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THE  
LAWRENCE STRIKE  
OF 1912

BY  
JOHN BRUCE McPHERSON

ISSUED FROM THE PAPERS OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL  
ASSOCIATION OF WOOL MANUFACTURERS, BOSTON, MASS.



BOSTON  
THE LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY PRESS  
1912

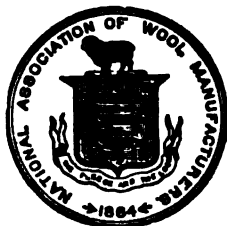


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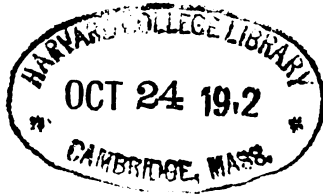
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*177. Schmitz, J. J. ...*

MICROFILMED  
AT HARVARD



## THE LAWRENCE STRIKE OF 1912.<sup>1</sup>

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DURING the early months of 1912 one of the fiercest, most dramatic, and most widely advertised industrial conflicts ever fought in New England was waged for nine weeks in Lawrence, the great center of the country's worsted industry. For the first time, leaders of the most recent propaganda amongst labor men — syndicalism or the industrial union — appeared in the extreme East, introducing methods both novel and spectacular, which constantly focused the attention of the laboring, as well as the political, class on the conflict and the combatants.

The mills involved in the strike, with the number of their employees when running at full capacity, were the Everett, with 2,500, the Atlantic, with 1,300, and the Pemberton and Lawrence Duck, each with 500 employees, which use cotton as their sole raw material. There were also the Washington, with 6,500, the Wood, with 5,200, the Ayer, with 2,000, and the Prospect, with 500 employees — controlled by the American Woolen Company; the Arlington, with 7,900, the Pacific, with 5,200, the Kunhardt, with 1,000, and the local plant of the United States Worsted Company, with 800 employees, whose chief raw material is wool.

### RAPID INCREASE OF ILLITERATE IMMIGRANTS.

Prior to 1895 the population of Lawrence, originally almost exclusively native born or Irish, was largely increased by immigration from England, Germany, and French Canada. In 1905 the city contained 70,000 people, of whom 32,000 were foreign born. Five years later the population had been

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<sup>1</sup> In the following pages I have attempted to tell in a truthful manner the story of the great labor outbreak which convulsed Lawrence last winter, attracted widespread attention, and provoked discussions in the halls of Congress. It has not been my aim to give an interpretation of this attempt on the part of the leaders to overthrow the present industrial organization, but simply to assemble and present the facts, many of which have not, up to this time (July), appeared in print. I may add that this article was prepared with no thought of having it appear in this Bulletin. —*J. B. McP.*

increased by more than fifteen thousand, the foreign born then numbering 41,000. The full significance of this increase of nine thousand in the foreign-born population is not disclosed by the figures themselves. It lies in the fact that the inpouring hosts no longer came from Teutonic stock in the countries of northern and western Europe, but chiefly from the countries of southeastern Europe and from Asia Minor. During the half decade the Italian population more than doubled. The increase of the Polanders showed even a larger percentage, while the Lithuanians more than trebled their number.

According to the census of 1910, the population of Lawrence was made up of 600 Armenians, 700 Portuguese, 1,200 French Belgians, 2,100 Poles, 2,300 Scotch, 2,500 Hebrews, 2,700 Syrians, 3,000 Lithuanians, 6,500 Germans, 8,000 Italians, 9,000 English, 12,000 French Canadians, 12,000 Americans, and 21,000 Irish, 86 per cent of the entire population being of foreign parentage.

This polyglot population increased too rapidly for the city properly to care for and assimilate it. Lawrence, to adopt the words Professor Ripley applied to the whole country, "has had to do not with the slow process of growth by deposit and accretion, but with violent and volcanic dislocation — a lava flow of population suddenly cast forth from Europe." Thousands of the newcomers — and the majority of them have been in the country less than three years — are either unmarried or have left their families in their old homes. Chiefly rural, they are illiterate folk, who have come with no purpose to settle in the country and become American citizens. On the contrary, they are a mobile, migratory crowd, with no permanent interest in any industry, or city, or in the country itself, their chief aim being to earn the largest amount under existing conditions, live upon the basis of minimum cheapness, and save the largest possible sum from their wages, with which to return to their native shores and establish themselves either in business or as land owners.

Unable to read or to speak the English language, these

people are nevertheless great consumers of European revolutionary literature. Unacquainted with our customs; possessing ideals and views of life radically different from ours; of a highly excitable temperament; natives of countries where no representative government exists, and where revolutionary intrigue is a daily occupation, they furnished a fine field for operations by a bold, able, and commanding set of revolutionary leaders. Given a cause and leadership, and there was sure to be an explosion of no mean dimension among these heterogeneous people.

#### THE OUTBREAK AND THE REASON GIVEN FOR IT.

Neither cause nor leader was wanting. The ostensible reason for the outbreak was the taking effect on January 1, 1912, of the law prohibiting the employment in factories of women and children — young persons under eighteen years — more than 54 hours a week, accompanied by a reduction of earnings corresponding to the reduced working time. This bill was passed by the General Court, and approved by the Governor May 27, 1911. Suspension of work on the part of the two classes named made it unprofitable to continue to move machinery on the 56-hour schedule in the departments where adult men predominated. The enactment of this law was urged by organized labor in the State, and was opposed by manufacturers as unwise further interference with the industries of the Commonwealth, because it would be an additional handicap from which competitors in other States permitting the operation of their factories from two to four hours longer per week were entirely free. When this bill was pending in the legislature, an argument used against its passage was that it would mean smaller earnings. The labor leaders, it is claimed, admitted that such would be the result, but as they believed that effect would only be temporary, they were willing to put up with it for the short time it was expected to last.<sup>1</sup>

ie. them  
is. us

<sup>1</sup> See Message of Governor Foss, January 25, 1912.

## SHORTER HOURS AND THEIR EFFECT UPON WAGES.

For a number of years Massachusetts had been leading the campaign for shorter hours for women and children. As early as 1892 hours were reduced from 60 to 58. In 1909, when an effort was made to clip off at one time four hours of the week's working time, a compromise bill was passed which fixed the number at 56, but two years later the goal set in the previous attempt was reached, six hours having been cut off in less than twenty years. When the hours were reduced from 60 to 58, and from 58 to 56, no corresponding loss of earnings was experienced, and presumably no such result was really expected in January.

