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Farmers and Organized Labor

A Symposium by Progressive Farmer Readers

Good Labor Unions and Some Bad Ones—Use Judgment

IF WE believe in coöperation among farmers, then we must concede the right of town labor to organize and coöperate. I think labor unions have aided greatly in bringing about better living conditions for the laboring man and a fairer division of the profits of industry. I see also some mistakes of labor unions and wrong ideas.

As a famous American once said: "There are good trusts and bad trusts." I am of the opinion that his idea of trusts might be just as applicable to labor unions. I don't think the farmer should look upon organized labor with the spirit of the Irishman who killed the snake in the show case just because his motto was, "I kills 'em wherever I see's em." There are times when the farmer should lend his support and coöperation to the town labor union as to a friend or brother in need of help. There are times when "the cross of gold and crown of thorns" should be borne coöperatively. It is not best for our country that labor be ground in the dust by the heel of capital. It is also equally as bad for labor to demand the unreasonable with rashness.

I believe in fair and conservative labor unionism, and that kind deserves the farmer's support.

Capital still has the long suit. Capital has too much advantage. Some men are easily growing too rich. Capital in general is not giving a fair share to labor. The division of the fruits of industry are not just.

But rashness can never gain friends for the cause of labor. I like President Wilson's idea of driving out evil by turning on the light of publicity.

Let labor unions get the facts and hold them up to the public for judgment. Capital, if it be unfair, will squirm when the sunshine of fair-minded opinion becomes directly upon it.

Furthermore, I consider this an inopportune time for labor to demand more pay and shorter hours. We have reached the limit in that direction. Labor needs the cost of living reduced. This can be done by a reduction in the price of manufactured articles, and still give capital a fair share. Let the labor unions begin to clamor for lower prices and strike against high prices of manufactured articles and excess profits by middlemen on farm products and they will get the support they deserve from the farmer.

CHAS. EAKER.

Farmer Should Oppose Cheap Labor but Control His Own Affairs

"SELF-preservation being the first law of nature," the farmer must first look out for his own interests, and in so doing, if assisting other workers in other industries to secure living wages and proper working conditions will stimulate the market for farm products—as it surely will—then the farmer should, from purely selfish motives, support and coöperate with organized labor in securing its demands.

Organized labor aims to raise the standards of living for workers in town industries by raising wages, establishing a uniform eight-hour working day in factories and mines, creating better working conditions and more healthful living conditions. In short, the town worker is trying to secure a comfortable living for himself and family and provision for old age as reward for his labor, to which he is justly entitled, and the farmer should be willing for him to have it. When the town laborer's

standard of living is raised, greater demand is created for the farmer's products; therefore, the farmer is helping himself when he helps the laborer.

The farmers are now organizing their economic forces, as labor is organized, and the temptation to enter politics, as organized labor has done, is very much in evidence. However, the farmer has wisely declined to become—as an organization—a constituent part of organized labor, because he is not directly concerned in all of labor's political program.

The farmer also knows that cheap labor has been a curse to mankind down the ages. Cheap labor has been detrimental to Southern agriculture. The South has produced cheap cotton because she had cheap labor, and the Southern farmer has had a cheap standard of living. Conditions in the South for the past 40 years need no recital to prove what cheap labor will do.

Farmers can handle agricultural problems more intelligently than persons engaged in other industries, and they should maintain their organizations separate and apart from organized labor, coöperating with labor in matters of National scope in securing reforms calculated to be beneficial to the commonwealth.

JAMES T. WILLIAMS.

Thinks Labor Unions Will Hang Themselves

A MAN should hardly be expected to continue striving to push a mule out of a mudhole when every time he makes a friendly push the mule kicks him in the face with both feet. The man will eventually learn that the mule is destitute of a coöperative spirit and will let him perish in the mudhole.

In like manner, farmers are learning that organized labor is destitute of coöperative spirit and will let it perish. There is an old adage, and a mighty true one: "Give some people enough rope they will hang themselves." This applies to organizations of individuals as well as to single individuals. Farmers are giving organized labor rope in the form of food and clothing and settling their strike, riot and labor disturbance bills. The day of hanging, determined solely by organized labor, is dead sure to come. The farmer, innocent of guilt in reeling off the rope, will live to see the execution and prosper thereafter as he has never prospered before.

C. C. CONGER, Jr.

Where Coöperation Would Help

CO-OPERATION between farmers and organized labor is much to be sought after.

A system of marketing could be perfected that would greatly benefit producer and consumer by eliminating certain classes of profiteering middlemen that are the curse of commerce.

But so long as organized labor persists in its scheme of radicalism and unreasonable demands, it does not deserve and should not expect the support of the farmers.

M.

I like The Progressive Farmer fine, and my children don't want to miss a copy. They are anxious to read Huck Finn. I think you are keeping your promise in making The Progressive Farmer larger and better. I will try to interest some of my neighbors in taking The Progressive Farmer.—J. R. Johnson, Seven Mile Ford, Va.

I think The Progressive Farmer is the best paper on earth. We would not be without it for anything. We keep all the papers to refer to when we need them.—M. J. Williamson, Bedford City, Va.

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Yes, four subscriptions will earn two sets of the trees and vines as enumerated above, and six subscriptions will earn three sets; you can earn as many as you wish, two subscriptions for each set.

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