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The Open Shop, Number Five

Business Men's Association of Omaha

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Abraham Lincoln Said

"Let every American, every lover of liberty, every well-wisher to his posterity, swear by the blood of the Revolution never to violate in the least particular the laws of the country and never to tolerate their violation. * * * Let every man remember that to violate the law is to trample on the blood of his father and to tear the charter of his own and his children's liberty. Let reverence for the laws be breathed by every American mother to the lisping babe that prattles on her lap; let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges; let it be written in primers, spelling books and in almanacs, let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls and enforced in courts of justice. And, in short, let it become the political religion of the nation, and let the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the grave and the gay of all sexes and tongues and colors and conditions sacrifice unceasingly upon its altars."

In The Constitution

George E. Norman, elected to the constitutional convention from Douglas County on the union labor ticket, has introduced a proposal which, if approved, would make union collective bargaining compulsory in Nebraska. The proposal provides that the courts shall be empowered to compel all persons to deal with trades unions on questions of industrial differences.

Mr. Norman expects to have the support of other union labor members of the convention elected from Douglas County. The proposal is now being considered by a committee.

From a Labor Viewpoint

(Chicago Labor News)

The production of commodities is needed everywhere.
The world is hungry for food and in need of almost all useful things.

There is a shortage of things. This is undeniable.

America has a duty to the world—a duty to produce.

There are some working people who don’t believe this.

There are some employers who don’t believe it.

Let them think a moment. Do they remember the great war and its great and terrible destruction? Do they forget that the war ran a bill of damage against the world—and that this bill must be paid in commodities?

Production! Commodities! Things! The mills have got to run to make things.

When children don’t get enough to eat doctors come around and shake their heads and say “Anemia.” That means starvation.

If the world doesn’t get enough of commodities, we will have an anemic world—and a crazy world. Much crazier than it is now.

We must produce more, and the only way to do it is by the sincere co-operation of both employer and employee.

The employee who receives good treatment from his employer and does not do his best to increase production is not doing his share to cut the high cost of living.

The employer who refuses to deal fairly with labor is not doing his share to increase production and thereby lower the cost of living.

Remember this, Mr. Employer and Mr. Employee, you must work together and not against each other if you want to increase production.
Wages and Prices

It was at a minstrel show that one "end man" asked the other:

"Say, did you know that George Washington once threw a dollar clear across the Delaware river?"

And the other replied:

"Yes, but that didn't amount to much. You must remember that a dollar went a lot further in those days than it does now."

It is the truth. The dollar of today does not "go as far" as the dollar of George Washington's time, or even that of four years ago.

Prices have advanced. Wages have advanced. The increased income of the merchant has not made him any better off; what he buys costs more. And the increased wage of the workingman is largely offset by the increased cost of the things which he wears, which he eats, which he must have to live, and the house which he rents or which he builds to occupy.

What is the answer?

Some labor leaders declare it is higher wages—and still higher wages. But as wages go up, so the price of the things which labor produces must go up. And as prices go up, the demand grows for more wages. Who wins in this vicious circle? Nobody.

The case is typically illustrated by the building trades. Contractors employ workmen and pay them a wage—it used to be from 20 to 60 cents an hour, according to the trade; today it is 55 cents to $1 an hour, or even more. But the wage increase does not come out of the contractors' pocket. It is paid by the man who builds the home. If he is himself a wage-earner, his home costs him that much more. If he builds the house to rent to someone else its cost is increased and the man who rents it pays an increased rent. If the new building is a store, the merchant who owns it or rents it must receive more for the clothes, the groceries, the hardware which he sells.

Eventually, the public pays for the increased wage of the building trades worker. And the public includes everybody—the few merchants and the employers and the many wage-earners including the building trades worker himself.

The only way to reduce the cost of things is to produce more of them for the same money. That involves greater efficiency by labor, greater efficiency by management, greater efficiency by invested capital. That means the "taking up of the slack," the giving of real service for good wages, the payment of wages and the earning of dividends on a basis of service and labor rather than of idleness.

Let's work—all of us—for everybody's good. "Everybody" includes us.

Team Work Wins

The New York Sun, in the course of an interesting resume of industrial conditions, reports that, despite an unprecedented demand for goods and advancing wages in factories and shops, the individual output of the workingman has decreased from fifteen to fifty per cent. Introducing a statistical summary, the Sun says:

"In sections of the country where the open shop prevails, conditions are better than in those places that are strongly unionized. Individual production also is higher in factories where the relations between capital and labor are close, or where the co-operative system is employed."

