

Steel Striker Feels 12-hour Day and Corporation Hostility to the Unions Are Potent Methods of Suppression

Is Convinced Foreigners Were Brought to This Country to Make Unionization Difficult—It Is Only by Understanding the Workings of the Minds of the Men Underneath That a Proper View of the Situation Can Be Had, and a Solution Arrived at for the Problems Affecting the Worker and the Employer—12-Hour Day Allows Laborer No Time for Recreation or Home Life, Giving Him Time Only for Eating and Sleeping and Work.

By RAY STANNARD BAKER.
Article III.

In this article I wish to show how one great section of American industry looks from below, to the workers, taking the specific situation at Gary, Ind., as the explanatory example. It is only as one tries to understand how the worker feels and thinks—his own actual point of view—that we can get at the problem. In my previous article, I have tried to explain how industry looks from above to the employer.

When I went to Gary to make inquiries about the steel strike I had in mind the 12 demands made by the national leaders when the men walked out on September 22; but I heard only two discussed with any emphasis either by the workers or the management.

First, the 12-hour day. Second, the right to organize and to bargain collectively with the employer.

The 12-hour day is a very real thing in the life of Gary, and I tried in a number of specific cases to find out what it means. Here is the exact daily schedule of a skilled American workman who does 11 hours a day during one week and 13 hours a night during the next. He has his Sunday free, though many men in the steel industry still have the seven-day week; nor does he do the "long-turn" of 24 hours continuous service when the change from day to night work takes place—a practice still persisting in some centers of the steel industry. In order to get cheap rent—for there is a great shortage of housing in Gary—this man lives four miles out from the mill. He must, therefore, in order to be on time, get up early.

Man Exits Only.
4:30 a. m. he arises and gets breakfast.

5:30 he leaves home.

5:55 he reaches the mill.

6:00 he begins work.

He is on duty steadily until 5 o'clock in the afternoon. There is no stoppage for the luncheon, but he has time, during waiting periods, to get something to eat. He arrives home at 6 o'clock; soon after he finishes his supper he must go to bed, for at 4:30 in the morning he must be up again.

During the night shift he gets up soon after 3 o'clock in the afternoon, starts work at 5 o'clock, works 13 hours, until 6 in the morning, is home at 7, and in bed before 8. Including the time he takes to go and come from the mill, this man's time is really commandeered for some 14 hours every day.

He has been at this work all his life; he now makes \$7.87 a day.

"I don't live," he said, "I just exist; I work and sleep. I don't get any time to see my family. I can go to any entertainment, without taking it out of my sleep; and I am too tired to go to church on Sunday, or to do anything else but lie around."

How It Strikes a Pole.

Another striker, a Pole, said to me in broken English:

"They tell us to go to school, learn American. When we get time? Twelve hours a day! What the hell they want!"

Remember, I am trying to show just how it looks from below.

According to Judge Gary's testimony before the senate committee, there are 69,284 men in the United States Steel corporation now working the 12-hour day; and there are many thousands more in the independent companies. A great proportion of these 12-hour men are foreigners, of some 42 nationalities at Gary alone, speaking a babel of tongues and hitherto unorganized and unorganizable.

When I remarked to a group of workers that Judge Gary had told the senate committee that employees of the United States Steel corporation desired a 12-hour day, and even a seven-day week, in order to make more money, I was greeted with a shout of laughter.

"Want it!" said one of them. "We can't help ourselves. The mills run on the two-shift basis and it's either 12 hours or quit. Besides, at the rate of wages per hour paid by the company most of the men could live unless they worked the long hours."

So much for the 12-hour day. The senate committee, in the recent conclusions after investigation, said: "That the laborers in the steel mills had a just complaint relative to the long hours of service on the part of some of them and the right to have that complaint heard by the company."

"We believe where continuous operation is absolutely necessary the men should at least be allowed one day's rest in each week."

The Demand to Organize.

The other great complaint, the demand to organize and bargain collectively, is more complicated. It goes down deeper into the roots of the controversy. For, if the workers were granted the eight-hour day and the six-day week, this other demand would not only persist but probably be strengthened. I met one steel employer, who said to me: "If you give an inch, if you let them discover that agitation and organization gets them anything, you've gone. Gary's right."

He spoke of Rockefeller's introduction of the eight-hour day and shop committees in his Colorado plant. "Did it stop the strike?" he asked. "No, they're out with all the others. So are the Cambria mills where they have company unions. Gary's right." There is one independent mill that was scarcely touched by the strike. It has been looked upon with some envy in the steel industry. Its superintendent explained to me how he managed his workmen:

"I watch 'em young; treat 'em like 'em old; tell 'em nothing." This question of unionization—collective bargaining as Judge Gary called it—is the crux of the matter. He saw it long ago when the corporation was organized, and ever changed in his opinion

while working; he paid and no fees charged for this work."

They have a most extraordinary mixture of human beings in Gary—the Croats and Poles leading, with large numbers of Greeks, Slovaks, Russians, Swedes, Hungarians. Lately the Spaniards have been coming in, and since the war, and especially since unionism began to threaten, many ignorant, negroes and Mexicans. In the main mill at Gary over 1,000 negroes are now employed.

Power of Corporation.
I asked why it was, then, if this was a strike for freedom, that so many men had gone back.

