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# The Charlotte Labor Journal

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## LABOR DAY, 1937

BY WILLIAM GREEN,

(President, American Federation of Labor.)



On Labor Day our thoughts are not centered entirely upon material achievements, important though they may be. Instead, we turn to a serious consideration of the social and economic aspects of life, with special emphasis upon the enduring and real. All the plans and aims of the American Federation of Labor focus upon a desire to secure for the masses of the people advance in the cultural, spiritual and educational phases of human life. We are deeply conscious of the fact, however, that the attainment of these higher ideals rest upon the stands of living which we are able to establish through the exercise of our economic influence. When we have established the practice of collective bargaining and no longer have to waste our energies in maintaining this right there will be more time for the development of those forces within us that release our creative and cultural abilities.

Let us turn first to the field of work. There has been a steady decline in the number of unemployed during the past year and we have every reason to hope for an even greater improvement in the months just ahead.

A review of the events of the year marked by Labor Day 1937 discloses a record of achievement and progress which is heartening to the workers of our Nation. The American Federation of Labor has increased its membership by nearly three quarters of a million members since last Labor Day. This does not take into consideration the membership of those organizations which left the American Federation of Labor and formed the C. I. O. Extension of union agreements parallels increase in the scope and strength of union organization. Workers who never before dared organize and ask for a voice in determining the conditions and pay under which they work, are now negotiating wage agreements through their elected representatives.

We have also made progress in the legislative field. As no law is really effective until the Supreme Court approves it, we find satisfaction in the favorable ruling of the United States Supreme Court on the constitutionality of the National Labor Relations Act. This has come a realization to the workers that they are free to organize and establish machinery for collective bargaining without fear of retaliation or discrimination on the part of their employers and those controlling their jobs. Theoretically the workers have been free for many years, yet in actual practice they have found it difficult to exercise this right in many instances prior to the time the National Government assumed responsibility for maintaining this right.

We are proud of the progress made in providing against those emergencies that befall most wage earners—old age and unemployment. Every state now has an approved unemployment compensation plan under the Social Security Act. Forty-two states have old age assistance laws to which the Federal Government also contributes. This is amazing progress in so short a time and is of real interest to those workers in covered occupations. We are now free to plan for the enlargement of the scope of coverage of the several state laws as well as improving the provisions already made. This should be one of the major objectives of state federations of labor during the coming year.

Labor is vitally concerned also with the old age benefit provisions of the Social Security Act and Railway Retirement Act. As experience points the way it is hoped that the classifications of workers included in these provisions will be definitely broadened. There are altogether too many categories of workers excluded from the provisions of the old age benefit plan under the Social Security Act. This has been due in part to difficulties of administering the provisions for some groups of workers and it may be that some separate scheme will have to be devised before the majority of these excluded workers may be brought under the provisions of the Act. Acceptance of the principle of contributory old age benefits is heartening however, and we feel encouraged to aim for further developments.

The decision of the Supreme Court concerning the constitutionality of minimum wage legislation is a reversal of its former stand on this subject and opens the way for protective legislation for women.

With each step forward Labor becomes increasingly conscious of the fact that our first concern is the strengthening and advancement of our organized labor movement, that the workers and all Society may be safeguarded and bettered. Strong organizations are essential not to gain new advantages but to protect the gains already made. Organization therefore, must be of our continuing and growing concern. Unity for the common good of all must be our aim. It devolves upon the rank and file as well as those entrusted with the direction of our unions to be ever conscious of our responsibilities both to the labor movement and to all concerned that the common good of all may be advanced. I bespeak the co-operation of all our members and friends toward this end.

I rejoice at every effort workingmen make to organize. I hail the labor movement. It is my only hope for democracy. Organize, and stand together! Let the nation hear a united demand from the laboring voice.—Wendell Phillips.

Trade unions are the bulwark of modern democracies.—W. E. Gladstone.

Attacked and denounced as scarcely any other institution ever has been, the unions have thriven and grown in the face of opposition. This healthy vitality has been due to the fact that they were a genuine product of social needs—indispensable as a protest and a struggle against the abuses of industrial government.

