

THE PERILS OF TRADES UNIONISM.

A portion of an address delivered by Hon. Clarence S. Darrow before the Henry George association of Chicago, June 25, as reported in the Chicago Record-Herald.

Trades unionism is an artificial institution, built by man to counteract some natural law. When opportunity was plenty there was no need for trades unions, but when the country became settled, and monopolies fenced in large portions of the earth, and began the traffic in men, then trades unionism began to grow here, as it did in Europe. Trades unionism is in the air, the people have caught it, and many men are joining in the movement who know nothing about its usage or what its functions are. Many men join unions who do not believe in the principle, because they think they can get on better with their fellow workmen.

Every step in trades unionism has followed the steps that organized capital has laid down before it, and it is fundamentally monopolistic. In the United States there are millions of workmen who have no other thought than how to get more wages, and they care for nothing else in trades unionism.

No thinking man will deny that the workmen are not getting anywhere near the wage they should get in comparison with the amount of their production. But wages are not measured by money, but in the necessities and comforts which are obtained.

Trades unions must find out why wages are not increased, instead of seeking arbitrary methods of raising wages in one craft, without relation to any other craft or to their fellow men. The mere question of raising wages accomplishes nothing in the end, and is burdensome. It is simply a weary traveling around in a circle. Not only that, but the raising of wages is often mischievous, and interrupts the economies of the business world, and leads to nothing. If the carpenter secures an increase in his wage, then the grocer, because he has to pay the carpenter, will demand an increase, and soon the miner will need an increase to meet the demand of the grocer. So it goes on until it gets back to the carpenter again, and no one has benefited, for no one can get more comforts and necessities for their money.

Whatever is accomplished by labor in raising wages is done with endless pain and trouble, and then they get only a fraction of what they expect, and the capitalist, with a stroke of the pen, can increase the profits twice as fast to keep up with their raise, and by a simple stroke of the pen. The burden falls

on the middle class, the large majority have no way of increasing their wages or their labor, and in this mad rush the middleman and the consumer is forgotten, and he gets the worst of it.

I view with uneasiness the friendly feeling that some of the big corporations are expressing for the trades unions. I always feel that trades unionism is safer when these gentlemen are on the other side. When I see men who are in political life like Mark Hanna, and who are also allied with the big corporations, professing love for trades unions, I am apprehensive. When I find men who all their lives have been interested in trafficking in men suddenly coming to love the workmen, I know what it means.

Of course, J. P. Morgan believes in big things. He sees that it is economy to deal with workmen as a body, rather than as individuals. He doesn't care how much he has to pay, because he understands that you can't mark up the price of labor as fast as he can mark up the price of his steel. But the public is really paying for it, and they are getting nothing in return. It is the same in every line where labor and capital are getting along peaceably.

Workmen may organize until the cows come home, but they can never worst the man they are trying to beat at his own game. I sometimes think it would be better if laboring men had tried to decrease wages, for then they would at least have increased the production, and in the general grab they might have obtained a little more. But any movement directed along toward the raising of wages will fail, because if the raise is equal, it will do no one any good, and if it is not equal, then an injustice is worked, because the man who controls the production gets the best of it.

The man who wants to make money is a fool to work. The rule in political economy is, he who does the most work gets the least wage. Any system of business organization which will increase production will benefit the workman, and anything that tends to the equitable distribution of wealth will do the rest. So far as trades unions do these things they are a benefit; so far as they do anything else, they are a detriment. They must turn their attention to the equal distribution of wealth. To do this they must work for such laws and institutions as will accomplish it. When trades unions spend their time tinkering about the question of wages in any craft, or in boycotting this man of that, they are frittering away their time and energy.

Without some movement directed to-

ward taking the natural products, as coal and ore, from the hands of trusts who limit their production, it is impossible to get an equitable distribution of wealth, or to help labor. The salvation of the workman is to take an interest in political action.

So far as laws influence the social conditions—and in this time and country they do to a large degree—the men who believe in the equal division of wealth must direct this almost wasted energy of the trades unions into political channels. But the man who will organize men into an industrial army, and then lead them to that party which makes it its business to exploit men, is worse than a traitor, and there are many of them in Chicago, the hotbed of trades unionism.

If you were to organize every man in the United States, and do nothing but declare boycotts and strikes or raise wages, they would accomplish nothing. They would be a great army going nowhere and doing nothing. For awhile they may build up the wall of wage, but they cannot keep it there. When the bubble of speculation breaks—and break it will—the organizations will melt away faster than they were built up.

There is no effort now on the part of the leaders to bring about any permanent good out of this vast wasted energy. Where can you point to any good the American Federation of Labor has ever done, except agitation, which is a rope of sand, to melt away under the first strain? They represent millions of laborers, but are they bound together to correct any real abuses? They are just an organization, as though that was an end, instead of a means to an end. Now is the time to accomplish something. There never was a time when it was so easy to educate an army of workmen until they have political convictions which they will stick to as their religion, until they accomplish them. If the leaders will do this, then trades unionism will live, but not otherwise.

TOM L. JOHNSON AT MR. BRYAN'S FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION.

At the Fourth of July celebration at Fairview, Mr. Bryan's home near Lincoln, Neb., under the auspices of the Fairview Jefferson Club, July 4, 1903, after the speech of Dr. Howard S. Taylor, of Chicago, Mr. Bryan introduced Mayor Johnson, of Cleveland, O., as the last speaker.

WM. J. BRYAN'S INTRODUCTION.

I am going to pass over the music which you find on the programme at this place, because I want to give the last speaker on the programme ample time and not have him speak while he feels rushed to catch a train. I have