

Omaha's Labor Strike

What It Means To Omaha

The future prosperity of the entire city of Omaha is concerned in the existing serious labor situation. **The future welfare of every wage earner, union member or otherwise, of every home owner, of every clerk and tradesman and of every citizen is involved.**

The RESULTS of this crisis affect YOU. Therefore, the CAUSE, the RESPONSIBILITY, the RIGHT and WRONG of it interests you. In order that you may judge of these things, the Business Men's Association of Omaha proposes to tell you the facts of the case.

Closed Shop—Sympathetic Strike.

The Business Men's Association is composed of the vast majority of the employers of Omaha. Its members believe in the "open shop." That means that they believe in working conditions which permit every man to earn an honest living, **regardless of whether or not he belongs to a particular race, a particular church or a particular union.**

Members of the Business Men's Association believe in fair wages—wages advancing as need be to meet the increasing cost of living.

The Business Men's Association does not believe in the "closed shop," which restricts individual enterprise and opportunity by refus-

ing work to men who are not members of some union. The Business Men's Association **does not believe in boycotts, sympathetic strikes, restriction of output and unreasonable demands that savor of persecution.**

Right of All to Work.

The present labor crisis is **NOT** a question of the continued existence of unions in Omaha. It is only a question of whether these unions shall exceed their rightful function by forcing despotic domination upon all employers—and all workers. Don't forget that.

The freedom of the EMPLOYEE is at stake in this question no less than the freedom of the employer—the freedom of the EMPLOYEE to work for whom he pleases and under what conditions he wills, **or whether he may work at all.**

A minority of the wage earners of Omaha are union members. The present fight against despotic use of union power is for the benefit of the majority outside the union—and **for the benefit of all Omaha.** The employers of Omaha are making this fight for no selfish reason of their own, but for the **good of the entire community.**

What It Is All About

Omaha's strike of today really began about two years ago when Max Dezettel came to Omaha and announced: "Omaha is the scabbiest town in America, and before we get through it will be a good union town." He prophesied "a great future for the local labor movement, **when every wage worker will be a union wage worker.**" Dezettel was a former I. W. W., whose only claim to union membership was a card issued by himself to himself in a Stenographers' and Bookkeepers' Union, which he himself organized.

With the assistance of David Coutts, organizer of the American Federation of Labor, and others, Dezettel brought about the organization of many new unions in Omaha—the Common and Building Laborers, Teamsters and Truck Drivers, Freight Handlers, Chauffeurs, Egg Inspectors, Stenographers and Bookkeepers, Boiler Makers, Mill Workers, Bakers and Confectioners and Meat Cutters. He brought about new activity in old unions and there was established the "Union Label League" to boycott goods not carrying the union label.

By May 20, 1916, the new leader urged that "every active trade unionist should now work harder than ever and do his part in agitating for 100 per cent organization for all trades in the state."

A Campaign to Dominate.

That was the plan—to extend union domination over **EVERY wage-worker and employer in Nebraska.** The present strikes are in the nature of a general assault in the great offensive war to change conditions under which Omaha has lived in industrial peace and prosperity for thirteen years.

Dezettel sowed the seeds and then abandoned Omaha in the late summer of 1916. Coutts, his first lieutenant, took his place.

In 1916, in the campaign to make Omaha 100% closed shop, there were five strikes—Building and

Common Laborers, Sheet Metal Workers, Machinists, Iron Molders and Pressmen. These strikes were fought with violence and the boycott. Large merchants, for one example, were placed on a boycott list simply because they advertised in a so-called "unfair" newspaper. That was the start.

Campaign Continued in 1917.

In 1917 the campaign was continued. **Fourteen unions made demands**—Hoisting Engineers, Painters and Decorators, Electricians, Steam Fitters, Plasterers, Mill Workers, Plumbers, Iron Workers, Lathers, Sheet Metal Workers, Teamsters and Truck Drivers, Tile Setters, Building and Common Laborers and Boiler Makers.

In practically every instance where the "closed shop" was not already claimed, a demand for it was made.

The new Teamsters' and Truck Drivers' Union, for example, set forth the "closed shop" demand in a printed contract requiring the employers "to give preference at all times to members in good standing with the union" and adding: "It is further understood that all non-members employed shall declare their intentions to affiliate with the union not later than one week after being employed."

That would require that no team-driver, truck-driver, stableman or helper be allowed to work in Omaha unless he join the union, pay the dues and keep in "good standing." If any man refused to join the union, the employer must dismiss him. And if any union man failed to pay his dues or otherwise lost his "good standing" with the union the employer must dismiss him, **regardless of his competence or other qualifications as a workman.** Other unions presented similar demands.

Sympathetic Strike—No Arbitration.

Another union demand is worth looking at. The

iron workers had a contract with their employers which included a system for the arbitration of all disputes—to avoid strikes. This year the union filed written demands that "arbitration be done away with." They also demanded the wiping out of a paragraph which pledged them not to engage in sympathetic strikes.

The sympathetic strike threat was further made in a published interview attributed to the president of the local hoisting engineers' union in which he was quoted as saying: "A walk-out of hoisting engineers would tie up construction of nearly all buildings. Engineers, plasterers, stone cutters, carpenters and bricklayers have an international agreement. **Should a non-union engineer come onto a job everybody in these crafts would quit.**"

All alliance of unions in the building trades, called the Building Trades Council, was developed for the purpose of binding its member unions to the sympathetic strike.

Restriction of Output.

Still other demands were made. The painters, for instance, presented eight and one-half pages of "working rules," in which **restrictions of output** was a prominent feature. The size of a brush was limited to five inches. Members of the union were required "not to set a pace for fellow workmen, nor should any foreman attempt to drive or speed any workmen under his authority." If any employe should be discharged for complying with this rule, the rules authorized the business agent to bring about a strike.

These are but samples. There were demands galore, imposing onerous conditions and unnecessary burdens upon the employer—**BURDENS WHICH THE PUBLIC MUST EVENTUALLY BEAR.** The split came because of these demands, which gave union leaders complete despotic control of the business of the employer.

Facts to be published in this newspaper tomorrow will prove that to enforce these demands, the unions declared a series of STRIKES—some purely sympathetic. They were STRIKES, not LOCK-OUTS.

Business Men's Association of Omaha