

National Chamber of Commerce Program of Industrial Slavery

In high-sounding phrases about "justice", "equality" and "individual liberty", the Board of Directors of the National Chamber of Commerce has formulated a complete program of industrial slavery for the workers of America. This twelve-plank program is now under referendum vote of over 1,300 industrial and commercial organizations.

At the time of President Wilson's famous industrial conference the liberal journals were insistent that Judge Geary represented the views of an exceptional autocrat, views which had no counterpart anywhere else in the world except in Japan. It was stated most emphatically that the group represented by Judge Geary as spokesman at this conference, the employer group, would not sanction the reactionary attitude of the chief of the Steel Trust; and that this attitude could only be accounted for by the fact that the steel strike was then in progress, and that recognition of collective bargaining under the circumstances would have compelled Judge Geary to enter into negotiations with the union representatives of the strikers.

Now comes the Chamber of Commerce program, which is expected to secure the necessary two-thirds vote on referendum,—a program which goes the full limit of Judge Geary's reactionism, and even a little beyond. The adoption of this declaration of policy will formally put American capitalism on record in favor of "benevolent despotism". It will make our capitalists avowedly the most obstinate, defiant and contemptuous in their dealings with their workers of any group of capitalists in the world. This has already been realized as matter of fact, though not heretofore advertised by the capitalists themselves by formal adoption of a program.

This charter of the divine right of business opens with this significant first clause:

"Any person possesses the right to engage in any lawful business or occupation and to enter, individually or collectively, into any lawful contract, either as employer or employee. These rights are subject to limitation only through a valid exercise of the public authority."

Once the absolute sanctity of contract is accepted, without regard to the living truths involved in dealings between the worker whose weekly or daily wage is his only hold upon life and the powerful corporation to whom that worker is an item like any other detail of machinery, then the foundation is definitely established for the perfect program of wage slavery. It was upon the same sacred principle that the system of chattel slavery was defended even by Abraham Lincoln. But the Abolitionists did not hesitate to challenge this one of the "ideals" among "the fundamentals of our national institutions."

An important method of limiting effective organization among the workers and the outlawing of strikes is the use of appropriate employment contracts.

It is to be noticed that nobody is questioning the right of any person to go into business. But the Chamber of Commerce is very much concerned to maintain the worker's sacred right to enter into any occupation on any contract which he may "choose" to make. This "liberty" is to be limited only by public law; which means that it must not be limited by union rules of any kind. It must not be limited by collective agreement between workers' and employers' organizations, but each employee must retain his "rights".

Of course the "open shop" is the logical sequence to the first clause, and here it is:

"2. The right of open shop operation, that is, the right of employer and employee to enter into and determine the conditions of employment relations with each other, is an essential part of the individual right of contract possessed by each of the parties."

To make the matter quite complete, there follows a clause declaring the right to seab:

"3. All men possess the equal right to associate voluntarily for the accomplishment of lawful purposes by lawful means. The association of men, whether employers, or employees or others, for collective action or dealing, confers no authority over, and must not deny any right of, those who do not desire to act or deal with them."

Just the same, as experience has shown, it would be rough sledding for any employer who refused to recognize the authority of an employers' association.

The fourth clause demands that associations of employers and of employees shall be "equally subject to the authority of the State" and responsible legally for their acts or acts of agents. This clause is a criticism of the exclusion of labor unions from the anti-trust laws, and it is further suggestive of incorporation of unions and liability on suits for damages. If the full meaning of this clause were to be developed into law the most conservative trade unions would soon become outlaw organizations.

The next clause is a brazen bit of hypocrisy:

"5. To develop with due regard for the health, safety and well-being of the individual, the required output of industry is the common social obligation of all engaged therein. The restriction of productive effort or of output by either employer or employee for the purpose of creating an artificial scarcity of the product or of labor is an injury to society."

The absolute life principle of capitalist industry is artificial limitation of production—restriction of output to the point of maximum return on investment.

Just why should a wage slave consider that he has any "social obligation" concerning production? There could only be social obligation if there were social production. But with private production there is only private obligation. Each corporation considers itself responsible only to its stockholders that is its 100% obligation. The only "social obligation" of the wage slave is toward his fellow-workers. Production is not his business, and cannot become his business until "the production-epoch", that is, until social ownership makes production the affair and interest of all engaged in the common industry.

Now we come to wages:

"6. The wage of labor must come out of the product of industry and must be earned and measured by its contribution thereto. In order that the worker, in his own and the general interest, may develop his full productive capacity, and may thereby earn at least a wage sufficient to sustain him upon a proper standard of living, it is the duty of management to co-operative with him to secure continuous

employment suited to his abilities, to furnish incentive and opportunity for improvement, to provide proper safeguards for his health and safety and to encourage him in all practicable and reasonable ways to increase the value of his productive effort."

