

THE WAGWORKER



VOL. 6

LINCOLN, NEBRASKA, AUGUST 28, 1909

8 PAGES

NO. 21

REAL TRUTH OF THE LABOR SITUATION IN LINCOLN

In his capacity of Deputy Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, the editor of The Wagworker is in constant receipt of letters relative to the industrial conditions in Nebraska. This is especially true just at this time, owing to the constant reiteration in eastern papers of the statement that there is a dearth of laborers, skilled and unskilled in Nebraska at the present time. The constant repetition of this statement has caused the labor bureau to be flooded with letters from eastern workers asking about the labor market in this section of the country. A sample newspaper story will be found in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle of August 3, under a Washington date line. It starts off by saying that "indisputable evidence is at hand that the country is rapidly recovering from the effects of the recent financial depression." Then it says:

"The greatest cry for labor comes from Lincoln, Nebraska. The commercial bodies of that city made a similar appeal before the panic, but following the 'slump' countermanded the order."

Then what may be an expose of the whole business is given in the following very interesting words—interesting to the workers of Lincoln who are unable to notice any such demand for labor as is indicated by the Washington dispatch to the Brooklyn Daily Eagle:

"In a letter received from W. S. Whitten, secretary of the Commercial Club, of Lincoln, it is asserted that 'there is a great need of labor, both skilled and common, throughout the state, particularly in Lincoln and Omaha, and the smaller cities where more or less manufacturing is done.'"

The Eagle further contains the interesting information that Secretary Whitten submits a scale of wages paid, showing that "good money" is paid laborers.

Deputy Commissioner of Labor Maupin submits in all candor that he is perhaps as well acquainted with the labor situation in Lincoln, Omaha, and Nebraska, as Secretary Whitten of the Lincoln Commercial Club. He is acquainted with about as many workers, knows about as much concerning wages, hours, conditions and state of employment as the secretary, and is in as close touch with the industrial situation as a man can well be.

It all depends upon the point of view.

Some men are inclined to think that labor is scarce if they are unable to immediately find some idle man who is willing to take a job that will last perhaps a day or two. And there are men who are willing to spread the story of "demand for workers" if by so doing they can flood the community with workers, thus beating



MISS MARY McDOWELL

Who Will Be the Orator of the Day at the Labor Day Celebration in Lincoln

down the wage scale by competition and thereby increasing their own profits.

But there is no great demand for workers, skilled or unskilled, in Lincoln or Omaha. Neither is there any great demand for workers in any section of Nebraska. The supply is quite equal to the demand. Secretary Whitten, the Brooklyn Eagle, Terrence V. Powderly and the United States Department of Commerce and Labor to the contrary notwithstanding.

Labor, especially the building trades, is quite well employed in Nebraska at the present time, but the demand is not so great that it can not be supplied without flooding the country with storied of a dearth of labor in Nebraska.

The Wagworker has been hearing rumors from different sources for some time to the effect that a concerted effort is being made to break down the wage scale in Lincoln and Omaha, and other Nebraska centers, by widely advertising for workers, thus flooding the labor market and forcing the workers to engage in a cut-throat competition in order to secure a bare existence. Since getting this direct evidence from the Brooklyn Eagle the editor of this paper has been scanning some of the big eastern publications, and to his surprise and disgust he has seen advertisement after advertisement to the effect that "labor is needed in Lincoln." Sometimes the ad takes the form of a demand for bricklayers, sometimes a demand for carpenters, sometimes a demand for painters and electrical workers. But these advertisements, and these special dispatches appear with such regularity and over such a wide expanse of territory that they give color to the claim that it is all a concerted program having for its ultimate aim the breaking down of the present wage scale, which is not by any means exorbitant.

If Secretary Whitten is giving aid to this program, either wittingly or unwittingly, he is doing the workers of Nebraska a grave injury, and working a future injustice upon the business interests of the state. It will not help business conditions any to flood a community with labor, thus breaking down wages, filling the community with unemployed and causing distress. Neither will it help business to fill the places of resident workers, most of them home owners, taxpayers and men of family, with workers from other states who will spend only enough of Lincoln or Omaha earned wages to pay their board, and send the rest to their home towns back east to be spent with merchants in those localities.

There have been times during the past year when the demand (Continued on Page 5.)

THE ELECTRICAL WORKERS.

Difficulty in Omaha and Council Bluffs Settled at Last.

