

LEVEL WAGE RATE

Why Trade Unions Fix a Minimum Pay Scale.

BEST FOR ALL CONCERNED.

Organized Labor Holds That the Employer May Pay More Than the Minimum, but Not Less—A Much Discussed Question Answered.

The tricky employing class opponent of the trade union is known through his talk after he has spoken ten words on the subject of unionism. He has always "an open mind;" he wishes "to speak candidly;" he has "no class prejudices." This run of professions, however, he is sure to follow with a "but," and the "but" marks his getting ready to fire off at you a lawyer's trip you up query. He has a mental magazine stocked with about six "buts" on the labor problem; nothing else, for he has no desire to weigh evidence and reach the truth. He has heard every one of his "buts" explained away a score of times, yet he still uses them when he can. Once in awhile he finds a labor sympathizer who is not prepared offhand to put the labor side to one of his "buts" briefly and clearly, and in such a case, seizing his advantage, he has trade unionism vanquished in two minutes.

Here's a favorite "but" of this canny class of objectors: "But I never could understand why the labor leaders insist on their followers getting equal pay for unequal work. They reduce their best men to the level of their worst."

That's a tangle of tortuous statements, tied up tight with malice pre-ense. It forms somewhat of a puzzle for the trade union novice to undo. But its knots are made up of three fallacies, each of which, taken separately, easily becomes plain:

First.—There are no "labor leaders" in the sense employed in the assertion. Matters of primary weight in the policy of the union movement are decided by the membership, democratically organized, deliberations free to all and the right of balloting equal. Union officials are spokesmen or administrators, and, while through experience they may become advisers, they are possessed only of powers imparted to them by their fellow members. Opponents speak of "labor leaders" as if some divine right or despotic method or sorcerer's wand had conferred on the few in the union the magic art of dictating to the many. As a fact, responsibility as a union official is assumed at the price of dictation from the ranks, sometimes accompanied with unjust criticism, misunderstandings, jealousies and jarring reminders of the election day to come.

Second.—How is it that no objections to working at a uniform minimum wage scale come from "the better qualified" in a union defending their supposed interests against "the less qualified?" In every union the scale is open to debate by all the members. In the international unions a general vote on any question may be asked on petition by a small minority, yet the proposition to abolish the irreducible minimum of the scale never comes up. Why? There's a poser for the "but" man. If the employing class objectors' opposition on this point that an injury is done to the best workers is grounded on any injustice, intelligent wage earners suffering under it might be expected to bring it up some time, somewhere, for adjustment. Men (and union men es-

pecially) are prone to cry out against injustice. The reply is that trade unionists have time without number considered this question and have reached a common determination. This is that employers may pay more than a fixed minimum rate, but shall pay no less. The employers respond by usually paying an equal rate to all. They see no injustice whatever in taking their advantage of cutting down all their employees to the lowest rate which any will accept. Strange it is that so few of them see that justice to "the better qualified" might bring the latter voluntary offerings from their employers above the scale in proportion to merits! That's the other side of the shield. The "but" gag worker rarely sees it—so he pretends.

Third.—Why a union irreducible minimum? Several good answers are to be given. Here is one now: No employee is paid according to the volume or value of his individual output. He is paid according to the price which a competitor workman in his occupation will consent to work for to get his job. In the absence of a trade union employers play off the bids of one man or set of men seeking work against another, down to the lowest level possible—the social cost of qualifying an employee considered. The union, on the other hand, restricts this competition, thereby stiffening the "labor market" and establishing an enhanced value for every employee. The union man therefore generally owes his rate of wages in live industries to the union and not to his individual product; hence "the better qualified" employee, knowing this fact, is well satisfied to take even the union minimum rate rather than risk the variable competitive rates under nonunionism. Under these, he is fully aware, his pay envelope would soon tell him a less joyful tale than when on Saturday night it now brings him the level union scale—plus manifold forms of the square deal in conditions of work usually unknown to the nonunionist.

Have you your answer, honest Mr "But?"—Samuel Gompers in American Federationist.

A LONG NEW YEAR CALL

A Story of New Amsterdam

By F. A. MITCHEL

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New Year's day, or the custom of making calls, was brought from Holland. Calling on that day was discontinued a generation ago, and if old Father Knickerbocker should come back on Jan. 1 he wouldn't know what to think.

The housewife was accustomed once a week to open her parlor, scrub it, sweep it, dust it and, having removed every speck of dirt, shut it up, lock it, put away the key and leave it till the next cleaning day, when the process was renewed.

