railroads, brickmakers, lumbermen, stone- tion for appendicitis," said one of a group men, the lime industry, structural iron at the club, "when it took me six weeks to and steel mills metal roofers and cornice get on my feet." I did not hear more of the conversation, but I noticed, on returning to Philadelphia, men, the hardware trades-all must feel journed with the understanding that each that there was no report of any strike on any disturbance in the operations of the able." etc., from the crowd. Meanwhile the his work. Asking him about it a few days builders. afterward, he smiled even more broadly which build homes touch the people more "You heard, of course, what they found?" than when he received the call of the nearly than almost any others. The amount he ventured. General interest-"business agent." who was the uninvited invested in building has been estimated by statisticians as being greater than that in digested securities, and all they had to de "You didn't hear all the conversation any other industry. The very vulnerability was to cut the coupons off."-New York that day," he said. "He added, after his which these facts suggests has invited the Times. 'But \$100 will settle it' attacks of trades No. I didn't have a strike. That \$100 in The position of the building industry as his pocket was cheaper than a strike would to the agitator is similar to that of real

estate in the presence of the tax gatherer; it cannot escape attack. Assaults upon it assent to the demands of blackmailers in are mischievous for reasons little thought the guise of walking delegates could no of. Such attacks are really directed upon longer serve even as a palliative of labor's the business of investing and saving the exactions. Union of labor could be effect products of industry. This age is in adtively encountered only by union of em- vance of almost every other in that it ployers. The great, grim struggle so long offers unrivaled opportunities and safety for the investment of accumulated earn-"Labor's unrest," of which we hear so ings. Land and buildings are a recognized much today, is not an unrest at all; it is form for such safe keeping; and a course a mere expression of two unjust phases of of action which renders it more costly or the labor question. One is the walking less safe is really an attack upon the best delegate, the other is the intoxication of

results of civilization. In still another form is the mischief suffered by the building trades felt by the community, though the community is to a great extent unconscious of its cause. It is in the encouragement given to stock speculation by the temporary uncertainties or dangers of safer forms of investment. I am of the opinion that much of the vast stock inflation of recent months and the injurious collapse of values were due to the overwhelming desire for investments for money, which have been turned

The present stage of the danger is difexists in the time of the greatest prosferent from almost all others in that it has passed all questions of wages, of just The weapons which labor is wielding are treatment, hours of labor, or any other themselves undergoing a change. Most matter properly within the purview of trades union action. The agitation of today ignores the vary groundwork of men's rights to their property and labor. The oring a fair fight for better conditions by ganizations existing among master builders in the various cities have come to the conclusion that a crisis is at hand; that eix weeks' or six months' cessation of work is better than the endurance of present constrike." If Jones strike against Smith in They are acting accordingly.

Trades unions are helping, in more direct ways, in the work of turning over our The attitude of the building trades is best industries to foreigners. Declaring that American workmen should receive Ameriwages, they deny to American youth, employer calls up his workmen and shows as far as lies in their power, the right and opportunity to learn trades. The limita "The sympathetic lockout is as logical tions on the number of apprentices allowed is a familiar example. It is not so gen-"The sympathetic strike is our only eferally known that they insist upon periods fective weapon." say its advocates. The of apprenticeship that are arbitrarily fixed, statement is itself an abandonment of all with no reference to the capacity of the justification. It is merely an extenuation. learner. The youth who, by natural skill or intense application, can learn the trade right. The men admit, however, that if within two years is obliged to spend a full employers were organized as thoroughly term as a pupil along with the most stupid as they, the workers would be powerless. or most indolent of his fellows. Em-The admission is impressive; it is now ployers, too, are at one with their most unreasonable workmen in enforcing the

The present outlook in relation to trades unions is serious. No assault is intended upon the principle of unionism; but no one knows where power unrestrained will lead. Business inen in union are far more power ful than laboring men, and can defeat their most formidable uprisings. The conliam H. Hayward of Boston, for the pur- that it will not result in a permanent pose. He formed a complete plan, but it lowering of the tone of labor in the United fell through. The men would not give it States.

unions, in which the employer is between President of the National Association of