

WORKMEN'S CONGRESS

Would It Be a Move in the Right Direction?

IF IT WOULD NOT, WHY NOT?

Some Plain Facts Tensely Stated That Should Cause a Laboring Man to Think More and Talk Less.

The Magazine propounds this question: Would a workman's congress be a move in the right direction? If not, why not? What can be said in favor of such a movement? Is the time ripe for it? What could it do if convened?

Just now what would be a move in the right direction for workmen to make? We refer to organized workmen, for they are the workmen who think, who want to accomplish something for their own benefit and for the toilers who shall inherit their tasks.

We do not now discuss the federation of organizations, but rather the unification of the mind forces of organizations; deliberation rather than federation.

True, all organizations have their annual or biennial conventions for deliberation and for the enactment of laws for their government, and it occurs in these conventions that those whose expressions are made public are taking even broader views of labor problems, and it would be difficult to chronicle a fact more creditable to the heads and hearts of men who have advanced to the responsible position of leaders.

It is worthy of remark that in all the labor organizations of the country are to be found men of broad and liberal views, students of industrial affairs, profoundly interested in the welfare of workmen, but, forever confined to their particular organization, they are handicapped; they never advance to their full measure; in a sense, fenced in. They discuss measures which relate to their particular organization, when, in fact, labor questions in their legitimate scope touch the wage-workers of the nation, and in a labor congress there would be opportunities to bring into commanding and merited prominence labor questions in which all are vitally interested.

We are profoundly impressed with the idea that the country cannot know the wealth of mind forces which labor possesses until a labor congress is convened, and we are quite as much persuaded that such a congress would prove a revelation to those who regard labor organizations with a species of contempt and lofty disdain, as composed of men who are small intellectually, and whose minds are chiefly occupied in accomplishing small things, men chiefly desirous of promoting organized jealousies, or feathering their own nests, to be wiped out of existence whenever organized capital deems it prudent to squelch them.

We do not state the position of affairs too narrowly. It is only required to read the monopolistic press to verify our declarations. In it you will find no complimentary declarations relating to organized labor, and the question arises, is organized labor doing these things which ought to be done, and which can be done, to change the estimate which a subsidized press carefully puts forth?

We are not opposed to what organized labor is doing. On the contrary, we have only words of commendation for what we see and hear. Labor day gives opportunities for parades, for many and valuable recreations, splendid addresses, etc., but we advocate something different, better, higher, more important. We should like to see a stately parade of labor's mind-forces, free from badges, gawaws, brass bands and all things spectacular; a labor congress of labor's intellectual men, debating questions which day by day, are becoming the vital questions of the times in which we live; questions that are up for debates in the parliaments of the world, and in which labor, more than any other interest, is concerned. Such a congress, composed of labor's representative men, would arouse continental interest. The press would not and could not ignore it. The plutocratic class would stand amazed at its presence. It would be a proclamation that workmen know their rights and are not ready to be enslaved. What says the labor press of the country? The labor congress is up for debate. May we hope to have the views of others.—Eugene V. Debs, in Locomotive Firemen's Magazine.

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LABOR PRESS NOTES.

Gleanings Culled From Various Industrial Papers.

What does equal rights mean, if not equal opportunities? What use or benefit is the cripple's equal right to compete for a prize on the race track with a professional sprinter?

No principle can be in harmony with right which makes a man's physical or mental endowments a criterion for justice; yet this is what the law lays down as right. We only have by law the right to try but what good is it to the man who is born today and finds the resources of human prosperity farmed out and monopolized by the politicians and their pets? No doctrine of equality can be true that makes the time of a person's birth an important factor in his suit for equity.

Equal rights, if it means anything equal or right, must mean equal chances to obtain; if not, our standard of justice is no better than the brute's—the rule of might. And our equal chances can only be determined by present circumstances, not by cases of the past.—Willis Hudspeth in Western Laborer.

It is a cause of keen regret that the laboring people do not take more interest in their own affairs. Even those who join the brotherhood frequently lose interest in labor movements, and simply be long as a matter of course, and take it for granted that whoever pays his dues has done his duty; but he has not. Money alone cannot make a good labor organization any more than money can make a nation.

If a country's defenders were acting for money it would be a sorry defense. It takes patriotism to make a brotherhood as well as a nation, and no great degree of success can be attained without it. Ever toiler should belong to some labor organization because it extends an influence that elevates the condition of the workingmen. It is not enough either, to be in good standing; every member should help.—Trackman's Journal.

