

Eugene V. Debs
“Unionism and Socialism”
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The labor question, as it is called, has come to be recognized as the foremost of our time. In some form it thrusts itself into every human relation, and directly or indirectly has a part in every controversy.

A thousand “solutions” of the labor question find their way into print, but the question not only remains unsolved, but steadily assumes greater and graver proportions. The nostrums have no effect other than to prove their own inefficacy.

There has always been a labor question since man first exploited man in the struggle for existence, but not until its true meaning was revealed in the development of modern industry did it command serious thought or intelligent consideration, and only then came any adequate conception of its importance to the race.

Man has always sought the mastery of his fellow-man. To enslave his fellow in some form and to live out of his labor has been the mainspring of human action.

To escape submission, not in freedom, but in mastery over others, has been the controlling desire, and this has filled the world with slavery and crime.

In all the ages of the past, human society has been organized and maintained upon the basis of the exploitation and degradation of those who toil. And so it is today.

The chief end of government has been and is to keep the victims of oppression and injustice in subjection.

The men and women who toil and produce have been and are at the mercy of those who wax fat and scornful upon the fruit of their labor.

The labor question was born of the first pang of protest that died unvoiced in inrequited toil.

The Labor Movement

The labor movement of modern times is the product of past ages. It has come down to us for the impetus of our day, in pursuit of its world-wide mission of emancipation.

Unionism, as applied to labor in the modern sense, is the fruit and flower of the last century.

In the United States, as in other countries, the trade union dates from the beginning of industrial society.

During the colonial period of our history, when agriculture was the principal pursuit, when the shop was small and work was done by hand with simple tools, and the worker could virtually employ himself, there was no unionism among the workers.

When machinery was applied to industry, and mill and factory took the place of the country blacksmith shop; when the workers were divorced from their tools and recruited in the mills; when they were obliged to compete against each other for employment; when they found themselves in the labor market with but a low bid or none at all upon their labor power; when they began to realize that as toolless workingmen they were at the mercy of the tool-owning masters, the necessity for union among them took root, and as industry developed, the trade union movement followed in its wake and became a factor in the struggle of the workers against the aggressions of their employers.

In his search for the beginnings of trade unionism in our country, Prof. Richard T. Ely, in his "Labor Movement in America," says:

"I find no traces of anything like a modern trades union in the colonial period of American history, and it is evident, on reflection, that there was little need, if any, of organization on the part of labor at that time."

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"Such manufacturing as was found consisted largely in the production of values-in-use. Clothing, for example, was spun and woven, and then converted into garments in the household for its various members. The artisans comprised chiefly the carpenter, the

blacksmith and the shoemaker; many of whom worked in their own little shops with no employes, while the number of subordinates in any one shop was almost invariably small, and it would probably have been difficult to find a journeyman who did not expect, in a few years, to become an independent producer."

This was the general condition from the labor standpoint at the close of the eighteenth century. But with the dawn of the new century and the application of machinery and the spread of industry that followed came the beginning of the change. The workers gradually organized into unions and began to take active measures to increase their wages and otherwise improve their condition. Referring to this early period in the rise of unionism, the same author records the incident of one of the first strikes as follows: "Something very like a modern strike occurred in the year 1802. The sailors in New York received \$10 a month, but wished an increase of \$4 a month, and endeavored to enforce their demands by quitting work. It is said that they marched about the city, accompanied by a band, and compelled seamen, employed at the old wages, to leave their ships and join them. But the iniquitous combination and conspiracy laws, which viewed concerted action of laborers as a crime, were then in force in all modern lands, and 'the constables were soon in pursuit, arrested the leader, lodged him in jail, and so ended the earliest of labor strikes.'"

This sounds as if it had been the occurrence of yesterday, instead of more than a hundred years ago. The combination and conspiracy laws have been repealed, but the labor

leader fares no better now than when these laws were still on the statute books. The writ of injunction is now made to serve the purpose of the master class, and there is no possible situation in which it cannot be made to apply and as swiftly and surely strike the vital point and paralyze the opposition to the master's rule.

We need not at this time trace the growth of the trade union from its small and local beginnings to its present national and international proportions from the little group of hand-workers in the service of an individual employer to the armies of organized and federated workers in allied industries controlled by vast corporations, syndicates and trusts. The fact stands forth in bold relief that the union was born of necessity and that it has grown strong with the development of industry and the increasing economic dependence of the workers.

