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SQUELCH THAT PROPOSED PRISON CONTRACT

The Crescent Manufacturing Co., of St. Louis, proposes to establish at the Nebraska state prison a factory for the manufacture of overalls, work shirts and the cheaper grades of clothing. The company through its representative, offers to pay the state 55 cents a day for the labor of each convict put into the clothing shop the first year, 60 cents a day to each convict serving the second year in the shop, and 65 cents a day for each convict working therein two or more years. It also asks the state to furnish 150 men for nothing for a couple of months so they can be "taught the trade."

The State Board of Public Lands and Buildings is said to be seriously considering the acceptance of the offer in some form or other. There is some disagreement as to the price per convict and the terms of the general agreement, but rumor has it that the board looks with favor upon the establishment of an overall factory in the penitentiary.

Two arguments are advanced to support the theory that such a factory should be established inside the prison walls. One is that the great and sovereign state of Nebraska "needs the money." The other is that the convicts must be given something to do, or the poor things will go mad. A wonderful lot of sympathy that is never extended to a poor devil on the outside who is striving manfully to earn an honest livelihood for himself and his little ones is forever being handed out in bunches to a lot of lawbreakers who are behind the bars as a punishment for their crimes against society.

Neither argument advanced in favor of establishing factories inside the prison walls is good. In the first place Nebraska is not yet down to that financial condition when it must depend upon the labor of convicts for its support. In the second place, it is not necessary to put convicts in competition with free labor in order to provide the convicts with employment. There is plenty of work the convicts can do that will keep them employed, be advantageous to the state, and not injurious to honest laborers who are trying to live honestly and decently.

Suppose the state establish a clothing factory in the prison and there make the garments used by the state's wards in the pen and other state institutions? That wouldn't put prison made goods in

competition on the open market with the products of free labor. Suppose the state put a hundred or more of them to breaking stone for macadamizing of the public roads? That would give the convicts employment and their work would not compete with the labor of free men.

Nebraska is too intelligent to begin at this late day to adopt a plan that is being discarded by other states. The prison contract system is so outrageous, so unfair to honest labor, so detrimental to honest and legitimate business, that one who has given the matter a moment's thought wonders how intelligent men can consider it for a moment. The employment of 200 convicts on overalls and work clothes will do more than throw a couple hundred free garment workers out of employment. It will drag down the wage scale of thousands of others. How can a manufacturer employing free labor pay girls and women a dollar or a dollar and a half a day for making overalls that must be sold over the counter in competition with over-

alls made in a prison at a labor cost of fifty or sixty cents a day? There can be but one result—the free laborer must soon seek other work, and failing to find it must "go to the bad," and thus make sure of employment, this time behind the prison bars.

The prison contract system puts a premium on crime and acts as a deterrent on honesty. It is a disturber of a labor market already in bad shape—so bad that thousands upon thousands of jobless men are walking the streets vainly looking for work that they may buy bread for hungry wives and little ones.

But strange as it may seem to those who are not misled by maudlin sympathy or actuated by conscienceless greed, the proposition to establish an overall factory in the Nebraska penitentiary is being considered. It is up to the free workers of the state to express their opinion of this proposition in most unmistakable terms.

Let every opponent of prison contract work write to the State Board of Public Lands and Buildings at once, protesting against this injustice. Do not mince words—tell just what you think—and just what you will do in case your protest is not heeded.

The overall and work garment industry in Nebraska is growing rapidly. The conditions in this trade are none of the best as circumstances are now. They will be infinitely worse if the men and women now engaged in garment working are forced to work in competition with convicts. Young women who now earn an average of \$7 a week, out of which they must pay board, laundry and dress—and live honorably—will be compelled to work for less if they are forced into competition with the convicts in the Nebraska prison. Society owes quite as much to these honest, virtuous, hardworking young women as it owes to the lawbreakers—the burglars, the sneak thieves, the porch-climbers, the strong-arm workers, the rapists and the highwaymen who are confined behind the bars.

