

LOW WAGES AND DESIRE FOR BETTER LIVING CONDITIONS CAUSES OF LABOR UNREST

Industrial Committee Cites Reasons of Employers and Employes in Report to Congress

Washington, Dec. 7.—Nine cardinal causes of industrial unrest, most generally agreed upon by employers and employes alike, were presented to Congress today by the Commission on Industrial Relations in its preliminary report as follows:

"Largely a world-wide movement arising from a laudable desire for better living conditions. Advanced by representatives of labor, socialists and employers and generally endorsed.

"A protest against low wages, long hours and improper working conditions in many industries. Advanced by practically all labor representatives and assented to by many employers.

"A desire on the part of the workers for a voice in the determination of conditions under which they labor, and a revolt against arbitrary treatment of individual workers and a suppression of organization. This was almost uniformly approved by labor witnesses.

"Unemployment and the insecurity of employment. Generally advanced by witnesses from every standpoint.

"Unjust distribution of the products of industry. Advanced by most labor representatives and agreed to by most employers.

"Misunderstanding and prejudice. Agreed to by employers and employes.

"Agitation and agitators. Generally advanced by employers, but defended by labor representatives and others as a necessary means of education.

"The rapid rise in prices as compared with wages.

"The rapidly growing feeling that redress for injuries and oppression cannot be secured through existing institutions.

"In addition," says the report, "it has been stated by many witnesses that the tremendous immigration of the last quarter century, while not itself a direct cause of unrest, has served to accentuate the conditions arising from other causes, by creating an ever supply of labor unfamiliar with American customs, languages and conditions."

While it presents no conclusions, leaving those for later work, the commission, after more than a year's investigation covering all phases of industry throughout the country in which more than 500 witnesses representing all relations of capital and labor were examined, presents the question:

"Is there need for changes, improvements and adaptations or must entirely new legal machinery be devised for the control of industry?"

The final report and conclusions of the commission will be submitted next August when its mission is concluded. These nine agreed causes were the result of the examination of 514 witnesses divided in interest as follows: Affiliated with employers, 181; affiliated with labor, 188; not affiliated with either group, 150. The witnesses included seven members of the Industrial Workers of the World and six representatives of the Socialist party.

Under the caption "What Employer's Say" the report presents the following summary of causes of unrest:

"Normal and healthy desire for better living conditions.

"Misunderstanding and prejudice. Lack of conception that interests of both labor and capital are identical.

"Agitation by politicians and irresponsible agitators.

"Unemployment.

"Unreasonable demands arising from strength of organization.

"Labor leaders who stir up trouble to keep themselves in office and to graft on employers.

"Inefficiency of workers, resulting in ever increasing cost of living.

"Rapidly increasing complexity of industry.

"Sudden transition of a large number of foreigners from repression to freedom, which makes them an easy prey to labor agitators.

"Universal craze to get rich quick.

"Decay of old ideas of honesty and thrift.

"Misinformation in newspapers.

"Too much organization for combative purposes instead of for co-operation.

"Violence in labor troubles.

"Sympathetic strikes and jurisdictional disputes.

"Boycotting and picketing.

"Meddlesome and burdensome legislation.

"The closed shop, which makes for labor monopoly. Financial irresponsibility of labor unions."

A similar presentation of the employer's side is as follows:

"Normal and healthy desire for better living conditions.

"Protest against low wages, long hours, insanitary and dangerous conditions existing in many industries.

"Demand for industrial democracy, and revolt against the suppression of organization.

"Unemployment, and the insecurity which the wage-earner feels at all times.

"Unjust distribution of the product of industry. Exploitation of the many

by the favored few." Demand for full share of production.

"Just attitude of police and courts.

"There is one law for the rich, another for the poor.

"Immigration and the consequent over-supply of labor.

"Existence of a 'double standard,' which sanctions only a poor living in return for the hardest manual labor, and at the same time luxury for persons who perform no useful service whatever.

"Disregard of grievances of individual employes and lack of machinery for redressing same.

"Control of 'Big Business' over both industry and state.

"Fear on the part of those in comfortable positions of being driven to poverty by sickness, accident or involuntary loss of employment.

"Inefficiency of workers on account of lack of proper training.

"Unfair competition from prison and other exploited labor.

"The rapid pace of modern industry, which results in accidents and premature old age.

"Lack of attention to sickness and accidents, and the difficulty and delay accorded in the common law and the statutes of states which have not adopted modern methods of dealing with those questions.

"Arbitrary discharge of employes.

"Blacklisting of individual employes.

"Exploitation of women and children in industry.

"Promotion of violence by the use of gunmen, spies, and provokers hired by employers.

"Attempt to destroy unionism by the presence of the 'open shop.'

"Monopolization of land and natural resources.

"Suppression of free speech and right of peaceful assembly.

"On the principle of collective bargaining the investigators found virtually all witnesses with the exception of those representing the Industrial Workers of the World to be in accord. As to any suggested method of application of that principle, however, wide divergence of opinion was noted. In this connection the report adds:

"A majority of the best informed witnesses who have appeared before the commission have insisted, however, upon the necessity of securing a proper basis upon which such collective bargaining can be carried out. It is impossible to analyze these suggestions at this time, but it may be well to note that practically all of the most experienced witnesses have insisted upon the necessity for strong organization of both employers and employes as a fundamental basis for the successful conduct of collective bargaining."

