

Talk with David M. Parry on Organized Labor

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NEW YORK, Jan. 12.—(Special Correspondence of *The Bee*.)—The trades union men of the United States look upon David M. Parry, the president of the National Association of Manufacturers, as an enormous bull, an overgrown golden calf, which is dashing about in the china shop of the labor organizations, shattering the images. They call him a bloated capitalist with horns, and think he is seventeen feet high and weighs a ton. The real David M. Parry measures 5 feet 6 inches and he tips the beam at just 125 pounds. If he has horns I have not discovered them. His black hair is well brushed back from a high forehead, his dark face is smooth shaven and his eyes are as gentle and his voice as suave as that of any business man I know.

Mr. Parry has made himself noted as the chief antagonist of organized labor in the United States. He has no use for labor unions in any shape, and he does not hesitate to say so. He not only opposes them himself, but he is now the president of the Manufacturers' association, which has a membership of 3,000 of the leading factories and corporations of this country, covering every part of the United States. He tells me that they represent capital running high into the billions of dollars and that each pays \$50 a year to the association as membership dues. The association largely represents the anti-union sentiment of the country, although I venture many of its members would not endorse views so radical as those of Mr. Parry.

It was in the offices of the association that I met Mr. Parry. I had come for an interview, and he answered my questions at once. Said he:

"You ask me why I oppose organized labor. I do it because as it exists in the United States it is revolutionary. It makes the Declaration of Independence and the constitution obsolete documents and declares all of us who are so old-fashioned as to believe in individual liberty the oppressors of labor and the enemies of the race. I believe many of the labor leaders would guillotine us if they could."

"That is rather strong language, Mr. Parry," said I.

"Yes, but I believe in calling things by their right names. Organized labor as it now is is a standing mob engaged in acts of open rebellion against the government. It defies the constituted authorities and tries to nullify individual and property rights. Such rebellion is worse than that which had the secession of the states for its object, and I think it is high time the country was waking up to the fact."

"Why, look at it," Mr. Parry went on. "We have had a series of labor insurrections during the past year known as strikes, in which the unions have tried to force their authority by mob law. They denounce the government officials who try to restrain them, they are keeping their members out of the militia, and they have even attempted to make the president of the United States violate his oath of office to please them. In their crusade against the exercise of individual rights they have blustered, threatened, assaulted and murdered. They even threaten helplessness women and children. I know the leaders of the labor unions will disclaim responsibility for such crimes, but they are nevertheless the accomplices of the brutal and ignorant men whom they have incited to commit such outrages."

"What right have you to speak against labor, Mr. Parry?" said I. "Have you ever been a workingman yourself?"

"I have the right of both a workingman and an employer," was the reply. "I have worked all my life, and I work now. I began to work on the farm as a boy and I know all about farm work, from the digging of post holes to hauling manure. I have clerked in a store, sold goods on the road and had a hardware store of my own. I am now an employer of labor, having several thousand hands; I am also a consumer, and every man has a right to discuss matters in which he is so vitally interested."

"How about working at a trade? Do you know anything of mechanics?"

"I make buggies and I understand everything connected with my business and have worked at every branch of it."

"Could you set a wagon tire?"

"I have set thousands of them. I have worked with my men, and I think I know something of the workingmen of the United States. It is not right to look upon the unions as representing American labor, for 85 per cent of our workmen do not belong to them. I am a friend of the workingman, but not of him as a trades unionist."

"Have you had any personal experiences with unions in your work?"

"If you mean in my factory I have not. I have always run an open shop, and so far the unions have refrained from making any demands upon me in my capacity as an employer. Since I have been denouncing their methods, however, I have had one little experience which shows that the agitators were looking for an excuse to ruin my business. It is a little matter and hardly worth mentioning."

"A painter one day asked me for a job,



DAVID M'LEAN PARRY OF INDIANAPOLIS, PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MANUFACTURERS.