Let us restate this remarkable clause in our own language: "We think that the workers should be kept alive. Indeed, we would like to see the workers keep on living. But, in order to remove any doubts on this point, we call the attention of our employees to the fact that they must hustle to beat hell if they expect to get enough wages enough of the time to keep on living. We are also willing to help the worker to improve himself—to increase the value of his productive effort. But we are not saying anything about who is to get this increased value."

How about hours of work?

"7. The number of hours in the work day or week in which the maximum output consistent with the health and well-being of the individual can be maintained in a given industry should be ascertained by careful study and should never be exceeded except in case of emergency; and one day of rest, or its equivalent, should be provided. The reduction in working hours below such economic limit, in order to secure greater leisure for the individual, should be made only with full understanding and acceptance of the fact that it involves a commensurate loss in the earning power of the workers, a limitation and a shortage of the industry and an increase in the cost of the product, with all the necessary effect of these things upon the interests of the community and the nation."

Never was a more inhuman proposition conceived by the mind of man. The owner of the chattel slave was at least obligated to keep his slave alive and marketable; he could not consider it as open to question whether or not the slave could keep himself alive by his contribution to industry. Nor did chattel slavery ever undertake to regulate the hours of labor by an exact mathematical calculation of the limit of efficiency, not one minute more nor one minute less than the point of maximum use of the sum total of the slave's life energy.

Not the eight-hour day, not the six-hour day, not the ten-hour day, but the number of hours which the worker, calculated as a piece of machinery, can stand the strain. For every minute less than this calculation, a reduction of wages. Taken together with the wage clause, this means a reduction of wages below the doubtful level of a "proper" standard of living, whatever these benevolent employers may consider proper. Go the limit of the use of your muscles and nerves or starve, that is the size of it.

One day rest out of seven, maybe; there is the qualification of an "equivalent" for the one day of rest. Think of the generosity!—at a time when organized workers are demanding the five-day week. At a time when the workers of the world are beginning to see as reality the possibility of an industrial system where the six-hour day for the five-day week may easily supply a living which includes not only the bare needs of life, but recreation, education, travel, every substantial enjoyment which the Chamber of Commerce considers appropriate to the individual life of its members!

What about unemployment? Surely this is a waste of energy utility below the "economic limit"—yet it is a constant, wholesale, inevitable part of the system of private capitalistic production. Millions are out of work all the time; on the average all workers lose one-fourth of full time. Too bad for the workers; all that the Chamber of Commerce is concerned about is the time that the employees are on the job, and that during this time a day's work shall be not one jot less than the last ounce of efficient energy!

There is no word in this program about unemployment. It is taken for granted that the capitalists will generously supply work to all who accept these terms, when as a matter of fact this has never been the case and never will be the case under private industry.

The next two clauses are a restatement of the Gary version of "collective bargaining", as follows:

"8. Adequate means, satisfactory both to the employer and his employees, and voluntarily agreed to by them, should be provided for the discussion and adjustment of employment relations and the just and prompt settlement of all disputes that arise in the course of industrial operation.

9. When, in the establishment or adjustment of employment relations, the employees do not deal individually but by mutual consent such dealing is conducted by either party through representatives, it is proper for the other party to ask that these representatives shall not be chosen or controlled by, or in such dealing in any degree represent, any outside group or interest in the questions at issue."

In other words, no union negotiations, no solidarity of workers even of a single craft, but only a nice, amiable little unionism of the one plant, a unionism which the employer can very easily supervise and keep in hand.

The Chamber of Commerce is kidding itself, or here is the deliberate challenge against any form of labor organization which goes outside the one shop, which means no organization at all. Probably the latter is the truth. American capitalism realizes that all organization of labor must be destroyed, or the momentum of the wages and hours fight will hurl the workers into the revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of capitalism. The Chamber of Commerce appears to be ready to face the issue, to declare openly that it means to maintain a slave system by might of the State.

The last clause of this program are anti-strike clauses, dealing with government employees, also with the workers in "public service activities", a classification which can easily be extended to include every major industry.

This declaration by the leading organization of capitalism in the United States shows that we have arrived at the show-down in the class fight. The employers dare to show their full hand. They hold in contempt the backward narrow, corrupt union movement in this country; and they mean to crush in its infancy the newer movement toward militant industrial unionism. This is the program of class-conscious capitalism, a program of industrial slavery built directly on the law-making, court, police and military power of the State; a program which regards the worker as one form of material for the making of profits, never for a moment as a human being.

