

# THE WAGEWORKER.

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## THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF UNIONS

WHAT WELL KNOWN WRITERS ON ECONOMICS HAVE TO SAY CONCERNING THE SUBJECT OF UNIONS AMONG THOSE WHO PRODUCE

"I do not hesitate," writes Mill in his "Political Economy," to say that associations of laborers, of a nature similar to trades unions, far from being a hindrance to a free market for labor, are the necessary instrumentalities of that free market the indispensable means of making the sellers of labor to take due care of their own interests under a system of competition. There is an ulterior consideration of much importance to which attention was for the first time drawn by Professor Fawcett in an article in the "Westminster Review." Experience has at length enabled the more intelligent trades to take a tolerable correct measure of the circumstances on which the success of a strike for an advance of wages depends. The workmen are now nearly all as well informed as the masters, of the state of the market for this commodity; they can calculate his gains and his expenses; they know when his trade is or is not prosperous, and only when it is are they ever again likely to strike for higher wages; which wages their known readiness to strike makes their employers for the most part willing to concede. The tendency, therefore, of this state of things is to make a raise of wages in any particular trade, usually consequent upon a rise of profits, which as Mr. Fawcett observes, is a commencement of that regular participation of the laborers in the profits derived from the profits of their labor, every tendency to which, for the reasons stated in a previous chapter, it is so important to encourage, since to it we have chiefly to look for any radical improvement in the social and economical relations between labor and capital. Strikes, therefore, and the trades societies which render strikes possible, are for these various reasons not a mischievous, but on the contrary, a valuable part of the existing machinery of society."

"The labor organizations," writes Richard T. Ely in his splendid book, "The Trade Union Movement in America," "enable the laborer to withhold his commodity temporarily from the market, and to wait for more satisfactory conditions of service than it is possible for him to secure when he is obliged to offer it unconditionally. They further enable him to gain the advantages of an increased demand for his commodity, to bring about a more satisfactory relation than would otherwise be possible between the supply and the demand for labor, and also to exercise an influence upon the supply in the future market. These organizations are calculated to do away with the injurious consequences of the peculiarities of labor as a commodity to be sold and, through them labor for the first time becomes really a commodity, and the laborer a man."

"Trades unions," continues Professor Ely, "have, as a rule, grown up out of conditions during a strike, and these first days have been abnormal; yet it is only during the abnormal period of a struggle that public attention is called to them. The general public knows little and seems to care less for the quiet, steady, beneficent influences which these unions are exerting upon workmen. Union men make mistakes, and even very intelligent men are not infallible as guides. Men, too, have often committed crimes and been guilty of folly for which they alone, as individuals, were to blame, yet which have been attributed to them as union men."

Rev. Dr. John Hall says: "There is a widespread suspicion of trades unions as being selfishly managed by paid agents for fomenting discord between the employer and the employed. When a continued strike embarrasses a contractor and throws the workers and their families on the benevolence of their fellows, it is natural to look to the evil on the surface and forget the underlying good which is contemplated. In the nature of the case, union effort by working people admits of easy vindication."

Rev. Dr. T. Edwin Brown says: "When we remember the history of the Christian church, the history of humanity, and by what terrific throes good evolves itself out of and through evil, we must not be too hard upon workmen. Are we perfect? Do we commit no blunders? Are we never carried away by passions? Are we always able to balance with perfect accuracy the conflicting interest of our

country they have never been adequately organized and protected, and regulated by law. Remember that the majority of those who compose these unions were men ignorant by necessity, suspicious as hunted animals are suspicious; distrustful of advice, because so often deceived by advice, with many violent and vicious men among them. And then, with all the facts in mind, ask yourselves whether it is wonderful that there have been mistakes, mischief, crimes, much folly in principle, and much wrong in fact. Is not the wonder rather that there have not been many more of these characteristics which arouse our complaint? There have been unwise restrictions, tyrannical regulations, vast aggressions, and hindrances to intelligent labor and to best production. Yes! But these are incidental. Many of the party tyrannies, which are quoted even now as characteristic of trades unionism, belong to the past. They have been outgrown. Many others will be outgrown. The workmen, in spite of all the blunders that have been made, ought to be proud of their organized history. I, as a man, sharing their common humanity, am proud of their history on their behalf."

Quoting Professor Ely again: One precaution which should not be forgotten by those who would judge the

laborers honestly is this: You get only one side of the case in press dispatches. Could you know both sides your opinion would frequently be quite different about alleged misdoings of laborers. HE WHO WOULD KNOW BOTH SIDES MUST TAKE A LABOR PAPER."

And again: "Finally, that terrible weapon of labor, the 'boycott,' found a precedent in the far more cruel blacklist which preceded it, in most cases caused it, and still continues its atrocities unrebuked. Now the parallels are not in themselves justification, but if the practice is wrong, they do prove that our entire industrial society needs reformation, and that it is cruelly unjust to saddle all the blame on those who follow their natural leaders."