A century ago a boy served his apprenticeship and became the master of his trade. The few simple tools with which work was then done were generally owned by the man who used them; he could provide himself with the small quantity of raw material he required, and freely follow his chosen pursuit and enjoy the fruit of his labor. But as everything had to be produced by the work of his hands, production was a slow process, meagre of results, and the worker found it necessary to devote from twelve to fifteen hours to his daily task to earn a sufficient amount to support himself and family.

It required most of the time and energy of the average worker to produce enough to satisfy the physical wants of himself and those dependent upon his labor.

There was little leisure for mental improvement, for recreation or social intercourse. The best that can be said for the workingman of this period is that he enjoyed political freedom, controlled in large measure his own employment, by virtue of his owning the tools of his trade, appropriated to his own use the product of his labor and lived his quiet, uneventful round to the end of his days.

This was a new country, with boundless stretches of virgin soil. There was ample room and opportunity, air and sunlight, for all.

There was no millionaire in the United States; nor was there a tramp. These types are the products of the same system. The former is produced at the expense of the latter, and both at the expense of the working class. They appeared at the same time in the industrial development and they will disappear together with the abolition of the system that brought them into existence.

The application of machinery to productive industry was followed by tremendous and far-reaching changes in the whole structure of society. First among these was the change in the status of the worker, who, from an independent mechanic or small producer, was reduced to the level of a dependent wage worker. The machine had leaped, as it were, into the arena of industrial activity, and had left little or no room for the application of the worker's skill or the use of his individual tools.

The economic dependence of the working class became more and more rigidly fixed - and at the same time a new era dawned for the human race.

The more or less isolated individual artisans were converted into groups of associated workers and marshalled for the impending social revolution.

It was at this time that the trades-union movement began to take definite form. Unorganized, the workers were not only in open competition with each other for the sale of their labor power in the labor market, but their wages could be reduced, and their hours of labor lengthened at will, and they were left practically at the mercy of their employers.

It is interesting to note the spirit evinced by the pioneers of unionism, the causes that impelled them and the reasons they assigned for banding themselves together in defense of their common interests. In this connection we again quote from Professor Ely's "Labor Movement in America," as follows:

"The next event to attract our attention in New York is an address delivered before 'The General Trades Unions of the City of New York,' at Chatham street chapel, on December 2, 1833, by Eli Moore, president of the union. This General Trades Union, as its name indicates, was a combination of subordinate unions 'of the various trades and arts in New York City and its vicinity,' and is the earliest example in the United States, so far as I know, of those Central Labor Unions which attempt to unite all the workingmen in one locality in one body, and which have now become so common among us. The address of Mr. Moore is characterized by a more modern tone than is found in most productions of the labor leaders of that period. The object of these unions is stated to be 'to guard against the

encroachments of aristocracy, to preserve our natural and political rights, to elevate our moral and intellectual condition, to promote our pecuniary interests, to narrow the line of distinction between the journeyman and employer, to establish the honor and safety of our respective vocations upon a more secure and permanent basis, and to alleviate the distress of those suffering from want of employment."

This is a remarkably clear statement of the objects of unionism in that early period, and indicates to what extent workingmen had even then been compelled to recognize their craft interests and unite and act together in defense thereof.

So far, and for many years later, the efforts of trades-unions were confined to defensive tactics, and to the amelioration of objectionable conditions. The wage-system had yet to develop its most offensive features and awaken the workers to the necessity of putting an end to it as the only means of achieving their freedom; and it was this that finally forced the extension of organized activity from the economic to the political field of labor unionism.

As the use of machinery became more general and competition became more intense; as capital was centralized and industry organized to obtain better results, the workers realized their dependence more and more, and unionism grew apace. One trade after another fell into line and raised the banner of economic solidarity. Then followed strikes and lockouts and other devices incident to that form of warfare. Sometimes the unionists gained an advantage, but more often they suffered defeat, lost

courage and abandoned the union, only to return to the scene of disaster with renewed determination to fight the battle over again and again until victory should at last perch upon the union banner.

Pioneer Agitators

Oh, how many there were, whose names are forgotten, who suffered untold agonies to lay the foundation of the labor movement, of whose real mission they had but the vaguest conception!

These pioneers of progress paved the way for us, and deserve far more at our hands than we have in our power to do for them. We may at best rescue their nameless memory from the darkness of oblivion, and this we undertake to do with the liveliest sense of obligation for the service they rendered, and the sacrifices they made in the early and trying stages of the struggle to improve the condition and advance the welfare of their fellow-toilers.

The writer has met and known some of these untitled agitators of the earlier day, whose hearts were set on organizing their class, or at least, their branch of it, and who had the courage to undertake the task and accept all the bitter consequences it imposed.

