

nothing but historical flotsam and jetsam, and that the individual is merged in the collectivity.—although socialism readily appeals to such as these, and so makes headway while its principles are not generally discussed, it does not appeal to the great common thought, which is neither materialistic nor paternalistic, but is now, as it always has been and always will be, sensitive to considerations of right and wrong and averse to individual submergence. To prophesy this is not to imply that in this battle all who think themselves socialists will be found on the socialistic side, nor that all who think themselves opposed to socialism will be on the other side. Socialism is as yet a somewhat indefinite term, and many who call themselves socialists because they oppose plutocracy, revolt with the rest of us at the distinctive doctrines of the cult that claims the name of socialism and is best entitled to it both historically and by dominance in the organized socialist movement.

THE MISTAKES OF TRADES UNIONISM.

In a country of vast resources like the United States, abounding in prosperity, or at all events, potential prosperity, and where, as Carlyle grimly put it, every male biped that does not grow feathers can share in the making of the laws by which industry is regulated and wealth distributed, it is remarkable that our organized laborers should have found no better remedy for their economic grievances than the old-fashioned and barbarous strike. One can understand the working masses of St. Petersburg and Moscow, whose souls and bodies practically belong to the autocracy, ceasing work en masse because political power is denied them; but where political power is so plentifully distributed as it is in the United States, the continued existence of the strike can only be explained on the supposition that the workers have not yet learned to use the weapons placed in their hands.

Advocates of trades-unionism would have us believe that the strike, the boycott, the union la-

bel, the closed shop, and such like remedies, have brought great good to the workers. Of the 22,000 odd strikes which have occurred in the United States in the twenty years from 1881 to 1901, it is claimed that fully one-half were successful. They may have been successful in the sense of achieving the immediate object desired by the strikers, but whether they have left the workers substantially better off permanently may well be doubted. Apparently they have not prevented the generally admitted fact that in recent years the prices of the necessities of life have risen faster than have the wages of the workers. If there is one thing which the history of the strikes has demonstrated, it is this: that there is always a large supply of unemployed labor in the country ready to work for the wages rejected by the strikers and to frustrate the efforts of the latter, except where powerful moral, legal or other barriers intervene. Whatever direct advantage trades-unionism may have brought to special interests, it has not made much impression upon the volume of poverty as a whole, judging by the existence of the ten millions of people whom Mr. Robert Hunter, after an exhaustive study of the subject, estimates to be underfed, under-clothed and underhoused in this country.

That the trades-unionist movement is very strong numerically is undeniable. One-third of the workers in our leading trades and industries are computed to belong to it—probably nearly 3,000,000 of workers altogether. This is a big proportion of the country's voting power. But power without intelligence will not avail much—except to the enemy, and unfortunately trades-unionism seems at present to have more power than intelligence.

In order to fight our enemy with any chance of success we must know his weak points. It matters not whether we are fighting a single enemy—a burglar who comes to rob our house, for example, or a whole army in the field, a knowledge of our opponent's vulnerable points is most essential. One blow intelligently aimed at the right spot and at the right time may send him staggering; whereas, striking at him right and left, without scientific method or pur-

pose, will probably exhaust us sooner than it will him. And furthermore, if we are honorable and fair-minded, we will take care not to hit the wrong man; we will respect the rights of neutrals, and try to see that nobody suffers from the quarrel who is not an active participator in it.

Now, surely these principles are applicable to economic and industrial quarrels. How far are they carried out by the trades-unions? Let us see. The men strike against the capitalists. They think of the capitalist only as the owner of the machinery and tools of production. But the capitalist is generally something more than that. He is the monopolist of natural resources and of means of transport. He occupies all the important passes, so to speak; he controls the bases of supply and has possession of all the economic strongholds. Arising out of his mastery of these advantages there is, at the very threshold of the field of production, a reservoir of idle labor, which he can tap at any moment to enable him to work his machinery and thus dispense with his regular hands. Now a wise labor leader, after a careful survey of the ground, could not help but see that a bold, open, frontal attack in the face of such odds, would be useless. It might be brilliant like the Balaklava charge, but it would not be war. He would see that the true method of attack is to dislodge the enemy from the passes, cut off his base of supply, and prevent the hungry reserve enemy from rushing to his assistance, by making common cause with them and absorbing them in the ranks of the employed. Instead of conducting labor's campaigns on broad, comprehensive lines such as these, the labor-leaders fight, not monopoly, but capital proper; that is they attack their natural ally and partner, leaving their real foe in undisturbed possession of his unfair advantages. Is it any wonder that they so often fail?

Another charge to be brought against the labor unions is that in their struggle with the capitalists they do not sufficiently respect the rights of neutrals. Of the thousand strikes a year which

we have in this country, not one is carried through without injury to the public. In many cases the injury is very great. The coal strike, the meat strike, the recent Interborough strike in New York and the teamsters' strike in Chicago, may serve as examples. The amount of public suffering which strikes occasion when they paralyze a whole industry, or an important public service, is almost incalculable.

