

# The Messenger.

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"EQUAL RIGHTS TO ALL; SPECIAL PRIVILEGES TO NONE."

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OFFICIAL ORGAN OF NORTH CAROLINA KNIGHTS OF LABOR.

## CO-OPERATION.

The question of establishing a co-operative industrial system as a solution of the vexatious labor problem, has for many years been the ideal of many of the foremost among the labor leaders in England, and in the United States. This method of doing away with strikes, lockouts, boycotts, etc., by encouraging the workers to become their own employers, has taken a firm hold upon the industrial classes, until it is more at the present time of our co-operative enterprises, rises in successful operation by the Local Assemblies of the Knights of Labor alone, to say nothing about the large number of co-operative stores and supply depots controlled by members of the Farmers' Alliance and the Grange. Many failures have been recorded, it is true, yet every attempt to get away from the wage system has had a good effect and when the same co-operators who have met with disaster start out a second time, as a rule, they will avoid the rock upon which they split at the first venture, and generally success will crown their efforts.

The following interview with an old and earnest co-operator contains so many good suggestions to those who contemplate engaging in co-operative enterprises that we publish it entire. Nearly every failure of co-operation in this country can be traced to bad management or dishonest officers—sometimes one, often to both:

"What have you to say about your experience in co-operation among working men?" was the question asked.

"I have a great deal to say," was the reply, "and first is that I get safely out of what I am now in I will never again venture in the same path. There was a time when I gladly looked forward to the day when the workingmen and women of this country would be managing their business as owners, but I must confess that my experience has taught me a lesson that may cost me some money, but that I will never forget. I have learned that while we have the best mechanics in the world, we also have the best business managers, but it is very rarely that both these qualities are found in the same man or set of men. The average mechanic is no more fitted to manage the many little details necessary to the successful control of a business enterprise than is the average book-keeper or salesman fitted to work in a shop where skillful artisans are necessary. The mechanic and the business manager are absolutely necessary in all business enterprises, if success is desired, but each must keep in his place or trouble will follow. One is as necessary for success as the other, and neither must think that the future of the business depends entirely upon his own exertions. This has been the trouble with nearly all co-operative enterprises, and the history of labor organizations is filled with stories of the wrecks of these undertakings, and the rock they have invariably split upon has been a failure to recognize the merits of each other and the necessity of one to the existence of the other. The man who could properly handle a file, make a shoe or fit a customer with a suit of clothes imagined that he was of more importance to the concern than was the well-dressed salesman who could secure customers for the clothes shoes or machines which the workmen were engaged in producing, and often the salesman has had to quit him

the concern would go into bankruptcy. And so in nearly all co-operative concerns the trouble has begun and ended only when a settlement was declared and all hands retired from business, in the condition of the child who died of the fire. Of the hundreds of co-operative schemes that have existed in this country few, if any, are successful today, and those only because they may have learned sense through bitter experience.

"In my opinion it will be thus until all men learn that the existence and well-being of one man is as necessary as another and, no matter what may be our station in life, or position as workers, the work we do is needed and should be appreciated at its full value. Until that time arrives we may look for no permanent success in working men's co-operative undertakings."

Profiteering would appear, after all, to be a practical way of introducing co-operation. It gives the worker the benefit of good management, and induces the employer to agree to necessary delays and senseless strikes; for, when an employer is generous enough to share his profits with the toilers, he will generally be found fair enough to settle differences by arbitration, and the laborer will surely be more interested in his work if he feels that he has an interest at stake beyond that of mere dollars and cents in wages Saturday night.

Co-operation is what we want. But are the wage-workers themselves ready to inaugurate the system?—*Journal of United Labor.*

In 1891 the charters of the banks expire. All labor organizations and unions of currency reform should bestir themselves accordingly. If the charters are renewed it will be years before the money monopoly can be broken. Industrial freedom is impossible till this monopoly is blotted out, for the banks, controlling the volume of money, are in a position to dictate the terms on which the people shall make their exchanges. Whatever rights are given the banks after the present charters expire, the right to issue notes to pass currency as money should not be one of them. The issue of money is one of the prerogatives of government, the handing over of which to private individuals or corporations is little short of criminal. —*Labor Reformer.*

In the investigation of the abuses of the contract labor law, now proceeding in New York city, it has been shown that numerous New York contractors make a regular business of supplying contracts throughout the country with labor at any desired price, and that extortionate rates are demanded by these contractors from the employes on the ground of having secured work for them. Thousands upon thousands of Italians and Hungarians have been imported, and statistics exhibited show that fully two-thirds of the laborers in the mills and mines of Pennsylvania have been obtained in this way. This is a flagrant abuse and is one of the principal sources of wage depression. The most strenuous efforts should be directed against it.—*Independent Citizen, Albany, N. Y.*

All the labor organizations of Chicago have decided to vote for Stroeter and Cunningham. This will give the Union Labor party about 25,000 votes in that city.

## TARIFF FIGURES.

We are one of the few who believe that the tariff question has nothing to do with the question of high or low wages.

We arrived at this conclusion some time ago, but not until we had read both sides with a view to ascertain which was right if possible; and the more we study it, the more satisfied we become that free trade or protection cannot help the laboring people so long as the control of the government is in the hands of the moneyed class.

From the census of 1880, the following results in a dozen or more states is given, showing the annual rate of wages in each:

Maine,	annual wages,	\$260
New Hampshire,		302
Massachusetts,		364
Connecticut,		285
New York,		374
New Jersey,		366
Pennsylvania,		309
Georgia,		211
Alabama,		35
Mississippi,		206
North Carolina,		155
South Carolina,		128
Tennessee,		234
California,		483
Oregon,		501

Now the figures given above call for serious consideration by every laboring man. The people of these states are all living under the same protective system. They are all under the same fostering care of the general government, they pay the same duty in North Carolina but they do in Oregon. The manufacturing industries of North Carolina are protected just the same as they are in Oregon. Yet in Oregon annual wages of her laborers are nearly four times as much as in North Carolina. Now what we want is some free trade or protectionist to explain whether the tariff has anything to do with the difference in wages in these two states. We don't want our brother workmen to lose their heads over this tariff bugaboo. Don't throw your hat in the air and howl for free trade or protection until you know which will benefit you, or whether either one will better your conditions. Study over the little table given above and then ask the free trade and protection orators to explain why this difference in wages between states in the same country and under the same system? Look into the matter carefully and see if there is not a cat hid under this tariff meal.

## CO-OPERATION IN WISCONSIN.

The first report of the Eau Claire, Wis., co-operative association is before us. The report is dated May 31, and says, "the store has been running only five weeks and doing only a strictly cash business. As we have carried a very small stock and the spring trade has been against a cash business, many of our patrons being idle most of the time, we think the association has done remarkably well. The share capital paid in is \$884.50, and the sales \$1,201.08. At this rate the sales would amount to \$12,000 per year, and at a net profit of only 10 per cent. would clear 120 or 133 per cent. on capital stock." How does that compare with a profit of 4 per cent. in the savings banks? Don't all you fellows who oppose co-operation and favor banking speak at once.—*Toledo News.*

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## Special Inducements

To invite their patronage, and to this end we will be making special offers from time to time

## For Saturday's Trade

Look in and see for yourselves. Cash is a strong inducement at this season and we desire to invite the laboring man to come and visit our store and be prepared to spend a little cash.  
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