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INDUSTRIAL FREEDOM.

NEW SERIES, No. 9

EQUALITY, SKAGIT COUNTY, WASH., NOVEMBER 1, 1901

25 CENTS PER YEAR

EQUALITY COLONY

A Brief History Showing Our Objects and Present Condition—Cooperative Colonies Are Not All Failures

The Brotherhood of the Cooperative Commonwealth was initiated at the time of the populist convention in St. Louis by some of the socialists who went there as delegates of the populist party.

The object of the association was to organize the workers into cooperative colonies and by pooling their capital, labor and money, build homes for themselves instead of working for capitalists and building homes for the other fellow.

The organization was perfected in September, 1896, by the election of a board of trustees consisting of Myron W. Reed, president; N. W. Lermond, secretary; Dr. C. F. Taylor, treasurer; Eugene V. Debs, organizer; Prof. Frank Parsons, dean; A. S. Edwards, editor; W. L. Smith, master workman, and W. W. White, distributor. These officers were to purchase land and machinery and hold it in trust for the association, carry on an active propaganda and act for the association in all its dealings.

Through the untiring efforts of the secretary, N. W. Lermond, the Brotherhood grew rapidly. Local unions were organized in nearly every state and territory. Pledges of money and machinery to help start colonies literally rolled in until over \$100,000 was pledged and Comrade Lermond started on a search for a location for colony No. 1. After looking over several states he finally selected a location near the head of navigation of the White river, in Arkansas. Pending his report to the board of trustees, a convention of the American Railway Union was held in Chicago and he was requested to attend in the interests of the B. C. C. While there he made an agreement with the Debs faction of the A. R. U. to join forces in colonizing a state with socialists and Washington was selected as the best state in which to try the experiment, so the Arkansas proposition was dropped.

The first move toward starting a colony in Washington was sending G. E. Pelton to this state in September, 1897, to select a site. After looking over a number of proposed locations, that on which Equality is now situated was chosen, and the watchword was "On to Washington!" An option was taken on 280 acres of fine land and the final purchase was made in December following. This land was unimproved, being covered thickly with brush and standing and fallen timber and about 200 acres had to be drained. The price paid was \$10 per acre.

Equality colony was organized November 1, 1897, at the home of Comrade Carey Lewis. The original members were 15 in number, two of whom are dead, two still members and the rest scattered far and wide, working for the cause of socialism.

The first work undertaken by the colonists was building a dike on the 5-acre lot of Comrade Lewis to keep out the tide water; next an apartment house was built at the same place for the accommodation of prospective colonists, who were coming in at the rate of half a dozen a day. The clearing of land and building of houses on the colony site was carried on with great enthusiasm and during the winter of 1887-8 not a day was lost; men waded through mud in the rain before daylight and after dark to and from work. Machinists, tailors,

engineers, carpenters, blacksmiths, school teachers and preachers all used the saw, axe and grubhoe to make a showing before spring, when the national board was to come from the east with a large printing outfit and thousands of dollars in cash to help develop Equality's natural resources and establish other colonies throughout the Sound country.

Spring came and with it the national board, but, somehow, the cash failed to materialize; though a worn out printing outfit was shipped here and \$400 freight paid on it, but the press was never set up.

Soon after he arrived Comrade Lermond purchased a printing outfit in Seattle, paying \$1500, and the first copy of Industrial Freedom was issued May 7, 1898.

During the summer of '98 nearly 200 members joined Equality. Some were very practical, useful members, others were very idealistic, useless members; all were good people and their intentions were of the best, but not having had experience in pioneering and always having worked for capitalist masters who had unlimited capital to furnish all necessary machinery for production they hesitated to assume the responsibility that would naturally rest on them and so gave up the fight and went back to the "flesh pots of Egypt."

Small lots of cultivated land were rented at various places the first summer and planted to vegetables which helped to support the resident members during the winter of 1898-9 and the process of clearing land went on rapidly.

George Savage, of this county, brought his portable sawmill, set it up, and with his family, stayed six months; at the expiration of that time he concluded that Equality life did not suit him and left, and his labor and the use of the mill for the six months were donated to the colony.

Several hundred thousand feet of lumber were cut by this little mill and was used as fast as cut. Two large apartment buildings were erected the first summer, also a large barn and several smaller buildings. About 40 acres of land were slashed, considerable ditching done and several acres of land put in condition for planting.

The national executive board of the B. C. C. was at Edison, some two miles southwest of Equality, collecting and disbursing the monies of that organization and had ideas of establishing new colonies, regardless of the fact that the dues and donations were insufficient to sustain the colony already started. It became necessary for the members of Equality, to insure the continuance of its existence, to protest against the use of any of the funds towards starting new colonies until Equality was somewhere near self supporting. This protest, after a number of intensely interesting meetings between the colony members and the national board, resulted in the complete autonomy of Equality and a division of the funds of the B. C. C.

When the government of Equality was thus taken from their hands the national board resigned, one by one, and members of Equality were appointed to fill their places. On account of the misrepresentation of the colony to outside members of the B. C. C., the membership in our national organization rapidly dropped from 3500 to 250 or 300. The national headquarters were moved to Equality and occupy a large building built for the purpose.

