

# THE WAGEWORKER



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## BOOSTING THE UNION LABEL

**Public Spirited Women of Omaha Seeking to Aid in Abolishing Child Labor and Protecting Women Forced Into the Industrial Field—An Encouraging Sign to Unionists Who Have Worked Along That Line for Years.**

The Social Science Department of the Omaha Woman's Club has taken hold of child labor and kindred industrial problems, and as a result there is an awakening to the enormity of the offenses against God and man that have become prevalent in the industrial life of America. The National Consumers' League is working along label lines, having designed a white label which guarantees against child labor and unsanitary surroundings. The Omaha women have been studying the conditions sought to be combatted by the "white label," and to that end invited the editor of The Wage-worker to address them from the trades union standpoint. The invitation was gladly accepted and the editor appeared before the club last Monday afternoon. Aside from the pleasure of discussing this question before such an intelligent and energetic body, the meeting was a source of great pleasure because it showed an awakening all along the line, and was a great encouragement to the earnest union men and women who have long sought the assistance of women in other walks of life. Mrs. Burbank, of the Omaha Club, read a paper on child labor and the labor of women in tenements, and the dozen trades unionists present were as much surprised as they were delighted with the advanced stand Mrs. Burbank took on the question. They had heard many strong arguments in defense of the labels, but her paper was what every trades unionist would call "square man talk," and made her at once the friend of all of them. She has studied the question, and is now seeking to abolish the vicious conditions.

Mr. Lovely of St. Louis and Mrs. Robinson of Brockton, Mass., both national organizers of the Boot and Shoe Workers' Union, Mr. Pratt of Cleveland, organizer of the Street Railway Employes, F. A. Kennedy, editor of the Western Laborer, and George Sanchez, president of the Omaha Union Label League, were also present and were invited to address the meeting. Elsewhere in this issue appears the reports of the meeting appearing in the Bee and World-Herald of Omaha. Mr. Maupin's address was as follows, and he illustrated by showing fac similes of all the union labels and contrasting union made overalls with non-union made overalls:

The question of the employment of women and children in the trades and industries is one of most vital importance, relating as it does to the very life of the nation. Permit me to say in starting that I am not one of those who believe in the "equality of the sexes." I am just old-fashioned enough to believe that womankind must lower itself if it becomes equal to mankind, and while I do not deny that women have a right to engage in the trades and industries if they so desire, I venture to make the positive claim that any system which makes it necessary for them to do so in order to make an honest livelihood is wrong and vicious. But our present industrial system has brought us face to face with a condition, and it is of the condition that we would speak, not of the theory.

I claim that the trend of modern industrialism threatens the home life of the nation, and whatever threatens the home life of this republic threatens the very foundation of the republic itself. The home is the unit of society, and our country is made up of a combination of these home units. The destruction of the units, therefore, means the destruction of the republic. In our mad race for wealth, in our frenzied chase after the almighty dollar, we have all but lost sight of the American home, and it is today threatened with extinction.

My time is limited, and being a comparative stranger I will seize the occasion to speak plainly. This is not a time for false modesty or for the mincing of words. I want right here to pay a moment's attention to a recent propaganda—the "race suicide" theory of President Roosevelt. This so-called race suicide is merely a mothers' strike against existing conditions. Why raise up children to feel the greedy maw of modern industrialism? Why bring children into the world to toil and struggle at the mill wheel and the machine to still further increase the wealth of those who are already wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice. Give us back again the conditions that once existed, when every woman's child had an equal chance in the world, and there will be no need of a political Jeremiah to sound the alarm about a dying race. The complaint about race suicide comes from two quarters—the great manufacturing centers where child labor is in demand, and from military boomers who want unlimited food for the belching cannons in order that military glory may be written in blood upon the pages of history. Race suicide is not threatened by the women of the land, but by the insatiate greed of those who would seize upon your child, and mine, to toil and slave at a pittance while the father walks the street in vain search of the work which is his God-given right.