The union men of today have little or no conception of what the pioneer unionists had to contend with when they first started forth on their mission of organization. The organizer of the present time has to face difficulties enough, it is true, but as a rule the road has at least been broken for his approaching footsteps; the union has already been

organized and a committee meets him at the station and escorts him to the hotel.

Far different was it with the pioneer who left home without "scrip in his purse," whose chief stock consisted in his ability to "screw his courage to the sticking point" and whom privation and hardship only consecrated more completely to his self-appointed martyrdom.

Starting out, more than likely, after having been discharged for organizing a local union of his craft, or for serving on a committee, or interceding for a fellow, or "talking back" to the boss, or any other of the numerous acts which mark the conduct of the manly worker, distinguishing him from his weak and fawning brother, and bringing upon him the reprobation of his master-starting out to organize his fellow-workers, that they might fare better than fell to his lot, he faced the world without a friend to bid him welcome, or cheer him onward. Having no money for railroad fare he must beat his way, but such a slight inconvenience does not deter him an instant. Reaching his destination he brushes up as well as his scanty toilet will allow and then proceeds with due caution to look up "the boys," careful to elude the vigilance of the boss, who has no earthly use for a worthless labor agitator.

We shall not attempt to follow our pioneer through all his tortuous windings, nor have we space to more than hint at the story of his cruel persecution and pathetic end.

Our pioneer, leaving home, in many an instance, never saw wife and child again. Repulsed by the very men he was hungering to serve, penniless, deserted, neglected and

alone, he became "the poor wanderer of a stormy day," and ended his career a nameless outcast. Whatever his frailties and faults, they were virtues all, for they marked the generous heart, the sympathetic soul who loves his brother and accepts for himself the bitter portion of suffering and shame that he may serve his fellowman.

The labor agitator of the early day held no office, had no title, drew no salary, saw no footlights, heard no applause, never saw his name in print, and fills an unknown grave.

In the labor movement is his monument, and though his name is not inscribed upon it, his soul is in it, and with it marches on forever.

Trades-unionism

From the small beginnings of a century ago the trades union movement, keeping pace with the industrial development, has become a tremendous power in the land.

The close of the Civil War was followed by a new era of industrial and commercial activity, and trades-unions sprang up on every hand. Local organizations of the same craft multiplied and were united in national bodies, and these were in time bound together in national and international federation.

The swift and vast concentration of capital and the unprecedented industrial activity which marked the close of the nineteenth century were followed by the most extraordinary growth in the number and variety of trades-unions in the history of the movement; yet this expansion,

remarkable as it was, has not only been equalled, but excelled, in the first years of the new century, the tide of unionism sweeping over the whole country, and rising steadily higher, notwithstanding the efforts put forth from a hundred sources controlled by the ruling class to restrain its march, impair its utility or stamp it out of existence.

The history of the last thirty years of trades-unionism is filled with stirring incident and supplies abundant material for a good-sized volume. Organizations have risen and fallen, battles have been fought with varying results, every device known to the ingenuity of the ruling class has been employed to check the movement, but through it all the trend has been steadily toward a more perfect organization and a more comprehensive grasp of its mighty mission. The strikes and boycotts and lockouts which occurred with startling frequency during this period, some of them accompanied by riots and other forms of violence, tell their own tragic story of the class struggle which is shaking the foundations of society, and will end only with the complete overthrow of the wage system and the freedom of the working class from every form of slavery.

No strike has even been lost, and there can be no defeat for the labor movement.

However disastrous the day of battle has been, it has been worth its price, and only the scars remain to bear testimony that the movement is invincible and that no mortal wound can be inflicted upon it.

What has the union done for the worker? Far more than these brief pages will allow us to place on record.

The union has from its inception taught, however imperfectly, the fundamental need of solidarity; it has inspired hope in the breast of the defeated and despairing worker, joining his hand with the hand of his fellow-worker and bidding them lift their bowed bodies from the earth and look above and beyond the tribulations of the hour to the shining heights of future achievement.

The union has fought the battles of the worker upon a thousand fields, and though defeated often, rallied and charged again and again to wrest from the enemy the laurels of victory.

The union was first to trace in outline the lesson above all others the workingman needs to learn, and that is the collective interest and welfare of his class, in which his own is indissolubly bound, and that no vital or permanent change of conditions is possible that does not embrace his class as a whole.