The report takes up in detail criticisms of existing trade unions which it says came from employers and radicals who advocate other forms of labor organization. There are eighteen detailed criticisms in this list with an additional list of seven specified objections to present labor union methods made by Industrial Workers of the World.

Paralleling these lists, twenty-one detailed criticisms of employers or organizations are presented, coming from labor representatives. The labor men, however, were unanimous in favoring strong organizations by employers to further collective agreements with employes.

While virtually unanimous agreement of witnesses was found in favor of the formation of Federal Commission of Mediation and Conciliation, the report points out that "practically every witness has expressed the strongest disapproval of any form of compulsory arbitration. Arbitration was suggested only as a last resort and to be purely voluntary. Witnesses agreed that mediators should be bi-partisan, that they should have full power of investigation, that their contact with industry or industries with which they are expected to deal should be as nearly continuous as possible, that they should, if possible, act before a dispute has come to a head, and that adequate inducements should be offered to obtain the best possible plan.

"The testimony of a majority of the employers was in favor of a rule similar to that of the Canadian Industrial Disputes Act, which prohibits strikes and lockouts in public utilities pending investigation by the mediators, assisted by representatives of the employers and employes. Such a law is uniformly opposed by the representatives of labor, on the ground that it is in violation of that provision of the Constitution of the United States which prohibits involuntary servitude.

"Regarding trade unions and employers' associations, the commission announces that it is making a comprehensive study of a large number of typical organizations. The commission says:

"Against many of these associations and unions grave charges of serious import to the welfare of the country, if they be proved true, have been laid before the commission, and it is only by the most painstaking, impartial and unrelenting examination that the facts can be developed, and such examination is now proceeding."

The commission's experts also are looking into questions of unorganized labor, scientific management in shops as it affects employes, women and children in industry, land problems, unemployment, social legislation and labor and the law. Of unemployment the report says:

"Nothing comes so clear to the commission as the imperative necessity of organizing a market for labor on a modern business basis, so that there will be no vacant jobs and idle workers in the same community at the same time, or within distance where the transportation is practicable. The consensus of opinion is that legislation for a national system of labor exchanges is an immediate necessity. The plan of the commission proposes to establish a bureau of employment in the Department of Labor, which would cooperate with state and municipal employment offices, regulate private agencies doing inter-state business, and establish clearing houses for distributing information, uniting all labor changes into one national system."

Proposals for constructive legislation, the report announces, will be submitted to Congress covering labor exchanges; Industrial Education, Vocational Guidance, and Apprenticeship; Safety Sanitation, Health of Employees and administration of laws relating thereto; Smuggling of Asiatics; Mediation, Conciliation and Arbitration; Woman and Child Labor; Minimum Wage, Hours of Labor; Agriculture and Farm Labor; Social Insurance, especially workmen's sickness and invalidity insurances, and Labor and the Law.

NEW LABOR LAWS Progress of 1914—Big Gains For America's Industrial Army.

Big gains in the war against industrial evils is recorded in the Review of Labor Legislation of 1914, just issued from its New York headquarters by the American Association for Labor Legislation. The labor laws enacted by Congress, by thirteen state legislatures which convened this year and by Alaska and other territories are briefly summarized.

"Noteworthy as marking renewed determination to grapple scientifically with one of the most pressing problems of industrial maladjustment," said John B. Andrews, Secretary of the Association, yesterday, "is the law adopted this year in New York, establishing a state-wide system of public employment bureaus. Shortly after the signing of this act, New York City adopted an ordinance resulting on November 18 in the opening of the best equipped public employment exchange in the country. New Workmen's compensation laws were enacted in New York, Maryland, Kentucky and Louisiana, while other states, notably Massachusetts, liberalized the provisions of existing compensation codes. By enacting carefully drawn measures for the prevention of compressed air illness and of lead poisoning, New Jersey took an advanced stand in the campaign for occupational hygiene. In no fewer than seven states this year, initiatives affecting labor were submitted to popular vote. Among those which were successful are a new Arkansas child labor law adopted on September 14, and a Washington bill prohibiting the taking of fees by private employment agencies from applicants for work, adopted at the general election on November 3. The 1913 Colorado 'assumption of risk' law and the Nebraska workmen's compensation act of the same date, upon which referenda had been demanded, were sustained by popular vote, while the Missouri full-grew law of 1913, which was similarly challenged, was repealed. Universal eight hour day bills, initiated in the three Pacific coast states, were lost. Of more than ordinary interest is the section of the new federal anti-trust law which prevents the use of the Sherman act against trade unions on the ground that 'the labor of a human being is not a commodity or article of commerce.' Congress also strictly regulated the issuance of injunctions by federal courts in labor disputes, and established an eight hour day for female workers in the District of Columbia." Two important measures still before Congress provide for a federal system of public employment offices and for adequate industrial accident and occupational disease compensation for federal employes.