## RIGHT TO ORGANIZE AFFIRMED BY FEDERAL CHURCH COUNCIL IN LABOR DAY MESSAGE

Reaffirmation of the full right of working men and women to organize in unions for their mutual benefit, approval of higher wages that have recently been secured by some groups of workers as in complete accord with the spirit of the Christian religion, strong condemnation of an economic system that regards toilers as mere machines to be exploited for the profit of employers, and an admonition that "many church members" whose economic views are hostile to the interests of labor should correct their "bias of class," are the outstanding features of the Labor Sunday Message for 1937 issued by the Executive Committee of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, through its Department of the Church and Social Service, from the Council's headquarters in New York City.

### JUSTICE FOR ALL

Turning to the Bible for justification of applying the principles of religion to modern industry, the Council said:

"On this Labor Sunday, dedicated to a consideration of the meaning of the Christian Gospel for our industrial life, we remind ourselves of the spiritual insight of the prophets of Israel who saw that the God who rules the universe is also the God of justice in human affairs. God, as revealed in the Bible, calls us to share in His concern for justice for all. As Jeremiah said of King Josiah, 'He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Was not this to know me?' saith the Lord."

"On this day we remind ourselves also of the compassion of Christ for the poor and disinherited. That compassion, in a day when poverty was inevitable, becomes for us in our day when poverty can be abolished, a demand for justice in the distribution of the product of industry. From the perspective of Christianity it is intolerable that masses of men, women and children should be denied the opportunities which comfortable people regard as necessities. God did not create wage-earners to be mere instruments for the making of money for others; the welfare of all must be inherent in the end for which all the processes of production and distribution are carried on.

### RELIGIOUS SIGNIFICANCE OF LABOR RELATIONS

"It is because of the concern of religion for justice and for social welfare that church bodies have for thirty years officially declared for the right of employes as well as employers to organize. Back of these declarations has lain a conviction of the sacredness of human personality and of the dignity of the common man, which is born of the teaching of Jesus that all men are children of God.

"Such a belief issues in a demand for democracy, both in political and industrial relations. This leads to the organization of workers in order that they may have a recognized voice in determining the conditions under which they live and work. Experience has shown that since industry is often organized on a national or even wider basis, labor unions of corresponding scope are needed if workers are to be adequately represented in truly democratic relations, and if industry-wide standards are to be maintained."

### TRADE UNIONS INCREASE MEMBERSHIP

Emphasizing the fact that "many industries in this country have been organized over a long period of years," and that "it has been demonstrated that it is possible for organized employes and organized employers to maintain generally harmonious relations, and to adjust their differences through joint conciliation without recourse to strikes or lockouts during the terms of their contracts," the Council pointed out that "the past year has been marked by a significant advance in wider organization of workers," and said "the decision of the Supreme Court validating the National Labor Relations Act marks a wider and more far-reaching recognition in law of labor's right to organize and bargain collectively."

### WAGES ARE STILL TOO LOW

"As yet only a minority of American workers are organized," the Council continued, "and it must be recognized that annual wages of many skilled workers are still below a comfortable level of living, while the wages in many industries both urban and rural are grossly inadequate for a decent standard of living for an American family. Many millions still can find no work. We are convinced, therefore, that thoughtful Christians will welcome the contin-

porary gains in status and economic welfare on the part of labor as in line with the social ideals of Christianity.

### CLASS BIAS AFFLICTS CHURCH MEMBERS

"In the growing complexity of society many of us have been so cut off from the lives of the industrial workers that we are tempted to think of them not as neighbors, not as persons whose welfare in this world is as important in the sight of God as our own, but as strange masses.

"While there are millions of wage earners in our churches, yet many of our congregations have drawn their membership, by reason of location and association, chiefly from the more comfortable middle classes. Many church members see the world from the point of view of the laboring masses.

"As a result of belonging to a class that is relatively secure, many of us tend to fear the very social changes which we should welcome because of the ethical demands of our Christian faith. While protesting against anything that accentuates class consciousness, we fail to realize that our own point of view is largely controlled by the bias of class.

"Our first need is for self-knowledge and repentance, and sincere desire that the same mind may be in us which was in Christ Jesus who counted not privilege and power as things to be grasped, but emptied Himself in the service of man.

"There are many parties to industry. The demand of the hour is for greater tolerance, understanding and fair play among them. Voice have been raised among employees urging modification of the older attitudes of many toward organized labor. Leaders of labor should realize that with increasing power, the labor movement must accept greater responsibility, not only fulfilling its traditional ideal of a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, but also taking a broad view of the economic scene as a whole.

