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SPIRIT OF LABOR DAY 1948



MEANY'S MESSAGE

(Continued from Page 1) that the reactionaries have been having a field day in the past three years in a number of state legislatures, with the result that today hostile state laws, of varying degrees of severity, are operating in more than half the states of the Union.

The injuries inflicted upon the tens of millions of average wage-earning citizens since the end of World War II have been dealt out to us by the reactionaries of business and politics whose grip on Federal and state law-making bodies is not yet complete. There are quite a few items on their program for the American labor movement which they are keeping veiled for the present. While for the most part the National Association of Manufacturers and its unholy agents and allies have done a good job of guarding the secrets of their future warfare against organized labor, enough has leaked out to make clear that labor's enemies have in store new measures so drastic as to make even the Taft-Hartley Act look mild by contrast.

Yes, American labor does have serious matters to consider on this Labor Day. To my mind, the most serious problem of all is one that must be of concern not only to workers but to all other Americans who believe—really and truly believe, in their hearts—that the free American way of life is the best way of life to be found on our planet.

Our American way of life is indeed the best ever devised by the minds of men, and it is the best not simply because we have the most telephones and automobiles, and bathtubs and skyscrapers. There is much more to it than that. The American way of life is best for various reasons and in various ways, but the most important point about America is that we have been free from the blight of what is often termed "the class struggle."

The nations of Europe know what the class struggle means. The class struggle has been going on over there for decades. It is one of the sad facts of European life.

American labor, as represented by the American Federation of Labor, has always rejected the concept of the class struggle. We have never been out to destroy the employers. On the contrary, we have always recognized and defended the legitimate rights of employers. No stauncher defenders of our American free enterprise system exist than the 7,500,000 American working men and women who make up the American Federation of Labor. We have asked and fought for recognition of labor's rights. We have asked and fought for economic justice. But we have always recognized that decent, fair employers were fully entitled to decent, fair treatment at labor's hands.

Where the class struggle idea

calls for "war to the death" between employers on the one side and workers on the other side, our idea in the American labor movement has been "live and let live." In the past 100 years, millions of people left Europe and came to America because they were sick of the class struggle. No one circumstance has contributed more directly or more vitally to the phenomenal rise of our nation than the absence of the ruinous class struggle. America has grown mighty and it has prospered, and none have prospered more than the employers of the nation.

And yet today the National Association of Manufacturers and certain legislators have permitted their hatred of organized labor to blind them to this fundamental fact. Like the totalitarians of the Left, but without the same deliberate planning and awareness of what they are doing, the controlling clique of the NAM and their federal and state legislative cohorts have been taking steps to bring the nation ever closer to the precipice of the class struggle.

American labor has always refused to believe that this deadly disease will ever catch hold here. We have never wanted it. We do not want it now. The class struggle is an evil thing, as the tragic experiences of other peoples, in other lands, have amply shown.

But the NAM and other reactionaries who are driving to bring about a condition in which the emergence of the class struggle concept would be inevitable even in democratic America had better stop and reflect for a moment—if they can spare that much time from their plottings against working men and women.

Let them ponder and ponder well that, if there is going to be a class struggle in America, it can have only one result, only one outcome—not the crushing of la-

bor, as they desire, but the utter defeat of the initiators of the struggle, the powerful reactionary wing of Big Business.

Despite the menace which we face today, I am confident that we can soon again move forward on the road to a better day for America's workers. The past record of the American Federation of Labor indicates beyond question that strong opposition will bring out even stronger labor's will to progress.

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