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PRISON MADE GOODS.

Exploitation of Convicts a National Disgrace.

CONTRACT SYSTEM EVILS.

Distressing Effects of Penal Labor
 Competition With Free Workers.
 Livelihood of Women Endangered.
 Sad Lot of Prisoners.

Sensational evidence charging that a mammoth trust is exploiting prison labor throughout the land and that this combination corrupts officials, degrades convicts, destroys free industry and denies a living to thousands of working men and women has been laid before the house committee on labor by manufacturers, reformers and representatives of organized labor.

In support of bills which if made law would practically abolish interstate commerce in prison made goods the terrible extent and effect of prison labor were clearly shown by men and women in all classes of life and all parts of the country.

That Judge Watson of the appellate court of Indiana is a stockholder and director in the Reliance-Sterling Manufacturing company, otherwise known as the "prison trust," was charged by A. B. Salaat, a shirt manufacturer. It was also related that a warden in New York had made \$10,000 "commission" in one year for selling prison made goods and that another in Kentucky was dismissed for receiving bribes from contractors.

This powerful prison trust, according to the testimony, controls the contracts of eleven penitentiaries and reformatories. It pays New Jersey convicts as low as 26 cents for nine hours of labor.

One hundred prisoners working at machines turn out 10,000,000 handkerchiefs a year, which are sold in the open market at 4 cents less per dozen than it costs firms employing free labor to make the same article.

It was estimated that the output of shirts made by convicts yearly is 4,500,000, or 75 per cent of the entire industry.

Rev. J. Burkart, ex-chaplain of the Baltimore city jail and house of correction, emphatically denied the assertion made by some that convict industry teaches trades to the prisoners and prepares them for work after being released. He said that most of them are employed at making goods done by women workers outside of the prison walls. He also declared that the contract system is brutal in the extreme, being worse than penance or chattel slavery. The prisoners, he said, are driven from early morn until night, leaving no time to improve them morally, mentally or physically.

Arthur E. Holder, who, with Thomas F. Tracy, represented the American Federation of Labor at the hearing, gave the following incident in his experience as an organizer, showing how convict labor affects "free" workers: Up here in a little place called Tidout, in northwestern Pennsylvania, last summer I went into a large chair factory, among the employees. I tried to induce those men to form a local organization, and those men told me, with tears coursing down their cheeks: "Mr. Holder, it is no use. We are down and out. We are simply living upon bread and molasses. We have to live two families in a small home, where formerly we used to have a home of our own. Then our day's earnings came down to \$1.35, from \$1.35 they came down to \$1.15, and from \$1.15 they came down to \$1, and last summer we were working for 90 cents a day."

B. A. Langer, secretary of the United Garment Workers of America, told the committee that convict labor threatens the livelihood of the 30,000 women organized in his union. He said: "In the Trenton penitentiary they make corduroy trousers such as are made by our best class of firms manufacturing that grade of goods, and they ship them complete for 50 cents a dozen. Our price on that class of goods is \$1.75 a dozen."

Henry E. Wise of Wise Bros., shirt manufacturers, said that the competition of penal labor has forced them to reduce the number of their employees from 3,000 women to 100. Wise said: "We formerly used to run the Maryland reformatory house of refuge. We could not run it. No man who calls himself a man can run a prison contract and do what is expected of him."—Minneapolis Union Advocate.

Labor's Memorial Day.

The second Sunday in May is labor's memorial day. Responding to a widespread sentiment, the Norfolk convention of the American Federation of Labor in 1907 recommended that as the date on which throughout the jurisdiction of the American labor movement men and women might assemble and give public recognition to the services for labor performed by departed fellow workers. The observance of the day promises to become more general year by year. The official organs of the international unions and the labor press as a whole are making mention of the approach of the date and suggesting appropriate ceremonies for the occasion. There's not a community in all the land which has not had noble examples of devotion and self sacrifice among the members of organized labor who are no longer among the living. Here's to our absent comrades!—American Federationist.

MERCHANTS AND UNIONS.

Why Business Men Should Favor Organized Labor.