The question of what effect this law would have upon wages was not passed by without discussion by some of the operatives. At least one organized body was keenly alive to the situation. At their convention held in Boston in May, 1911, the loom fixers passed a resolution notifying the employers that if the 54-hour bill became a law, they would demand the same pay for 54 as for 56 hours' work. In pursuance of that action, a committee representing that organization held a conference on this very subject in December with the agent of at least one of the largest mills, and in this same mill the operatives were told orally about the change and what its results would be. The English Branch of the Industrial Workers of the World appointed a committee on January 2 to interview the mill officials and ask what effect the change of hours would have upon earnings. As a rule, however, its full effect was not posted clearly on the bulletin boards. The mill managers generally complied literally with the law, which requires the posting of the hours of labor in manufacturing establishments, taking it for granted, as has been said by one employer, that employees "paid by the hour must have known what would be the result, and those paid by the piece or the yard could see it also; or, as expressed by another, "the people could not expect to take home 56-hour wages for 54 hours of work."

## BEGINNING OF THE STRIKE.

Contrary to the general belief, the first cessation of work did not occur in the Washington Mill of the American Woolen Company, but in the Lawrence Duck Mill, where a strike began on the first of January, the day on which the new 54-hour law took effect. On the preceding Friday a committee representing the employees held a conference with the treasurer about the effect the new law would have upon their hours and wages. They were told that inasmuch as all the weavers were men, the company was willing to run the mills 56 hours per week, so that there should be no change either in the working hours or the earnings, but that if the time was reduced to 54 hours, the pay for the two hours' reduction would be lost. In other words, the company was not willing to pay 56 hours' wages for 54 hours' work. This was not satisfactory to the committee and a strike was called.

On January 9 a meeting of the employees of the Duck Mill was addressed by Joseph Bedard, afterwards secretary of the Strike Committee, and sixty-eight persons filed applications for membership in the Industrial Workers of the World. The following night a mass meeting of almost all the Italian workers of the city was held to discuss the new law and to hear reports of committees which had been appointed to interview their respective mill agents. At this meeting, the chairman of which was Angeline Rocco, the 27-year old high school student and secretary of the Italian branch of the Industrial Workers of the World, it was decided that all Italians of all the mills should strike Friday evening. They declared that wages received owing to the 54-hour law were insufficient to live on, and they "wanted" pay kept at the amount which they received under the old law. This attitude indicating the temper of the operatives was emphasized by the action, on Thursday afternoon, January 11, of the Polish weavers (chiefly women) in the Everett Mill. When their wages were paid they protested against the smaller amount received, quit their looms, and

after a demonstration to influence other employees they retired from the mill, which was shut down on Saturday and remained closed until the strike was declared off.

To take any action, the result of which would be to lessen the earnings of the unskilled workers at a time when the cost of the necessaries of life was abnormally high, without discussing the question with the wage-earners, was impolitic and cost the companies dear.

#### DEPRESSION IN THE TEXTILE INDUSTRY.

It is true that the whole textile industry had just experienced several very unprofitable years. As the president of the National Association of Cotton Manufacturers said in his address at the April, 1912, meeting: "Few mills earned dividends; most mills which paid dividends took them from surplus accumulations of other years, and many were compelled to pass dividends entirely." A prominent cotton manufacturer of Rhode Island is on record as saying: "The year 1911 was one of almost unparalleled depression in the cotton industry in this country. Widespread curtailment and abnormally low selling prices were made to keep as much machinery as possible going. It is said that in one large center in Massachusetts the cotton manufacturing operations resulted in a loss exceeding two million dollars."

The depression under which the industries staggered was likewise hard on the employees, not because the rate of wages had been reduced but because extensive curtailment had been the rule, and this lack of employment caused the wages earned in normal years greatly to shrink during 1911. The lack of business, which was so damaging to mills and workers, has been attributed by at least one prominent treasurer to tariff agitation, to the fluctuating cost of raw materials, and to the popularity of narrow skirts, which lessened by half the cloth required for women's dresses and greatly diminished the requirements of the trade.

Notwithstanding a number of lean years in the last decade great expansion of mills occurred in Lawrence. Many thou-

sands of unskilled workers from southeastern Europe flocked to the city and were enlisted to man the machinery in these great new plants, where, because of their lack of skill, they proved of questionable cheapness to their employers, and, because of their numbers, a great incubus upon the city itself, whose officials, receiving scarcely a dollar in taxes, were obliged to furnish at great cost the privileges and advantages of city life to thirty thousand operatives.

#### WERE INDUCEMENTS OFFERED TO IMMIGRANTS?

It was charged and denied that these immigrants had been induced to come to Lawrence by post cards and posters, alleged to have been distributed by agents of the American Woolen Company, showing operatives in the mills carrying bags of gold on pay day into a bank opposite the mill. An official of the Government was unable, after weeks of investigation, to find any basis for the charge, and President Wood, in a telegram to a New York paper, demanding a retraction of the statement, declared that the company had not "directly or indirectly sent agents through southern Europe seeking workers for their mills, nor have they caused to be distributed literature in southern Europe or elsewhere in foreign countries, nor have they directly or indirectly thus procured men or boys for work in Lawrence."

#### THE OUTBREAK IN THE WASHINGTON MILL.

Whether the refusal to pay the same wages for 54 hours as for 56 hours' work was due to the undoubted depression and uncertainty of the future or, as alleged by Governor Foss, was to show "the unwisdom of legislative interference," it is not necessary to decide. It was done without making plain to all the help an intention so to do. When the pay envelopes for the early days of January were opened in the Washington Mill on Friday, January 12, an uprising occurred which did not subside that day until nearly all the workers of that mill, of at least two other mills of the American Woolen Company, and of several independent mills,

were persuaded to leave their posts or were driven from their customary work places. Most of those employees who then quit work remained out of the mills from sympathy with the action or were kept at home by intimidation and violence until the strike was finally ended. Neither in January after the strike began nor in February were more than 60 per cent of all the employees on the payrolls of all the mills January 1 at work during any one week. In fact, during one week in February the percentage fell below 30 and during that month it did not rise above 42 per cent of the normal force.