"Generally throughout the country wages have been increased in the last five years, but production has fallen down, the greatest decrease coming since the signing of the armistice. Manufacturers and large employers of labor pay tribute to the patriotism of workers during the war, asserting that the individual output then was phenomenal. Conditions at present show that with the increased wages paid in all lines, thrift is disappearing and that dissatisfaction is growing, resulting in smaller output per man."

Pressmen in "closed" union print-shops in Omaha have struck for a seven-hour day and greatly increased pay; "open shops" were not affected.
Reynolds Objects

Four hundred thousand union coal miners returned to work under the compromise of the coal strike suggested by President Wilson.

But T. P. Reynolds, whom Nebraska union labor permits to appear as its spokesman as president of the State Federation of Labor, was not satisfied. The Omaha Daily News, in an article which may be assumed to be accurate in the absence of any denial by Reynolds, says:

"T. P. Reynolds, president of the Nebraska State Federation of Labor, today said the miners made a mistake in accepting President Wilson's strike settlement offer while the injunction and contempt proceedings against them are pending.

"'I don't think they got enough wages and I have no confidence in political settlements,' said Mr. Reynolds.

"'I think the President's letter of Wednesday was an insult to working people. The miners never should have gone back to work until guaranteed pay for the five weeks they have been out.'"

This is the expression of Nebraska's highest union official!!

If the miners are to be paid for five weeks of idleness, who is to pay hundreds of thousands of other wage-earners for time lost because of the miners' strike?

Sometime, under the cumulative evidence of expressions such as these, Nebraska union labor may find food for thought as to the quality of its leadership.

* * *

The haste of the Chicago laborites to claim common cause with the "reds" has not been equaled by any other group in the country.

* * *

Painting Your Own Porch

In the "Voice of the People" column last week were printed letters from two men who pretend to deny citizens of Chicago the right to apply paint to their own property. We wonder how far such a doctrine is going to reach. And we wonder how many citizens subscribe to it.

The discussion was aroused thus: A woman wrote to "The Tribune" that her father, having painted his own porch, was waited upon by officials of the union and told he must pay a fine of $50 to the organization. Upon his refusal to pay this criminal demand he was slugged.

The letter was published in the "Voice of the People," and it called forth the two letters appearing the next day. These letters are self-explanatory. But they invite some pertinent questions. Who is it that preaches bolshevistic autocracy in an American labor union? Is the red doctrine of Lenin and Trotsky to obtain in Chicago? When did American citizens give away their inalienable right to defend themselves and their homes and to order their personal affairs to suit themselves?

"This is a union town," writes Ivan Babotiwicz, in a truly sterling American-like way, concluding his letter with the capitalized word "Liberty." Does this patriot entertain the notion that a union town means a town ruled by soviets? He is mistaken.

May a Chicagoan paint his own porch? May he cook his own food? Or must he, on order from the cooks' union pay a union cook to do it? Must a Chicago woman leave off baking bread because the bakers' union reserves that right? Is a citizen liable to be slugged if he brushes his own hat in violation of the hat brushers' union? Polishes his own boots?

Isn't it about time level headed citizens get together for the re-establishment of some ordinary rights?—CHICAGO TRIBUNE.
Strikes and Railroads

The question of taking steps to protect the people from paralysis of railroad traffic by strikes is squarely before Congress. Each house has passed a bill for the regulation of the railroads after their return to private ownership and, because of important differences in the labor provisions, final legislation now awaits the reaching of an agreement by conferences.

Both the Senate and the House bills provide for encouraging the settlement of labor disagreements affecting the railroads by any existing means of negotiation or mediation. The Senate bill—known as the Cummins' bill—goes further and provides for the organization of a committee on wages and working conditions, consisting of four representatives of the railroads and four of their employees, with three subordinate adjustment boards with like equal representation. There is provision for the settlement of all differences by these boards.

Further—and this is an important and distinctive feature—the Cummins bill provides, under penalty of a fine not exceeding $500 or imprisonment for six months, that no two or more persons shall enter into any combination or agreement to hinder or prevent the operation of trains or other facilities of transportation in interstate commerce. There is specific protection of the employee in a provision "that nothing herein shall be taken to deny to any individual the right to quit his employment for any reason."

The bill further requires every railroad corporation to include on its board of directors one or more of its classified employees.