The union has been a moral stimulus as well as a material aid to the worker; it has appealed to him to develop his faculties and to think for himself; to cultivate self-reliance and learn to depend upon himself; to have pride of character and make some effort to improve himself; to sympathize with and support his fellow-workers and make their cause his own.

Although these things have as yet been only vaguely and imperfectly accomplished, yet they started in and have grown with the union, and to this extent the union has promoted the class-conscious solidarity of the working-class.

It is true that the trades-union movement has in some essential respects proved a disappointment, but it may not on this account be repudiated as a failure. The worst that can in truth be said of it is that it has not kept up with the procession of events that it lacks the progressive spirit so necessary to its higher development and larger usefulness, but there are reasons for this and they suggest themselves to the most casual student of the movement.

When workingmen first began to organize unions every effort was made by the employing class to stamp out the incipient "rebellion." This was kept up for years, but in spite of all that could be done to extinguish the fires of revolt, the smouldering embers broke forth again and again, each time with increased intensity and vigor; and when at last it became apparent to the shrewder and more far-seeing members of the capitalist family that the union movement had come to stay, they forthwith changed their tactics, discarding their frowns and masking their features with the most artful smiles as they extended their greeting and pronounced their blessing upon this latest and greatest benefaction to the human race.

In fewer words, seeing that they could not head it off, they decided to take it by the hand and guide it into harmless channels.

This is precisely the policy pursued, first and last, by the late Marcus A. Hanna, and it will not be denied that he had the entire confidence of the capitalist class and that they clearly recognized his keen perception, astute diplomacy and sagacious leadership in dealing with the union movement.

Mr. Hanna denominated the national leaders of the trades unions as his "lieutenants;" had the "Civic Federation" organized and himself elected president, that he and his lieutenants might meet upon equal ground and as often as necessary; he slapped them familiarly on the back, had his picture taken with them and cracked jokes with them; and all the time he was doing this he was the beau ideal of Wall street, the ruling voice in the capitalist councils, and all the trusts, syndicates and combines, all the magnates, barons, lords and plutocrats in one voice proclaimed him the ruler of rulers, the political prophet of their class, the corner stone and central pillar in the capitalist temple.

Mr. Hanna did not live to see his plan of "benevolent feudalism" consummated, nor to be elected President of the United States, as his Wall street admirers and trades-union friends intended, but he did live long enough to see the gathering clouds of the social revolution on the political horizon; and to prevent the trades-union movement from becoming a factor in it, he taxed the resources of his fertile brain and bended all the energies of his indomitable will. Clearer sighted than all others of his class, he was promptly crowned their leader. He saw what was coming and prepared to meet and defeat it, or at least put off the crisis to a later day.

The trades-union movement must remain a "pure and simple" organization. It must not be subject to the laws of evolution; it must be securely anchored to its conservative, time honored policy, hold fast to its good name and preserve inviolate all the traditions of the past. Finally, it must eschew politics as utterly destructive of trades-union ends, and above all, beware of and guard against the

contamination of socialism, whose breath is disruption and whose touch is death.

That was the position of Senator Hanna; it is that of the smaller lights who are serving as his successors. It is this position that is taken by the press, the pulpit and the politician; it is this position that is reflected in the trades-union movement itself, and voiced by its officials, who are at once the leaders of labor and the lieutenants of capital, and who, in their dual role, find it more and more difficult to harmonize the conflicting interests of the class of whom they are the leaders and the class of whom they are the lieutenants.

It is not claimed for a moment that these leaders are corrupt in the sense that they would betray their trust for a consideration. Such charges and intimations are frequently made, but so far as we know they are baseless and unjust in almost every instance; and it is our opinion that an accusation of such gravity is never justified, whatever the circumstances, unless the proof can be furnished to support the charge and convict the offender.

But the criticism to which these leaders are properly subject is that they fear to offend the capitalist class, well knowing that the influence of this class is potential in the labor union, and that if the labor lieutenant fails of obedience and respect to his superior capitalist officers, he can soon be made to feel their displeasure, and unless he relents, his popularity wanes and he finds himself a leader without an office.

The late Peter M. Arthur, of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, was a conspicuous example of this kind of leadership. There was frequently the most violent opposition to him, but his standing with the railway corporations secured him in his position, and it was simply impossible to dislodge him. Had he been radical instead of conservative, had he stood wholly on the side of the engineers instead of cultivating the good offices of the managers and placating the corporations, he would have been deposed years ago and pronounced a miserable failure as a labor leader.

The capitalist press has much to do with shaping the course of a labor leader; he shrinks from its cruel attacks and he yields, sometimes unconsciously, to its blandishments and honeyed phrases, and in spite of himself becomes a servile trimmer and cowardly time-server.

