

THE WAGWORKER

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NO. 6



Among the Live Workers Here, There and Elsewhere

New York, May 6.—Mr. Frank A. Kates, Lincoln, Nebr. Dear Sir and Brother: Acknowledging receipt of your favor of May 1st, I can assure you that your letter contained very pleasing information, and I trust that the position taken by the Governor is a correct one, and fair to free labor, whether organized or unorganized.

The letting of convict labor on shirts and overalls has decreased the prices of making these garments, of which 99 per cent are made by women. You can, therefore, realize what injury has been done to the women of our country by prison labor. The Governor of Nebraska will be commended very highly for the position he takes in this matter.

I desire to thank the Central Body of Lincoln, Nebraska, for their prompt action in the matter of letting of the labor of convicts for the making of shirts and overalls, and I trust that the Governor's position will be upheld by the other four or five members of the Board, which (I see by the Wagworker) were not present when the Governor decided that the labor of the convicts should not be let to make shirts and overalls, and I trust that the C. L. U. of Lincoln and other organizations will keep up their agitations, making it their business to see the other members who were not present, and induce them to coincide with the Governor in his views.

We are making strenuous efforts throughout the United States to have the making of garments taken from the various prisons. In Illinois, it has cost us a great deal of money, and we have by no means yet reached any agreement with the Prison Board and the Governor of that state. The action of the Governor of Nebraska is highly commendable, and I trust it will be copied by the governors of the various other states where this class of work is done. But our work will not cease when the garments are taken from the penitentiaries. There are several other crafts that that suffering equally as much as the Garment Workers are, from the fact that their goods are also made in the penitentiary. I believe that there are roads in Nebraska that will not be made for the next two hundred years to come, if they are made then, and I believe that the labor of the convicts should be used on the muddy roads of the various states to put them in good condition for traveling. This would not interfere very materially with free labor and would be a great benefit to the country. In fact, there are some parts of the country where the condition of the farmers is not a very prosperous one, and they cannot afford to have good roads, and if the convicts were set at breaking stones and rocks to make these roads, it would be of inestimable value, not only to the farmers, but to the country at large. If this proposition could not be carried, then the next best thing, in my opinion, would be the framing of a law the same as it is in the state of New York, where the convicts manufacture for the state institutions all their supplies; and if the supplies cannot be made by the convicts, then, of course, they are purchased on the outside, but in most cases all of the supplies are made by the convicts and in this way it does not injure the wagworker by making an article that sells for less than one-half of that at which free labor can produce it. The year of the panic the Stirling-Reliance Company made a net profit of \$300,000 on convict labor and sold the goods so cheap that not less than a dozen shirt factories in the state of Pennsylvania were compelled to close, thus throwing out of employment from forty to five hundred girls in every factory. You can readily see what injustice it works in the garment working industry to the employees.

I am sending you by express prepaid, 100 posters, showing the tickets that are sewed on garments made in the various penitentiaries. Of course these fac similes are only a few, but no doubt, the garments are sold in Lincoln, Nebr., as they are in almost every city of the United States. Also 250 court plaster cases for distribution among delegates and members of organized labor in Lincoln, Nebr., and

I thank you in anticipation of this favor.

Again thanking you for your interest in this important matter and urging you to keep up the work. I am, with best wishes,

Fraternally yours,
B. A. LARGER,
General Secretary United Garment Workers of America.

The many trades unionists of Lincoln who heard Raymond Robins when he was in Lincoln a year ago will be rejoiced to know that he will probably attend the State Federation of Labor meeting next month. Raymond Robins is the "livest wire" in the trades union movement. His superior as a public speaker does not exist, and he knows the game from Alpha to Omega. Trades unionists may well rest content to have their cause presented to the public by this gifted man.