I had nothing for him in the factory and told him that he might paint the steps of my house, although they hardly needed it. When he got through I paid him what he asked, but a few days later a walking delegate of the Painters' union called upon me and said that my steps had been painted at a rate less than the union scale. I told him I knew nothing about his union scale and cared less and showed him out of my office. Then the Painters' union applied for a national boycott on my factory. The application passed through the Central Labor Union of Indianapolis and was sent up to President Gompers of the American Federation of Labor. Mr. Gompers came out to Indianapolis to see my front door steps, and in a speech there gave forth the startling information that the boycott had been granted upon the petition of the painters. Thus the Parry Manufacturing company was to be sacrificed for my personal act, a good example of the sense of justice which animates the strike bosses. Well, I was boycotted. The boycott was an advertisement and my business has never been larger than since it was declared."

"How about strikes, Mr. Parry? Do they pay the laboring man?"

"No," was the reply. "They do not benefit the employer, the employe nor the consumer. They lessen our respect for the law and they shake our faith in the perpetuity of our government. Take the anthracite strike. The mob dominated the mining regions for months and the whole military power of Pennsylvania could not or did not maintain law and order. In that strike it is estimated that \$5,000,000 were lost in wages. I am not certain as to the figures. I know that the operators lost enormously, but the loss of both is as nothing in comparison to that of the consumers. Every household had his coal bills almost doubled by that strike, and even now the prices have not come down to the normal figures of before the strike. The public has already paid millions and it is still paying its tribute to the organization of United Mine Workers."

"Have you ever estimated the money cost to the consumers, Mr. Parry?"

"I have tried to," was the reply. "We know that it caused a shortage of 25,000,000 tons of hard coal. That much coal was not mined on account of the 150,000 men who were idle during the four or five months of the strike. The loss would have been just the same if the coal had been mined and dumped into the sea, and putting the price of the coal at \$5 per ton it was \$125,000,000—almost enough to complete the Panama canal. That shortage raised the prices of all kinds of fuel and the people had to pay the bill. The matter was submitted to arbitration, and in its settlement the national arbitration board stated that the miners were already receiving wages that compared favorably with those of men in other industries. Nevertheless, they gave them an advance of 10 per cent on their wages, and every laboring man of the United States now has to help pay that 10 per cent when he lights

his kitchen fire. He also pays for it in every bit of manufactured goods made with steam. The whole public is taxed by the men working in those mines. That is one of the beauties of arbitration."

"Then you don't believe in the law of arbitration, Mr. Parry?"

"I do not. The constitution of the United States is a good enough law for me. Either a man has a right to run his own business or he has not. If he has not we ought to strike the clause referring to our property rights out of the constitution. The idea of arbitrating the question whether an employer can employ a man who does not belong to a union is absurd. It is revolutionary. It means that individual liberty is destroyed and that we must bargain with a lot of irresponsible blatherskites for such liberties as we may be allowed to possess. How public men can lend their voices and influence to arbitration is beyond my comprehension. I can only account for it on the theory that they are afraid of their shadows or are willing to sell their patriotism for the sake of money and political power."

"What do you think of the charge that the present business depression is caused by the demands of organized labor?"

"I think it is largely so," said Mr. Parry. "The unions have caused the strikes that we have had, and the losses arising from them have become a national disaster. I believe that 1903 will go down in history as the year when the labor agitators put a check to a period of unparalleled prosperity. The strikes they originated have caused an enormous loss in our aggregate production, and you must always remember that the consumption is regulated by the amount produced. You cannot divide more than you have to divide, and anyone with a thimbleful of brains can see that cutting down the production is not the way to make the people rich. In times like this it is the masses who suffer most. The capitalist can shut down his business and still have enough for his personal wants. The laborer has only his work, and he who is poorest suffers most and longest."

"But you do not deny labor the right to strike, do you?"

"No, I do not. They have that right as individuals or collectively, but they have no right to interfere with the business of their employers or with the men hired to take their places. Many of the demands for strikes are so unreasonable that they cannot be granted and the business go on. The labor organizations do not consider that. They act as though labor had no interest whatever in the business, and if opposed they try to attack their employer through the consumers of his goods, and by boycott dog him from one end of the country to the other. They prevent others from doing the work they will not do themselves, and if they succeed in destroying him, as they sometimes do, a chorus of glee goes up from the labor agitators and their followers throughout the whole country. They think they have won a great victory, when they have actually killed the goose which has been laying their

golden eggs. They remind me of the man who tried to improve his personal appearance by cutting off his own nose."