From the Washington Mill the crowd, composed largely of Italians, surged toward the Wood Mill, where the pay envelopes had not been distributed, "rushed" the gates, broke open the doors, damaged the escalators, pulled girls from their work, cut off the electric drive, stopped the machines throughout the mill, and threatened to kill any person daring to put the machinery in motion, and the Wood Mill, like the Washington, was soon cleared of workers. While these ends were being secured in that section of the city, one hundred Syrians walked out of the worsted spinning department of the Arlington Mills in the other mill section; and by Friday night a working force of ten thousand, chiefly employees of the American Woolen Company, was on the streets.

Inasmuch as the strike was precipitated by a comparatively small number of employees, and as some tried to work the next morning, it was expected that many more would attempt to enter the mills Monday morning. This the strike leaders decided to prevent at all hazards, the center of attack being the four mills of the American Woolen Company, but especially the Prospect, the least affected of the four. This effort was entirely successful, the city's small available police force being powerless to help those willing to work to get into the mills, or to control the strikers and sympathizers, who assembled prior to the opening hour and choked the streets leading to the mills.



## LEADER ETTOR'S PROMPT APPEARANCE.

The strike might have collapsed in a few days from lack of support and effective leadership, had not Joseph J. Ettor, one of the five members of the Executive Board of the Industrial Workers of the World, reached Lawrence Friday night, to assume charge of the unorganized masses. Prior to the outbreak there were three branches of the Industrial Workers in Lawrence, the English, the Franco-Belgian, and the Italian, affiliated in one "local." The nucleus of the English section was a remnant of the Independent Textile Weavers, a union formed after a Weavers' union of the United Textile Workers of America collapsed about 1905. The Franco-Belgian section was founded in December, 1907, and the Italians were organized by Ettor in May, 1911. The paying membership of all branches when the strike broke out has been variously placed between extreme estimates of 300 and 600.

For the work to be done in the way in which it was done, no better leader than Ettor could have been selected. Half Syrian and half Italian, though only twenty-six years of age, he has long been engaged as an agitator, organizer, and leader in outbreaks at Paterson, Brooklyn, McKee's Rocks, and others equally important and equally sanguinary. He was the magnet about whom for weeks these masses rallied, whose words were unquestioned, and whose advice was implicitly accepted. With the cunning of the Syrian and the eloquence of the Italian, this man, steeped in the literature of revolutionary socialism and anarchism, swayed the undisciplined mob as completely as any general ever controlled his disciplined troops, his boast being, "I could stop more rioting by raising my hand than the others can with their bayonets and powder." Immediately upon his arrival he began to organize these thousands of heterogeneous, heretofore unsympathetic, and jealous nationalities into a militant body of class-conscious workers. Able to make an incendiary speech either in the English or Italian language, he soon fired the strikers with a sense of the righteousness of their cause, and of the many injustices under which they supposedly suffered.

His followers firmly believed, as they were told, that success meant they were about to enter a new era of brotherhood, in which there would be no more union of trades and no more departmental distinctions, but all workers would become the real bosses in the mills. Appearing like a whirlwind, he swept through the city, stirred up the police, the city government, the militia, and even the State, and aroused amongst his followers the ardor of crusaders engaged in a holy undertaking, winning unqualified loyalty to himself and the cause he represented.

Meetings were held Saturday and Sunday, at which the fighting spirit was aroused to a high pitch, and plans were laid to organize a fight for Monday morning to prevent any employees from going to work. The occurrences of Saturday were repeated and the mills of the American Woolen Company were almost deserted. Realizing their success at these mills, the strikers moved against the Pacific mills, where the watchman was brushed aside and twenty men forced their way into the mill, intending to clear it by the methods used so successfully at the Washington, Wood, and Ayer. The twenty were held as prisoners, however, and the mill hose was turned upon the attacking force, who, retreating, soon returned, bringing chunks of ice and coal with which they attempted to break the windows of the weaving shed. Shots were fired at the hosemen by a man concealed under an umbrella. At the Arlington mills a similar effort was made. The engineer of the top mill of that corporation, under threat of death if their demand was not complied with, was compelled by strikers to stop the machinery; and after the operatives had been frightened and driven from the building, an attempt to carry the gates of the top mill was made, but ended in failure when the hosepipes were turned on the besieging forces.

This plan of <sup>militar-</sup>campaign was devised and followed because it is the policy of the I. W. W. organization, and because the leaders knew full well that the acts of the authorities in repressing violence would fan the flames of resentment and solidify the ranks of the strikers.

Don't know -  
 @ 157, only strike  
 shook up town -  
 no + strike

This outbreak, it is generally believed, occurred before the date set for it by the leaders, May 1, the international socialistic labor day. Ettor was in Lawrence May, 1911, expounding its doctrines, and undoubtedly this local was seeking a favorable opportunity to start a strike. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, an organizer and speaker, was in the city on several occasions, and made addresses. Upon returning to Lawrence, January 20, 1912, she said, "I have studied the conditions and we prophesied that there would be a strike when the 54-hour bill passed."

When the opportunity was presented, although in the depth of the coldest winter for years, and without funds, the leaders did not shrink from the responsibility of carrying on a strike under such adverse conditions. It was a hard time for the workers to be without work and wages. It was likewise a difficult time for the mill managers. If their samples were not ready for the usual openings, only a few months distant, much business would surely be lost for the year; and perhaps, if this business were once diverted, it might be permanently gone. Then, too, improvement in business was just noticeable, and inactivity at such a time, after a long period of curtailment, was most unwelcome and costly.

#### AIM OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD.

The aim of the Industrial Workers of the World is to unite the workers of the nation into an industrial union — a union by which they will be able to cease working simultaneously in one, several, or all industries. Originating some sixteen years ago in France, it has been transplanted in this country, where until last January its chief activities were in the West. It has practically no financial resources: its policy being to have no funds in the treasury for the employers to dissipate. It demands abolition of the wage system and the elimination of all capitalists. Craft lines are broken down and an industrial union is organized, which cares nothing about the recognition of the union, for which trade unionists have waged some of the fiercest struggles. It refuses to enter into time contracts with employers, and

reserves the right to strike at any moment for any cause. Industrial Workers have as their motto not "a fair day's pay for a fair day's work," but "abolition of the wage system." Solidarity is emphasized. As a result of their philosophy, the unskilled and not the skilled man, as in the trade union, dominates the situation. This movement is destined to make an impression in this country, especially in the industries where the unskilled, untutored immigrant from southeastern Europe holds the field. Fraught with great significance for our industrial life, it menaces not only the industries of the country, but the regular recognized trade unions, which will experience trouble along with the industrial managers in combating the novel and effective attack of these new radicals. They declare themselves Socialists, yet protest against those who favor the parliamentary method of bringing about the peaceful revolution advocated by adherents of the red flag. They are extremists, who, chafing under legal processes, regard them as ineffective. They are in a hurry and demand direct and immediate action, holding that labor is *now* equipped to take over the management of our industrial system.