The House bill provides for the submission of disputes to similar boards of adjustment, but provides specifically that the employee members of such boards shall be appointed from among the membership of railroad union crafts. It further provides that employees involved in any specific dispute shall be represented by men appointed by the executives of the union. These two provisions not only make no provision for representation of non-union employees but specifically deny them such right.

The House bill further makes decisions as to wages, hours and working conditions final when made by the adjustment boards consisting only of representatives of the railroads and employees, the public having no representation.

There is no provision in the House bill forbidding combinations or agreements to interfere with transportation.

The provision of the Cummins' bill for the protection of the public from strikes has brought forth violent objections from the American Federation of Labor and the railroad brotherhoods. Threats have been made that passage of the bill will be the signal for a general strike, although the official announcement declares that the railroad brotherhoods will not take so radical a step.

The Cummins' bill is designed to prevent strikes but to insure fair-dealing to the employee by providing for his equal representation on wage-making and condition-fixing boards. The House bill provides for enforced "closed shop" unionism, with full right to strike.

These bills are now before Congress. One or the other or something of similar nature will soon be law. Now is the time to tell Nebraska senators and congressmen what their constituents believe about this important subject.

* * *

The Forked Road

American labor is going forward. Nothing can stop it. No real American wants to stop it if it marches on the road of our common American progress.

Nothing can stop it, but something can set it far back, and that is a desertion of American principles for Russian and German theories. If labor leadership prefers imported experiments, discards American democratic methods of progress, and resorts to violence instead of to a fair appeal to the common conscience, it will insure its own costly defeat. For the American people in mass are for America and will turn upon any class which attempts to destroy our institutions.—CHICAGO TRIBUNE.
Seattle Goes "Open Shop"

BY F. R. SINGLETON

Seattle is breaking the domination over her industries of the radical element of organized labor which has held almost absolute sway in that city for the past three years, and has so restricted production and increased production costs that her shipyards, lumber mills, and many lesser industries have been finding it hard to compete with those in which the labor situation was less acute; that she was beginning to lose commerce to other Pacific ports where the labor cost of handling cargoes was less; that she was losing new industries seeking location on the Coast, which avoided Seattle because of industrial conditions.

Seeing her opportunity of becoming the greatest city on the Pacific Coast and one of the great ports of the world slipping away from her, Seattle has risen in the might of an American city, and is breaking the tightening bonds which were beginning to strangle her industries and commerce. Seattle is rapidly going open shop.

Seattle has declared her independence of organized labor rule and is refusing even to deal with the radicals in control of organized labor in the city, whose course since the signing of the Armistice has proven them to be no better in their actions, sentiments and purposes than I. W. W.

The American Plan

They do not call it "open shop" in Seattle. They call it the "American Plan of Employment" which, as defined by the "Associated Industries of Seattle," the organization leading the movement to success, means that every man shall be protected in his inalienable right to work, regardless of political, religious or labor affiliations; that every employer shall be protected in his right to run his own business and to hire employees without having to gain the permission of an autocrat of labor.

The open shop is being established in Seattle by the breaking of a series of strikes, designed by the radicals in the labor movement as a substitute for the general strike, by which they planned to bring about the paralysis of industry in Seattle and so discourage employers that they would be able to take over industry themselves under a soviet system. The open shop is being established by the force of public opinion as the result of an intensive publicity campaign in the Seattle dailies, conducted by the Associated Industries. Pages on pages of advertising informed the Seattle public that the industries and commerce of Seattle were being attacked by the radicals of organized labor and that, if their domination over organized labor and the industries and commerce of Seattle were not broken, the population, industry, commerce and prosperity of the city would decline.

The response was prompt. The Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club, the Kiwanis Club and all other civic and commercial organizations of the city took action demanding the end of radicalism and sabotage in Seattle, and endorsing the open shop in industry. These declarations were published in page advertisements, and at the end of ten days of this intensive advertising, the public sentiment in Seattle was overwhelmingly in favor of Americanism in industry, and the power of the radicals was broken. Where, a year ago, the closed shop was strongly supported by public opinion in Seattle, today the public is demanding open shop, and any employer who signs a closed shop agreement with any labor union will be exceedingly unpopular.

Fair Deal for All

The movement in Seattle is not against unionism, but against the domination of unionism and industry by un-American radicals. The Associated Industries, in its publicity, has repeatedly recognized the right of workers, as well as employers, to organize; has endorsed the principle of collective bargaining; has declared that there shall be no discrimination against union men under the American Plan, and has urged employers not to take advantage of unemployment to cut wages. The Associated Industries has been consistently American and so has won the confidence
of the public and of the conservatives of union labor.