Present day conditions leave hundreds of thousands of women face to face with a great question—whether to enter the industrial field and work for a starvation wage, or to revel in a brief luxury at the expense of her immortal soul. But the presence of women in the industrial field is not wholly due to greedy employers. It was John J. Ingalls, who, smarting under his political defeat, retorted to a taunt by Mary Ellen Lease that "There are only two classes that mutilate the dead—Indians and women." I have in mind a young woman of my home town. Her father is a professional man who draws a splendid salary from a great corporation. The family lives in one of the very finest homes in Lincoln. And yet this daughter is working as a stenographer in a Lincoln office for a wage of \$5 a week, merely to get pin money and an occasional ticket to the theatre. And while she is doing that scores of girls are facing starvation because they cannot find work at a living wage. That young woman may not realize it, but she is responsible in a measure for the downfall of the unfortunate girl who, crazed by want and seeing no hope for her, sells her soul for the bread she could not honestly earn.

In another way, too, women are responsible for much of the suffering endured by their sisters who have been forced by a vicious industrial system into the trades and industries. I refer now to the so-called "bargain sales" so often and so extensively advertised. A few years ago I spent several days in New York City acquainting myself with sweat shop conditions and tenement slavery. My good friends, all of you women with tender hearts and good impulses, I would not dare to tell you face to face all that I saw and heard during that visit. The poverty, the degradation, the filth, the immorality, the disease and the death that reeks and riots in those squalid districts no pen can tell or artist depict. In the midst of all that a large share of the "bargains" in dainty lingerie offered to you is made—made in filthy dens by consumptives, scrofulitics and worse. I have seen twelve women, three or four of them with nursing babies, sewing on linen underwear for women in a room 12 feet by 15, having no windows and ventilated only by a door leading into a dark hall and an opening into a shaft. All the light came from three gas jets, and in this room where twelve women worked twelve and fifteen hours a day, six people slept regularly. And I was told by one of the women that it was an exceptionally good week when one of them made \$4, and that only by working from 85 to 90 hours. I have seen women's cloaks made in a tenement by women hollow-eyed and half-starved, and who were in the last stages of diseases that we would isolate or quarantine in any city in Nebraska. I have watched trembling women line up in front of a "sweat shop" tyrant with their little bundles of completed work that perhaps entitled them to as much as \$2 for a whole week's work, and seen the tyrant dock them half their just due—God save the mark—because of some fancied defect, and from the tyrant's decision there was no appeal. And these garments and goods come west, are put on display and sold as "bargains" to thoughtless women who never give a thought to their helpless and despairing sisters whose very souls have been sown into the seams and tucks and flounces. I haven't the least doubt in the world that there are some within easy distance of this meeting place who are sweetly conscious of dainty lingerie, little thinking that into the ruffles and flounces thereof have been sown the tears and blood and sweat and souls of their despairing sisters. And although for years earnest men and women have been crying out against these conditions, millions of thoughtless men and women have continued to stop their ears and rush and crush to secure these so-called bargains. Bargains, when purchased at the price of human life, bargains, when purchased at the price of a sisters' immortal soul? God help America if the cry of the oppressed is not soon heeded.

Six years ago I appeared before the Woman's Club of Omaha to read a few little rhymes of my own composition. I was confronted by an audience of about a thousand. Today I come to tell of conditions that threaten our home life and our republic, and I am complimented—complimented indeed—by an audience of perhaps a hundred. I say complimented, because five or six years ago I doubt if a dozen women would have shown enough interest in this great problem to leave their homes and attend. That so many of you are here is a good sign. When the people are aroused thoroughly to the iniquities of our present system, something will happen.

The child labor problem is a companion problem to the one just mentioned. It is even a greater problem because it is a greater crime against humanity. To deprive a child of the plaything of its youth, to dull its mentality and dwarf its body, and send it to its grave without ever having given it one ray of soul sunshine, is worse than murder. And I have seen hundreds and hundreds of children less than 7 years of age tending machines in the cotton mills of Georgia. All they knew was how to tie a broken strand, and their lack lustre eyes stared vacantly at me when I tried to talk to them. They never smile, because they are never happy. They never cry because they are without mental feelings. Murdered, mind, soul and body, for gold—and Puritan Massachusetts is to blame more than Cavalier Georgia. African slavery at its worst was clean and Godly compared to the child slavery that exists in this country today, and God Almighty is going to call this nation some day to a more severe accounting than He did when he balanced the books of His wrath and demanded the best blood of the nation as expiation for the wrongs inflicted for three centuries upon the black man. Owen Lovejoy, Wendell Phillips and old John Brown were reviled and scorned when they warned the people against the wrath to come. Today men and women who stand forth demanding justice for the women and

children—the white slaves of a debased industrialism—are denounced as agitators, socialists, anarchists, crazy trades unionists and law-breaking conspirators against vested rights. Nero fiddled while Rome burned, and Newport gives monkey dinners and Fifth Avenue visits the horse show, while women and children toil through the weary hours only that starvation may be warded off for a few days longer.

