

President Defends Eight-Hour Law

[President Wilson vigorously defended his settlement of the recently threatened railroad strike in an address to business men at Long Branch, N. J., Sept. 23. His speech follows:]

"Mr. Chairman, gentlemen of the Business Men's league, ladies and gentlemen: I need not tell you what a sense of gratification it gives me that you should come bearing this generous message which I have just heard from your chairman. There is a sense in which the business men of America represent America because America has devoted herself time out of mind to the arts and achievements of peace, and business is the organization of the energies of peace. No one who looks about upon the field of American business at the present moment can fail to realize that a new breath and spirit have come into the business of America.

"There have been times when it looked as if America were interested only in herself, but in these recent years American business men have lifted their eyes to more distant horizons and have seen how the markets of the world were waiting for their service; and as they have sought and obtained entrance into these markets a new vision had come to them, of what the development of the resources of America means; of what the organization of American efficiency means; of why it was that American merchants and American manufacturers and American miners and all the multitude of men who have developed the peaceful industries of America were planted under this free polity in order that they might look out upon the service of mankind and perform it.

BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA

"There never was a time when the pulse of energy and success beat so strongly in the veins of American business as it beats today, and yet I hope that all business men in America realize that we are only at the beginning of a new era. America has not played its proportionate part in the development of the trade of the world. I mean that it has not played a part proportionate to the gifts of Americans and the resources of America, and that in the times to come, partly because of the unhappy circumstances of recent years, but chiefly because America is now about to release her energies, the scope of American business will be what men have hitherto not dreamed of, if American men know how to take advantage of the opportunity.

"The problems that are before American business are world problems rather than American domestic problems. America must understand the world in order to subject it to its peaceful service. And yet when we look upon the field of American business there are some things that disturb us. Some men seem to think that the way to advance American interests is to walk backwards and to attempt again the provincial policies which have characterized an age when we shut our doors against the influences of the world.

THE CHIEF CLOUD

"But the chief cloud that is upon the domestic horizon is the unsatisfactory relations of capital and labor. There is only one way, gentlemen, in which the relations of capital and labor can be rendered satisfactory—that is by, in the first place, regarding labor as a human relationship of men with men, and, in the second place, to regard labor as part of the general partnership of energy which is going to make for the success of business men and business enterprises in this country. So long as labor and capital stand antagonistic, the interests of both are injured and the prosperity of America is held back from the triumphs which are legitimately its own.

"You know that we have been a legalistic people. I say with all due respect to some men for whom I have a high esteem that we have been too much under the guidance of the lawyers, and that the lawyer has always regarded the relations between the employer and the employee as merely a contractual relationship, whereas, it is, while based upon contract, ever much more than contractual relationship. It is a relationship between one set of men and another set of men with hearts under their jackets and with interests that they ought to serve in common with persons whom they love

and must support on the one side and on the other.

"LABOR IS NOT A COMMODITY"

"Labor is not a commodity. It is a form of co-operation, and if I can make a man believe in me, know that I am just, know that I want to share the profits of success with him, I can get ten times as much out of him as if he thought I were his antagonist. And his labor is cheap at any price.

"That is the human side of it, and the human side extends to this conception, that that laboring man is a partner of his employer. If he is a mere tool of his employer, he is only as serviceable as the tool. His enthusiasm does not go into it. He does not plan how the work shall be better done. He does not look upon the aspect of the business or enterprise as a whole and wish to co-operate the advantage of his brains and his invention to the success of it as a whole. Human relationships, my fellow citizens, are governed by the heart, and if the heart is not in it, nothing is in it.

THE REAL PROBLEM

"I have recently been through an experience which distressed me. I tried to accommodate a difference between some of the employees of the American railways, and the distressing thing I discovered was that on the one hand there was unlimited suspicion and distrust of the other side, and that that suspicion and distrust was returned by the other side in full measure. The executives did not believe in the sincerity of the men, and the men did not believe in the sincerity and fairness of the executives, and while arbitration was being discussed I had this sad thought: Arbitration is a word associated with the dealings of hostile interests. It is an alternative of war.

"There ought to be no such thing as the contemplation of hostility as between men whose interests are the same and who should co-operate together. And, therefore, it came upon me with a force that it had never had before that the real problem of capital and labor was to bring the two sides to understand and believe in one another; that the problem of the next generation, if America were to really to release her energy, was to be this real, genuine, fundamental reconciliation between capital and labor.

"I did not realize until I held those conferences just how far apart they were in that particular indispensable part of our national life, the transportation of the country, and when I did realize it, I saw that there was a great task that was worthy any man's while ahead of us to bring the minds of the country together, to see that men understood one another, to see that they had some assurance that they were speaking the truth to one another.

