

tum of labor organizations; that labor combination makes high wages possible; and the economic axiom, that labor is a commodity and that the prices of commodities are determined by the relation of supply to demand.

The economic law just mentioned, admits of no exception. A rise or fall in the price of labor can always be traced to an influence which has been exerted upon the general or particular demand for labor or upon the supply of labor.

It is admitted that labor organizations may concert their action and produce an influence upon the supply of labor, and it is equally true that employers may exert a similar influence upon its demand. Such influences, in the very nature of things, are temporary at the best, and can never attain the consequence of a natural law or a permanent cause or effect.

Therefore, it is unjust to claim that labor combination is the permanent cause of increased wages unless we also grant that industrial combination is the permanent cause of diminished wages. This is also unjust because it is untrue.

All men of judgment will undoubtedly agree that it is the law of supply and demand which determines, absolutely, the price paid to every man for the labor he performs.

Protection Against What?

We are told, in the second place, that labor unions afford protection to their members. This is probably upon the assumption that a danger or difficulty is constantly impending. If so, what is it? Is the laborer protected from physical violence? Whence comes the violence? Is it a shield against the reduction of wages or increase of hours. If violence, let law, which is impartial, take its course. If it be a reduction of pay, let economic law assert itself normally, or it will triumph forcibly.

The sum and substance of this so-called protection is a belief, on the part of the proteetees, that the employer is constantly seeking whereby he may injure the employee. It is an unconscious or ignorant tendency toward the creed which preaches constant enmity, dissatisfaction and disruption between the forces of employed labor and employed capital.

There is no natural antagonism between these two factors; they are allies, parts of one unit. A disturbance between them is unnatural, and the spirit and temper of trades-unionism, which is at variance with capital, should be deprecated by all intelligent and reasonable men.

The protective feature of combinations of labor is unnecessary, inviting an opportunity to quarrel without cause; it is unnatural, condemnable and rather than being a benefit, it is a disaster.

Unionism Tends Towards Dependence.

It increases self-respect, they tell us.

A man's respect is increased by the fact of his possession of a membership card in a labor organization. Testimony from members, holding such cards would probably substantiate the statement. A Baptist would contend fiercely for immersion as the scriptural mode of baptism. Interested witnesses do not always produce unprejudiced decisions.

He who respects himself most highly is he who relies most confidently upon his own exertions. Independence is one measure of self-respect. Absolute independence, intelligently appreciated, is most inductive of the greatest degree of self-respect.

In proportion as one allows his total independence to separate into partial dependence, he loses his self-respect. Surrender one right or privilege, incident to self-maintenance, and self-respect suffers as severely as it benefits by the assumption of a new responsibility.

What the laboring-man is unable to secure for himself and by his own efforts, he transfers to his fellow-worker and associates, thus losing what the mass acquires. He unnaturally gives up what the other wrongfully assumes.

If self-respect were to depend for its accretion upon the associative principle, why not surrender all individual effort and work out all the problems of life and its relations upon this basis. Self-respect will thrive and augment upon sole-endeavor and paternalistic ideas will destroy it.

Individual Contract.

One of the most serious objections to this method of attempting to compel quickly, that which natural law decrees shall develop slowly, is the beginning of a tendency to annihilate the right of individual contract.

The hours a man shall labor, the wages he shall receive, the circumstances which shall surround his employment, should be determined by an individual agreement by and between two parties.

The employer should be the better judge of the number of hours he desires to operate his establishment. He, knowing the cost of material, rental, taxes, the existing competition, the capacity and profit of his industry, should be more capable of determining the value of a man's services to himself, than any other person. He should stipulate, as party of the first part, the primary conditions of employment. As party of the second part, the prospective employee should agree, compromise or disagree, thus effecting, modifying or annulling the contract. This is ideal. The real is vastly different.

The rule seems to have been reversed. Today, an aggregation of disinterested men determine, not only the conditions which shall surround the employee, but they, ignorant of the profit, loss, capacity or any other condition of the em-

ployer, stipulate the value of the services to be rendered, whether competent or incompetent, as well as the number of hours in the day the establishment shall continue in operation.

It is an artificial economic condition which places a premium upon inferior labor, and at the same time destroys or limits the ambition and possibilities of the energetic, competent and faithful man.

With patience we must await the outcome, which will appear only, when human-kind attains the realization that all human accomplishment is by labor. Labor is not employed by some intangible despot called Capital. Both Labor and Capital are impersonal conditions; while all injustice is personal.

LEWIS M. HEAD.

Nebraska City, Neb., June 20, 1901.

A BANKRUPT PARTY AND A DESTROYED CAREER.

EDITOR THE CONSERVATIVE:

Do you recall the private letter of congratulation which I once addressed to you upon your discovery of Hon. W. J. Bryan as a new, young and brilliant leader of the democratic party of the state? It was, I think, in 1890 that you received, and answered, with sympathetic interest, that tribute to Mr. Bryan as a coming leader of the growing democratic party in Nebraska. It had elected the sterling and steady James E. Boyd to the governorship and Bryan to two terms in congress. It was gaining strength on old and true democratic lines, on the dangerous money question and on all other current issues which were the legacies of republican usurpation and misgovernment, state and national. This was especially true of Douglas and other populous counties in the state. Discontent with republican domination was everywhere apparent, particularly with the corruption of the state government. Young men of marked character and talents, full of honorable ambition, energy and zeal, were directing its policies and nominating its candidates. Sagacious men foresaw with clearness, the coming opportunity to redeem and hold the state. Some of us had overtly assisted Mr. Bryan to celebrate his own abilities and promise, and were relying upon him to aid others and to gratify his own ambitions in this work.

It is a sad story. The state convention which nominated Holcomb for governor and ordained fusion, which always means dishonor and death to political parties, has bankrupted the democratic party, and, from the same deadly influence, destroyed the once promising public career of W. J. Bryan.

GEORGE L. MILLER.

Omaha, Nebraska, June 20, 1901.