

Labor Legislation During 1915

(Compiled by United States Department of Labor.)

The annual summary of labor legislation in the United States, published by the United States bureau of labor statistics of the department of labor, which appears as its Bulletin 186, covers the activities in this field during 1915, of 45 states, two territories, and the federal congress. With three exceptions, Kentucky, Maryland and Mississippi, every state in the union held a legislative session, regular or extra, in 1915, and of these, all but two, Louisiana and Virginia, enacted laws of special interest to labor. The bureau's report reproduces the text of all these labor laws and presents a concise review of each class of legislation. The workmen's compensation laws are omitted, having been published separately in the bureau's recently issued Bulletin 185.

Aside from the enactment of workmen's compensation laws, perhaps the most significant feature of the legislation of the year is the growth of the industrial commission plan, uniting in one authority the administration of workmen's compensation, factory inspection, and other labor laws. This plan was adopted in 1915 in Colorado, Indiana, Montana, Nevada and New York.

Especially notable in the legislation of the year was the attention given to the subject of unemployment and public employment offices. In Illinois a commission on unemployment, consisting of three representatives of labor, three of employers and three of the public, was established to report at the next legislative session. In connection with the state employment offices a general advisory board was established to investigate and deal with unemployment. California and Nevada passed resolutions calling for investigation of unemployment. In Idaho emergency employment is to be provided by county boards of commissioners for unemployed citizens of the United States who have been for six months resident of the state. Employment is to be on the highways at rates to be fixed by the county boards, not more than 60 days' work of this kind to be furnished any person within one year. One-half of the expense is to be borne by the state, and refusal to perform the work assigned, debars one from this form of relief work for the period of one year.

Public employment offices were provided for in California, Idaho, Iowa, New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and provision was made for the extension of the system of public employment offices in Illinois, Michigan and Oklahoma. The licensing and supervision of private employment offices were provided for in seven states, Colorado, Nebraska, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas and Wisconsin, while Idaho prohibited the maintenance of private employment agencies operated for profit.

Laws relating to the employment of women and children were quite as numerous as in preceding years. Notable among these were the minimum wage laws enacted by Arkansas and Kansas, making 11 states which now have such legislation. California, Massachusetts and Washington passed amendments as to their minimum wage laws, not, however, involving any important modifications. In Idaho a commission to investigate the subject of minimum wage legislation was provided for.

Considerable progress was made in the field of child labor legislation, notable in the states of Arkansas and

Pennsylvania. In the latter states the law requires 8 hours per week of school attendance for children under the age of 16, such attendance to be between the hours of 8 a. m. and 5 p. m.

In the field of safety provision the most detailed enactments were those formulated by the industrial commission of Wisconsin and the industrial boards of New York and Pennsylvania. The rules and orders of these bodies indicate an intimate knowledge of the conditions to be met which it is impossible for an ordinary legislative committee to procure. The worker's welfare is looked after in less usual ways by new enactments in some states regulating the sanitary conditions in labor camps, railway labor camps, and the like.

Laws to regulate the giving of clearance cards or statements of cause of discharge were enacted in three states, California, Indiana and Oregon, while in two states, California and Nevada, the right is given the employe by law to hear and answer charges brought by "spotters" before being discharged on their evidence. Other important laws enacted during 1915 were the seaman's act, which made numerous provisions for safety and abolished arrest and imprisonment for desertion; the Alaska and Arizona old age pension laws, and the California act providing for the appointment of a commission to report on the subject of social insurance.

AMERICANISM

Evidently the Colonel has spent too much time of late east of the Alleghenies. The west has always claimed the Colonel for its own, a big, two-handed fighter, no pussy foot, no snob, all American, and proud of it. So it isn't like the Colonel to believe, as he confesses he did, that "the state of Lincoln and Grant isn't loyal and patriotic."

"They talk about the middle west," he told a Tribune reporter, "The Mississippi valley being prosperous and contented, and not thinking about the country's needs. Why, this country out here is as truly patriotic today as though the Atlantic ocean ran clear up the whole length of the Mississippi valley."

Thanks, Colonel—for nothing. If we in the west are worrying about anything it is most certainly not an accusation from New England and New York that we are not American because we do not care to go to war for England. The west is confident of its Americanism and it would like the Colonel next time New York tells him the west is without patriotism to consider a few facts.

For example, during the Christmas holidays last year they were standing eight deep at the diamond counters on Fifth avenue. New York was gorged with easy money. War had brought to the east sudden wealth. New fortunes sprang up in a few months. Old fortunes expanded hugely. After several lean years every one began to thrive. The great banks and financial houses swam in the mid-current. Their transactions for the allies ran into the billions. If their relations with England and France for years have been of great moment in the world of international finance, they now become of paramount importance.

In the west we view the war heroes of New York and New England with some self-control because we see it against the blazing background of this vast financial phenomenon.

We are not unaware, furthermore,

that the most conspicuous social class of the east likes of all things to speak of Lady Lammoxy by her first name. It is intermarried with the British nobility and gentry and spends a reasonable amount of time in England or Scotland, where it is even so tactless sometimes as to outspend royalty.

This class is small numerically, but the number of the comparatively obscure who accept its standards as far as purse will permit is larger than a plain western American likes to believe. In no western city will you see American lads at transplanted English schools playing Rugby with English teachers under an English flag. In no western city will the Colonel find, as the Colonel knows, that habit of deference to all things transatlantic and especially to things English that is the special weakness of the wealthy and "educated" in the east.

The west, of course, has its snobs, its vociferous minorities, its sentimental partisans, its selfish interests, its "hyphenates" of varieties. But there is no dominating spirit but the spirit of America, the deep Americanism of the mid-continent, whose naive pride is here, whose highest hopes and fairest dreams are here.

The west is not apathetic. It is not in the nature of the westerner to be apathetic, and this the Colonel, if any one, should know. But the west is not infected with Anglicanism and not intoxicated with entente money. It is American and so profoundly concerned with the problems of America, the essential American problems to which Colonel Roosevelt has so vigorously addressed himself, that it has less stomach for tackling the problems of the old world than the

idealists of the east, and no stomach at all for sealing with its blood the financial contracts of Wall street or the marital contracts of Newport.—Chicago Tribune.

THE MICROBE OF MILITARISM

Charles Thomas, Chicago, Ill.: I have read The Commoner of March with great interest especially the fifty or more letters approving your peace policy. To me the crime that overshadows all other features of militarism is the determination to turn millions of our "little brick school houses" into training camps, and our universities and colleges into rifle ranges. If military madness is spreading among the adults of this land, what may be expected from the school boys of this nation? Spread this microbe of militarism in our school houses and the former marvelous school system of ours that has been the bulwark of prosperity and peace, will crumble and fall, and then will begin the downfall of this nation.

A DECIDUOUS TREE

John Drew was congratulated at the players in Gramercy park on the abundant hair with which, despite his years, he is still blessed.

"Thank goodness," said Mr. Drew, complacently, "I'm not like Tree.

"Tree went into a Los Angeles barber shop the other day and said:

"Can you cut my hair without my taking off my collar?"

"The barber, with a loud laugh slapped Tree's pink and polished dome jocularly.

"Why, bless your heart, Sir Herbert," he said, "I could cut it without your taking off your hat."—Washington Star.

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