"The achievement of increasing industrial wages alone will not solve the total problem. A balance between agriculture and industry must be attained. Prices to consumers must be taken into account. Labor and consumers in many countries have been quick to grasp the advantages of consumers' co-operation as a vital part of the movement toward a better day.

"Comprehensive collaboration of all groups is urgently needed. Employers, labor, consumers and the government must work together to provide for the economic needs of all the people. We must create also such co-operative relations among the nations and such access to raw materials for all as shall promote international peace.

### END OF ECONOMIC INSECURITY ASKED

"As industrial and economic life becomes more complex we discover increasingly urgent need for more personal consecration of individuals to the religious life. For religion will always be indispensable not only for the soul of the individual, but also as social cement to hold any society together in the bonds of peace. Selfish struggles for prestige or power on the part of individuals or groups can become divisive forces in any society.

"There must, indeed, be such a re-organization of our economic life as will remove the fear of economic insecurity on the part of men and nations which now leads to inter-class and international conflict, but there may still remain in individual lives those destructive and socially divisive forces of sin and selfishness, of jealousy and pride and intolerance which would tend to tear apart any social order.

"The Church must therefore continue to serve society by proclaiming Christ's gospel of justice, love, and reconciliation, and by insisting that both individuals and economic and political institutions shall conform to the will of the God of justice and love."

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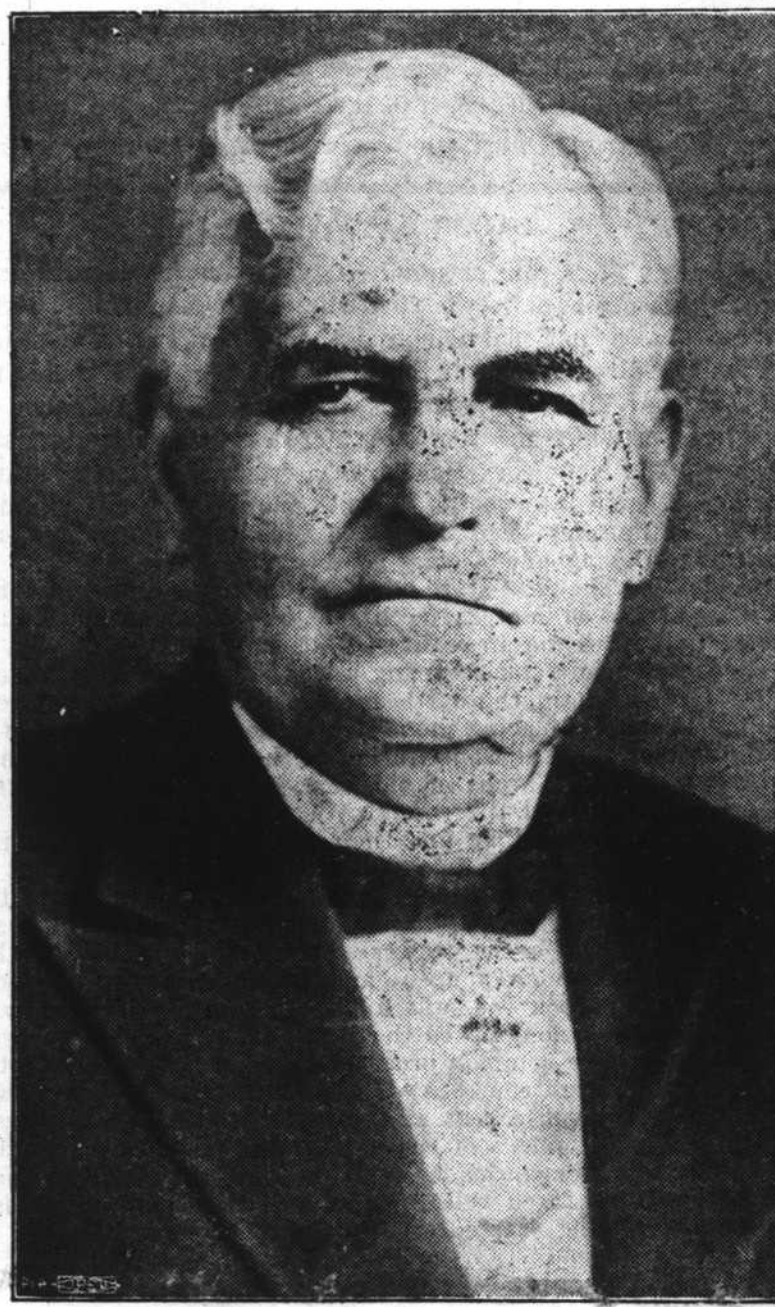
### NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

The Charlotte Labor Journal is the only union labor weekly newspaper published in Mecklenburg county, or in this immediate section. It is endorsed by Central Labor Union and affiliated bodies. There seems to be some misunderstanding in regard to this matter, and attention is called to a resolution appearing upon the front page adopted by Central Labor Union.