In the name of these honest and hardworking young women, in the name of free workers who are striving to support families and rear their children so they may become honest, God-fearing, intelligent citizens—in the name of common justice, let every worker make immediate protest against the damnable proposition to enlarge the already iniquitous prison contract labor system in Nebraska.

State Federation of Labor

Lincoln, Nebr., April 17, 1909.—Believing that an organization made up of the wage earners of the State would be of benefit to those who toil in mill and factory, in shop and in the transportation service, and acting in for the purpose of organizing a State Federation of Labor. Census and Industrial Statistics, I hereby call a delegate convention in the city of Lincoln on June 21 and 22, 1909, for the purpose of organizing a State Federation of Labor. Such organizations in other states have been productive of great good to the workers and, therefore, productive of great good to the commonwealths. In this connection, I desire to call attention to the Kansas State Federation of Labor. This organization is recognized by statute and there is annually appropriated \$500 for defraying the expenses of the Federation's meeting.

The matter of permanent organization, plan of representation, dues, rules of government, etc., of the organization will, of course, be left for the organization itself to decide. In order, however, to effect organization, I ask each local union in Nebraska to select one delegate to represent it at the initial meeting. Each delegate should come with credentials properly signed and sealed by the local officials of the union. Local secretaries are urged to promptly report to me the names of delegates thus selected, and local organizations are urged to act promptly.

Full information as to program, hotel rates, place of meeting, etc., will be announced in ample time.

It is the aim of this department to forward the cause of labor to the fullest possible extent, and to that end it asks the hearty co-operation of the workmen and women of the State.

WILL M. MAUPIN,
Deputy Commissioner.

Bureau of Labor Census and Industrial Statistics.

The State Federation of Labor Meeting in Sight

Elsewhere The Wagworker prints the call for a meeting to organize a State Federation of Labor, the call having been issued by Deputy Commissioner of Labor Maupin. Mr. Maupin holds that such an organization will be of service, not only to the workers of the state, but to the bureau, and it will put the Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics in close touch with the workers. The latter is the chief reason Mr. Maupin offers for issuing the call. It is his aim to make the Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics what it was intended to be—a bureau of labor and industrial statistics.

The call printed elsewhere has been sent to the local secretary of every labor organization in the state. If any have been missed it is because the deputy commissioner could not locate. Any local secretary who fails to receive a formal notice is requested to consider any mention of the fact a notice that his organization is requested to send a representative to the meeting.

According to reports on file in the Bureau of Labor Census and Industrial Statistics, Nebraska has the following organizations:

- Typographical Union, 3—Omaha, Lincoln, Fremont.
- International Printing Pressmen and Assistants' Union, 2—Omaha, Lincoln.
- International Stereotypers and Electrotypers, 2—Omaha, Lincoln.
- International Association of Machinists, 5—Alliance, Grand Island, Fairbury, Lincoln, McCook, North Platte, Omaha, Beatrice.
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, 4—Omaha, (2), Fremont, Lincoln.
- Amalgamated Association of Street and Electric Railway Employees, 1—Omaha.
- Wood, Wire and Metal Lathers' International Union, 2—Omaha, Lincoln.
- International Alliance Bill Posters and Billers, 1—Omaha.
- Journeyman Barbers' International Union, 7—South Omaha, Lincoln, Beatrice, Omaha, Fairbury, Nebraska City, Fremont.
- Brotherhood of Railway Clerks, 1—Omaha.
- Sheet Metal Workers' International Alliance, 1—Omaha.
- Cigarmakers' International Union, 5—Omaha, Lincoln, Grand Island, Plattsmouth, Fremont.
- Coopers' International Union, 1—Omaha.
- Brotherhood of Leatherworkers on Horse Goods, 4—Omaha, Lincoln, Fremont, Hastings.
- Journeyman Tailors' Union, 2—Omaha, Lincoln.