The Black Sheep.

Chapter XXXVII
Collins' Ambition.

On their way to Harrison, Jack asked Collins, what object he or Rudolph had in cutting pages from his note book, and the big man replied that he had done so, for the good of humanity. Of course this was an explanation that did not explain anything to the boy. Yet, he asked no further questions, partly because he had not understood Collins' meaning and was turning the matter over in his mind, and partly because Collins immediately proceeded to take him to task for his singular philosophy about human relations.

"You have a good brain Jack," said he, "but it is leading you wrong. It ties you so close to a mole hill that you fail to see the mountain. Your passion for natural phenomena in the animal and vegetable world has a tendency to blind you to the greater, and in a sense more wonderful, phenomena of the social world. You are not a millionaire, or the son of a millionaire, no matter how you wiggle you are on the lower side of the fence. Types or no types, capitalism is a reality and the class struggle is a fact. It is a damned hideous fact and you will not be able to escape it."

"I do not deny the class struggle. I know that it exists. The only difference between you and I is that I maintain that it must exist as a natural result of biologic variation. As long as life produces variations there will be the weak and the strong, the wise and the foolish, the aggressive and meek, the worker and the shirker, the schemer and the producer. All I maintain is that no matter what your system of society you will always be face to face with these facts," Jack urged.

But Collins ignored the boys explanation at least in part when he said, or later it must die, and that at its

death, one of two things must happen, either, the workers take over natural resources and the tools of industry and run them for the common good, or the world plunges back into the dark ages or worse." He stopped and looked at his companion intently as if expecting an answer, but the boy made no reply. He just walked on beside Collins on the trail between the forest and the lake, evidently busy with his own thought on the subject of human destiny.

Just before they came in sight of the village Collins resumed the conversation. Speaking as if to himself, "It makes no difference," said he, "if the ultimate change comes, first to the light or to the dark and it will be for good or evil in proportion to the accumulated intelligence of the working class. The change will come as truly as tomorrow's rising sun will bring the coming of the day. That can be mathematically demonstrated. Blondes and brunettes are not a problem in industrial development, also they may be a problem in social relations. And social relations are but the reflex of industrial necessities and industrial necessities are regulated by the requirements of mankind and the availability of natural resources, plus the evolution of the machine. All these factors are interacting. The real problem is, whether mankind will retain and develop what it now has or if it will lose and relapse into the primeval night."

Jack looked at the big man curiously. He had seldom heard him talk with such calm earnestness. There was no doubt, but what Collins believed what he said. He actually feared the possible death of civilization and a consequent relapse into the dark ages. He feared "Caesar's Column" more than he did the "Iron Heel." Jack tried to comfort him with the statement that civilization could only fall and perish if by some catastrophe the blonde races were exterminated. Then he maintained, that the world would go back into darkness until a new light could be evolved in the fog lands. But Collins was not in the mood to philosophize. "O forget it," said he

impatiently. "Get this idea clearly in mind, it is the one important thought that every worker should hold. The working class constitutes eighty per cent of the world's population—the parasites twenty per cent. These figures are not absolutely correct, I only use them as a paradigm. Now the twenty, will employ the eighty, only as long as there are markets. Once the markets are gone, and they are fast going, then seventy out of every eighty will become useless to the twenty parasites. Useless human beasts of burden will be disposed of, as were the oxen at the coming of the horse, and as will the horse be disposed of at the coming of the motor. My God, kid, can't you see the massacres, the holocausts of the future, if we do not develop the spirit of solidarity. The people simply must awaken to retain and to hold what their hands and brains have lost, for if they do not then their masters will hurl them against each other, and they will destroy each other in the fury of their own ignorance," he concluded passionately.

"It's no use to try it," Jack answered. "They will only chase you, and jail you, and finally kill you, for your pains. The very people you try to awaken would thank their bewitched Gods for having had part in your murder. The very masses who you would give your life to educate would hold a ghastly dance around your bleeding cadaver. It is not that they are vicious, it is because they are trusting and obedient to their superiors, as they call them. They believe the word of the papers, the preachers, the teachers, and all other hirelings of the ruling beast. You can't get them to hang together. As far as solidarity is concerned, the whole working class is a rope of sand."