The trades-union movement of the present day has enemies within and without, and upon all sides, some attacking it openly and others insidiously, but all bent either upon destroying it or reducing it to unresisting impotency.

The enemies of unionism, while differing in method, are united solidly upon one point, and that is in the effort to misrepresent and discredit the men who, scorning and defying the capitalist exploiters and their minions, point steadily the straight and uncompromising course the movement must take if it is to accomplish its allotted task and safely reach its destined port.

These men, though frequently regarded as the enemies, are the true friends of trades-unionism and in good time are certain to be vindicated.

The more or less open enemies have inaugurated some interesting innovations during the past few years. The private armies the corporations used some years ago, such as Pinkerton mercenaries, coal and iron police, deputy marshals, etc., have been relegated to second place as out of date, or they are wholly out of commission. It has been found after repeated experiments that the courts are far more deadly to trades-unions, and that they operate noiselessly and with unerring precision.

The rapid fire injunction is a great improvement on the gatling gun. Nothing can get beyond its range and it never misses fire.

The capitalists are in entire control of the injunction artillery, and all the judicial gunner has to do is to touch it off at their command.

Step by step the writ of injunction has invaded the domain of trades-unionism, limiting its jurisdiction, curtailing its powers, sapping its strength and undermining its foundations, and this has been done by the courts in the name of the institutions they were designed to safeguard, but have shamelessly betrayed at the behest of the barons of capitalism.

Injunctions have been issued restraining the trades-unions and their members from striking, from boycotting, from voting funds to strikes, from levying assessments to

support their members, from walking on the public highway, from asking non-union men not to take their places, from meeting to oppose wage reductions, from expelling a spy from membership, from holding conversation with those who had taken or were about to take their jobs, from congregating in public places, from holding meetings, from doing anything and everything, directly, indirectly or any other way, to interfere with the employing class in their unalienable right to operate their plants as their own interests may dictate, and to run things generally to suit themselves.

The courts have found it in line with judicial procedure to strike every weapon from labor's economic hand and leave it defenseless at the mercy of its exploiter; and now that the courts have gone to the last extremity in this nefarious plot of subjugation, labor, at last, is waking up to the fact that it has not been using its political arm in the struggle at all; that the ballot which it can wield is strong enough not only to disarm the enemy, but to drive that enemy entirely from the field.

The courts, so notoriously in control of capital, and so shamelessly perverted to its base and sordid purposes is, therefore, exercising a wholesome effect upon trades-unionism by compelling the members to note the class character of our capitalist government and driving them to the inevitable conclusion that the labor question is also a political question and that the working class must organize their political power that they may wrest the government from capitalist control and put an end to class rule forever.

Trades-unionists for the most part learn slowly, but they learn surely, and fresh object lessons are prepared for them every day.

They have seen a Democratic President of the United States send the federal troops into a sovereign state of the Union in violation of the constitution, and in defiance of the protest of the governor and the people, to crush a body of peaceable workingmen at the behest of a combination of railroads bent on destroying their union and reducing them to vassalage.

They have seen a Republican President refuse to interpose his executive authority when militarism, in the name of the capitalist class, seized another sovereign state by the throat and strangled its civil administration to death while it committed the most dastardly crimes upon defenseless workingmen in the annals of capitalist brutality and military despotism.

They have seen a composite Republican-Democratic congress, the legislative tool of the exploiting class, pass a military bill which makes every citizen a soldier and the President a military dictator.

They have seen this same congress, session after session, making false promises to deluded labor committees; pretending to be the friends of workingmen and anxious to be of service to them, while at the same time in league with the capitalist lobby and pledged to defeat every measure that would afford even the slightest promise of relief to the working class. The anti-injunction bill and the eight hour measure, pigeon-holed and rejected again and again in the

face of repeated promises that they should pass, tell their own story of duplicity and treachery to labor of the highest legislative body in the land.

They have seen Republican governors and Democratic governors order out the militia repeatedly to shoot down working men at the command of their capitalist masters.

They have seen these same governors construct military prisons and "bull pens," seize unoffending workingmen without warrant of law and thrust them into these vile quarters for no other reason than to break up their unions and leave them helpless at the feet of corporate rapacity.

They have seen the supreme court of the nation turn labor out without a hearing, while the corporation lawyers, who compose this august body, and who hold their commissions in virtue of the "well done" of their capitalist retainers, solemnly descant upon the immaculate purity of our judicial institutions.