Capital Beach will be opened on Memorial Day, and Manager Buckstaff says he is going to make the season so much better than last year that there will be no comparison. Now, if he can only get decent and adequate transportation facilities to the Beach he will have a winner. Lincoln needs something like that, and Manager Buckstaff deserves liberal patronage. It is developing into one of the finest pleasure resorts in the west, and above all it is being conducted along clean lines. No man need fear to send his wife and babies out there for the day and wait until he can get in a day's work and hike out there for supper and an evening of restful enjoyment.

Of course the Lincoln Star sees in the deputy labor commissioner's demand for the union label on his printing a deep, dark plot to work up a political deal. The esteemed Star can see lots of things that never existed. The deputy labor commissioner is demanding the label on the printing of his department for the simple reason that he wants only first-class work—and if it goes to a union shop he won't have to lay awake nights worrying about the kind of a job of printing he is going to get for the state's money. That's all there is to it, the esteemed Star to the contrary notwithstanding.

The baseball season was opened with eclat—whatever that is—last Wednesday afternoon. And the home team hammered out a substantial victory. It must have rejoiced the heart

of Manager Green when he looked around and about him and saw nothing but people. They filled the grand stand, overflowed the bleachers, and made a fringe of humanity three-fourths of the way around the fence. And it is well that it is so. Colonel Green is just the kind of a good fellow that we like to see lugging off the money. Quiet, gentlemanly, always seeking to give his patrons the best, he is furnishing Lincoln with a sport free from rowdiness and spectacles calculated to remind one of Coney Island in the old days.

Governor Shallenberger pitched the first ball of the season, and Mayor Love gave an imitation of a man trying to catch it. We are frank to say that Mr. Love can easily make a better mayor than he ever will make a catcher. He called the mayor into close conference before he pitched his first curve—and then down. Then he assumed the correct position, jammed the ball into the palm of his good right hand, and swung his arm gracefully but forcefully. It had such a wide curve—the ball, not the gubernatorial arm—that it deceived the city's chief executive who peered through the meshes of Jimmie Sullivan's mask, and plunked up against the grand stand with a sound akin to that made by a fat man stumbling over a row of glass fruit jars. Then the governor and the mayor gracefully doffed their caps to the shrieking multitude and perambulated to the bench.

And the season was opened.

By the way, the Lincoln team looks good to the old timer who wields this

trenchant typewriter. And the grounds—they are a dream of baseballistic beauty. Sodded diamond, enlarged bleachers and grand stand, better entrances and exits—say, it's all right, bo! And here's hoping that the "Greenbackers," or the "Prohibits," just as you please to have it, will set a pace that will make 'em all go some to keep in sight.

The handsomest church edifice in Lincoln—the First Christian church—will be dedicated Sunday morning. If you do not feel that you must go to church somewhere else, just attend these dedicatory services, see a church building that doesn't run to steeples, hear one of the greatest pulpit orators in America, F. M. Rains, and get some inspiration to start on the week with the determination to do a little more in the service of your fellows.

"I hear you are taking a lot of interest in your new home."

"That's a mistake—I'm paying interest."

Maybe you think this is a joke.

The Wood, Wire and Metal Lathers' Union of Lincoln has served notice that after June 1 they will charge 3 1-2 cents per yard. This is one of Lincoln's smallest unions, measured by membership, but it seems well able to take care of itself.

In the meantime, when you think of it—and you ought to think of it all the time—just insist upon having the union label on the goods you buy.

State Federation Meeting

Has your local a delegate to represent it at the meeting called for the purpose of organizing a State Federation of Labor? If not, why not? It is entitled to one—and it should elect one. You need the Federation; the Federation needs you. Every local union, every central labor union, every Federal labor union—all are entitled to one delegate each at the initial meeting.

Lincoln, June 21, 22--Do Not Forget

Those are the dates, that's the place. Now is the time to get busy and get in line with the progressive workers of other states. The meeting will be a success without you, but it will be a bigger success if you are on hand in the person of a duly accredited delegate. Lots of things that need to be done that cannot be done without organization. It will be a meeting of business—not a "joust."

