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Richard Olney on Labor In Politics

A Criticism by Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor.

It is refreshing to turn from the platitudes, superficialities, and dishonest misrepresentations of the average "publicist" who deals with the question of organized labor as a political force to a sober, thoughtful consideration of the subject by a high minded thinker, one who, when he speaks, has something of great importance to say and says it in a statesmanlike manner.

Such a consideration will be found in the timely and remarkable article which Mr. Richard Olney, attorney general and later secretary of state in Mr. Cleveland's second cabinet, has written for the new periodical, The Inter-Nation.

Mr. Olney welcomes the "advent of organized labor into politics." He gives his reasons at length for his position on the question, and he gives them in an impressive and remarkably candid way. He boldly expresses the conviction that "the best guarantee and the strongest hope of the continued ascendancy of American political principles" is in this day and generation to be found in the deliberate decision of organized labor to act politically with practical unanimity and without formal organization as an independent or a new party under disinterested and conservative leadership.

The grounds upon which this opinion is based are trenchantly stated in a paragraph which we produce in full. Mr. Olney writes:

"The pronounced trend of current events is at variance with those principles and adverse to those institutions. It is toward strong centralized government; toward paternalism and the increase of governmental activities, both in number and extent; toward enlarging the powers of the general government at the expense of home rule and of government by the states, toward putting the country on a permanent war foot and converting us from a pacific people to a people under arms; toward burdening us with the inordinate taxation inseparable from great military armaments, and toward the doctrine and practice of the doctrine that rights are not to be predicted either of nations or individuals; that it is superior strength alone which counts and is the true test of law and of morality, and that the stronger may work it will with the weaker whenever the interests of the stronger—which is the stronger will always deem coincident with those of mankind and civilization generally—shall so require. If these only too obvious tendencies are to be and should be resisted, whence the resistance to come? Not from the capitalistic class, which is naturally in love with a strong government, with a money spending government, and with a government which, in the cause of good business, will stick to nothing that can be done with safety and profit. Not from the professional classes, so-called, whose members invariably disagree on such issues, even clergymen being found to approve of war as a healthy stimulant no people can be without. The one class—and the only class—in a community to be counted upon as a sure opponent of the pernicious tendencies in question is the wage-earning class."

It is true that Mr. Olney writes from the standpoint of a Jeffersonian Democrat of the old school, and that not all his ideas concerning "state rights," federal power and jurisdiction and like questions are necessarily shared by the rank and file of thoughtful unionists. But while organized labor may not be opposed to what the old Jeffersonian school regards as "paternalism and the increase of governmental activity," while it may believe that under conditions actually existing, control and regulation of the privileged classes in the interest of the great mass is not only too dangerous to ultimate freedom, but inevitable and desirable, it is certainly true that organized labor is, and always has been, unalterably opposed to militarism, to the doctrine of brute force in government, to international aggression, to sham patriotism, to colonial adventures, to despotism over inferior races, to reckless patriotism, to colonial adventures, to despotism over inferior races, to reckless extravagance in government, and to the whole spirit of plutocracy, with its corruption, commercialism of everything it touches, its rapacity and knavery.

Not only is organized labor opposed to all these evils, but it is the only formidable force that can be counted on to fight them. Take the experience of nearly all our large and many of our smaller cities, with their rascally franchise grabbers and plundering public service (?) corporations, who have been fighting perpetual franchises, the use of public property in a way to give "swollen" fortunes to a few buccaniers at the expense of the community? The labor unions, and practically they alone have carried and are carrying on the fight against plutocracy in this great field. Whenever there is a question of true Democracy (not in a party sense) versus tyranny, and plutocracy in any department of activity, the friends of true Democracy turn to the labor unions.

Mr. Olney has been accused in capitalistic newspapers of idealizing labor and misconceiving the whole situation. But it is his critics who are too prejudiced, too narrow and bigoted, to appreciate the nature of the great conflict that is going on in modern society and the great role of organized labor in that conflict. One of Mr. Olney's critics writes as follows:

"His argument is a beautiful one, if only the actual conditions made it applicable. But he has, one would say, only to read the official program of the American Federation of Labor to discover that what we have in trade unions in politics is only another class seeking special privileges. As a lawyer, Mr. Olney must have had his attention called to the anti-injunction bill backed by Mr. Gompers (and by the president) in the name of labor. It was simply a proposal to exempt labor unions from the established penalties of law, and, in their behalf, to break down the safeguards which the experience of centuries has found it wise to throw about the rights of the individual citizen. The other notorious demands of organized labor are for special privileges of a most offensive kind. Nothing that the beneficiaries of protection ever asked, or that a moneyed oligarchy, thinking itself in control of government, ever greedily sought, is more grossly selfish or discriminates more sharply against outsiders, than the avowed aims of trades unions."