Seattle is winning industrial independence by the power of organization. While the individual employer, with a few exceptions, in the past has been unable to withstand the radicals who ruled Seattle labor and has bowed to their dictates, the employers of Seattle collectively, banded together along with many other citizens in the Associated Industries, have been able to defy the radicals and to establish open shop in every Seattle industry in which a strike has occurred or a contract broken by the unions, during the past three months. In rapid succession, the building industry, the job printing industry, the merchant tailors, the dyers and cleaners, the jewelers, the shoe repair shops and the master pile drivers have declared and established their independence of radical domination, meaning that the unions have lost control of industries in which thousands of men and women are employed.

Seattle would progress on the open shop road much more rapidly, under the stimulus of public opinion, if it were not for the fact that the Associated Industries has taken a strong stand against the breaking of existing contracts with labor unions. One of the cardinal principles of the organization is that employers must keep faith with each other and with employees, and so the open shop movement progresses as strikes occur, unions break contracts and existing contracts expire.

"Open Shop" at Last

During last spring and summer the Associated Industries grew rapidly in membership and influence and endeavored consistently to cultivate better relations between employers and labor, and to promote a square deal for the employee, the employer and the public in general in Seattle—but the unions failed to clean house.

The final declaration for the open shop came when Mr. Waterhouse became convinced that the radicals, still in complete domination of the unions, were attempting, by a series of strikes, to paralyze the industries of Seattle and take them over. Advance information of this plan was verified by events. On September second the carpenters and some of the other unions in the building trades struck to enforce impossible wage demands in spite of the vital public need of more homes and other buildings and the willingness of the employers to arbitrate. They arrogantly stated that their demands, involving $10-a-day wage for carpenters and other exorbitant increases, must be granted first and then they would talk arbitration. The job printers, the tailors, the dyers and cleaners and piledrivers followed in rapid succession and the air was full of strikes in other industries.

Strikers Lose

On October fourteenth Seattle contractors, backed by the Associated Industries declared open shop in the building industry, after six weeks of fruitless negotiations with the unions to bring the strike to a settlement on terms which would not make it impossible for new buildings to be undertaken. Their action, announced in page advertisements in the daily newspapers, was applauded by the public. On October twenty-first, the Buildings Trades Council voted to call the strike off. The strikers returned at their old wages and under open shop conditions.

It took only one seven-column, fifteen-inch advertisement in the Seattle dailies, announcing open shop and inviting men to work under the American Plan, to establish the piledriving industry on the open shop basis. The fight has been harder with the job printers, the tailors and the dyers and cleaners, but the employers in each of these three industries declared unequivocally for the open shop and are making it stick." The employing printers have been drawing men from all over the United States to take the place of those strikers who refuse to return to work, and are gradually building their forces up to normal. The tailors have been greatly helped by the fact that all the associations of employing tailors in the cities of the Pacific coast, as far south as Sian Dego, California, have followed the example of Seattle and have declared open shop. The dyers and cleaners have got back many of their old employees and are back to normal
in their operations. To have granted the demands made in any of these lines would have amounted practically to turning over the business to the employees.

No More Strikes

The declaration of open shop by the building contractors was a body blow to union labor radicals and disarranged their plans to bring about industrial paralysis by involving one industry after another in strikes. A sentiment against strikes developed in the unions and no more strikes were called.

Once decided for the open shop, the Associated Industries conducted an intensive publicity campaign in the three loyal daily newspapers of Seattle. In a series of ten-page advertisements, beginning October twenty-ninth, the Industries aroused the community to the danger of radical domination and demanded that the industries of Seattle be run on the American Plan. The campaign was assisted greatly by the newspapers themselves in strong editorial and news publicity.

At the end of ten days public sentiment was strongly in favor of the open shop.

Then came the murder of four former soldiers by the I. W. W. during the Armistice celebration parade at Centralia, Washington, a few miles from Seattle, and the suppression by the government of the disloyal Union Record, the organ of the radicals, to crystallize sentiment in Seattle against the reds in control of labor. The sentiment grew so strong that the elimination of the radical alone can save unionism in Seattle.

The movement for the American Plan, the open shop has spread from Seattle to the other cities of the Pacific Coast, and the Coast expects to see it sweep the country until the right of all Americans to work without being subjected to coercion and intimidation is established. San Francisco, Portland, Spokane and Tacoma have organized "Associated Industries" on the Seattle plan.