#### VIOLENCE AND DESTRUCTION OF CAPITALISM ADVOCATED.

The notorious William D. Haywood, the protagonist of the Industrial Workers of the World, in outlining the work set for him to do, said in a New York speech, "I am going to put the workers of this country into such a tremendous organization, a union with such enormous strength and power, that we shall be able to abolish the wage system and starve out those hell hounds of capitalists."

To bring about this result, various methods, from passive resistance to extreme violence or insurrection, are permitted and approved, the degree of violence or insurrection depending upon the counter-resistance or aggression of the enemy, the strength of the direct action organization, and other contributory causes.<sup>1</sup>

Haywood stands for violence as a weapon of the working

<sup>1</sup> Solidarity, January 27, 1912.

classes, and urges upon Socialists the open declaration of an intention to organize for armed warfare. He despises the law, and believes in "coercion played on so large a scale as to be irresistible instead of sporadic as it is now."

The organization fights not only the capitalists and regular trade unionists, but Socialists who advocate the accomplishment of their purpose through the ballot. The slower way is unacceptable to them, because "the militant minority of the outlawed slaves will raise more hell with the capitalist enemy in one year, by the advocacy and use of all these means and methods forbidden by the intellectuals, than would the latter in a thousand years, with their monstrous jargon of peace and legality."<sup>1</sup>

James Duncan, vice-president of the American Federation of Labor, declares that their program necessarily entails revolution as typified by the general strike and their country-wide class war. "They make no pretence to preserve industrial peace. Nor is the establishment of an honorable peace ever dreamt of by them. When a dispute arises, pronunciamento after pronunciamento is issued to create greater discord. The irritation strike, the passive strike, and every variety of sabotage — indifferent work, reversing cards on cars, putting packages in wrong cars — are advocated and approved. Violence is deified and is ethically justified."

While Haywood and his band of Industrial Workers of the World are denounced by many intellectuals amongst the Socialists, they are also denounced quite as severely by the DeLeon wing of the Industrial Workers of the World, who charge them with being seceders from the true Industrial Workers, raising the flag of anarchy, laying the axe to the ballot box, and advocating sabotage.

#### INVASION OF THE EAST PLANNED.

Holding such views and engaged in such a propaganda, it is not surprising that the leaders, after many bitter struggles in the West, should have planned to organize the illiterate

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<sup>1</sup> *Solidarity*, January 13, 1912.

immigrants in the textile industries, and to inculcate their principles amongst them. The design of the leaders to begin a campaign in the East is revealed in an article printed in January, and evidently written before the outbreak of the strike, in which the writer said, "The battles of Homestead, Pullman, Ludlow, and McKee's Rocks compare favorably with those of Cœur d'Alene, Cripple Creek, and Goldfield." Then predicting that "the solidifying of these two forces will make the most sturdy, stubborn, and militant working classes in the world," he continued:

"The restless workers who listened to the cry, 'Go West,' and went, are now turning their faces to the East. Many workers are looking our way just now, and if those who understand cannot be depended upon to do the right thing, look out for breakers, because ignorance will not help — all together once, just to see what will happen."<sup>1</sup>

After the preliminary agitation by Ettor, leaders — both men and women — of all grades of importance and of variegated reputations, rushed to Lawrence to assist in arousing and inciting the masses then on the streets. The strike had not progressed many days before it became evident that it was being directed by men who, inflaming the workers at the constantly recurring day and night mass meetings, were pursuing tactics unusual in industrial struggles in this Commonwealth.

Haywood, soon called to the scene of conflict, immediately began an assault upon all in authority, speaking with great frankness and bitterness at many places. Addressing the Poles, he cited them as toilers who would inherit the earth and some day be above the kings, the czars, and the bosses of the land. The Industrial Workers of the World, he predicted, would sweep everything before them, till they should cover the country and the whole world. "For a starter, the mill owners in Lawrence will have to give in." In a speech at Lynn he said:

"The wonder to me is that the Lawrence strikers have not gone into the mills and destroyed the machinery and burned

<sup>1</sup> Solidarity, January 13, 1912.

up the mills. I contend that the strikers have built the mills and that they have a perfect right to destroy what they have built up." And standing in Faneuil Hall he defiantly proclaimed that it was time for the government of Massachusetts to be overthrown.

At its inception trade unionists, familiar with the aims of the organization, declared the strike was an attempted revolution, led by men whose chief aim in life is to foment sedition and preach a class war. It was early recognized as an incipient rebellion by many, and was proclaimed by Ettor himself as "a war between classes." Its importance was recognized by Vincent St. John, national secretary of the Industrial Workers of the World, who in a letter to Hayward said: "A win in the Lawrence mills means the start that will only end with the downfall of the wage system."

*WFL read*

*YV*

**SITUATION MORE SERIOUS THAN AT FIRST SUPPOSED.**

On the afternoon of January 12, just after the flaming forth of the protest, President William M. Wood of the American Woolen Company issued a statement in which he expressed the belief that "as soon as the employees understand the real issue, and where the responsibility rests (he having placed it on the labor leaders), they will see that their action was hasty and ill-advised." "There is no cause for striking," he continued, "and when the employees find that justice is not on their side, the strike cannot possibly be long-lived. I look for an early resumption of work." This proved to be a baseless hope, and indicates that President Wood failed to realize the resources and the mettle of the band pitted against him. A few days later he declined a suggestion made by the Lawrence City Council that he confer with a committee of strikers to arrange for arbitration, taking the position that "there is nothing to discuss, much less arbitrate. There is no strike — only prevalence of mob rule."

*I was implicated from 12.5.08 strike - not true*

Governor Foss soon sent his private secretary to Lawrence to investigate and report. Meeting Ettor and suggesting a settlement through the State Board of Conciliation and

Arbitration, he was informed by that leader, true to the principles of his organization, that while they were quite willing to acquaint the Board with the facts, the strikers were not looking for arbitration.