They have seen state legislatures, both Republican and Democratic, with never an exception, controlled bodily by the capitalist class and turn the committees of labor unions empty handed from their doors.

They have seen state supreme courts declare as unconstitutional the last vestige of law upon the statute books that could by any possibility be construed as affording any shelter or relief to the labor union or its members.

They have seen these and many other things and will doubtless see many more before their eyes are opened as a class but we are thankful for them all, painful though they be to us in having to bear witness to the suffering of our benighted brethren.

In this way only, can they be made to see, to think, to act, and every wrong they suffer brings them nearer to their liberation.

The "pure and simple" trade-union of the past does not answer the requirements of today, and they who insist that it does are blind to the changes going on about them, and out of harmony with the progressive forces of the age.

The attempt to preserve the "autonomy" of each trade and segregate it within its own independent jurisdiction, while the lines which once separated them are being obliterated, and the trades are being interwoven and interlocked in the process of industrial evolution, is as futile as to declare and attempt to enforce the independence of the waves of the sea.

A modern industrial plant has a hundred trades and parts of trades represented in its working force. To have these workers parcelled out to a hundred unions is to divide and not to organize them, to give them over to factions and petty leadership and leave them an easy prey to the machinations of the enemy. The dominant craft should control the plant or, rather, the union, and it should embrace the entire working force. This is the industrial plan, the modern method applied to modern conditions, and it will in time prevail.

The trade autonomy can be expressed within the general union, so far as that is necessary or desirable, and there need be no conflict on account of it.

The attempt of each trade to maintain its own independence separately and apart from others results in increasing jurisdictional entanglements, fruitful of dissension, strife and ultimate disruption.

The work of organizing has little, if any, permanent value unless the work of education, the right kind of education, goes hand in hand with it.

There is no cohesiveness in ignorance.

The members of a trade-union should be taught the true import, the whole object of the labor movement and understand its entire program.

They should know that the labor movement means more, infinitely more, than a paltry increase in wages and the strike necessary to secure it; that while it engages to do all that possibly can be done to better the working conditions of its members, its higher object is to overthrow the capitalist system of private ownership of the tools of labor, abolish wage-slavery and achieve the freedom of the whole working class and, in fact, of all mankind.

Karl Marx recognized the necessity of the trade union when he said,

“the general tendency of capitalist production is not to raise, but to sink the

average standard of wages or to push the value of labor more or less to its minimum limit. Such being the tendency of things in this system, is this saying that the working class ought to renounce their resistance against the encroachments of capital, and abandon their attempts at making the best of the occasional chances for their temporary improvement? If they did, they would be degraded to one level mass of broken wretches past salvation. By cowardly giving way in their every-day conflict with capital, they would certainly disqualify themselves for the initiating of any larger movement.”

Marx also set forth the limitations of the trade-union and indicated the true course it should pursue as follows:

“At the same time, and quite apart from the general servitude involved in the wage system, the working class ought not to exaggerate to themselves the ultimate working of these every-day struggles. They ought not to forget that they are fighting with effects, but not with the causes of those effects; that they are retarding the downward movement, but not changing its direction; that they are applying palliatives, not curing the malady. They ought, therefore, not to be exclusively absorbed in these unavoidable guerilla fights incessantly springing up from the never-ceasing encroachments of capital or changes of the

market. They ought to understand that, with all the miseries it imposes upon them, the present system simultaneously engenders the material conditions and the social forms necessary for an economic reconstruction of society. Instead of the conservative motto, 'A fair day's wages for a fair day's work!' they ought to inscribe on their banner the revolutionary watchword, 'Abolition of the wage system.'

"Trades unions work well as centers of resistance against the encroachments of capital. They fail partially from an injudicious use of their power. They fail generally from limiting themselves to a guerilla war against the effects of the existing system, instead of simultaneously trying to change it, instead of using their organized forces as a lever for the final emancipation of the working class, that is to say, the ultimate abolition of the wage system."

In an address to the Knights of St. Crispin, in April, 1872, Wendell Phillips, the eloquent orator and passionate hater of slavery in every form, said "I hail the Labor movement for the reason that it is my only hope for democracy."

Wendell Phillips was right; he spoke with prophetic insight. He knew that the labor movement alone could democratize society and give freedom to the race.

In the same address he uttered these words, which every trade-unionist should know by heart:

"Unless there is a power in your movement, industrially and politically, the last knell of democratic liberty in this Union is struck."

The orator then proceeded to emphasize the urgent need of developing the political power of the movement; and it is just this that the trade-unionist should be made to clearly understand.