The dull and ignorant who peruse this quoted idiotic paragraph evidently assume that, "as a lawyer," Mr. Olney has necessarily approved of the anti-injunction bill "backed by Mr. Gompers." By the way, the parenthetical words, "and by the president," show that the scribe is a malicious as well as an ignorant conversationalist, for it is not true that the president and Mr. Gompers have been "backing" the same anti-injunction bill, and even the hasty newspaper reporter knows this to be a fact. He either does not know or dishonestly affects not to know, that many excellent lawyers and learned, upright judges (like the late Judge Tuley of Chicago, and Justice Gaynor, of New York) have taken the labor view of the injunction abuse. That in England both houses of parliament have enacted an anti-injunction and anti-conspiracy law practically identical with that backed by union labor, he knows, but dishonestly ignores, as the fact is too painful to plutocracy and would not suit his argument. His own characterization of the anti-injunction bill is as venomous as it is false and mendacious. With regard to the "other notorious demands of organized labor"—the scribe does not specify them—yet can only say this, his use of the terms "greed" and "gross selfishness" in connection with them indicates a depth of stupidity which we really cannot be expected to fathom. We suspect that Mr. Parry or one of his disciples wrote the article from which we quote. Even the capitalistic economists have felt constrained to recognize the great social value and utility of the organized labor movement. The labor movement cannot be selfish. It cannot benefit unionists without benefiting "outsiders." It cannot raise wages or shorten hours or improve labor conditions without extending these gains to all laborers. Moreover, it is not unionism open to the "outsider." It is not every union maintaining a force or organizers for the express purpose of bringing in and helping the non-union men to better their conditions? Is this "selfishness?" Do the trusts pursue this policy? Do the monopolists, rebate payers, and rebate takers, the beneficiaries of improper privilege generally—do these gentry believe in the "open door," in increasing daily, hourly, the membership of their industrial organizations? Are they paying organizers and speakers to induce, as far as possible, to share in the advantages of collective bargaining, co-operative and defense of common interests. But we have said too much to the probably consciously false and absurd misrepresentations of the plutocratic scribe. Our chief object was to direct attention to Mr. Olney's wholesome candid, enlightened view on labor's function and influence in politics. Let the hirelings of plutocracy rave and rage. The very stars in their courses are fighting for liberty and justice and right, the cause of humanity, the cause organized labor has at heart and which is the essence of its being.

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THE PASSION PLAY Its Origin, According to Tradition of Oberammergau.

According to local tradition, the origin of the Oberammergau Passion play was as follows: When in the year 1333 a deadly plague threatened to depopulate the districts of Partenkirchton, Escheloke and Kohlrub, which are separated from Ammerthal, on the valley of the Ammer, by a rampart of mountains, the Ammerthalers succeeded for a time in protecting themselves against the dread contagion, but one day a native who had been working all summer at Escheloke evaded the quarantine and entered the Ammerthal by a secret path in order to celebrate an annual church festival with his family. Two days afterward he was a corpse and in less than three weeks the plague had carried off eighty-four of the Ammerthalers. Despairing of all human succor the terrified survivors addressed themselves to God and registered a solemn vow that if he heard their prayer and removed the scourge they would represent, every ten years, "for thankful remembrance and edifying contemplation, and by the help of the Almighty, the sufferings of Jesus, the Savior of the world."

Not a single person died of the plague after the vow was made, though many were affected by it. The first representation of the Passion Play in the village took place at Oberammergau in the following year and it has been repeated every ten years without a single omission.

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WHY SOME SCHEMES FAIL.

By the Rev. Charles Steilzo.

On all sides one hears of measures for solving the "social question." Hard, cold remedies, they offer, sometimes—dust-covered and lifeless as a geometric problem. No blood, no pulse, no heart-beat.

Forgotten is the fact that this is an intensely human problem, having to do not only with statistics and computations, but more than this, and most of all, with real men and women. The beautiful schemes which read so well in book and magazine, which sound so plausible from lecture platform and public desk, go all to pieces when applied to flesh and blood men, because they leave out altogether the element of human nature.

Some social schemes fail because they are presented by those who lack the peculiar personality which is necessary in order to impress others. They do not inspire confidence. They do not impart hope. They sound a dismal note. The pessimist is never a success as a reformer.