- Brotherhood of Boilermakers and Iron Ship Builders, 8—Omaha, North Platte, Havelock, McCook, Fairbury, Alliance, Grand Island, Lincoln.
- Bartenders' International League, 2—Omaha, Lincoln.
- Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, 2—Omaha, Lincoln.
- Bridge and Structural Iron Workers, 1—Omaha.
- International Union of Steam Engineers, 1—Omaha.
- Journeyman Stonecutters' Association, 2—Omaha, Lincoln.
- International Union of United Brewery Workmen, 2—Omaha (2); branch at Fremont.
- International Union Ladies' Garment Workers, 1—Omaha.
- International Photo Engravers' Union, 1—Omaha.
- Plumbers, Gas and Steam Fitters' Union, 3—Omaha (2), Lincoln.
- Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators and Paperhangers, 5—Omaha (2), Beatrice, Lincoln, Holdrege.
- International Brotherhood of Blacksmiths, 4—Omaha, Grand Island, Havelock, Alliance.
- Operative Plasterers' International Association, 2—Omaha, Beatrice.
- American Brotherhood of Cement Workers, 1—Omaha.
- International Glove Workers' Union, 1—Lincoln.
- Railway Switchmen's Union, 2—Omaha, Lincoln.
- Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, 11—Alliance, Beatrice, Chadron, Fairbury, Fremont, Lincoln, McCook, North Platte, Norfolk, Omaha, Wymore.
- Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, 11—Chadron, North Platte, Omaha, Lincoln, Norfolk, Fairbury, Beatrice, Fremont, McCook, Alliance, Wymore.
- Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen, 11—Chadron, Omaha, North Platte, Norfolk, Lincoln, Fairbury, Wymore, Alliance, McCook, Fremont.
- Bookbinders' International Brotherhood, 2—Omaha, Lincoln.
- United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, 11—Fremont, Fairbury, Beatrice, Grand Island, Holdrege, Lincoln, McCook, Nebraska City, Omaha (2), South Omaha.
- In addition to the above there are Federal Labor Unions, chartered by the American Federation of Labor, at South Omaha, Omaha (2); and Fairbury. There are Central Labor Unions at Beatrice, Fremont, Lincoln, Omaha and South Omaha. Deputy Commissioner Maupin invites these Federal Unions and Central Bodies to send delegates to the meeting. A number of the local unions have auxiliaries composed of the wives, daughters and sisters of the union men. Every such organization is also urged

to send a delegate, and if the responses are numerous enough Deputy Commissioner Maupin promises to have some woman well known in the trades union movement address the convention. "The organization of a State Federation of Labor will be of great service to this department," said Mr. Maupin. It will enable the commissioner to keep in close touch with labor interests throughout the state, and thus permit him to collect and publish valuable statistical information. I have great hopes that the initial meeting will be a good one, both in point of attendance and in interest."

THE LABOR TEMPLE BOOSTERS.

Temple Day Pledges Being Signed With a Hearty Good Will.

The directors of the Labor Temple Association met in regular session last Monday evening, and hurried through a mass of business. The Auxiliary to the Typographical Union reported acceptance of the offer to secure pledges on "Labor Temple Day," May 12, and further reported that the work had already begun. Pledges aggregating upward of \$200 were secured the first day, and then less than an hour's work was performed. The plan looks like a sure winner—and will be if the boosters get busy as they should. All certificates of stock paid for to date have been issued and are being handed to the owners as rapidly as possible. From now on the work of pushing will be prosecuted with vigor. As rapidly as possible committees will call on the various organizations and ask pledges to the "Labor Temple

Day" fund. The Wagworker speaks for these enterprising unions women a courteous welcome and hearty support.

It must be borne in mind that your pledge does not mean a donation. It is a subscription to stock that is non-assessable, and sure to pay good dividends in the very near future.

The Fulton Stock Co. has promised a benefit performance for the Temple fund in a short time. This will be profitable if the workers will come across with a little push.

HEAD THEM OFF.

Owing to the opposition of the musical unions in the United States the Banda Mexicana, organized in the City of Mexico, and composed of 75 pieces, will not tour the United States. Director Roche made efforts to book the band in New York and other large eastern cities, but found the union too strong. Now, if some of the long haired acrobats who tour the country with scab bands during the summer season, could be headed off, what a great blessing it would be.—Kansas City Labor Herald.