The New York Sun in a recent editorial says that the prolongation of the coal strike of 1902 was the means of killing ten times as many Americans as perished by wounds and disease during the Spanish-American war. The figures may be exaggerated; we have no means of measuring the amount of death and suffering which resulted from the stoppage of the nation's fuel supply, but we can well believe that thousands of lives must have been thus sacrificed, principally the very young, the delicate and the aged; all of them persons who did no injury to the strikers or the operators.

Now, even if we put the matter on no higher ground, the fact that strikes inevitably entail such grievous consequences on offending parties is surely sufficient to stamp them as unjust and cruel methods of industrial warfare. When a weapon is so unreliable that it wounds those who use it as often as it does those against whom it is directed, and when it cannot be used at all without seriously wounding a third party, who has nothing to do with the quarrel, it would seem that it is time to discard it. But I would even go as far as to say that the very principle of strikes is indefensible. They are in defiance of the social well-being and ignore the organic interdependence of society. Trades have no natural rights as such; it is the individuals belonging to them that have the rights, and the right to combine to bring to a standstill an industry which is interwoven with the national life and on which scores of other industries may depend is not one of those rights.

Trades-unionism as currently interpreted, does not make for economic justice. It starts by throwing the worker on a false scent, fostering the mischievous idea

that the world owes a man a living at the trade he has learned, regardless of the ebb and flow of invention and social progress, which are ever making and unmaking trades. It encourages the delusion that the providing of work for people is an end in itself, whereas, it is only a means to the end, the end being the procurement of the goods which the worker requires, and for which he exchanges his work. It assumes labor to be a rigid, stereotyped, homogeneous thing, instead of a plastic commodity, responsive to every expression of the social will. Its exclusive care is for the man who is already in employment; it has no concern for the man who is out of employment; he is a "scab" or a "blackleg" if he should assert his elementary right to work, even though it be to allay the pangs of hunger. It is monopolistic in its essence; quite as truly as the Standard Oil company or the Steel trust; its devices for artificially cornering the supply of labor by limiting the number of apprentices and by the meddlesome system of licenses, badges, closed shops, etc., are exactly on a par, in principle though less in degree, with the capitalistic schemes to overthrow competition through the shutting down of plants and the locking up of the natural sources of supply.

That labor has rights and very important rights, too—and not merely organized labor, but non-union labor—every impartial mind must admit. That there is such a thing as a fair rate of wages for each trade, at any given time and place, even though it may be impossible to say off hand in dollars and cents what it is, is undeniably true. But it is certain that strikes and strike methods afford us no assistance in settling the question. A strike is a trial of strength—a tug-of-war in which all the influences, external as well as internal, that can be marshalled on either side, play their part. It is thus no more a true means of arriving at economic justice than a war is a true means of arriving at international justice. In the one case as in the other, it is the stronger side, not the justice side that wins. In the anthracite coal strike in 1902, the men won out, not because they happened to have justice on their side, but because

they were "protected" by a law which prevented non-certificated miners from competing with them. The same cause would, doubtless, have enabled them to win out had their demands been less just. But the true justice of the matter is lost sight of when strikes and trade disputes are regarded as two-sided contests where the parties are free to "have it out." In reality they are three-sided contests, of which, however, only two sides do the fighting, the third side, viz, the public, merely looking on and paying for the game.

It is not correct to say, as is often done, that the quarrel between capital and labor is over the division of their joint product. It is really over the division of what they can squeeze from society for their joint product. The distinction is important. Given the power to control prices—and this power can be attained by combination,—and it is all the same to capital and labor whether the quantity of their joint output be large or small. And as a matter of fact, in some cases where they have come to terms we see them trying to enrich themselves, not so much through an increased output, as through charging increased prices for the same or a less output. In New York city, for example, the policy of the building trade is to build few houses and to charge as much for them as if they built many. It would not be an unnatural outcome of present tendencies if an alliance between organized capital and organized labor were to be formed, with the object of securing "fair wages" and "fair dividends," through unfair prices to the consumer. Of course, if such a plan were to become general, it would defeat its own object, the men losing as consumers what they had gained as producers.

We, therefore, see that "fair wages" means wages which shall be fair to the public as well as to the wage-earner and the employer. There is no way of securing this "fair wages" except the open market; an open market for labor and an open market for products. If we had an open market, the price of labor and the price of everything else would tend to adjust itself to the cost of production, which is the only true guiding

principle in any rational scheme of social economy.