"Alton Lock," is a novel written by Charles Kingsley that all union men should read. The hero of this wonderful novel expresses the complaint in one place—and that with a tinge of bitterness—that the workingman who remains true to his class and tries to help it, is called a demagogue. "Is

## THE STATE FEDERATION OF LABOR

AN ORGANIZATION OF THE WORKERS OF THE STATE FOR THE PURPOSE OF SECURING BETTER CONDITIONS AND BETTER LEGISLATION

The Nebraska State Federation of Labor was organized at Lincoln on June 24, 1909, in the hall of the House of Representatives. The call for a delegate assembly to organize the Federation was issued by Will M. Maupin, deputy labor commissioner, and met with a ready response from the local unions of the state. Mr. Maupin assumed the duties of the labor commissioner's office while the legislature of 1909 was in session, and until the session closed was unable to undertake the work of laying plans for organizing a state organization. As soon as the legislature adjourned Mr. Maupin, who believes that the Labor Bureau should

zation should be held the following January, at which time he should be relieved of duty. Frank Hart of South Omaha was elected secretary-treasurer, and South Omaha selected as the place of holding what is known as the second annual convention, but which in reality was the first annual convention of the Federation.

The Federation met in South Omaha on January 4, 1910, in the midst of a raging blizzard that interfered sadly with the train service and prevented many delegates-elect from attending. But despite these untoward circumstances there were upwards of eighty local unions represented, and the convention proceeded to transact a lot of business of great interest and importance. It is not necessary to review in detail the work of the South Omaha convention. Many important resolutions were adopted, and many plans laid for prosecuting the work of organization and securing laws needed in the interests of the wage earners. The following officers were elected for the present year:

President, Frank M. Coffey, Lincoln.  
First Vice, John C. Trouten, South Omaha.

Second Vice, Will M. Maupin, Lincoln.

Third Vice, J. A. Booth, Fremont.  
Fourth Vice, John Lambert, Fairbury.

Secretary-Treasurer, Frank P. Hart, South Omaha.

Delegate to American Federation of Labor, W. A. Chrisman, Omaha.

Sergeant-at-Arms, A. A. Hyers, Havelock.

Legislative Committee, F. M. Coffey, chairman, Lincoln; S. A. D. Smith, Havelock; T. C. Kelsey, Lincoln; James Kotera, South Omaha; J. C. Lynch, Omaha; C. L. Widman, Fremont; S. Grace, North Platte.

Havelock was selected as the place for the 1911 convention, and January 4 is the date set. The Havelock workers promise that the delegates will be entertained in a royal manner, and that this promise will be carried out to the letter is not doubted by those of us who have the pleasure of knowing the loyalty and energy of the union men of that city.

President Coffey is a member of Lincoln Typographical Union, and is well known in union circles throughout the country. He was twice president of his local union and was a delegate to the memorable Toronto convention. To him more than any one man Mr. Maupin is indebted for assistance in carrying out the plans that resulted in the organization of the Nebraska Federation of Labor.