Now, there lived in New Amsterdam a Dutchman of the name of Heinrich Van Olden, whose daughter, Annake, was the pride of his heart. She was a plump maiden of some eighteen summers, looking for all the world in her dozen petticoats like a tea bell, her bust forming the handle and all below the waist the ringing part. Her mother was a frugal woman who, having married a poor man, found herself obliged to seek a home in a new country instead of living in luxury in an old one. Consequently she arranged a match between her daughter and Peter Van Vrankin, who was thirty-six,

if he was a day, and far too old for a maiden only half his age. "For," the girl reasoned, "when I am as old as he is now he will be twice my age, or seventy-two, and when I am seventy-two he will be a hundred and forty-four."

Frau Van Olden was not sufficiently bright to contravert this mathematical demonstration, but she insisted on the match all the same, declaring that it would be an advantage, since Van Vrankin would likely die long before his wife, leaving her his property and years of independence.

The last New Year's day before the English relieved the New Amsterdam Dutchman from governing themselves and changed the name of the town to New York was being celebrated as usual. Every housewife's parlor was open to the friends of the family, and many bottles of Scheidam schnapps were set up for callers.

Well, that night, after every Dutchman in New Amsterdam had called on every Dutchwoman living under the shadow of the fort, Frau Ten Eyck was greatly worried because her son Heilegar didn't come home. Though at 9 o'clock every light in the town had been put out, the young man had not turned up. His father went out to ring the fire bell, and when those sleepy watchmen who responded came, each with his bucket, Ten Eyck told them that his son was missing and he feared the youngster had fallen in the pond where the Tombs now stands or been spirited away by some Indians who had been drinking schnapps during the day on the bowling green.

Every Dutchman said "Jah!" and went back to bed.

For a week the people of New Amsterdam hunted high and low for young Ten Eyck. The pond was dragged, the wood beyond that wall which gave its name to the financial center of America was searched, and the slips on the East and Hudson rivers were watched with the expectation that the body might rise. But no Heilegar Ten Eyck appeared.

One week from New Year's day Frau Van Olden unlocked the door of her parlor and, with broom, brush and duster, entered it for the purpose of giving it the periodical cleaning. Over the banister on the floor above her daughter, Annake, was looking down upon her anxiously. The housewife was engaged in raising as large a cyclone of dust as possible. Her daughter, listening to the swish of her broom and the rolling of the furniture as it was moved to uncover the dirt heard her mother give a shriek.

The cry acted as a spur on the girl, who ran down the stairs and into the parlor. The missing Heilegar Ten Eyck was crawling out from under a sofa, while the housewife stood, broom in hand, regarding him with infinite surprise.

"Are you living or dead?" asked Frau Van Olden.

The young man looked piteously at Annake.

"Mother," said the girl, "Heilegar was calling here on New Year's evening. Just before 9 o'clock I left him to go for something I wished to give him, and while I was gone you entered"—

"I hid behind the sofa," interrupted the young man. "You came in, blew out the candles and, going out, locked the door. I have been here ever since."

"Why didn't you knock?" asked the frau. "How have you lived here a week without food?"

"I didn't knock, fearing to start a scandal, and Annake has let food down the chimney from the roof."

"Really, mother," put in the girl, "we didn't know what to do, so we put off doing anything till now."

"Well," said the mother, "you two must be married at once. Don't stir from here till the dominie comes."

The dominie came, and the twain were made one. Then the father and the mother of the groom were summoned, and after they had wept over their son they were informed of the reasons for his disappearance.

This was the nearest to a scandal New Amsterdam ever came.

To Plan Eastern Naval Base.

Chief Constructor Washington Lee Capps, U. S. N., who has been ordered to the Philippines on a mission of great importance to the navy, will make a careful examination of the navy yard at Cavite, Manila harbor, and the naval station at Olongapo, on Subig bay.

Part of the general scheme of the naval department in the Pacific is to create an American Gibraltar at Pearl harbor, Hawaii, which involves the abandonment of the idea of establishing a powerful naval base in the Philippines and converting the station at Olongapo into a mere repair depot.



WASHINGTON L. CAPPS.

There is not water enough at Cavite to enable heavy warships to approach the navy yard there, and it is doubtful if Olongapo can be made impregnable.

Still, in view of the necessity of making more or less repairs to the American fleet which must be maintained in the orient Olongapo will be put in condition.

Rear Admiral Capps is a native of Virginia and is forty-six years old. He was appointed cadet engineer in the navy in 1880 and reached the rank of naval constructor in 1895. Since 1903 he has been chief constructor of the navy and chief of the bureau of construction and repair, with rank of rear admiral.

Evil in Neglected Legislation.

In Belgium, where education is not compulsory, 21 per cent. of the working people over ten years of age can neither read nor write.

A Mystery.

We sometimes wonder how people who do not drink sassafras tea are ever able to find out when spring comes.