"How about the working day, Mr. Parry? Can the United States be run on an eight-hour basis?"

"I think not. The majority of men work ten hours, and that is an indication that it requires a ten-hour day to produce enough to satisfy the needs of humanity. If you cut the working day to eight hours, you cut off one-fifth of the total production, and this means that the people will have to be satisfied with four-fifths of the commodities that they now get. Organized labor does not look upon it in that way. It insists upon more of the necessities and comforts of life for its own peculiar class and therefore demands that it shall have ten hours' pay for eight hours' work. This is practically a 25 per cent increase of wages, and if granted it must come out of the consumers. So, you see, organized labor is bound to have a good bargain even if that bargain is rather hard on the rest of the population."

"But, Mr. Parry, John Mitchell and Samuel Gompers say that a man can do as much work in eight hours as he can in ten."

"Yes, I know that, but upon the same logic he can do as much in six hours as he can in eight, and as much in four as he can in six. Indeed, you might go on and prove that a man can do as much by not working at all as he can by working ten hours, which is ridiculous. I am especially opposed to granting the eight-hour day as to government work. I see no reason why the government should give ten hours' pay for eight hours' labor, any more than an individual should be compelled to do so, and think that those who favor that law are in favor of robbing the public treasury."

"But, Mr. Parry, speaking of wages, is not labor capital's partner? And if so, does it get its share of the profits?"

"It gets a big share," replied Mr. Parry, "and far more, proportionately, than the capitalist. What are the average dividends of our big industrial organizations? Those which do a safe, steady business do not pay more than 4 per cent. That is, 4 cents on every dollar. That is the profit of the capitalist. The balance of the earnings are spent for raw materials, rent and labor. As time goes on and capital accumulates, it comes into competition with other capital, and its profits decrease, while at the same time the real wages—that is, the amount that a man can purchase from a day's work—tend to rise. Labor gets more and more and capital less and less every year."

"What do you think of giving the workman a share in the business?"

"I don't believe in it. He will never believe that he is fairly treated, and if money is lost he will not be willing to take his share of the losses. He looks upon it as a matter of charity, and it is a bad thing all around. We had a manufacturer at Indianapolis who called his men together a year or so ago and told them that his profits had been such during the past twelve months that he could afford to make them a present of 5 per cent of his earnings in addition to their wages and at the end of the speech each man was given an envelope containing his share. After the employer left the men held a meeting and one of them got up and said:

"How do we know the old man is telling the truth, and that we are getting our full 5 per cent? I think we ought to have a committee appointed to go and look at his books."

"This was done, and a committee called on the employer and asked for the books."

"The employer looked up in surprise, saying: 'I don't understand.'"

"Well," replied the committee, 'you say we are partners and that you have given us 5 per cent of the profits of the business. How do we know that we got our full 5 per cent? We should like to see the books.'"

"This almost paralyzed the employer," continued Mr. Parry. "He waited a moment and then said: 'Why, men, that money was a present from me. You are not entitled to any more than your wages, and I need not have given you a cent.' He thereupon dismissed them, and that was the last time he took his men into partnership."

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Had the Label

A joke on D. M. Parry, the Indiana manufacturer who has become widely known for his invectives against organized labor, was perpetrated recently in the law office of Senator Beveridge, at Indianapolis.

Mr. Parry entered there wearing a new suit of clothes. Larz Whitcomb, who is in Mr. Beveridge's law office and knows Mr. Parry intimately, chaffed the manufacturer about his new clothes and suggested that they were made by organized labor.

"No," said Mr. Parry, "I think not this time." But Whitcomb pushed back the lapel of his friend's coat, and on the inside, sewed in a conspicuous place, was the union label.—Washington Post.