The Pacific Coast is making a new declaration of independence for America.

To Prevent Strikes

The second national industrial conference, called by President Wilson after the failure of the first, drafted a tentative statement of principles and has proposed a plan for the avoidance of strikes as a method of settling industrial disputes.

Having done this much—with emphasis upon the tentative nature of its action—the conference adjourned over the Christmas holidays, in order that it might await the development of public opinion for or against its proposals and that it might receive the benefit of constructive suggestion and criticism before making a final report.

The result is two-fold: The conference declares positively against the unionization of government employees in departments whose conduct is essential to the administration of justice or the maintenance of public safety and order; further, it proposes an elaborate system of adjusting industrial disputes or, in the failure of both sides to submit to adjustment, of investigating the issues and making public declaration of a finding.

Briefly, the conciliation and arbitration plan proposes the establishment of a National Tribunal whose members shall be appointed by the President, with the approval of the Senate. Subordinate to this are to be Regional Adjustment Boards, composed of "panels" of employers and workingmen of the various industries in the region.

Provision is made for submission of industrial disputes to arbitration boards, to consist in each case of representatives of the employers and employees affected, plus employers and employees drawn in rotation from the "panels" of the Regional Adjustment Board. If both sides agree to submit the controversial issue to the arbitration board so constituted, agreeing to continue or resume the existing status pending arbitration, the arbitration board shall hear the case and make a binding award. If either side refuses arbitration, the board may make a finding nevertheless, which shall be made public but which shall not be binding. There is no provision for
compulsion, either as to delaying strikes pending investigation or as to enforcing awards to which either side has not voluntarily submitted.

The report is one which should be studied by everyone and on which constructive suggestions should be made. It was for this purpose that the conference made it, avowedly as a tentative report subject to revision in the light of future suggestions.

Already Samuel Gompers and Secretary Morrison of the American Federation of Labor have condemned the plan because it fails to provide specifically that negotiations with employees shall be through trade unions. Mr. Gompers declares that the conference, in its final report, should embody such recognition.

Strikes

Any eighth grade school boy can answer this question:

"If a man strikes for thirty days and wins a ten per cent wage increase at the end of the walk-out, does he win or lose at the end of the year?"

He loses!

Yet that is the result of many a strike.

The business agent doesn’t lose, of course; his salary goes on. The international organizer doesn’t lose. His salary continues; in fact, the more strikes the more work for the organizers. The strikers foot the bill.

But the man who loses all his wage for thirty days in order to win a ten per cent raise for a year comes out a loser at the end of the year.

And if the strike is for something other than wages, the loss is even more easily figured.

Yet, union men frequently empower their officials to call strikes at their will, for real or fancied grievance. And too frequently—too frequently for the good of the union man himself, to say nothing of the public—the strike is finally settled by a compromise which might have been achieved without a walk-out.

Many times the strike is lost because of the leader’s mistake in calling it, and brings nothing but loss to the workers who obeyed the strike order.

There are days ahead with plenty of work to be done. There is a crisis in the land which calls for every man’s best and utmost. Is the “best” to be half-hearted, half-way production, hampered by strikes in this industry and that?

As to Negro Labor

The inflammatory attack of a certain labor paper upon “The Open Shop” and Omaha employers generally, alleging a concerted plan to import negro workmen in an effort to smash Omaha unions, is perhaps beneath the dignity of notice.

The paper refers pointedly to “the possibility of a repetition of the disgraceful scenes of September 28,” openly suggesting that race riots may be union labor’s answer to the negro importations falsely alleged.

Without desiring to engage in useless argument over a false issue, but merely to keep the record straight, “The Open Shop” declares its entire lack of sympathy with the importation or colonization of any groups of colored citizens. It further denies that such action has been undertaken or is contemplated. As such workers may come or go, in the natural and ordinary movement from one industrial center to another, “The Open Shop” bespeaks for them, as for all other citizens, equal and fair consideration. But it looks with disfavor upon their importation or colonization, because of the very tendency to raise race prejudice and becloud the issue which does exist—Shall Omaha remain industrially free?

In this statement, “The Open Shop” speaks the policy and practice of the Business Men’s Association of Omaha.

“The Open Shop” does not rest its case for industrial liberty upon racial prejudices or antipathies. It refuses to be a party to the incitement of racial disturbances. It is fighting for a just cause with weapons of Truth and Reason. It rests its case on the merits of the issue.

Will the labor press of Omaha undertake the same responsibility?