"I never had franker conferences in my life than I had with the representatives of the two sides. You know that when the public began to notice this controversy it had already been going on for some time. I had been watching it with great anxiety, and when it became evident that an accommodation was not going to be reached I thought it my duty to try my hand at the difficult task of accommodation, because I knew how much was involved not only in the immediate effects of a great strike such as was threatened, but also in the ultimate effects, the soreness left, the resentment that would remain, the feeling of hostility that would be accentuated.

POINTS AT CONTROVERSY

"And so I asked the privilege of consulting with them. Before I consulted with them I, of course, made myself acquainted with the point at controversy, and I learned that they were very simple indeed; that the men demanded an eight-hour day and that in order to make the eight-hour day work they demanded that the railroads pay them one-half more for overtime than they paid them for the time in the regular day, the men alleging that that was the only way in which they could obtain a genuine eight-hour day, by making the railroads pay more for the time beyond the eight hours than they paid for the time within the eight hours.

"I saw at once that there was one part of this that was arbitrable, but that, in my opinion,

there was another part that was not arbitrable. I do not regard the question of the principle of the eight-hour day as arbitrable.

STOOD FOR EIGHT-HOUR DAY

"The first thing I told both sides before I requested their opinion was that I stood for the eight-hour day. I received no suggestion from either side as to what the basis of settlement was to be, except that the railroad executives did suggest that congress give them some sort of assurance that if the eight-hour day went into operation they would get increased rates for the carriage of their freight. I pointed out to them that it was impossible to tell whether they would need increased rates for the carriage of their freights.

"We believe in the eight-hour day because a man does better work within eight hours than he does within a more extended day, and the whole theory of it, a theory which is sustained now by abundant experience, is that his efficiency is increased, his spirit in his work is improved, and the whole moral and physical vigor of the man is added to.

THE 80-CENT GAS CASE

"This is no longer conjectural. Where it has been tried it has been demonstrated. The judgment of society, the vote of every legislature in America that has voted upon it is a verdict in favor of the eight-hour day. And, therefore, I said to those gentlemen on both sides at the very beginning: 'The eight-hour day ought to be conceded.' But they said: 'It will cost us an immense sum of money.' 'How do you know how much it will cost you?'

"You remember there was a case decided by the supreme court of the United States. It was known as the 80-cent gas case, where, by legislation in the state of New York, 80 cents was established as the charge for the unit of the supply of gas, and the law was contested upon the ground that it was confiscatory, and therefore unconstitutional. And when appeal reached the supreme court of the United States, it said:

"'Nobody can tell until you try to manufacture gas at 80 cents whether it is confiscatory or not. Go ahead and manufacture gas and sell it for 80 cents, and then, if it proves impossible to conduct your business upon that charge, come back and discuss with us the confiscatory character of this act.' And it may be remarked in passing that the company never went back to discuss it.

"I said to the railroad executives: 'You are asking that the result of the eight-hour day be predicted and the prediction be arbitrated. You are asking for an arbitration of a conjecture, of an opinion, of a forecast of the figures of experts based upon an entirely different experience, and if you were to ask me personally to arbitrate such a question, I would say I am not competent to arbitrate it. The reasonable thing to do is to grant the eight-hour day, not because

(Continued on Page 21.)

FROM A CAMPAIGN WORKER

A. J. Diebold, Seneca, Ill.; Enclosed draft for \$26.25, contributed by the following persons: A. J. Diebold, \$1.50; C. H. R. Thomas, \$1; B. W. Romey, \$1; Thos. Norem, \$1; Tom Dunn, \$1; J. F. Murphey, 50c; Henry Monoro, \$1; W. J. Farley, 50c; J. F. Carroll, \$1; C. M. Malcolm, \$1; D. J. Heaton, \$1; Frank Timmins, \$1; Wm. J. McGettrick, \$1; W. L. Craig, 50c; Wm. J. Dunn, \$1; Chas. Lyons, 50c; C. A. Bartley, \$1; P. J. Foley, \$1; J. C. Thomas, \$1; A. Bessel, \$1; R. D. Moran, 50c; Alfred Clark, 50c; A. T. Goldie, \$1; J. Higgins, 50c; E. Solberg, \$1; Ben Eyan, 50c; E. J. Mason, 50c; Louis Pfeffer, \$1; E. F. Killelea, \$1; John J. Sheedy, \$1; Philipp Timmons, 25c.

I went among my friends and told the democrats that the committee had to have money, and we want to circulate The Commoner as campaign literature. I think a good division would be for you to advance my subscription and that of Mr. Thomas for a year, as we are old Commoner subscribers; and to each of the new names send The Commoner for the balance of the campaign, and then the balance of the money to be forwarded to the democratic national committee to be used to pay other expenses.

A New York newspaper prints this headline—
"Boss Murphy to Quit at End of Year." Quit what?