Accidents and Diseases

Three legislatures enacted laws requiring industrial accidents or occupational diseases to be reported, while New Jersey adopted scientific measures for the prevention of lead poisoning in lead plants and potteries and of the dreaded 'bends' or compressed air illness in tunnel and caisson work. Four states gave further attention to protecting their industrial

workers from fire, and Maryland passed two comprehensive laws regulating coffeeeries and tenement work-shops. Three states and the territory of Alaska legislated upon the subject of safety in mines, Kentucky going furthest and enacting a new mine code. Several new railroad safety laws are concerned with full crews, headlights and enclosed vestibules on trolley cars.

Factory Inspection

Seven states dealt with machinery for more efficient enforcement of their labor laws. No changes from the old style labor department to an industrial commission are recorded this year, but special commissions or boards to administer workmen's compensation laws were created in Kentucky, Maryland and New York. In several states salaries of labor department staffs were increased.

Child Labor

Eleven states, or about three-quarters of those in which legislation was passed this year, took action on child labor. Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi and Virginia passed entirely new codes, and other states amended their laws, tending to raise age limits and educational requirements, to shorten hours and to forbid hazardous employments and night work. Backward steps were taken in Maryland, where the minimum age for newsboys was reduced from twelve years to ten, and in Mississippi, where the maximum working hours for boys of fourteen and girls of sixteen were increased from eight to ten a day.

Workmen's Compensation

By the action of New York, Kentucky, Louisiana and Maryland, exactly twenty-four states, or one-half of those in the union, now have workmen's compensation laws. Massachusetts after two years experience, raised the benefits under its law from 50 per cent to 66 2-3 per cent. of wages, and New Jersey also liberated its rates, though to a less extent.

Hours

Alaska established an eight-hour day on public works, and a number of vacation and hour laws for public employes were enacted in Massachusetts and New York. Five states and Alaska legislated on hours in private employment, railroad workers and miners being the groups most widely affected. The weekly rest day law in New York was amended to exempt a number of milk handling establishments and also, in the discretion of the commissioner of labor, continuous industries in which no employes works more than eight hours a day.

Trade Disputes

The use of the injunction in labor disputes was regulated in Massachusetts and by Congress, the latter body also declaring the Sherman anti-trust law inapplicable to labor organizations as 'the labor of a human being is not a commodity or article of commerce.' Congress further, in appropriating \$200,000 for the enforcement of anti-trust laws, for the second time specified that none of the money was to be used for prosecuting labor organizations whose acts were not in themselves illegal. Louisiana and Massachusetts protected workmen in their right to organize.

Unemployment

Spurred on by the experiences of the winter of 1913-1914, three states, Louisiana, Maryland and New York, made provision for public bureaus to

put employment givers and employment seekers in touch with one another. The most important of these laws is that of New York, which created a bureau of employment within the state department of labor, with branches throughout the state in the discretion of the commissioner. The people of Washington, increased at long-standing abuses, practically abolished private employment agencies in their states by prohibiting the taking of fees from applicants for work.

Women's Work

Though minimum wage legislation this year was represented only by some amendments to the Massachusetts law, five states and the federal government took action on hours and working conditions affecting women. Mississippi established for women a ten-hour day and a sixty-hour week, and Virginia extended its ten-hour law to cover certain establishments not previously affected, while New York made its nine-hour day and fifty-four-hour week general for women employed in all mercantile establishments and limited their working week to six days. Congress established for all female employes in the District of Columbia an eight-hour day and a forty-eight-hour week, prohibited their employment before 7 a. m. or after 6 p. m., and provided a special staff of three inspectors, two of whom are to be women, to enforce the act.

WHO'S WHO IN THE WAR

Col. Rt. Hon. John Edward Bernard Seely, who was being denounced in some quarters as a "traitor" not so very long ago, because of his part in the Irish troubles, has been making a brilliant showing at the front. Col. Seely was Secretary for War in the Asquith ministry until public criticism forced his retirement from the post, but he has lately demonstrated, what his friends have always claimed, that he is a better soldier than politician. Col. Seely is forty-six years of age and was the youngest son of Sir Charles Seely. He was a barrister before the South African war aroused his military ardor, when he went to the front with the Imperial Yeomanry, winning the D. S. O., the Queen's medal and honorable mention in the dispatches. Long before that he had taken part in a daring rescue at sea and had received a gold medal from the French government as a recognition of his heroism. After the close of the South African war Col. Seely entered the political arena and was elected to Parliament. He was Under Secretary for the Colonies before he was elevated to the high cabinet post now held by Earl Kitchener. According to reports from the front, Col. Seely has been one of the bravest and most daring of the British staff officers in France. He had two motor cars "shot from under him" by German shells, and he distinguished himself in scouting work. It is declared by the British correspondent that he has often driven his car into the thickest of the fighting in order to rescue wounded soldiers. He is described as being "all over the place," going where the shells are thickest in the discharge of his duties.

Seven Moro prisoners escaped from the San Ramon prison, near Manila, and a few days later returned and unsuccessfully attempted a jail delivery.

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