Some social schemes fail because of the immoral character of their advocates. They may rally about themselves a few kindred spirits. They may issue a few propaganda pamphlets. They may even print a newspaper which shall become the organ of their party, thus giving an impression of great influence. Often, too, they may for a time win followers who are the victims of every new fad and fancy. But soon there comes a Waterloo, because no social scheme can permanently win the people which hasn't back of it the strength of a moral purpose.

Failure there is, also, because of a lack of aggressiveness. Men are not waiting to be reformed. They are not running about seeking help or advice. They do not readily listen to a new voice. Often, they will not need the one that it did, though good, because it has become a monotone. It has lost its cheer and brightness.

And so indifference must be met by a loyalty and a devotion to one's dream, which will prove one's sincerity. It must be met by the spirit of the prophet, who feels that he has a message for men. It must be met by the fire of enthusiasm which shall consume not only the critics and the objections of the people themselves, but which will burn up the dross in one's own character, so that the dream of the reformer for other's good, may become so vital a part of his own life, that he himself shall become the incarnation of the vision which he saw in his most inspired mood.

Mr. Union Man:—Notify your druggist that the Bell Phone is Unfair.

HIS DANGER. Smith—That cough will get you into trouble if you don't get rid of it. Jones—How so? Smith—You bark so much the police will arrest you for not having a dog license.

STATE OF MINNESOTA, COUNTY OF St. Louis—ss. District Court, Eleventh Judicial District. Gertie LaPine, Plaintiff,

vs. JOSEPH LAPINE, Defendant.

Summons. The State of Minnesota to the Above named Defendant:

You, Joseph LaPine, are hereby summoned to appear in the above entitled action, which complaint is on file in the office of the Clerk of said District Court, at the City of Duluth, County of St. Louis and State of Minnesota and to answer a copy of your answer to the said complaint on the subscribers, at their offices in the City of Duluth, County of St. Louis and State of Minnesota, within 30 days after the service of this summons upon you, exclusive of the day of such service, and if you fail to answer the said complaint within the time aforesaid, the plaintiff in the action will apply to the Court for the relief demanded in said complaint, together with the costs and disbursements of this action.

Dated, January 16, A. D. 1907. H. H. HAWKINS and A. T. PARK, Attorneys for Plaintiff, 610 Manhattan Building, Duluth, Minnesota.

Labor World, Feb. 16, 23, March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, 1907.

Notice of Expiration of Redemption. OFFICE OF THE COUNTY AUDITOR, County of St. Louis, State of Minnesota.

To Elizabeth J. Fleming: You are hereby notified that the following piece or parcel of land, situated in the County of St. Louis, State of Minnesota, and described as follows, to-wit: "The Northwest quarter of Northeast quarter of Southwest quarter (NW 1/4 of NE 1/4 of SW 1/4) of Section Four, Township forty-nine (49) North, Range fifteen (15) West, according to the government survey thereof, is now assessed in your name."

That on the 12th day of May, A. D. 1903, at a sale of land pursuant to the real estate tax judgment duly given and made in and by the District Court in and for said County of St. Louis, on the 15th day of March, A. D. 1903, in proceedings to enforce the payment of taxes delinquent upon real estate for the year A. D. 1901, for said County of St. Louis, the above described piece or parcel of land was duly offered for sale, and no one bidding upon said offer an amount equal to that for which said piece or parcel was subject to be sold, to-wit: the sum of Two (2) Dollars and fifty-two (52) cents, the same was duly bid in for the State of Minnesota for said sum.

That thereafter, and on the 13th day of November, A. D. 1906, the said piece or parcel of land, not then having been redeemed from said sale, and having then become the absolute property of the State of Minnesota, was sold and conveyed at public sale by the County Auditor of said County pursuant to the order and direction of the District Court of the State of Minnesota, and in accordance with the provisions of the statute in such case made and provided, for the sum of Sixteen (16) Dollars and thirty-five (35) cents duly paid to the County Treasurer of said County.

That the certificate of sale for said piece or parcel of land executed and delivered by said County Auditor upon said sale last above mentioned has been presented to me at my office by the holder thereof, for the purpose of having notice of expiration of time for redemption from said sale of said property given and served, and that the amount required to redeem said piece or parcel of land from said tax sale at the date of this notice, exclusive of the costs to accrue upon said notice, is the sum of Sixteen (16) Dollars and sixty-seven (67) cents. That the time for the redemption of said piece or parcel of land from said tax sale will expire sixty (60) days after the service of this notice and filing of proof of such service in my office. Witness my hand and seal of office this 29th day of December, A. D. 1906. (Seal) O. HALDEN, Auditor St. Louis County, Minnesota. By J. A. MARVIN, Deputy. Labor World, Feb. 9-16-23 1907.

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