"That's easy enough to answer. In the first place the power and watchfulness of the managers was such that we never could form a very strong union. How can you get ignorant Hungarians, Italians, Poles, negroes and Mexicans together and teach them the value of organization when the dread of the boss is always over them? And no sooner does the strike start than the military comes in and prevents picketing and prevents any large meetings. Many of these foreigners are easily frightened by soldiers; they've had experience at home. On the other hand, the most intelligent men, who ought to be leaders, hold high-paid places or are buying company houses, or are getting bonuses, or are working for pensions. They know that if they go out they lose everything. Since this strike the company has done its best to stir up racial and national feeling between the skilled American workers and the negroes and foreigners. It's their eye to keep us apart and disorganized. So it has got to be a movement largely made up of the unskilled laborers, and they are foreigners. And there you are. Oh, they know their business—the Steel Corporation! And that's what has made wild radicals of some of the foreigners; they don't see any other way out except secret organizations and revolution."

Another thing these workers believe—and believe everywhere in the steel districts, as shown by the senate investigation—is that the government is somehow against them; the government meaning to many of the foreigners—the local police. I am not entering into the question of whether they are right or wrong, but trying to get down what they actually believe or feel, for it is not upon what they ought to believe and feel that they act, but upon what they do believe and feel. Well, they believe that the officials and constabulary are controlled by the steel companies. In Pennsylvania there is every evidence of suppression and even violent suppression, by the constabulary. Much testimony was given before the senate committee to show that there is no such thing in some of the steel towns as free speech or free assemblage. The companies assert that this control is necessary to preserve order and protect property; but from below, to the strikers, it looks like oppression.

Believe Themselves Suppressed.
Many of the officials in steel towns are employees of steel companies. Even in Gary, where the control has been less rigorous than in Pennsylvania, I heard much of the same kind of complaint. Whether the strikers are right or wrong, no honest inquirer can avoid the impression that they feel themselves suppressed. Much is done for them by the Steel corporation; but of themselves, either by political or social organization, they feel they are allowed to have no say about

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the vital conditions under which they work and live.

"But," I argued, "Judge Gary said to the senate committee that any worker or group of workers could make a complaint and get it remedied; that all superintendents were especially instructed upon this point."

I am going to put down the exact answers I got.

"Say, Mister, you weren't born yesterday, were you? What chance do you suppose one 'hunkie' or a bunch of 'hunkies' would have getting to Judge Gary with a complaint, or even getting to the head men of the Illinois Steel company? And what do you suppose would happen if they complained very often over the head of their foremen? Here's the pink slip for you guys."

Minor Complaints.

There are many other minor complaints—so the strikers argue—that can only be met when the workers are organized, just as the various mills are organized, in one body, and can meet the employers upon equal terms. There are examples of petty graft by foremen upon ignorant workmen, men are laid off without explanation or excuse, the plants are closed down without warning, and the loss falls upon the workers (13 per cent of the possible working time is thus lost every year to the employees).

This state of mind at Gary, and elsewhere in the steel industry, has resulted in vast losses to every one concerned. Though the mills are operating again, there are many strikers still out and still agitating, soldiers are still on guard. A considerable number of foreigners have drawn their money from the postal savings bank, sold their Liberty bonds, and gone home to Europe, thus further reducing and disorganizing the labor supply. Some of the skilled men have left for other industries. Two electricians, for example, whom I met, had easily found work at the union scale of a dollar an hour in Chicago; more than they had received in the Gary mills. The mills are running inefficiently, with many inexperienced men, and the whole morale is low; and this at a moment when the world never needed steel products as it does now.

In the next article I shall try to exhibit the radical fringe of the labor movement, show what it is that the employers fear, who make up these radical groups, and try to estimate the extent of their influence.

Fur Prices Will Remain High, Is Word of Dealer

New York, Jan. 3.—Reduction in fur prices is unlikely "for a long time," according to Norman H. Bacon, president of the New York Fur Auction Sales corporation. Mr. Bacon said today that on a recent trip to the middlewest and Canada he was met everywhere by reports of short catches, especially of muskrats.

Prices for "rat" skins are rising daily in consequence. Trappers are making the most of the situation, he said, as are the country dealers who collect from the trappers.

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The fair fame of "Seventy-seven" for Grip and Colds is the entering wedge into many homes and families for Dr. Humphrey's long list of Remedies for all diseases which it is safe and wise for the non-professional to treat.

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Has been Steady, Sure, Certain, and it will continue so because of its progressive spirit and natural resources.

The Growth of The Woodmen of The World

(Omaha's 100% Fraternity)

has likewise been STEADY, SURE and CERTAIN and will continue so because it has ALWAYS carried out every obligation, year after year, in good faith and ALWAYS WILL.

INSURE WITH US AND SHOW YOUR THRIFT AND WISE FORETHOUGHT.

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Exhume Bodies of Eight Members of Holladay Family

Harrison, N. Y., Jan. 3.—The bodies of eight members of the family of Benjamin Holladay, who many years ago was known from coast to coast for his great wealth and the lavish manner in which he spent it, have been removed from the crypt under the little stone chapel at Ophir farm, in Purchase, where they had been for years, and placed in a vault at St. Mary's cemetery in Rye.

The bodies removed today include his, that of his wife and Jennie Lind Mary Holladay, Countess A. De Pourtales Gorgier; Pauline Cassandra De Bussiere, wife of Baron De Bussiere of Paris; Madge Holladay, Joseph C. Holladay and an unidentified infant. They had

of St. James, who now owns Ophir farm. Mrs. Reid's action was prompted by the fact that many private cemeteries in Westchester county have been obliterated through changes in ownership of the estates upon which they existed and the desire to prevent such a contingency in the case of the Holladay family.

Benjamin Holladay, who made his fortune through ownership of the Ophir silver mine in Nevada, died in Portland, Ore., 30 years ago. Most of his once great fortune had gone by that time.

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