Undismayed by President Wood's declination of the City Council's invitation, the members of the City Government held a meeting in the City Hall on Sunday, January 20, at which the loom fixers, mule spinners, wool sorters, and the strikers, by their leader, Ettor, were represented. The meeting was called after the officials had interviewed the Boston mill executives, to learn whether committees from the different mills could be selected to meet the mill agents to discuss the strikers' demands, namely, 15 per cent increase of wages on a 54-hour basis, abolition of the premium system, double pay for overtime, and no discrimination against strikers, to which after the arrest of Ettor and Giovannitti was added a demand for their release.

At this meeting the skilled crafts stated that they had no grievances to justify their striking, but that they had been forced out of work. The Strike Committee opposed the request, and that negative recommendation was approved by the general meeting, the strikers demanding that all the mill agents meet the delegation of the whole body, "the controversy not being confined to any one mill, but being universal."

The attempt to bring about this conference having failed, a controversy was then carried on in the papers over the wages paid in Lawrence, the strikers insisting that the average wages in busy seasons, earnings of the foremen and superintendents included, were six dollars a week, and "they must be less in slack times." Because these statements were often repeated an erroneous impression was gained by the public, who accepted as true the figures given out by the Strike Committee, and by some well meaning but misinformed speakers and lecturers.

#### FORMULATED AND OTHER GRIEVANCES OF THE STRIKERS.

In addition to the formulated grievances, it was asserted by the strikers that the machinery was speeded up; that as a

(controversy) in  
papers over  
wages?



consequence, the output was as much under the 54-hour as under the 56-hour schedule, and that their wages were reduced to increase the profits of the bosses. It was also asserted that because of the increased speed the earnings of the weavers, who had to work much faster and could not turn out as good cloth, were materially reduced by a system of fines imposed for imperfect work; and that higher wages were paid to native than to foreign help for the same kind of work.

To support this allegation of "speeding up," a witness before the House Committee on Rules testified that the speed of the machines, which he asserted was increased by the loom fixers "in order not to lose any premium during the two hours," caused so much damaged cloth that the weavers paid fines of \$1.50 and \$2.50 when certain grades were damaged, their earnings being greatly reduced in this indirect way.<sup>1</sup> These charges not only were not supported, but they were denied by the supervising engineer of the American Woolen Company, who testified<sup>2</sup> that the speed of the machinery was established when it was installed, and that no change was made immediately before or since the first of January. The speed of the machinery in the whole mill can be increased only in the engine room, the operative having no control over the speeding, or the movement of the bobbin in the loom. Were such a change made at the machine, it would have to be done by a difference in the size of the pulleys. After he had heard this testimony, the original witness varied his story and testified that since January 1 the "belts that run the wheels of the machinery in every room were speeded up by putting some kind of soap on it, and it was running with a much faster speed than it used to be; in fact, we could not attend to the work."<sup>3</sup>

The charge that fines were levied for inferior work in violation of the Massachusetts statute was also denied, the cashier of the Washington Mill testifying<sup>4</sup> that no fines are levied, and that while cloths are graded, the same rate of pay

<sup>1</sup> Hearings, Committee on Rules, House of Rep., pp. 114, 115.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*, pp. 447, 448, 449.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*, p. 452.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*, p. 432.

is given for all grades. This testimony was substantiated by the cashier of the Wood Mill,<sup>1</sup> who declared that there are no deductions for grading, and that the weaver gets the full rate, which is based upon the number of picks per yard, without reduction.<sup>2</sup>

Nor was there better basis for the charge that the weaver's premium was harder to earn with the reduced hours of labor, since the amount of output which entitled a weaver to the premium had been reduced in exactly the proportion of 56 to 54, so that the weaver would have the same chance under the new time schedule to earn the premium without increased effort.<sup>3</sup>

#### THE PREMIUM SYSTEM.

This efficiency or premium system was not in force generally in the mills in Lawrence, but only in the Kunhardt Worsted Mill, employing about one thousand hands, where the bonus was based on weekly earnings, and in the mills of the American Woolen Company, where the monthly period was in force. If, therefore, valid objection could have been made to the system—it should not have been sweepingly made against all mills in that city.

This bonus system applied to weavers, winders, dressers, loom fixers, second hands, and those engaged in certain processes in finishing. In some cases the premium was based upon output; in others it was paid for constant attendance. Where it was based upon production a certain per cent in addition to wages was paid to all who exceeded a fixed minimum, the per cent increasing as the earnings advanced from one standard sum to another, the fixed sums depending upon the kind of loom used by the weaver. If the weaver earned from \$34 to \$39.99 with a certain loom or from \$39 to \$43.49 with another, he received a 5 per cent addition to his earnings, and as the earnings grew larger the premium was advanced to 10 per cent, with 1 per cent additional for each dollar earned above the several fixed standards. The higher the percentage the more difficult it was to win the reward. The

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<sup>1</sup> Hearings, p. 443.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem*, p. 447.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*, p. 447.

premium of the loom fixer was based upon the earnings of the weavers, and that of the second hand, or assistant overseer, upon the earnings of all the loom fixers under his charge. Herein lay the danger of crowding and overtaxing the weavers, because premiums of two classes above them were dependent upon their efficiency and earning power.

When the premium was based upon monthly earnings certain hardships to the operatives resulted because the rigid rules allowed only "one day out" for sickness or any cause during the four weeks. If absent the fourth week of one period and the first week of the next period both premiums were lost, and the output above the average required to earn the premium, if continued the full four weeks, would be paid for only at the regular rates. When this hardship was brought to the attention of the mill managers who used the system it was recognized as a just complaint and they promptly agreed to reduce the period to two weeks. Although organized workers are, as a rule, opposed to all bonus systems, many weavers objected to its abolition when the period in which the premium could be earned was reduced by half, because nearly 90 per cent of all the weavers profited by it and earned a premium of some size.

#### WAGES PAID IN THE INDUSTRY.

In all countries wherein the textile industry is prominent, it is one in which the family, — husband, wife, and children, — are engaged in earning wages, rather than the head of the family alone. Experience shows that in such industries the earnings of the entire family are no higher than those of the family head in industries where only men are employed.

At the Ayer mill, which may be considered typical of the American Woolen Company's four plants, only two rates on the 54-hour basis were less than five dollars per week — \$4.52 and \$4.92. Practically 7 per cent of the employees, chiefly bobbin and shop boys, received these wages.<sup>1</sup> For the week ending January 6, 1912, when the mill ran full time, the average pay, including wages of engineers, book-

keepers, the mechanical department and the office force of 75 or 100, was \$9.02. At the Arlington Mills none received less than five dollars a week, and at the Pacific only eighteen out of 5,200 employees got less than five dollars, four of these being learners and the others chiefly old men unable to do men's work.

