

THE LOS ANGELES HORROR FAIRLY ANALYZED

It may have appeared somewhat strange to the average reader that The Wagerworker did not rush frantically to the front immediately after the Los Angeles affair and begin uttering a defense of organized labor. There were several reasons why this was not done, the chief reason being that no defense of organized labor was, or is, necessary. Secondly, it would have been a waste of time to discuss the matter then, for the public mind was too wrought up to calmly consider an argument or evidence. Now that three weeks have elapsed, and the public mind somewhat cooled off, it may be a good time to calmly and dispassionately review the whole matter.

Every day since the explosion that wrecked the Los Angeles Times building the police—notoriously the tools of the anti-union organization of Los Angeles—have been promising to “close their net” on the culprits who blew up the building. Every day they had fresh evidence narrowing the crime down to four or five men. And every newspaper rumor, industriously set afloat by the police tools of the union haters, sought to more firmly convince the public that the labor unions were behind the diabolical plot to destroy the Los Angeles Times.

But since the first newspaper reports of the explosion not one word has been heard from the man who, an hour after the explosion, said that hours before the explosion he had smelled escaping gas and had reported the fact to several people. It would never do to let it become known that the notoriously unsafe and unsanitary Times building had been wrecked by an explosion of leaking gas. Dynamite was the first explanation offered by the union haters of Los Angeles, and this was being pretty well believed in certain quarters until it was incidentally mentioned that dynamite does not blow up, but down, and the explosion that wrecked the Times building was an upward and outward explosion—exactly the kind of a blow-up that follows the explosion of gas.

Outside of the “clues” and “rumors” of the hired man hunters of Los Angeles there has not been offered one scintilla of evidence showing that the explosion was a premeditated affair, or that if it was it was due to any trades union, to any trades union officials or to any trades union members. In all fairness let it be remembered that Harrison Gray Otis accumulated quite a few bitter enemies during his service as a military officer. There is as much reason to believe that the explosion was due to the efforts of some soldiers whom he treated with brutality as there is to believe that the wreck was due to the efforts of union men whom he has been fighting and abusing for years. There is absolutely nothing offered so far to prove any man of set of men guilty of wrecking the Times building and killing a score of men.

Harrison Gray Otis, hater of unionism and head and front of the “open shop” movement on the Pacific coast, is editor and owner of the Los Angeles Daily Times. He uses the columns of the Times daily to abuse and vilify union men.

The Times building is wrecked by a mysterious explosion and several lives are lost.

Therefore, union labor is responsible for the wreck and the resultant loss of life.

There is the whole case against union labor in a nutshell. Absolutely nothing to connect organized labor with the explosion save the desire of union haters to fasten a crime upon unionism.

But let us admit, for the sake of argument, that a half-dozen men belonging to a trades union, conspired together and wrecked the Times building, killing a score of men. What does that prove? It merely proves that a half-dozen men were cowardly murderers, and no more proves that unionism means violence and murder than it proves that all Christians are murderous fanatics because one religion-crazed man murders his baby under the idea that he has been called upon to offer it as a living sacrifice to the Almighty.

A few years ago William Dabman, living near Watseka, Ills., joined a local church during a revival. A few months after he took his two-year old daughter out into the woods and killed her. It was clearly shown that Dabman, in a fit of religious frenzy, had killed the baby because he thought he had been called upon to offer it as a living sacrifice to an offended Deity.

If all union men are murderers because a half-dozen men blew up the Los Angeles Times building, then all church members are murderers because William Dabman killed his two-year-old baby.

The Wagerworker does not deny that union men blew up the Times building. It does deny that any evidence to that effect has been produced. It does not deny that in an hour of frenzy, brought on by long continued vilification and abuse, a half-dozen union men wrecked the Times building and killed a score of innocent people. It does deny that the perpetrators of such a hellish deed represent in any sense the whole body of organized labor. Becom-

ing a member of a trades union does not change a man's nature one iota. It may change his mode of living, but it leaves him the same loves and hates, the same likes and dislikes, as before. Carrying a union card does not make a man infallible; it does not lessen his liability to make mistakes.

There is not a trades union in the world that teaches or counsels violence. On the contrary, trades unions teach moderation, arbitration, conciliation—they teach peaceful methods of gaining ends that men and nations have for centuries resorted to armed force to obtain. Members of unions often do commit assaults—not because they are members of unions but because they are just men.

But what if trades unions did teach violence? Have not the men who make up the rank and file of trades unions been given through all the years plenty of warrant for resorting to the same methods that have been used against the workers for centuries on end? From the day when the Egyptian taskmasters made the Israelitish slaves manufacture bricks without straw, the lash of oppression has been laid upon the backs of those who toil. Babies have been snatched from the cradle to fatten the greed of cruel taskmasters; the home has been robbed of the wife and mother to make possible the ease and comfort of the wife and daughters of the taskmaster; the father has been bent upon the rack of unrequited toil, and his moans of pain and anguish failed to reach the ears of men who were intent only upon catching the sound of jingling dollars.

Less than one hundred years ago it was a capital offense for workmen to make a concerted demand for higher wages. Less than three-quarters of a century ago men were thrown into prison in England and in the United States for daring to organize for self-protection. Less than twenty-five years ago in our own United States men were threatened with imprisonment if they dared cease work for a corporation that was grinding them into the dust. And right now, here in Lincoln, Nebraska, men are threatened with imprisonment if they dare to remonstrate with men who have taken the places they left in an effort to secure recognition of the ordinary rights that are due to every man who works for wage. Through all the centuries labor has been taught that it is a slave; its back has been lashed with the whip; the fruits it created have been wrested from it and it has been told to thank God it is allowed to retain a pittance. And when, as now and then happens, this giant, momentarily glimpsing its own strength, and roused from its sullen stupor, breaks a pillar in the capitalistic temple, immediately the cry goes up that every worker is a potential murderer, and every organization the workers have formed to secure for themselves some little relief is a school for crime and violence.

The wonder is not that now and then some worker runs amuck; it is that workers have borne so long and so patiently the burdens that have been laid upon their backs for centuries. The wonder is not that there should have been so much of violence and bloodshed in the warfare that labor is making for recognition of the rights of manhood; the wonder is, after all has been said and done, that there has been so little.

Let us admit for argument's sake that every charge of violence and crime and bloodshed laid at the doors of organized labor is true. What of it? Trades unionism is less than 150 years old. Christianity is 1900 years old. All the crimes laid at the door of Trades Unionism would not be a drop in the blood red bucket of raping, violence, murder and crime perpetrated in the name of the Carpenter of Nazareth and under a banner raised in the name of “Peace on Earth, to men good will.” The little brown men in the Philippines, asking only the right to rule in his own land, has been given the “water cure” and filled with lead, all in the name of religion. Men have been boiled in oil, dismembered upon the rack, burned at the stake and thrown to the wild beasts—all in the name of God. Scarce more than fifty years ago children were sold from their mothers' breasts, husbands sold away from wives and wives away from husbands, and men of one race given power of life and death over men of another race, all right here in the United States—and over the whole hellish institution of chattel slavery was thrown the cloak of religion and it was carried on by men who prated loud of being followers of the Man of Gallilee. For nineteen hundred years the Church of Jesus Christ has been undergoing a slow and painful process of evolution, and it is today far short of perfection. Why then expect a purely human institution like trades unionism, to accomplish more in a century and a half than a divine institution like the church has been able to accomplish in nineteen centuries? When the church was a thousand years old it was pushing its campaign with fire and sword—is it to be wondered at that in its first infancy trades unionism should show signs now and then of doing the same thing? Is not the wonder that trades unionism is so