The Labor Movement in Europe

By
Rev. Charles
Stelzle

II. PERSONALITIES OF LABOR LEADERS.

It was a privilege to meet the labor leaders who have made such a distinct impression upon the political and economic life of Europe. On a number of occasions I had "tea" in the House of Commons with some of the labor members. One afternoon I spent an hour or more discussing English and American trades unionism with about a dozen of the leaders, among them being Arthur Henderson, M. P., the chairman of the labor party in parliament; J. Ramsay MacDonald M. P., secretary of the labor party; D. J. Shackleton, M. P., chairman of the Trades Union Congress; Will Steadman, L. P., secretary of the Trades Union Congress; Harry Gosling, member of the parliamentary committee of the Trades Union Congress and member of the London County Council; George Nicholls, M. P., and Will Crooks, M. P. I also met many of the labor officials who are at the head of national organizations, several of them having been fraternal delegates to the convention of the American Federation of Labor.

The thing that impressed me most in talking with the men was the fact that trades unionists, particularly in England, have developed a company of specialists who direct them in their efforts to secure special legislation in parliament or in obtaining concessions from their employers. In such matters as child labor, old age pensions, woman's place in the state and in industry, in educational questions, and in temperance, the British leaders have few superiors in any walk of life. In many cases they are the authorities on these subjects. Organized labor in Europe has learned the value of retaining the services of their leaders long enough to utilize the experience which they have obtained as students of industrial problems. A labor leader on the other side seems to make a profession of his business, which is at it should be. The result has been that labor leaders abroad, as a class, are more effective in legislative matters than are the labor leaders in America. True enough, they have been longer confronted by industrial problems, and having studied them more diligently in the necessity of the case, they have become experienced in these

matters. There is a solidity in their characters which must impress even an ordinary observer. As a class they are modest and unassuming. Their moral standing is fully as high as the average member of parliament—in some respects it is very much higher. As public speakers they are everywhere in demand and, on the whole, they speak more interestingly than the average platform man.

In Germany there are a number of women "labor leaders" who are doing very effective service. I was particularly impressed with their refined manners and the intimate knowledge which they seemed to possess concerning not only the various aspects of the industrial problem in Germany, but their familiarity with the labor situation throughout the entire world. As one would expect to find in Germany, practically all of the leaders among the women are socialists. Herr Bebel, leader of the socialists in the German reichstag, is not the aggressive-looking individual that I expected to find. He is a quiet, unassuming, rather under-sized man, who is thoroughly familiar with the political situation. On the day that I attended the reichstag, the question under consideration was the banking system of Germany, and it was amazing to find the laboring men in the German congress holding their own against the leading financiers of the world upon a subject with which they are not supposed to be very familiar.

France naturally produces a radical type of leader in the labor movement, although the men who are at the head of the bona fide trades union propaganda impressed me as being fairly conservative—as conservatism goes in sunny France. There is no doubt that the radical leaders of labor in France are doing the cause of organized labor great injury.

In Scotland and Ireland, the leaders have the characteristic which is quite common in the rank and file,—that of "heckling" the speaker, which is what one would expect from an Irishman or a Scotchman. As a matter of fact, some of the most interesting experiences which I had during my trip were had in these latter countries.

Labor Memorial Day Was Fittingly Observed

As usual, a little handful of faithful union men attended the "Labor Memorial Service" at the First Baptist church last Sunday evening. Of the 3,000 or 3,500 union men in Lincoln perhaps ten or a dozen thought enough of their dead comrades to meet to pay a tribute of respect to their memory.

Those who did attend the services were privileged to hear two splendid addresses, one by a fellow unionist, C. H. Chase, and one by the pastor of the First Baptist church, Rev. Samuel Zane Batten. Rev. Batten is well known for his friendship for organized labor and his outspokenness in favor of patronizing the union label.