Figures published by President Wood showed that in 1911, on full time schedule of 56 hours, the average wage for yarn manufacture was \$7.48, and the lowest wage in that department \$5.10, paid to minors or unskilled adults. For dressing, weaving, mending, dyeing, and picking, the usual range was from \$7.91 to \$12, the most highly-paid weavers earning from \$18.35 to \$21.36; and the dressers from \$15.66 to \$21.44. But average wage statements, which usually combine the skilled and unskilled, men and women, young and old, must be accepted with great caution, because to generalize from such figures will lead to erroneous conclusions. The average wage of \$9.02 does not help the large number who get a smaller amount. Nor can the pay envelopes showing small sums be accepted as conclusive evidence that the average wage was only six dollars a week, for it is not shown what work was performed, or that the holder of such an envelope worked a full week. Lipson, the weaver who testified before the House Committee on Rules, and who presumably was the best witness that could be produced, became so contradictory in his statements, which in turn were refuted by the Company's records, that he retired discredited and unworthy of belief. His average wage, he asserted, "is from nine to ten dollars a week," whereas the records of the Wood Worsted Mill showed that for the week after the 54-hour law took effect, he earned \$14.38, and that from November 9, 1910, to January 10, 1912, inclusive, working five per cent less than the normal working time, or slightly less than 53 hours per week, his average earnings were \$11.52.<sup>1</sup> They also showed that thirteen out of a possible fifteen premiums had been paid him, and yet he had the hardihood again to take the stand and say, "It is not true," stoutly insisting that

<sup>1</sup> Hearings, p. 437.

his average wage was, perhaps, "a few cents less than nine dollars."

A Committee on Comparative Wages, appointed by the National Association of Wool Manufacturers, recently compiled a report on wages paid in wool manufacture in this country, England, and on the Continent of Europe. This report puts the wages of twisters at \$7.50, mule spinners under the French system at \$15.75; cloth room burlers at \$7; cloth room sewers at \$10; and weavers at \$13. These figures, it was believed by the Committee, were "a fair average for the country. Some wages are higher and some lower, the figures quoted being considered an average that is as just and exact as can be established."

It is a fact, as has been said by one long familiar with the textile centers of the country, that "the entire textile life of the United States has always depended upon the low paid help, made up largely of immigrants who have begun their lives in the mills of the country, partly because they were acquainted with that sort of employment and partly because they were incompetent to take up any other line of work."<sup>1</sup> As immigrants of different nationalities have successively come to the country and attained new and higher standards of living, they have in turn been assailed and displaced by a new alien race, which has brought with it a lower standard, and so the battle of the standards has continued,<sup>2</sup> the mills constantly reaching down to the lower strata of society and lifting them higher.

These textile wages are based upon the full running time, and no allowance is made in the calculation for curtailment and unemployment, which were much in evidence during the preceding two years, and which greatly reduced the earnings of the operatives. Unemployment, due to illness and other causes, is a constant factor in industry, even in prosperous years. In the worsted industry it has been placed at 5 per cent, reducing by that amount the possible yearly earnings.

But low as the earnings of the unskilled operatives were, they have been able to get ahead in life's battle. This fact

<sup>1</sup>Hon. John N. Cole.

<sup>2</sup>Kengott's "Story of a City," p. 102.

Use of  
immigrants  
in mills -  
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is shown by the \$21,000,000 deposits in the savings banks of Lawrence, and the money sent each year to foreign countries, the postal money orders issued yearly from 1907 to 1911, inclusive, averaging \$125,406; but above all, by the real estate assessed to owners of the several nationalities. These are — Armenians, \$17,000; Syrians, \$222,800; Poles, \$201,000; Italians, \$801,000; French, \$1,288,000; Irish, \$10,262,500.

#### WAGES HIGHER IN LAWRENCE THAN IN EUROPE.

Much emphasis has been placed by those opposed to protection upon the low wages alleged to be paid in the wool manufacture in this country, and it is often accepted that the sole beneficiaries of Schedule K are the manufacturers, who have not shared its benefits with the workers. Whether or not the wages paid are as high as the industry can afford, I do not say; but if the figures of the Tariff Board are to be accepted, then the wages paid in Lawrence are higher than those paid for similar service in either Providence or Philadelphia, two other important centers of the worsted industry; and for all classes of help in the mills, the wages paid in the United States are from 43.3 per cent to 184 per cent higher than those paid in Great Britain. The tables collated by the Tariff Board<sup>1</sup> show in the departments requiring relatively unskilled workers that their earnings are greater than those received by many skilled workers in Great Britain, which country's wages are, in turn, higher than those paid on the Continent.

Statements from the strike leaders and letters from President Wood to his employees — he did not speak to the labor organizations or for the manufacturers, who had no organization — appeared frequently from January 16th to the 23d, during which time many interests were at work trying to find some method of settlement.

Up to January 23 the mill executives, except Mr. Wood, made no public statements. On that date, however, the agent of the Arlington Mills issued a notice in which the management, after deploring the unfortunate conditions

<sup>1</sup> Rep., Vol. III., p. 826.

existing in Lawrence, and expressing a belief that alleged grievances could have been adjusted by a conference with the agent, offered, if a settlement could not be reached owing to conditions, to submit all questions at issue to the State Board of Conciliation and Arbitration. From the start, Ettor opposed conferences by committees from single mills with the agent, fearing an agreement might be reached in some mills and not in others, and a break be caused in the strikers' ranks. When this offer was announced, therefore, he urged his followers not to consider it, declaring in a speech to the English-speaking employees: "We have the operators licked. They now realize it and offer to arbitrate, but we will refuse to arbitrate or compromise. We have made our demands and will not submit to any conciliation."

The State Board again appeared on the scene the next day, when one of its members assured Colonel Sweetser, in command of the militia, and Mayor Scanlon that the mill managers would attend a conference that night, January 24, with the Strike Committee. When this committee appeared at the appointed time and place, they found some of the mills unrepresented, Mayor Scanlon stating afterward that as late as 5.45 o'clock a representative of the State Board "was working the telephone trying to notify certain mill men of the meeting." Those who received no notice did not appear, but in the words of the Mayor, "How could they when they were not notified?" An attempt to do business was made, but the Strike Committee, adhering to their decision to engage in no conference unless all the mills were represented, refused to take part in any discussion, and withdrew in worse temper than when they entered the conference room.

