

TRADE UNIONISM AT THE ROOTS

BY SAMUEL GOMPERS.

WHATEVER may be the burdens and duties thrust upon the trade union movement, the first duty is simple. It is to get members into the union.

Upon success in this first step depends all success in every other direction.

The American Federation of Labor stands in a position of power and commanding influence today because more than five million men and women have individually and separately joined trade unions.

After they joined they learned the routine of trade union work. They have done the hard jobs that are not particularly interesting, but they are necessary before all other things.

Trade union strength and influence all goes back to such things as keeping books, attending meetings, serving on committees, paying dues, reading trade union publications, looking for new members and serving on wage negotiation bodies.

NO outsider can have any true idea of the vast amount of work that is done without compensation in the trade union movement every day in the year. Men and women are working tirelessly, and with no reward except the consciousness of duty well done—and this work goes on day after day, year after year.

Today the American Federation of Labor is a great influence in the affairs of the nation and of the world. This is possible only because men and women everywhere perform the small tasks of trade unionism—the tasks that are small by themselves, but that together make up the foundation of the life of the movement.

It is important to be a good trade union secretary, a good presiding officer, or a faithful treasurer. These are offices that require skill and work and integrity. And mostly they are offices that call for much work and no material reward. The regard is in a satisfied conscience.

It is important to be an able member of a trade union committee appointed to meet and negotiate with employers. Ability here may mean advancement or retrogression for the men and women represented. The work of dealing with employers in such negotiations constantly calls for more knowledge, more preparation, more force and tact in presenting the facts and the logic.

It is important to be a good organizer. Good organizers bring non-unionists to understand the benefits of trade unionism and they make their impression upon the life of the community in which they work.

THE American trade union movement is a sound and constructive movement. It is thoroughly American. Its roots are entwined with the roots of our free and democratic national life. It is the one truly progressive labor movement in the world because it is the one which sticks to the business of advancing labor's economic interests and that is never swerved from that job.

Where American labor interposes its strength in affairs that may not seem to be purely industrial, it does so for the purpose of protecting its opportunities on the industrial field—to keep the way clear, to keep the movement safe and sound, to free it from attack, to keep obstacles out of the way. The main effort always is in industry, where the work is, where the wheels of industry are, where the wage earners are to be found and where they give their skill and their effort in production.

Be a good trade unionist. It is the first and most important duty. Be a member on the job. On that all other things depend. Whether the movement has five million or twenty million members, the great successes can be gained only through individual loyalty and faithfulness. There is and there always will be individual responsibility. The individual who would benefit from the labor movement must give his or her mite of service in that movement.

It is worth more than all else to be a faithful member, to know the movement at its roots. There is none so busy with other work, or so burdened with other tasks, either in the union or out of it, that he can afford not to be first of all a good trade unionist in the ranks.

No other exaltation can dim the luster of that simple service.

THE SUPREME COURT'S RISE TO POWER

BY LOWELL MELLETT

"O YEA! O yea! O yea! All persons having business before the Honorable the Judges of the supreme Court of the United States, are admonished to draw near, and give their attendance, for the court is now in session. God save the United States, and this Honorable Court!"

Having business before the Honorable Judges, you draw near as admonished, as near as the court attendant will permit you. This is the back row of the U. S. Supreme Court chamber, one of the two rows reserved for tourists and other sightseers. However, the court room is very small, despite its impressive dignity, and you can see and hear fairly well.

Your business is to discover for yourself, if you can, whether these United States have a government of laws or a government of men. Somewhere you have read that the ideal government is one of laws, not of men. Seeing in the flesh the men who interpret the laws may help you to decide. Later, a certain amount of historical research may reveal whether these men and the long line of men who preceded them, reaching back into the misty past, have been given us the law as they have found it in the written word, or as they have found it in their own human conceptions.

The judges behind the high bench present a pleasing appearance. All are dressed in black, though the dim light of the room does show the silken sheen of their gowns. You may wonder why they wear the bothersome gowns, since only their shoulders can be seen and gowns must be warm in summer.

In the middle sits Chief Justice Taft, rejected by the voters of all save two States the last time he ran for President, now presiding over that branch of the Government whose powers are alleged to have become greater than the presidency. He looks competent, though today seemingly a bit bored and restless. This is strange, for it was Taft who once declared in a public speech:

"I love judges and I love courts. They are my ideals on earth of what we shall meet afterward in Heaven under a just God!"