There is one reason if no other why business men, especially merchants, should favor union labor in preference to cheap nonunion labor, and that reason is "that if labor is poorly paid the wage earner will have no money to spend with the merchant. Every business man knows, if he will stop to think, that the retail house depends upon the wage earners for 90 per cent of their trade. If he had to depend upon the trade of the rich for his support the retail merchant would stand a small chance of succeeding. If the working people are prosperous the merchant thrives from his trade, and when the workingman's wages are cut down it takes just that much cash from the till of the business man and just that much comfort from the cottage fireside. Is not that sufficient reason why the business men in this country should support and encourage the great masses of organized labor? The union men in this country are not so blind or deaf that they do not know their friends. They know the sentiment and attitude of every business man of any prominence, and a careless or slighting remark made against organized labor finds its way into the meeting place of the tolling masses as fast as one spoken in its favor.

It has been said that unionism and anarchy travel hand in hand, but they are as far removed from each other today as heaven is from the last resting place of the man who deserted his union. Union men today are the bone and sinew of civilization and our republican form of government. In times of war the union man is the first to shoulder the musket and rush to the defense of our flag, and he will do so again if he is called upon. Union men are the champions of right and justice, and they have the manhood to resist oppression from those who would sap from them, drop by drop, the means of support for their wives and children.—A. R. Wyatt in American Federationist.

JUSTICE TO WORKERS.

Growing Demand For an Equitable Compensation Act.

Compensation acts for workmen must sooner or later come in all our states. Under the present system about one workman in ten who are injured has the legal right to a lawsuit, and if suit is brought his chance of recovery is about one in ten. The defenses set up by the employer are, under modern conditions, arbitrary and unreal. If suit is brought it can be dragged along for several years, and the lawyers' fees and court expenses eat up half the damages.

Large employers and the liability insurance companies have all the advantage in the trial of a case because of their perfect machinery for getting evidence, their skillful lawyers and their ability to take all appeals. In New York state this subject is being energetically pressed at present, the general feeling being in favor of an act providing for compensation equal to 50 per cent of the wage rate in case of disability and in case of death for a sum equal to four years' wages.

The present system does not tend to make the employer interested in preventing accidents or in the proper care and quick recovery of the injured any more than it tends to give real relief to employees and their families. The proposed change would produce a community of interests between the employer and the employed. It would lead toward better machinery, better care and far more justice. It is recognized, however, on the other side that the act should be so drawn as to prevent the encouragement of litigation by attorneys who live by collecting accident claims, and one method of accomplishing this would be a plan for the settlement by arbitration of practically all questions arising under the compensation act.—Collier's.

Unions Ask For No Special Privileges.

The trades unions ask for no special rights or privileges not accorded to or enjoyed by any individual citizen. We insist upon freedom of action always within the law and invite punishment by due legal process of law if we transgress. We object to and emphatically protest against government by injunction, which is another name for industrial slavery and a hollow mockery on our boasted democracy. We want and demand free speech and a free press, both of which are guaranteed by the constitution, but denied us by injunction judges in some cases.—Cigarmakers' Journal.

Meaning of Cheap Labor.

Cheap labor means poverty and degradation for the masses of the people. It means low prices for the products of the farm and factory. The consuming power of the people is measured by their earnings, and cheap labor means the lessening of their purchases. The sooner the retail merchant looks at these facts in the right way the better off he will be both in the sale of factory and farm products.

Give Us Men.

Give us men,
 Strong and stalwart ones,
 Men whom highest hope inspires,
 Men whom purest honor fires,
 Men who trample self beneath them,
 Men who make their country breathe them
 As her noble sons,
 Worthy of their sires;
 Men who never shame their mothers,
 Men who never fail their brothers,
 True, however false are others!
 Give us men! I say again,
 Give us men!



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By making the Housewife comfortable. Fuel Gas is cheaper than coal. It is cleaner, easier to handle and safer to use. Four Thousand families will bear witness to the facts. Once used, never abandoned. Let us figure with you in replacing your steel range with a Gas Range. We furnish the fuel—You touch a match. We court investigation.

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