## LABOR DAY MESSAGE 1937

BY FRANK MORRISON

Secretary-Treasurer, American Federation of Labor.



As a result of years of agitation by the American Federation of Labor with the co-operation of the membership of the affiliated organizations through the enactment of the National Labor Relations Act, we have established the principle in law under which employers are prohibited from discriminating against or interfering with employes joining a union of their own choosing for the improvement of labor conditions. Notwithstanding the right is inherent under guarantees of the constitution of the United States, discharge from employment and various forms of discrimination have been the penalty of wage workers who have had the temerity to pioneer in union membership.

Courts are somehow always able to read into laws enacted for the benefit of labor, meaning that defeats the purpose of the legislation. This was the development with the labor Sections of the Clayton Anti-Trust Law. We hailed those provisions as labor's bill of rights and as prohibiting courts from rendering decisions which place wage workers in their collective relations with employes in a different category than free citizens. The interpretation of the Courts rendered the Clayton Act null and void from the standpoint of any benefit to labor.

The National Recovery Act was enacted to overcome the evils of competition that were wrecking industry and reducing the conditions of labor to levels below the subsistence line. When the Act was being drafted it was through the insistence of the American Federation of Labor that provisions were incorporated to protect the wage workers in union membership. This legislation forced the hands of unfair employers and the Company union spread like a mushroom growth as a pretext of complying with the law. Our experience with legislation has been that it is difficult to put words together in a law that will not when it comes to the scrutiny of the courts provide loopholes to legalize the acts of antagonistic employers.

The struggle which our affiliated organizations have carried on in defense of the right to organize has had all the implications of warfare with enemy forces. Our movement has made progress because trade union regulations and provisions impose self-restraint and self-discipline in the face of grueling provocation. These policies have permitted better judgment to prevail, gains to be secured and maintained to await the opportunity of another day.

## Green Lauds Housing Bill; Jobs For Idle

ATLANTIC CITY, N. J.—The enactment of the Wagner-Steagall \$500,000,000 Housing Bill to provide decent dwellings for workers and their families who are compelled to live on small incomes was characterized as "the only thing of importance to organized labor" accomplished by the recent session of Congress, by William Green, president of the American Federation of Labor, at a press conference in the Hotel Ambassador here soon after his arrival to attend the meeting of the Executive Council of the Federation.

Mr. Green said the American Federation of Labor made the Housing Bill "its number one demand" at the beginning of the session and worked steadily for its final enactment. Although asserting that the measure was finally agreed to by both the Senate and the House of Representatives on the last day of the session was generally acceptable to the A. F. of L. Mr. Green pointed out that it contained some limitations that should be remedied at the next session of Congress.

Among these limitations he included the provisions prohibiting the Housing Authority, set up to administer the Act, from lending money to finance projects where the cost per room exceeds \$1,000 (\$1,250 in cities of more than 500,000 population). "This limit is too low in places where

high land costs must be figured in," Mr. Green explained, adding: "Nevertheless the resulting program will stimulate building construction generally, and also revive construction by private capital. There is a shortage of homes; the need for housing is great and the rent problem is becoming serious.

"But as a result of the enactment of the bill a housing program will be launched in all the larger cities. We estimate that more than 150,000 homes will be built in the next year as a direct outcome of the bill, along with a considerable amount of slum clearance.

"Other good effects will be increased work in the building trades and creation of job opportunities in building materials. Altogether it will be very helpful to the whole unemployed problem."

## Labor Broadcast For Union Label By I. M. Ornburn

On Labor Day, I. M. Ornburn, Secretary-Treasurer, Union Label Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor, will deliver an address, entitled "Labor Day Banners," over the coast-to-coast network of the Columbia Broadcasting System. Mr. Ornburn will be heard in the morning from 9:45 to 10 A. M. EST. He will tell the radio audience of the great growth in the demand for Union Labels, Shop Cards and Buttons.