Here is reading from a printed brief presenting one side of the case concerning which argument is now being heard. Offering the argument is the lawyer for a corporation dealing in gas and light. You gather it is a controversy between some city out west and this lawyer's corporation. The lawyer argues and Chief Justice Taft reads. However he is listening at the same time, for he asks the lawyer a question.

On the right of Taft is Justice McKenna, a wisp of a man, holding his white whiskers tightly in one hand as he sits stiffly upright against the back of his chair. McKenna is 80 years old and has set in one of those nine chairs for 26 years. He is paying earnest attention to the lawyer's remarks and occasionally propounds a question in a thin, treble voice.

On the left of Taft is Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, a man older yet than McKenna, though reputed to have one of the youngest, keenest minds of them all. He is 83 years old and has sat behind that bench for 37 years. Long enough to be set in his ways, you would think, but it was Holmes who said not long ago:

"I do not think the United States would come to an end if we (the court) lost our power to declare an act of Congress void."

Since it is this very question which is troubling you, it is worth your while taking another look at Holmes. From where we sit he does not show his years. His snow white imperial mustache is almost military, though it would be a trifle long for the army. He takes off his gold-rimmed glasses when he asks this busy western lawyer a question and puts them on again when the lawyer has answered.

Next to Holmes is McReynolds, long-faced and saturnine and quite a bit bald, baldier than any of the others, in fact, though younger than most of them, and younger looking. He isn't quite comfortable in his seat for some reason and shifts about a great deal, straining all the time to maintain attention.

Then comes Sutherland, one of the new members. (He, like Sandford, sitting at his left, was appointed by President Harding. With Butler, absent today, and Chief Justice Taft, there are four Harding appointees among the nine.) Sutherland is giving very serious attention to the papers before him, presumably the same brief the other judges are reading from—time to time. His still newer colleague, Sandford, is not. If you didn't know it to be impossible, you'd suspect that Sandford is wearied to death. He squirms about in his chair, rests his head sideways against his back and, at times, nibbles the ends of his fingers. And he whispers to the serious Justice Sutherland.

There is whispering likewise at the other end of the bench, Van Devanter of Cheyenne, Wyoming, sits next to Brandeis of Boston. Brandeis smiles, as if at what he himself is saying; Van Devanter, not amused—or so it seems at this

distance. The Brandeis smile is not able, sad, not cynical; merely tinged perhaps by regret that the world is not intelligent.

There, they sit. As dignified and intelligent, as high-purposed and sincere, a group of jurists as are to be found in any country. They represent great power, the greatest in some ways among all American forces, greater certainly than similar courts in other lands, for they can and do set aside the will of the people, as expressed by the people's direct representatives. Yet, you can't escape the conclusion that they, too, are just men.

As good a group of judges, no doubt, as ever, has graced this bench. In one respect, at least, a better group than some that have preceded them, for they still have their health and mental alertness, whereas—well, listen to this:

"During the hearing of some of the most important cases Justice Gray, suffering from kidney trouble, frequently fell asleep. Justice Shiras often nodded in slumber, blissfully oblivious to the learned arguments of learned counsel who often were put at their wits' end to conceal their confusion. As for Justice Field, he could be seen, on occasion after occasion, staggering to his seat, all out of breath, his eyes bulging, and his frame in the shiver of extreme decrepitude; he required an assistant to hold him up."

This paragraph is from a description of the court under Chief Justice Fuller, in Myer's History of the Supreme Court.

There is nothing like that now.

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In the full bloom of life we are prone to forget that inevitable visitor—Death. We mingle with our friends and companions for a while and are shocked and grieved when the Master calls our friend and loved one from us. It is good that we are taught to bow in humble submission to the will of the Father. Were it not for that faith in the goodness of God our pain and suffering would be unendurable when death takes our friends and loved ones from us.

On February 4, John Edwin Thorpe, a member of our Order, a man we loved, a true Junior and a loyal friend, was taken from us. We regret his going, yet that abiding faith in the God we are taught to love and honor gives us hope to believe that all is for the best, and courage to withstand the pain of parting.

To the surviving wife, and his mother and his brother and sister and to his numerous friends we would say a word of solace and breathe a prayer that their grief may be lessened in the thoughts of the happiness he gave them while living.

That the public may know of the high esteem in which we held our departed brother, it is ordered by Park Council, No. 90, Jr. O. U. A. M., that a copy of this resolution be given the press, a copy sent to the bereft family and a copy spread upon the minutes of our Order, that Juniors hereafter may read of the good qualities of our departed friend, John Edwin Thorpe.

H. A. STILLWELL, JAMES F. BARRETT, Feb. 9, 1924. Committee.

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