But it is encouraging to those who have been grappling with this great problem for weary years to see an awakening of the American conscience. Every day some man or woman steps forward and takes hold to help along the needed industrial reformation—for the social reformation that we all know is so much needed can only come as a corollary of an industrial reformation. Anson Phelps Stokes, Jane Addams—God bless her—and others too numerous to mention are helping along the pioneers in this great work. And who are the pioneers? You have heard a great deal about the law-breaking and law-defying trades unions in Omaha during the last two or three years. You have read multiplied columns of newspaper stuff about riots and assaults by trades unionists, and perhaps many of you have been led to believe that trades unionism is a synonym for murder and riot. But let me tell you, my good friends, that the pioneers in the work of protecting women and children against the evils of our modern industrial system have been these same despised trades unions. The protest against child labor in mill, mine and factory did not have its genesis in the heart of any employer. It sprang from the heart of a wage earning father who banded himself with other wage earning fathers in an effort to bring about conditions that would give their boys a better chance in life than the fathers ever had, and to give their girls a chance to become happy wives and mothers instead of slaves at the loom or the sewing machine.

At the last state convention of Woman's Clubs an eastern woman appeared and made a talk in favor of the National Consumers' League's "white label." This label, she told us, is a guarantee that the article to which it is attached was made in a sanitary factory. All well and good. Far be it from me to oppose the aims of the National Consumers' League. But it is not a pioneer in the label movement, and it does not guarantee enough. It may guarantee sanitary surroundings for the workers while at work, but does it guarantee enough to enable the worker to live in sanitary surroundings, have enough to eat and a little left for the indulgence of the worker in some of the pleasant things of life? It does not. But there is a label that does guarantee all these things, and more. It guarantees sanitary conditions in the factory. It guarantees that the article was not made by child labor, it guarantees the safe guarding of life and limb, it guarantees a living wage, and better yet it guarantees to you women that if the article to which it is attached was made by a woman she made as much wages as the man engaged in making a similar article. "Equal pay for equal work" is a cardinal principle with all trades unions, and if your cloak or your dress skirt bears the label of the United Garment Workers of America you can rest assured that the woman who made it received a wage equal to that received by her brother in the same shop. The woman who operates a typesetting machine in a union printing office receives the same scale as her union brother. I at the cigarmaker's bench receives dollar for dollar as much as her brother for an equal amount of work. The cloth hat and capmakers of America demand that women shall receive equal wage with the men. In fact, all unions practically enforce this demand, and this may explain in part the suddenly developed opposition to the "closed shop" on the part of a lot of manufacturers. The trades union movement is a safeguard against industrial slavery, and the union label is a guarantee of a decent wage, decent surroundings, adult labor, and happy homes—anything that guarantees happy homes for American workmen should appeal to every man and woman in whose heart there exists the smallest spark of patriotism.

Push the white label of the National Consumers' League all you will, but I insist that to do so will merely divide our forces and tend to nullify our efforts at industrial reform. Our label was in the field a quarter of a century before the National Consumers' League was organized, and it guarantees so much more without any extra effort on your part. Now for a few brief words about the trades unions. They need no defense, but perhaps they need a little explaining. A trades union is merely a banding together of men engaged in the same occupation for mutual protection and betterment. A "closed shop" is one employing only union men, and is open to any man who will join the union of his trade and pay his share of the expense of securing and maintaining better conditions, hours and wages. The "open shop" is one in which men work without having any voice in the disposition of their labor, being dependent wholly on the generosity of the employer, and is closed to every craftsman who has any self-respect. It is claimed by the opponents of trades unions that the union men deny the non-union man has a right to work. That is absolutely and unqualifiedly false. I am a trades unionist and I freely concede to my non-union brother the right to work for whom he pleases, for what wages he pleases and as many hours as he pleases. But pause a moment while I explain further. History will prove that every move for a shorter workday had its inception in labor organization. Every increase in average wage came about as the direct result of labor organization. Every law ever enacted for the safeguarding of life and limb in any of the trades and indus-