ANOTHER CASE OF CONTEMPT.

As if to show its contempt for organized labor, the tobacco trust has christened its latest brand of scab cigars, Judge Wright, after the man who sentenced Gompers, Mitchell and Morrison to jail. There are some union men who persist in purchasing the Owl and other similar makes of cigars, but the fellow who exchanges his union-made coin for a Judge Wright cigar will be going the limit, and a few steps beyond.—Kansas City Labor Herald.

Among the Live Workers Here, There and Elsewhere

There ought to be considerable doing when the Central Labor Union meets next Tuesday evening. In the first place there is the proposition to have convicts from the penitentiary employed on the new live stock pavilion at the fair grounds. In the second place there is the proposition to install an overall factory at the penitentiary. If these two propositions are not enough to arouse the ire of free workmen then we confess we don't know what will arouse it. On top of these two propositions is the proposition to establish a business agency, with a possible labor headquarters, and the State Federation of Labor matter. All in all there is every reason why there should be a big attendance of delegates. Any union man with a clear card is entitled to admission to the meetings of the Central Labor Union, and now would be a good time for a bunch of them to come in and help boost the good propositions and "knock" on the bad ones.

W. T. Pinney, former president of the Musicians' Union and one of the active unionists of the city, is a candidate for alderman from the Seventh ward, having been nominated by the democrats. Here is a bully chance for the unionists of the city to elect one of their own number to the city council—one who will always be "Johnny on the spot" to look after the interests of the workers. Mr. Pinney was one of the foremost workers in organizing the Musicians' Union, was that organization's first president, and is a hustler from Husterville. Union men will make no mistake in giving him their active support, regardless of political affiliations.

The faction of the Electrical Workers recognized by the American Federation of Labor, better known as the McNulty faction, does not seem to be in it to any great extent in this neck of the woods. There are eighteen locals in Nebraska and Iowa, and not one of them pays allegiance to the McNulty regime. All are with Reid. A new local has just been instituted at Norfolk, and it, too, is a Reid local. The Wagworker is not familiar with the causes of the controversy but it can see nothing unfair in the Reid faction's proposition to leave the whole matter to a vote of the International Brotherhood. The Reid faction says it will abide by the result, but the McNulty faction refuses and stands pat on its recognition by the Denver convention of the American Federation.

It didn't take the city council long

to turn down the proposition to appropriate a few dollars for the purpose of giving band concerts in the City Park this summer. Of course not. The wage earners of the city are about the only ones interested in free band concerts. They are unable to travel during the summer, or to pay out money for high grade music. And the city council is made up largely of gentlemen who can afford to attend the high class musical soirees and lie to the mountains or the lakes for the summer. Some of these days the men who make Lincoln will have adequate representation in the council—and then the council will do something for the wage earners.

The park commission has appropriated \$200 for the building of a band stand in the city park. Now let the Traction company do the right thing and supply the band for at least two concerts a week during the months of June, July and August. One concert in the middle of the week and one Sunday afternoon would be a big thing. The Traction company could well afford to pay for the band, as its revenues would be vastly increased by the increased traffic on the park lines.

Frank A. Kennedy, editor of the Western Laborer, Omaha, was one of the lucky ones in the Tripp county land drawing. He got inside the first thousand, which insures him a good piece of land. And now he announces himself as a candidate for road overseer in his Tripp county township. Those darned Irishmen can't keep out of politics to save 'em.

R. E. Perrin, vice-president of District Council No. 5, Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, is doing some organizing work in Nebraska. Incidentally he is boosting the State Federation of Labor proposition to beat the band. By the same token, a lot of other union men ought to be boosting it.

The call for the State Federation of Labor meeting has been issued, and already the responses are coming in. There are a few eminent gentlemen, who are not unionists and much more interested in partisan politics than they are in the welfare of the workers, who are "knocking" on the proposition to beat the band.

Next Saturday Deputy Labor Commissioner Maupin will address the Sixth District Federation of Woman's clubs at Kearney, his subject being "The Modern Moloch." At Kearney,

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