#### INVESTIGATION URGED BY GOVERNOR FOSS.

The next day Governor Foss sent to the Legislature a special message in which he said, "The importance of some immediate action on the part of the Legislature is manifest by the failure of the representatives of the manufacturers to join last night in conference, after an understanding to do so

had been reached.”<sup>1</sup> “One purpose of the investigation,” he wrote, “should be to determine how far the advantages conferred by the national law upon the beneficiaries have been and are to-day shared with the laborers, who are supposed to be the ultimate beneficiaries.” He recommended immediate action to provide for a full investigation by a special legislative committee, or a commission to be appointed by the Governor, of the cause of the strike, with full power to summons persons with books and papers, and to ascertain all the facts bearing on the strike.

On January 25 Ettor and a committee met, in the Boston office, President Wood and officials of the American Woolen Company, but they returned to Lawrence in fighting spirit, announcing that it would be “a fight to a finish, that there would be no more parleying — all peace negotiations are off — no armistice — no truce.” Steps were immediately taken to put this threat into effect, a telegram being sent to President Heberling of the Switchmen’s Union of North America, at Buffalo, to have members refuse to handle Lawrence freight, except food for strikers, and to workmen in the New York clothing trade to show their spirit of solidarity by refusing to handle any goods made by the corporations affected. An effort was also made to organize and call out the firemen employed at the electric lighting plant and put the city in darkness.

While the two sides were putting their case before the public, members of the Legislature were introducing various orders into the General Court, providing for a searching investigation. These were referred to the Committee on Rules, who went to Lawrence to look over the ground for themselves prior to deciding whether or not to report in favor of the investigation.

#### LIBERTY OF SPEECH ABUSED.

During these early weeks of the strike, the city officials, only recently installed in office under the new charter, and unfamiliar with the duties of their respective positions,

<sup>1</sup> See Mayor Scanlon’s statement, *ante*.



lacked firmness in handling so delicate a situation. Liberty soon became license, and as disorders multiplied, passions grew, placing in jeopardy the lives of citizens and the property of the mills. All the while Ettor was diligently making fiery speeches, which worked his hearers up to a high pitch of excitement and fury, at one time declaring, "We will turn this town upside down before we get through;" at another, "We will win this strike even if they erect scaffolds on the streets;" and at another, "Remember from now on, sleep during the day and keep awake during the night. You know what that means. I plead with every man and woman not to forget there is such a thing as emery dust. If they drive you back to work, God pity the looms, yarn, and cloth. You will not hesitate to get some satisfaction out of the machinery."

As the days passed and there were accessions to the working forces, the feeling became more tense. At one of the Sunday meetings on January 28 an English member of the Strike Committee expressed the conclusion reached by his colleagues, that "There is not going to be any more scabbing after to-morrow. We will fill Essex street and Broadway full of strikers, and the scabs will not be able to get to the mills. Show Wood you mean business." A parade was announced for six o'clock the next morning, and for an hour before the time crowds gathered until the streets leading to the mills were filled and access to the mills prevented. Shortly after five o'clock, when it was still dark, an attack was made upon the street cars, during which the trolleys were pulled off the feed wire, the windows smashed with chunks of ice, the motormen and conductors driven off, and the passengers, in some cases, not allowed to leave the cars, and in others pulled from the cars and thrown into the streets. Several hours later a great crowd went to the house of the French priest, who some days previous had advised his people to go to work, called him vile names, and threatened to pull down his church and house. Singing revolutionary hymns in various languages, they "rushed" the International Paper Company's mill, in no way connected

with the textile plants, and the small Plymouth Mill of the Fibre Matting Company.

#### A RIOT AND A DEATH.

In the afternoon a crowd gathered in the heart of the Italian and Polish district, and when shots were fired the police were summoned. Upon their arrival an effort was made to disperse the crowd, during which a woman striker was shot and, it was charged, killed by officer Benoit, and witnesses were produced who swore they saw him do the shooting. As the revolver carried by the officer was a No. 32 caliber and undischarged, and the bullet which killed the girl was fired from a No. 38 caliber, it is quite clear some person other than the officer fired the fatal shot. One theory is that the bullet was intended for the officer; another, that the woman was shot because she had deserted and returned to work. The situation was so critical that a regiment of troops were ordered to reach Lawrence that night to reinforce the nine companies then on duty. Mass meetings were forbidden, for rioting and anarchy, in which the Italians, Syrians, and Lithuanians took the lead, had to be met.

*17/11/20* During the strike the militia, called upon to do a most disagreeable duty, had to perform it under most trying conditions. Denounced as "uniformed drunkards" and as "reptiles with bayonets," who were "instrumental in preventing the constitutional rights of free speech, free assemblage, and holding citizens in a state of terror,"<sup>1</sup> they maintained order during those weeks when the feeling was extremely tense, without firing a shot. Had they been withdrawn early in the struggle, riots dangerous not only to mill property but to the city generally, would surely have resulted. Their conduct during this service was creditable alike to the officers, the men, and the Commonwealth.

#### AN OPEN LETTER FROM GOVERNOR FOSS.

That night Governor Foss issued an open letter, in which he asked all operatives to resume their places for thirty days,

<sup>1</sup> No law abiding citizen has reason to fear or resent the presence of the militia.

“pending an effort which I shall make to get differences adjusted; and in view of the fact that no notice was given to the mill operatives of a proposed reduction in wages when change of hours went into effect, I request mill operators to give 56 hours’ pay for 54 hours’ time during that period without discrimination.” He believed the differences, if carefully discussed, could be easily adjusted, and he promised to use his best efforts to bring all questions in dispute to a settlement satisfactory to all parties. This letter, which seems not to have been sent to the mill managers or the Strike Committee, was regarded as not official by the latter, who announced that the Governor had no authority to name such conditions, and were they to take favorable action on the proposal, without official invitation or assurance that the mill owners agreed to it, they would break the back-bone of the strike.