tries was secured by the efforts of organized labor and against the active opposition of the employing classes. Every child labor law on the statute books of our states was placed there by the activity and energy of organized labor and against the active opposition of selfish men who sought child labor because it meant greater profits. It has taken time and money to secure all of these bettered conditions, and I have borne my humble part therein, giving of my time when called upon, and giving of my money in the shape of union dues and assessments to pay the financial expense. Now, my non-union brother reaps just as much benefit from all these laws as I do, and he hasn't paid a cent towards the expenses. He can work where he will, but as a union man I absolutely refuse to work beside a man who is so infernally mean and selfish that he will not help me bear the burden of expense of securing and maintaining the bettered conditions which he enjoys. What woman in my audience would sacrifice her time and deny herself many little pleasures in order to secure a neat and clean little home, and then throw it open for some dissipated and degenerate tramp to enjoy equally with her?

How can you women help in this great industrial reform? The answer is easy. Look for the union label. Cloaks, gloves and shoes are the principle article bearing the union label that are made for women. The Western Laborer of this city each week carries a list of union made shoes, garments and gloves and tells what stores handle them. You can buy union made soap, union made cereals, union made brooms, union made flour, union made wooden and tinware and union packed fruits. And every time you buy an article with the union label on it you are making a breach in the walls of entrenched greed and hastening the day when your children and my children will be guaranteed a better opportunity than we have had.

O, wives and mothers of Omaha, I beg of you to study this industrial problem. No matter if your husband be wealthy or not compelled to labor with his hands, for the time may come when your son or your daughter will have to do so. You are the guardians of the American home, and in your hands is the work of defending it against a foe more dangerous than the rifle and cannon of invading hosts. Lay aside any prejudice you may have acquired against the trades unions, and join heart and hand with us in our work of defending the women and children against greed and lust. We as trades unionists have made mistakes, but that is because we are members of the fallible human family. Out of our mistakes we are groping to higher and better things. Come and help us yet higher. From your homes of plenty let your hearts go out to the toiling and starving thousands of women and children, and let your hands and your pocketbooks follow your hearts. If we as trades unionists could secure the hearty co-operation of the Woman's Clubs of America for a single year, the country would ring with the laughter of happy children freed from the mills, the songs from the thankful lips of women given back once more to life and hope, and the sturdy tread of millions of happy fathers on their way rejoicing to well requited toil. In conclusion let me assert my heartfelt belief in the claim that the union label is today the most promising weapon in the armory with which to fight against present vicious industrial conditions, the only weapon in sight that promises emancipation for the women and child slaves in our sweat shops, tenements and mills.

And now, in conclusion, if in my rambling and weak remarks I have dropped one thought that will make you think and act, then I am more than repaid. I thank you.

## THE UNION CLUB.

**Fragrant Organization Meets Again After Several Months of Missed "Setts."**

The Union Club of Lincoln is the parent organization of the Omaha and Kansas City Union Clubs. For several months it has not had any "setts," but it is showing signs of activity, superinduced by the remarkably open winter. Saturday evening of this week it will meet at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Erstine King, when cards will be indulged in and at a seasonable hour partake of refreshments. Pastries are barred at all meetings of the club.

New "setts" are being put out in other cities and when the Colorado Springs meeting of the printers is pulled off the International Union Club will make its presence known. The Omaha club is particularly active these days. The editor had the pleasure of attending a special "setting" at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Bert Cox last Monday evening.

## THE LABEL LEAGUE.

**Union Men Criminally Careless in Not Giving It Their Undivided Support.**

The union men of Lincoln are guilty of criminal carelessness in not taking a more active interest in the welfare of the Woman's Union Label League of this city. They are also guilty of injustice to themselves and to their families. By mistake The Wageworker said the club would meet last Monday evening. It will meet next Monday evening, and it should be largely attended.