The cry, "no politics in the union," "dragging the union into politics," or "making the union the tail of some political kite," is born of ignorance or dishonesty, or a combination of both. It is echoed by every ward-heeling politician in the country. The plain purpose is to deceive and mislead the workers.

It is not the welfare of the union that these capitalist henchmen are so much concerned about, but the fear that the working class, as a class, organized into a party of their own, will go into politics, for well they know that when that day dawns their occupation will be gone.

And this is why they employ their time in setting the union against the political party of the working class, the only union labor party there ever was or ever will be, and warning the members against the evil designs of the socialists.

The important thing to impress upon the mind of the trade unionist is that it is his duty to cultivate the habit of doing his own thinking.

The moment he realizes this he is beyond the power of the scheming politician, the emissary of the exploiter, in or out of the labor movement.

The trades-union is not and can not become a political machine, nor can it be used for political purposes. They who insist upon working class political action not only have no intention to convert the trades-union into a political party, but they would oppose any such attempt on the part of others.

The trades-union is an economic organization with distinct economic functions and as such is a part, a necessary part, but a part only of the Labor Movement; it has its own sphere of activity, its own program and is its own master within its economic limitations.

But the labor movement has also its political side and the trades-unionist must be educated to realize its importance and to understand that the political side of the movement must be *unionized* as well as the economic side; and that he is not in fact a union man at all who, although a member of the union on the economic side, is a non-unionist on the political side; and while striking for, votes against the working class.

The trades-union expresses the economic power and the Socialist party expresses the political power of the Labor movement.

The fully developed labor-unionist uses both his economic and political power in the interest of his class. He understands that the struggle between labor and capital is a class struggle; that the working class are in a great majority, but divided, some in trades-unions and some out of them, some in one political party and some in another; that because they are divided they are helpless and must submit to being robbed of what their labor produces, and treated with contempt; that they must unite their class in the trades-union on the one hand and in the Socialist party on the other hand; that industrially and politically they must act together as a class against the capitalist class and that this struggle is a class struggle, and that any workingman who deserts his union in a strike and goes to the other side is a scab, and any working man who deserts his party on election day and goes over to the enemy is a betrayer of his class and an enemy of his fellow man.

Both sides are organized in this class struggle, the capitalists, however, far more thoroughly than the workers. In the first place the capitalists are, comparatively, few in number, while the workers number many millions. Next, the capitalists are men of financial means and resources, and can buy the best brains and command the highest order of ability the market affords. Then again, they own the earth, and the mills and mines and locomotives and ships and stores and the jobs that are attached to them, and this not only gives them tremendous advantage in the struggle, but makes them for the time the absolute masters of the situation.

The workers, on the other hand, are poor as a rule, and ignorant as a class, *but they are in an overwhelming majority.*

In a word, they have the power, but are not conscious of it. This then is the supreme demand; to make them conscious of the power of their class, or class-conscious workingmen.

The working class alone does the world's work, has created its capital, produced its wealth, constructed its mills and factories, dug its canals, made its roadbeds, laid its rails and operates its trains, spanned the rivers with bridges and tunnelled the mountains, delved for the precious stones that glitter upon the bosom of vulgar idleness and reared the majestic palaces that shelter insolent parasites.

The working class alone-and by the working class I mean all useful workers, all who by the labor of their hands or the effort of their brains, or both in alliance, as they ought universally to be, increase the knowledge and add to the wealth of society - the working class alone is essential to society and therefore the only class that can survive in the world-wide struggle for freedom.

We have said that both classes, the capitalist class and the working class are organized for the class struggle, but the organization, especially that of the workers, is far from complete; indeed, it would be nearer exact to say that it has but just fairly begun.

On the economic field of the class struggle the capitalists have their Manufacturers' Association, Citizens' Alliance, Corporations' Auxiliary, and - we must add - Civic

Federation, while on the political field they have the Republican party and the Democratic party, the former for large capitalists and the latter for small capitalists, but both of them for capitalists and both against the workers.

Standing face to face with the above named economic and political forces of the capitalists the workingmen have on the economic field their trades-unions, and on the political field their working class Socialist party.

In the class struggle the workers must unite and fight together as one on both economic and political fields.

The Socialist party is to the workingman politically what the trades-union is to him industrially; the former is the party of his class, while the latter is the union of his trade.

The difference between them is that while the trades-union is confined to the trade, the Socialist party embraces the entire working class, and while the union is limited to bettering conditions under the wage system, the party is organized to conquer the political power of the nation, wipe out the wage system and make the workers themselves the masters of the earth.