The artisan and laborer have really greater cause for apprehension in these United States than in any other so-called liberally governed country. There is an all-prevailing feeling that any wrong can be righted when the time comes that will make it necessary—a feeling that the crisis will provide the remedy. That is a slipshod faith and sure to win defeat. The time to right a wrong is when it appears, and not to wait until another is piled on top of it to hold it in place. The ballot is supposed to be all potential for protection, but it needs no argument to show that hope to be only baseless fabric of a dream.

Co-operation provides the only reasonable promise of emancipation for what are known as the industrial classes, and nationalism is only general co-operation. Under its beneficent tutelage and control there would be no strikes, no dictators, no landlords, no wasteful competitions, no offensive monopolies. Is it not strange that they who ought to be most deeply interested in adopting and spreading the principles of nationalism should really seem to be the most indifferent to their success.—The Nationalist.

In 1864 the printers struck on the Democrat and St. Louis Republican. That was in war times. General Rosecrans was in command at St. Louis. He detailed a number of soldiers who were printers to take the strikers' places.

M. H. Madden and Thomas Gauley, printers, sent in a report of the same to President Lincoln. The answer returned was as follows: "Order those soldiers back to duty in the ranks. The servants of the federal government shall not interfere with the legitimate demands of labor so long as I am president." Abe Lincoln.—Des Moines Artisan.

Pennsylvania has fallen in line with New Jersey, New York, Massachusetts and other states which have established boards of arbitration for the amicable settlement of labor disputes. The Philadelphia Ledger and other leading papers refer in terms of the highest praise to the new law and its objects. Arbitration has come to stay.—Patterson Labor Standard.

Wendell Phillips said: "The main spring of our progress is high wages—wages at such a level that the workman can preside over a home, can command leisure, go to lectures, take a newspaper and lift himself from the deadening level of mere toil."—Shelby Sun.

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AMONG OUR EXCHANGES.

The trades unions in Belgium went into politics and won the day. Perhaps free, independent Americans will take a hint after a while.—Arapahoe Pioneer.

The man who thinks for himself, is independent and a success; the man who permits others to think for him is a slave and a failure.—Polk County Independent.

"Whoever controls the currency of a nation rules the people," said James A. Garfield. Then if the people controlled the currency they would rule themselves.—Independent Herald.

Landlordism has driven 3,418,383 Irishmen out of Ireland since the year 1851. The land which supported these millions has been put into cattle and sheep pastures and game preserves.

The strength of a nation is not in the number of its inhabitants, nor the richness of its soil, but in the number of its free home owners, and the greater division of its property.—Southern Mercury.

The Democrats have got the "chance" they were howling for, and now they think 'till take them at least four years to get "used to the chance," and then they'll begin to think of the people.—Watchman.

Governor McKinley doesn't credit this talk of hard times. "This country has too many resources and too much money." Nevertheless the governor was caught in a crash a few weeks ago and was helped out by the charity of his friends. But leaving this go, if times are not hard and money is easy, how does he account for the hundred or two bank failures of the past two months, involving thousands of depositors and millions of money? Our resources are not worth a cent so long as old Shylock has got his grip upon them. He will get all the benefit.—Holt County Independent.

A Sioux City firm made a demand on a banking firm in that town for the sum of \$35,000 which was due; the bank was not able to pay it and made a sight draft on a Chicago bank for the amount. The Chicago bank could not meet it at once and the parties growing anxious commenced suit for the recovery of same, and the result was the failure of both banks—also the failure of twenty-eight other banks connected with these institutions. Yet we frequently have men stop us on the streets to tell us that our banking system is the best in the world. If that be true then the rest of the world must have a pretty rocky system.—People's Rights.

"Whoever eats up, robs and steals the nourishment of another commits as great a murder as far as in him lies, as he who starves a man or utterly undoes him. Such he does a usurer, and sits the while safe on his stool when he ought rather be hanging from the gallows. Little thieves are put in the stocks, great thieves go flaunting in gold and silk. Therefore is there on earth no greater enemy of man, after the devil, than a grip-money and usurer."

So spake Martin Luther, and for speaking it would, in this age of plutocracy, be styled a "crank," "an anarchist" and "a calamity howler." We are simply fighting again over the old battle fields of the past. Liberty survived the greed and avarice of feudal kings. Liberty will survive the present onslaught now being made up by the plutocratic followers of Sheeney Rothschilds.—Road.

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