A machinery fund was established about this time, contributions called for, and nearly \$2000 resulted. With

THE MOSSBACK

Preaches an Anniversary Sermon Words of Wisdom From Comrade Eddy—Experimental Stage Passed

Your uncle the lighting change artist is going to preach you anniversary sermon. He is positive that there is nothing too good for an Equalityite and he wants each of you to resolve upon this anniversary of its founding that for the ensuing year you will strive to obtain for the colony and for yourself the best that it is possible to achieve.

So far as is consistent with future stability he advises you to "blow yourself" for present comforts; believing that in so doing you will best serve the interests of the colony as well as your own welfare. Don't, I beg of you, deny yourselves comforts now that future members, people who are now wasting their substance in riotous living "on the outside," may revel in luxury at some future time.

"Be good to yourselves" fellows and "draw down" some of the pay for the years of privation and toil you have gone through with.

Adopt my "mean, selfish" advice and put your current income, so far as consistent with business judgment, into the creature comforts of to-day, for to-day.

"Let the other fellow walk the floor" and resolve that if he will persist in staying in outer darkness that you won't sacrifice your present comfort and convenience to his future welfare.

The experimental stage of Equality could be, doubtless, passed. From now on the highest possible standard of living is the best policy. You have come to the point where selfishness and unselfishness do not clash, but coincide.

The better and brighter you can make life in Equality colony the better and brighter the prospects for cooperative effort and the welfare of the toiling masses.

I shall never feel just like an "outsider" again with regards to the welfare of Equality colony. I wish I was enough of an "insider" to officially promulgate as its doctrine from now on that its first, and last, aim was the happiness of its members now there on the ground.

Nothing succeeds like success, and in just so much as you make conditions better under cooperative efforts than they are under individualism you prove your case. The most of mankind are in the kindergarten class in economics and one small object lesson is worth more than volumes of theory.

Comrades, your whole duty is to yourselves, and what might under other circumstances be selfishness is in you the highest and noblest type of unselfishness.

Now if my advice is good, and I'm just darned egotistical enough to think it is, don't let it go in at one ear and out at the other. Act on it. Apply it practically as you there present and familiar with conditions can act on it.

And now anniversary greetings and may the fullest blessings of peace, prosperity and happiness be with you all until your next anniversary. Amen and amen. BIGE EDDY.

All women interested in forming a Woman's Socialist League, for the promulgation of socialist principles, are requested to address: Imogene C. Fales, 126 Macon street, Brooklyn, N. Y.; Marion H. Dunham, Burlington, Iowa, or Wenonah S. Abbott, Oakland, Calif.

MEDITATIONS

Of an Old Socialist—The Individual a Parasite on Society—Fellowship

The business of the slave makers is now, and ever has been, resolution of human thoughts, relations and demands into finalities, whatever is to be done with the so called final thing afterwards they will do it for you. If it is liberty they will make it constitutional, they will interpret it. If an organization, they will be its executive. If a property relation, they will hold the deed. If it is a religious relation, they will make the doctrine; or if an ethical relation, they will define it. And if it is a social relation, they will prepare and present the scientific formula. But from the outset the process is invasive as to the subsequent liberty of the individual mind.

If I might dare reduce the art of intellectual self-defence to anything resembling a formula, I would say: "In all matters pertaining to human affairs, whatsoever is declared final is therefore premature." When men are no longer able or permitted to think for themselves, let us hope that the race may receive due warning of that coming calamity, and then we will call in the formulators. But till then, let us do our own thinking. Among things that are not finalities, I name here a few: First: The struggle for individual superiority over others—the competitive struggle of ego evolutionists.

In such a struggle, the whole question of the relative value of this, or that, depends upon some foreseen finality, which to the evolutionist of individualism is the supremacy of individualism over some or all others. The survival of the fittest. To me it seems that it is not the thing that is final. And even this evolutionist himself apologises for its obvious inadequacy as a final consideration by asserting that it tends, in a cosmic sort of way, at last, to bring the best groups to the top, to bring the best to all by the smaller and earlier process of bringing the best out of all. Hence even the Spencerians abandon the theory of individual supremacy as the final good, by justifying it as only leading to the larger good of all; which is therefore itself the thing that is final.

"Necessity is the mother of invention," says the capitalist. "We find invention profitable; we must have invention. Therefore also we must have necessity." But invention is not final, nor profits; neither is necessity the final condition for the inventive mind to work its best works.

"How to get the best of life for all of us," is the true mother of invention, and this alone justifies, as it mathematically includes all other good. The greatest perplexity of life today is to ascertain relative values. And it is a perplexity, because it is considered within the bounds of minor relations, and not from the one final absolute view point—the good of all.

Truth now is a matter of habit and training; of struggle toward this final view point, and no more. When the mind is habituated to that one point of view, all the perplexities of relative values will then pass away.

I know of no better reason for writing these thoughts than as a process of training for you and me to get on to that point of view, and to habitually recognize the general well being of all the manhood of the world as the thing that is final for the individual, as well as for the social activities.

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