The Union Label League could, if properly supported, soon double the demand for union made goods in Lincoln. That would mean more union men in Lincoln, better wages, shorter hours and more unionism. Wake up and help make the League a great power for good.

## THE MINISTERS AS DELEGATES

There are several important reasons why Central Labor bodies should encourage and accept fraternal delegates from Ministers' Associations.

First, because one of the most bitter and most conspicuous opponents of trades unionism in this country is opposing the plan. If the labor movement is going to suffer through its introduction, the man in question would undoubtedly endorse it. When the matter was under consideration in his city, he sent a circular letter to every minister in town, urging them to vote it down.

Second, because trades unionism has nothing to lose, and everything to gain, in the education of the public in the matter of trades union principles. There is no class of professional men who are more influential in moulding the thought of the public along moral and ethical lines than the preachers.

Third, because there is so much in common between the church and organized labor. No one realizes this quite so well as the trades unionist. Let us give the minister a chance to learn it. He cannot get it in books. He must get it in the human touch of his brother in the labor union.

Fourth, because the workingman should learn that the church is not opposed to his interests. That may have been so in the past, and it may still be true in isolated cases. But why throw into the face of the present-day preacher who is earnestly seeking to know the truth, the charge that he is hypocritical and unfair to labor, when he distinctly proves that this is not true in his case by his willingness to know more about the conditions, the aims and the aspirations of the toilers? That minister and the organization which sent him are indicating by their official action that their feeling toward the toilers is not one of opposition, but one of real and hearty interest. At least, give them a chance to prove their sincerity. If the Central Labor body fails to do this, it can never again declare, with bitterness, that the churches and the ministers are not concerned about their interests.

Fifth, because the American Federation of Labor, at its last meeting, very heartily recommended "that all affiliated state and central bodies exchange fraternal delegates with the various state and city Ministerial Associations, wherever practicable, thus insuring a better understanding on the part of the church and clergy of the aims and objects of the labor union movement of America."

## PRINTERS' ANNUAL BALL.

Lincoln Typographical Union No. 209 will hold its twenty-fourth annual ball at Fraternity hall, Thursday evening, February 22. There are especial reasons why the printers want this ball to be the best they have ever given. In the first place, they are proud of these social events and very proud of their history as an organization. In the second place, they are anxious to clear a neat sum of money to help them in doing their share towards financing the strike for the eight hour day.

There are about 90 printers at work in Lincoln, a majority of whom are working regularly. During the month of January these printers paid over \$900 into their local treasury, nearly \$800 of which was forwarded to international headquarters to help defray the expenses of their brother printers who are on strike. The union printers of Lincoln are paying about 11 1-2 per cent of their earnings weekly into their treasury. This means a great sacrifice on the part of most of them, but they are doing it cheerfully and with a good will. The burden is a heavy one and they are making no complaints, but they now ask their friends and sympathizers to turn in and help them by making their annual ball a success socially and financially. When the printers and their wives start out to sell tickets they will appreciate the patronage of the trades unionists and business men of the city.

## TYPOGRAPHICAL UNION NOMINATES

The Lincoln printers hold Injunction Judge Holdom of Chicago in utter contempt. And they rejoiced and were exceedingly glad when union "politics" enabled them to express their contempt. They have nominated for president of the International Typographical Union Mr. Edwin R. Wright, president of Chicago Typographical Union No. 16, and now under sentence to jail for contempt of one of Judge Holdom's contemptible orders. They would have nominated Wright anyhow, but the nomination was made with unusual emphasis and amidst a lot of enthusiasm—just to show Judge Holdom and his gang of selfish backers that he is held in utter contempt. Under the laws of the union the subordinate unions nominate their preferences for international officers at the February meetings. Last Sunday the Lincoln union made the following nominations:

For President, Edwin R. Wright of Chicago.  
For Vice President, Albert G. Calvert of Philadelphia.

For Secretary-Treasurer, John W. Bromwood of Denver.

For Trustees of Union Printers' Home, Anna Wilson of Washington, John Armstrong of Toronto, Herbert Cook of Boston.

Delegates to American Federation of Labor, Frank Morrison of Chicago, Michael Colbert of Chicago, Frank Foster of Boston.

When thirty subordinate unions have nominated a plan, he is entitled to have his name placed on the ticket.