Just see what they did to me at Muller, they praised me to the skies when I spoke to them of the things that affected their present and future welfare. They led me to believe that they were with me, but when I was first, because of my agitation, these very people said among themselves, 'why didn't he keep his mouth shut,'

and "it serves him right, he had no business shooting off his bazoo against the people who give him work," and "A man should stay by the man who feeds him." Ye gods, they fed me, when I worked in their mines, in constant danger of death and received only a fraction of what I produced. No, no, Ed I can't see where either you or I gain anything, by playing the twentieth century Jesus. Both the masters and the slaves, would look upon us as Black Sheep."

"By the way, do you know why sheep men keep black sheep in their flocks? It is in order to count the white ones and keep track of them. So we agitators are used by the masters to part to the tamper of the slave."

They were just crossing a little brook that ran from the woodland into the lake, by jumping from one rock to the other. The rocks were wet with the rain that had fallen and the big man losing his footing fell full length into the water. The icy bath cooled the ardor of his eloquence and Jack rustled about to find pitch wood, with which to start a fire, as to dry his companions' clothes. After a few moments of good natured bantering about the mishap Collins said, "you're all wrong Jack, even if you were right, you would be wrong. You are to big a man to entertain so damned selfish a view of life. You simply must help in this battle for a better world. Remember you don't live for yourself alone. You are only a link in the chain of human evolution. Some day you may have children, and they may live at the death of capitalism, while you lived during its life. I know that you do not want it said that you could have helped to change conditions only you were more interested in rats than you were in the welfare of your class. After all is said, the fact remains, that we are human and we have duties and responsibilities not only to our selves but to our kind. I know you will take this view of it, ultimately. There are two forces that will drive you to it. The one is the hand of capitalism, and the other is the part of your note book you misad this morning."

"Yes, what in hell did you cut out the leaves from that note book for?" Jack asked as he heaped another arm of bark on the fire.

"I sent it to the daughter of the real estate man at Anamosa. I have a notion that a little correspondence will awaken a new set of brain cells, that have hitherto laid dormant in your head. That girl had the spirit of the crusader, while you have the mind of a scientist, and damn me if I don't believe that bringing you together will save you both as fermenting germs in the great leaven of revolutionary thought. I hate the hour, geologic, and it was a big fight on my part to decide whether to send those notes or not. I remembered all that she said and appreciated more what she did than you perhaps imagine. I know that she is made of good stuff, in a sense of better stuff than you, you are inclined to gravitate towards books, and hills, and valleys, animals and plants, and abstract thought, while she is drawn toward man and justice, and the ideals that directly affect human welfare."

Then there is another matter I want to talk about, now that we have a few moments time. You can't speak of such things before Rudy. I had a love affair once; it was during my Scissorbill days. The girl worked in a store and I worked in a mill. I got hurt, and was laid up for six months or more. Couldn't raise my hand above my head. Couldn't walk. Had to be wheeled about in a chair. Of course I went broke right down flat. This girl kept me during all the six months. Now mind you she was only getting four and a half a week, and out of it she kept herself and kept me, and in some way managed to give something to the support of her sister. Now take a peek at scissorbill psychology. I never stopped to figure that she couldn't do what she was doing on her salary, and when I learned the truth after I was back on my feet, I bawled her out and left the country. Rudy would not have done such a thing. Two months later I met a fellow who had known us both, reduction. This plan, it was proposed and he told me that she had died three weeks after I left with the con—or as soon as possible.

something. I was no rebel then. Just a plain hooser but that cut me to the quick. I have tried to atone in some measure ever since, and I'll keep on attacking the system that made a fool of me, and a corpse of her, in every way that I can as long as there is breath in me. And if consciousness holds out and I can cage my strength the last three words, I will say with my dying breath will be, "God damn capitalism!"

"Get on your duds," said Jack. "Let's get to Harrison. Perhaps there is an answer to those notes."

(Continued next week)

THE CARTOON FUND
Bill Smith, our cartoonist, has been off the job for a couple of weeks. Our readers will be pleased to see he is now back again.
Let's see what the cartoon boosters have been doing lately.

Receipts:
Previously reported\$61.95
Charles Brown 50
Jno. Chipman 1.50
J. S. Jahner 1.00
Wm. Batten 1.00
Jas. W. Booker20
C. Baker50
A comrade 1.00
X. Y. Z. 1.50
Jno Reichle 1.00
Total\$70.15
Expenses 91.28

LONDON.—The Triple Alliance of miners, railwaymen and transport workers, have passed a resolution calling upon the parliamentary committee of the Trades Union Congress, the Labor Party and the Cooperative movement to join with the Triple Alliance in making an exhaustive inquiry into the reasons for the high cost of living and to work out a plan for its substantial reduction. This plan, it was proposed and he told me that she had died three weeks after I left with the con—or as soon as possible.