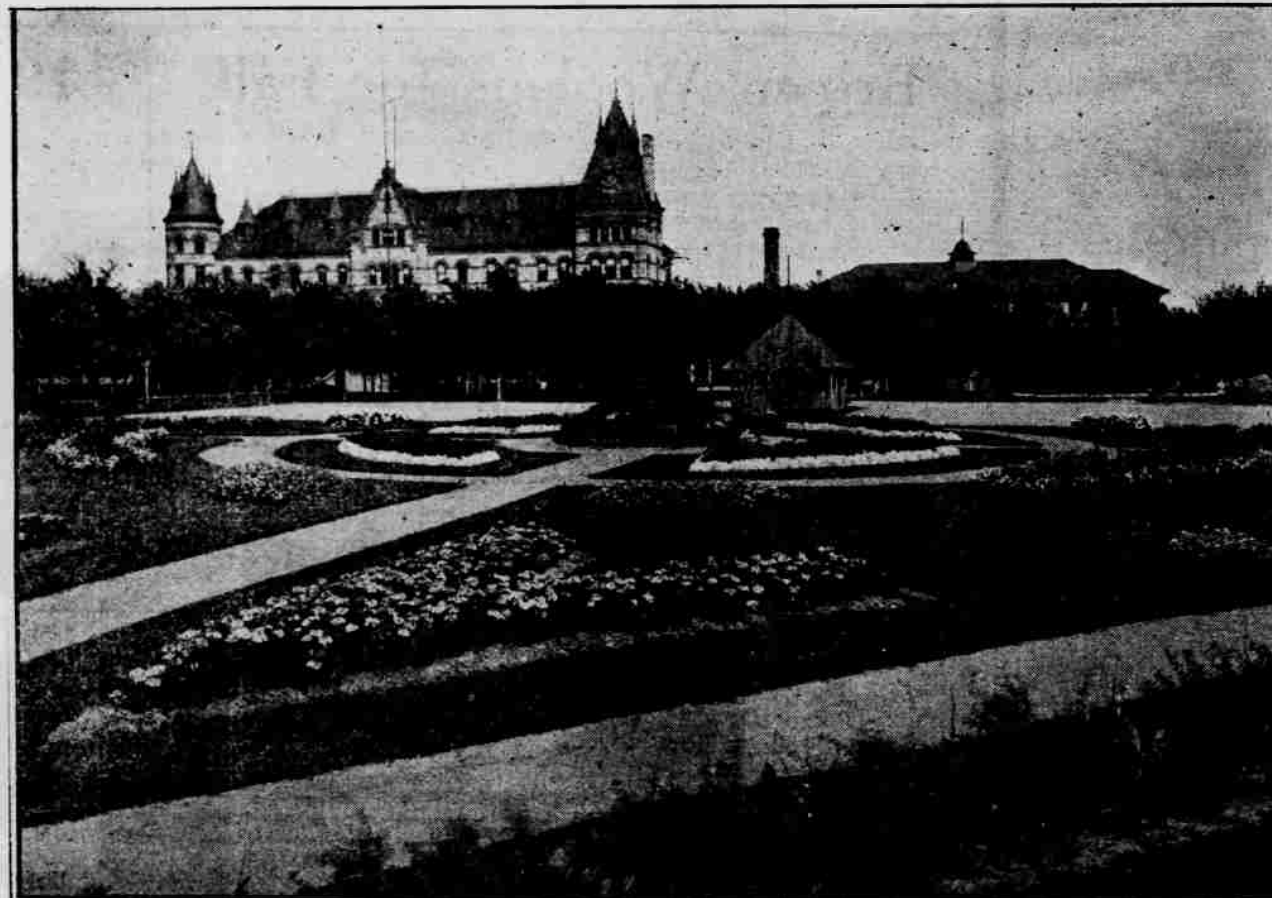
Secretary-Treasurer Hart is a member of Omaha Typographical Union, and resides in South Omaha. His work as secretary-treasurer during the first and most trying year of the Federation was such that he was honored with a unanimous re-election.

It is the purpose and aim of the Federation's legislative committee to have at least three of its members on duty in Lincoln while the legislature is in session, and to not only introduce and urge the passage of legislation in the interests of the wage-earners, but oppose legislation inimical to their interests. The Federation will not meddle in partisan politics, but it does expect to put every candidate for public office on record as to his views on those matters that are of especial interest to those who work for wages.

The revenues of the Nebraska State Federation of Labor are derived from a per capita tax levied upon the active membership of the affiliated unions. The secretary-treasurer is the only salaried officer of the Federation, he being paid \$100 per year.

The chief ambition of the men foremost in organizing the Federation is to get it on such a firm financial basis that it will be possible to maintain an organization in the field all the time, and have a live legislative committee always at work when work is needed.

If the union men of the state do their duty to themselves and their comrades, they will come forward and help make the State Federation of Labor stronger and better, to the end that its legislative committee will have every opportunity to press for the enactment of these needed laws.



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An Unanswerable Argument in favor of Trades Unionism.

this true only of England?" asks Professor Ely. Let the trades unionist of every community answer the query for themselves.

### TRADES UNIONS

- Foster education and uproot ignorance.
- Shorten hours and lengthen life.
- Raise wages and lower usury.
- Increase independence and decrease dependence.
- Develop manhood and balk tyranny.
- Establish fraternity and discourage selfishness.
- Reduce prejudice and induce liberality.
- Enlarge society and eliminate classes.
- Create rights and abolish wrongs.
- Lighten toil and brighten man.
- Cheer the home and fireside and Make the World Better.
- All wage-workers should be union men. Their progress is limited only by them who hold aloof. Get together, agitate, educate and do.
- Don't wait until tomorrow; tomorrow never comes.

be conducted in the interests of labor, undertook the task of calling a convention to the union men of the state, outlining his plans and asking for advice and cooperation. The responses were numerous and sincere. Not one dissenting voice was heard, and union officials all over the state promised their help. This help was forthcoming at the proper time. After securing a complete list of the officials of local unions throughout the state Mr. Maupin issued a call for a meeting on June 23, 1909, asking for one delegate from each local union in the state to meet in Lincoln for the purpose of organizing a State Federation of Labor. At 10:30 on the morning of June 23 Mr. Maupin had the pleasure of calling to order an assembly of men representing eighty-one local organizations and a total membership of over 18,000. Addresses of welcome were made by Governor Shallenberger and Mayor Love, and then Mr. Murray of Omaha was elected temporary presiding officer.

The delegates buckled down to work immediately, and after a two days' session permanently organized the Nebraska State Federation of Labor and elected a full set of officers. Mr. Maupin was elected president with the understanding, insisted on by him, that the first annual meeting after organi-