Mr. Chase was introduced by the pastor as a workingman who followed the same trade as that of the Carpenter of Nazareth, and Mr. Chase chose as his subject the story of Cain and Abel. "Am I my brother's keeper?" asked the speaker, quoting the words of Cain. Then he quoted Matthew 22: 37-39—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Continuing, Mr. Chase said:

"Four thousand years intervened between these two events. Abel's death was due to Cain's jealousy, or rather Cain's selfishness, which up to that time had no curb put upon it. A far cry is this from Christ's setting out of the two commandments to the Pharisee lawyer which is such a curb upon human selfishness. We are nineteen hundred years from the second commandment, and human selfishness is still rampant in the world. It is developed to the highest degree in what is termed the higher walks of life, where organizations are perfected and kept up with a zeal worthy of a better cause, for the sole purpose of the aggrandizement of the promoters, and at the expense of those less favored.

"Against this is set, as one factor in the fight for better standards of living, the trades unions. These are made up of human beings—common men and women—many of them ignorant, many of them radical, who see the wrongs and seek to right them all at once. From these come those plagues of modern civilization, the strikes and the boycott; and from the other side the lock-out and the blacklist. From an unthought-of source came the antidote for these unmitigated evils that have been so fearfully expensive, for in their last

analysis the cost is taxed up to the wage earners."

At this point Mr. Chase entered into a history and a description of the union label and what it stands for, and urged his hearers to help wage the fight for sanitary conditions for the workers, the abolition of child labor and the sweat shop, fair wages for fair work, by demanding the union label upon all their purchases.

"This label system," concluded Mr. Chase, "is a peaceful protest against the greed of grasping exploiters of human labor."

Rev. Mr. Batten dwelt at length upon the likeness of the aims of the church and the trades unions, and urged a closer working relation between them. He told of his many minglings with the delegates to the Central Labor Union, and spoke highly of the men he met there, characterizing them as earnest, thoughtful men who were striving to secure better conditions for themselves and their families. He spoke of the evils of the sweat shop, and emphasized Mr. Chase's remarks about the true meaning of the union label. It was a thoughtful, scriptural sermon that rang true, and its essence was as fine a union labor appeal as was ever heard in Lincoln. It is to be regretted that the church was not filled to its utmost capacity by trades unionists. There are hundreds of them in this good old town who know a whole lot less about the labor movement and the true meaning of the union label than this minister of the gospel. Those who heard Rev. Mr. Batten's sermon will remember it, and they will always entertain for him a feeling of deep gratitude for his splendid tribute to organized labor.

Special music was rendered by the quartette, and this was a most pleasing feature of the evening's services.

TYPOGRAPHICAL UNION.

Annual Election Takes Place on May 19 and Things Warming Up.

The annual election of Lincoln Typographical Union No. 299 will be held on the afternoon of May 19, from 12 till 7 o'clock. The election will be by Australian ballot and held at the office of the Wood Printing Co., Eleventh and N streets, in the basement. The chief interest is centered around the office of delegate, there being two to elect and five candidates. The presidency and the make-up of the executive committee are also stirring up something of a friendly scrap. F. H. Hebbard has no opposition for re-election as secretary-treasurer.

The committee appointed to arrange for a proper observance of "Printers' Memorial Day" has not yet completed arrangements. It hopes to have everything ready so the full program can be given in next week's Wagworker.

THEATRICAL MECHANICS.

Join With Stage Hands in Putting on a Benefit Performance.

The two local organizations of theatrical men in Lincoln will have a joint benefit at the Majestic on Wednesday afternoon, May 19, and they say it is going to be the biggest thing that ever happened in theatrical circles in Lincoln. They ought to know, for they are mixed up with things theatrical all the time.

All the artists who are in the city that day will contribute to the program, and as there are some big "headliners" dated for Lincoln that week the program promises to be something different. The performers always do a little better than their best when they appear in a benefit for the boys who set the stage and build the scenery. If you want to see the best in things theatrical you will also have the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping as fine a bunch of wage earners as ever carried union cards and "come across" when a fellow worker was in need of assistance.

GOING SOME.

During January the International Typographical Union paid fifty death benefits. It has \$226,989.95 in its treasury and \$116,464.18 in the old-age pension fund.