The only right that labor can claim that does not constitute a wrong to somebody else is the right to work without obstruction; the right to go into an open and unobstructed market and bargain freely for the sale of what it offers to produce. The union laborer claims this right for himself, but denies it to the "scab," while the capitalist monopolist would avail himself of the "scab's" right to work, but would, at the same time refuse him free access to the natural media on which his work can be most profitably expended. Now the right to work is a mockery unless it means access to the free gifts and productive powers of nature. It is as wrong for the monopolist (under whatever name he may be masquerading) to lock up the coal lands or the oil lands, for example, as it is for the trades-unionist to prevent the "scab" from earning an honest living. Free labor and free land are the indispensable conditions of economic justice.

The closed shop and the closed field are both standing menaces to the commonwealth. Abolish them, and the labor problem would be solved, for the overplus of labor would be absorbed in the newly-liberated channels of production, and aggrieved labor, no longer swamped by an army of starving competitors, could meet capital on a fair footing and force it to concede fair terms. Laborers would then be as independent as in the nature of things anyone can expect to be, and their increased earnings would not come out of the pockets of the consumer (as is often the case at present), nor out of the pockets of capital as capital, but out of that increased productivity of nature which social progress develops.

Such a plan would restore elasticity to our industrial system; there would be free choice of occupation; the individual would once more assert himself; collective bargaining would cease, for individual bargaining would be preferred under free conditions; and aggressive trades-unionism, with all its irritating and tyrannical system of badges, labels, boycotts and other strife-breeding contrivances would per-

ish, along with lockouts and trusts, with the disordered conditions which give birth to them all.

Thus by stoutly asserting the right to work in all its fullness, and by renouncing the so-called right to keep others from working, can labor come by its own. The open market is the one central goal towards which the laborer, the employer and the consumer can jointly move without injury but with benefit to each other's interests. Without it, there can be no permanent relief for labor as a whole. We may, by unfair class legislation, go on relieving labor superficially, but we shall be relieving in a circle; always relieving and always coming back to the point from whence we started, like Sisyphus with the rolling stone, or like the dog that thought he was feeding himself when he bit his tail off.

The above criticisms, it is hardly necessary to explain, have to do with the methods, and not with the fundamental aims of organized labor. With those aims the writer is in full sympathy. These criticisms we meant to be candid, because candor is the only attitude becoming any well-wisher of a just cause who sees that cause languish because its energy is misdirected and running to waste.

If organized labor will only employ the same energy in securing legislation that would bring about economic justice for all alike, that it now does to secure its immediate ends through means which are fast becoming intolerable to the rest of the nation, the victory will not be far off. It might die in the arms of victory, but it would have earned an immortal epitaph which would be worth dying for.

T. SCANLON.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

LOUISIANA.

Alexandria, La., July 24.—This is one of the most progressive little cities in America. It has a population of ten thousand, most of whom live in homes that are neither offensive mansions nor offensive hovels. The town in its new growth is happily free from both extremes. The stranger who drives over it is struck at once by the number of modest cottages, which have the air of being owned by the occupants. This is especially true of the new part, known as West Alexandria. Here the paving has hardly kept pace with the growth, but

in the main parts of the town there is more good paving than the visitor will see in any other Southern town of equal size.

The new post office is a pleasing building; but the pride of the town is justly centered in the court house and high school, both of which are excellent specimens of architecture, that would do credit to a city of any size. The court house cost a hundred thousand dollars, the high school fifty thousand; and the erection of each was financed in such a way as to make the burden fall as lightly as possible upon the taxpayers. I was informed that there was no graft in either job.

Indeed, one gets the opinion that Alexandria has been singularly fortunate in her management—except in one respect, which is the striking object lesson that suggested the present communication. Surely in the main the town business has been wisely administered. She owns her light and water works, and has operated these successfully for several years. I attempted to get definite figures, but was unsuccessful because of the manner in which the accounts are kept. All, however, admit the success of the plants, and every business man I spoke to on the subject heartily approved of the theory of municipal ownership.

This makes all the more surprising the glaring contrast of the one exception. I don't say that nowhere else in the world could one find a more striking object lesson. It is so striking that all the people on both sides of the river are beginning to see the absurdity of the situation, and even stockholders wear a sickly smile when the theme comes up.

Across the Red river from Alexandria lies the village of Pineville, and a good part of the parish of Rapides, of which Alexandria is the county seat. In Pineville are the National cemetery and all the cemeteries of Alexandria. Half a mile away is the new State asylum. There is, naturally, a great deal of passage and traffic across the river. Until a few years ago there was only a ferry; now there is a handsome iron bridge. But, instead of the two towns, or the parish, building this bridge, it was given over to a private corporation. This corporation last year paid eight per cent. quarterly dividends, 32 per cent. for the year. The charges are so high that complaints are loud and constant. If you wish to take a walk across and back, it costs you a dime; if you drive, fifty cents. No wonder the people are complaining, and regretting that they did not do the work themselves. They are having a convincing object lesson, and it does not seem rash to predict that within five years they will either buy the present bridge or parallel it with another.

In Alexandria, as in other parts of the