In this program, the trades-union and the Socialist party, the economic and political wings of the labor movement, should not only not be in conflict, but act together in perfect harmony in every struggle whether it be on the one field or the other, in the strike or at the ballot box. The main thing is that in every such struggle the workers shall be united, shall in fact be unionists and no more be guilty of scabbing on their party than on their union, no more think of voting

a capitalist ticket on election day and turning the working class over to capitalist robbery and misrule than they would think of voting in the union to turn it over to the capitalists and have it run in the interest of the capitalist class.

To do its part in the class struggle the trades-union need no more go into politics than the Socialist party need go into the trades. Each has its place and its functions.

The union deals with trade problems and the party deals with politics.

The union is educating the workers in the management of industrial activities and fitting them for co-operative control and democratic regulation of their trades, - the party is recruiting and training and drilling the political army that is to conquer the capitalist forces on the political battlefield; and having control of the machinery of government, use it to transfer the industries from the capitalists to the workers, from the parasites to the people.

In his excellent paper on "The Social Opportunity," published in a recent issue of the *International Socialist Review*, Dr. George D. Herron, discussing trades-unions and their relation to the Socialist party, and the labor movement in general, clearly sees the trend of the development and arrives at conclusions that are sound and commend themselves to the thoughtful consideration of all trades-unionists and Socialists. Says Dr. Herron:

"On the one side, it is the trade-unionist who is on the firing line of the class struggle. He it

is who blocked the wheels of the capitalist machine; he it is who has prevented the unchecked development of capitalist increase; he it is who has prevented the whole labor body of the world from being kept forever at the point of mere hunger wages he it is who has taught the workers of the world the lesson of solidarity, and delivered them from that wretched and unthinking competition with each other which kept them at the mercy of capitalism; he it is who has prepared the way for the co-operative commonwealth. On the other hand, trade unionism is by no means the solution of the workers' problem, nor is it the goal of the labor struggle. It is merely a capitalist line of defense within the capitalist system. Its existence and its struggles are necessitated only by the existence and predatory nature of capitalism.

"Organized labor has an instinct that far outreaches its intelligence, and that far outreaches the intelligence of the preaching and teaching class, - the instinct that the workers of the world are bound up together in one common destiny; that their battle for the future is one and that there is no possible safety or extrication for any worker unless all the workers of the world are extricated and saved from capitalism together.

“Until the workers shall become a clearly defined socialist movement, standing for and moving toward the unqualified co-operative commonwealth, while at the same time understanding and proclaiming their immediate interests, they will only play into the hands of their exploiters, and be led by their betrayers.

“It is the Socialist who must point this out in the right way. He is not to do this by seeking to commit trade-union bodies to the principles of Socialism. Resolution or commitments of this sort accomplish little good. Nor is he to do it by taking a servile attitude toward organized labor, nor by meddling with the details or the machinery of the trade-unions. Not by trying to commit Socialism to trade-unionism, nor trade unionism to Socialism, will the Socialist end be accomplished. It is better to have the trade-unions do their distinctive work, as the workers’ defense against the encroachments of capitalism, as the economic development of the worker against the economic development of the capitalist, giving unqualified support and sympathy to the struggles of the organized worker to sustain himself in his economic sphere. But let the Socialist also build up the character and harmony and strength of the socialist movement as a political force, that it shall command the respect and confidence of the

worker, irrespective of his trade or his union obligations. It is urgent that we so keep in mind the difference between the two developments that neither shall cripple the other. The Socialist movement, as a political development of the workers for their economic emancipation, is one thing; the trade-union development, as an economic defense of the workers within the capitalist system, is another thing. Let us not interfere with the internal affairs of the trade unions, or seek to have them become distinctively political bodies in themselves, any more than we would seek to make a distinctive political body in itself of a church, or a public school, or a lawyer’s office. But let us attend to the harmonious and commanding development of the Socialist political movement as the channel and power by which labor is to come to its emancipation and its commonwealth.”

We have quoted thus at length to make clear the position of the writer who has given close study to the question and in the paper above quoted has done much to light the way to sound tactics and sane procedure.

It is of vital importance to the trades-union that its members be class-conscious, that they understand the class struggle and their duty as union men on the political field, so that in every move that is made they will have the goal in view, and while taking advantage of every opportunity to secure concessions and enlarge their economic advantage, they will at the same time unite at the ballot box, not only

to back up the economic struggle of the trades-union, but to finally wrest the government from capitalist control and establish the working class republic.