For upwards of two months the inside wiremen and shopmen, members of the Electrical Workers' Unions in Omaha and Council Bluffs, have been on strike—or rather locked out. Their demand for a shorter day and better pay was denied, and the trouble has been on at a lively rate for some time. The locked-out men actually agreed to leave the whole matter to a committee of employers, provided the hearings should be public. They agreed to leave it to the proprietors of the four daily papers in Omaha and Council Bluffs. In fact, they tried every honorable means to reach a settlement. But their efforts were unavailing until last week, when a settlement was reached. The terms of the settlement were not made public, but the men seem to be well satisfied with its terms. Something like seventy men in the two cities have returned to work.

The inside wiremen of Des Moines have cut loose and organized a local of their own.

O, we guess Lincoln isn't so awfully slow in the matter of unionism. Not only has it got the largest local of Electrical Workers in the three states of Iowa, Nebraska and South Dakota, but a larger proportion of its local unions have affiliated with the Nebraska State Federation of Labor and paid in their initiation fees and the first quarter's dues. Guess that sounds good, eh?

Leo Huff, for several years manager of the Bell Telephone Co. in Lincoln, has severed his connection with the company and goes to Omaha to become manager of a large automobile business. The first of the week the employees of the Bell company in Lincoln were entertained by Mr. and Mrs. Huff, and before departing the guests surprised Mr. Huff by presenting him with a handsome diamond pin.

OF COURSE!

The employers' liability act passed by congress in April, 1908, was held to be unconstitutional by the supreme court of Connecticut on the 20th. It provides that employers shall be liable to employees for the negligence of fellow employees.

DON'T LIKE THE CZAR.

A huge demonstration by the organized labor party was held in Trafalgar square, London, recently, to protest against the visit of the emperor of Russia to England.

THE STAGE EMPLOYEES.

Sign Up With Every Theatre in the City of Lincoln.

For a live bunch of thorough unionists commend us to the local organization known as the Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees. It is not the largest local of the craft in the whole United States, but there is not one in the jurisdiction that has anything on the live ones of the craft in this little old burg. The local union has just signed up every theatre in the city—the Oliver, the Orpheum and the Lyric. By the terms of the contract only members of the local are to be employed, and in return the local agrees that it will furnish only masters of the craft to do the work.

This means a lot to the theatre-goers of Lincoln. It means, in the first place, that there will be no long delays between acts by reason of the incompetency of the stage hands. It means that superior stage settings will be provided. And it means that superior attractions will be more easily induced to date in at Lincoln because they will be guaranteed adequate stage service.

The organization experienced no trouble whatever in making the agreement with the local managers. The best of feeling exists all around. The Wagworker congratulates both employers and employees upon the friendly status that exists.

GLOVEWORKERS' PICNIC.

Lively Little Union Enjoys Outing at Capital Beach.

The members of the Gloveworkers' Union were the guests of the Deputy-Spangler Co. at Capital Beach last Saturday afternoon and evening. The lady members of the organization provided the solids, and the firm provided the ice cream and the transportation. The jolly crowd went to the Beach in plenty of time to enjoy a picnic supper, and the remainder of the evening was spent in sight-seeing and general polity.

The picnic was given as a sort of farewell to a couple of the lady members who are about to return to Chicago after working some seven or eight months in Lincoln.

The members of the Deputy-Spangler firm spared no efforts to make the occasion an enjoyable one, and the happy occasion only cemented more firmly the friendly relations existing between the employers and the employees in this institution.

There are more than 1,400 girls belonging to the Women's Bindery Union in New York City.

Labor Day in Lincoln

Labor's Annual Holiday will be celebrated in Lincoln, under the auspices of the affiliated Trades Unions of Lincoln and Havelock. The celebration will be held at

Beautiful Capital Beach

Where the workers and their families will spend the day in rest and recreation. There will be no parade, but there will be plenty of

SPORTS AND CONTESTS

With handsome prizes for the winners in each contest. Ladies' Base Ball Throw. Sack Races, Potato Races, Novelty Races, String Cutting, Nail Driving, 50 and 100 yard Dashes, etc. Only

Union Men and Their Families Eligible to Enter These Contests

Miss Mary McDowell

OF CHICAGO

Will be the orator of the day. Miss McDowell is prominently connected with the Woman's Trades Union League movement, and is at the head of the University of Chicago Settlement Work. She is a loyal unionist, a woman of rare ability and a public speaker of more than National reputation. Miss McDowell organized the women workers in the Chicago Packing Houses and helped them to win a fight for better conditions. Lincoln workers never had an opportunity to hear an abler champion of labor.

GRAND BASKET SUPPER—Bring your baskets well filled and eat your Labor Day Supper in the green grass and under the cooling shade.

DANCING AT AIR DOME in the evening—Come out and enjoy a rare good time on Labor's Greatest Holiday. It will do you good.