Ettor and his assistant, Giovannitti, were arrested on January 30, charged with being accessories to the murder of the woman killed the preceding afternoon, Ettor being temporarily succeeded by William Yates, of New Bedford, and later by the notorious William D. Haywood. After a lengthy preliminary hearing, they were held without bail for the action of the grand jury, there being no precedent, the justice ruling, for admitting to bail persons charged with so serious a crime. To many this arrest seemed to be an attempt to defeat the strike by depriving the strikers of a capable leader, and it was denounced as “an infernal outrage” by the Strike Committee, by all Socialists, and many others as another instance of the courts helping to crush labor. *Habeas corpus* proceedings were begun in the Supreme Court, but the petition was dismissed without prejudice because it belonged in another court. Whether the police judge was biased or not, I do not say, but as the Grand Jury sitting in Newburyport passed upon the indictments three months after the occurrence and found true bills, at least a *prima facie* case was made out.<sup>1</sup>

To Ettor his arrest could not have caused much surprise,

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<sup>1</sup> All delays in bringing the cases to trial have been caused by the attorneys for the defendants, the Commonwealth being ready on at least two different occasions.

for as early as January 22, in announcing Haywood's coming "in a couple of days," he said, "I had previously made arrangements that in case I was 'jugged,' he would come to take my place." He was so adroit in speech that generally, without uttering words for which he could be arrested, he produced the effect desired without overstepping the limit of free speech. The meaning conveyed to his hearers was that there must be violence to win the fight, and there was violence that 29th day of January.

#### A LEGISLATIVE CONCILIATION COMMITTEE.

After the Committee on Rules had unanimously reported on January 29 against an investigation "at present," the effort to get legislative action resulted in the appointment of a Conciliation Committee of three senators and five representatives whose mission it was to bring about an amicable adjustment of the controversy. The expense of keeping the militia was causing concern amongst the law makers, alarmed at the rapidly accumulating bills for which the State was responsible. This committee, though named as a conciliatory body, soon pressed the manufacturers hard to agree to meet the General Strike Committee to discuss terms of settlement, the Legislative Committee, according to Representative Sanborn, "being agreed that if mill owners repulsed them, they would notify the mill owners that the committee would stand solidly for a far-reaching investigation."

The mill managers deeming it inexpedient to begin negotiations with so unwieldy a committee as one numbering forty-eight, with many of whom no single employer had any relations, and disinclined to deal with men holding avowed anarchistic principles, were threatened by the Conciliation Committee that if they persisted in their position, the order for a drastic investigation, which they were presumed to dread, would be taken from the Speaker's table and passed. It is difficult to decide which side was wholly right, each having something in its favor. On the one hand, the State was put to great expense because of no fault on its part, and it seemed right that every expedient should be tried to end

the unhappy condition in Lawrence. On the other, it was the duty of the State to protect the property of citizens and them in their right to work unmolested and unintimidated. The feeling which the managers had against those leaders gathered from different sections of the country and more concerned for the overthrow of the wage system than the immediate interests of the operatives can be easily understood, and their disinclination to deal with them or their followers, appreciated.

#### THE COMMITTEE'S DIFFICULT MISSION.

This committee had difficulty not only with the mill executives, but with the two labor bodies, each of which represented a certain percentage of strikers. A sub-committee tried to persuade officials of the Central Labor Union (affiliated with the American Federation of Labor) and the leaders of the Industrial Workers of the World to select representatives to confer with the mill treasurers in an effort to bring about an amicable adjustment. The difficulty of their undertaking soon became apparent, when they were told by Haywood and Yates that if the conference was held, the Industrial Workers of the World alone should represent the strikers, they standing for the real strikers, and the American Federation of Labor for the skilled crafts forced out by the strike, and it was increased when the Secretary of the Central Labor Union told them that the "skilled help would not go back just because the Industrial Workers of the World called it off."

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Nor did the other sub-committee who conferred with the mill treasurers accomplish greater results. After the conference the latter issued a statement again defining their position, in which they stated that "the agents at Lawrence have and always have had authority to meet and discuss grievances with employees of the several mills. Because of the diversity of products and varying conditions, it seems impracticable to deal with the matter in any general conference until it appears that a fair effort has been made by the employees to deal separately with the several mills."

## DISSENSION AMONG THE LOOM FIXERS.

After a month's struggle, the two forces were deadlocked over the way to hold conferences and with seemingly slight prospect of finding one. About this time, however, signs of disagreement amongst the four hundred English and French Canadian loom fixers, who on January 20 had voted to request their members "to come out until matters have quieted down and their grievances had received consideration," became noticeable when some began to negotiate with individual mills about terms. On February 10 that organization sanctioned the return of the men working in the Arlington Mills, they having expressed a desire so to do, and the same privilege was granted to those employed in other mills if satisfactory arrangements were made with the managers. In pursuance of this permission, those employed at the Pacific Mills voted to return to work February 12, and the Kunhardt mill men, after a conference, returned to their places February 28; but fifty-four of those employed by the American Woolen Company voted on March 1 against returning.<sup>1</sup>

This action of the loom fixers was denounced by the Franco-Belgians, and by many loom fixers themselves, and John Golden, President of the United Textile Workers, announced that the loom fixers acted without the sanction or endorsement of either the American Federation of Labor or the United Textile Workers of America.

Early in February ~~the United Textile Workers, affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, decided to enter the field for organization purposes,~~ and to represent the English speaking skilled workers, who while standing for an increase of wages, were not in sympathy with the leaders of the strike or the policy of the Industrial Workers of the World. This appearance of the trade unionists was resented by the Industrial Workers of the World, who, regarding them as interlopers, denounced President John Golden as a strike

<sup>1</sup> The loom fixers, receiving wages varying from \$13.45 to \$17.25 were a local of a small so-called national association, which in May, 1911, had voted that should the pending 54-hour bill become a law there should be no reduction of wages.

breaker, "as a party to the outrages perpetrated against the peaceful women and children in this community, and as a bitter enemy who used his efforts to prevent a peaceful settlement of this strike."

**THE WEAKNESS OF ORGANIZED LABOR AT LAWRENCE.**

When the strike broke out the principal organized crafts were the wool sorters, the loom fixers, and the mule spinners, the first two being independent and the latter "a hundred per cent organization," the only one affiliated with the United Textile Workers of America. This weakness was not due entirely, as has been alleged, to lack of effort on the part of the United Textile Workers to start and sustain organizations in Lawrence, for within the past fifteen years at least ten unions were organized in the city, the only survivors being the mule spinners and the two local unions which had seceded from their national organization. Rather, the weakness was due to many causes. Organizations which had been formed were weakened by dissensions in some instances until schisms occurred. In most cases they succumbed because of the quiet or open opposition of foremen and overseers — subordinates in the mills. While the mill owners are not accused of causing this opposition, they gave the unions no encouragement, simply being indifferent to their success or failure. Then, too, there was racial antagonism along with a disinclination to pay the dues required, to which the foreign element had not been educated, and the advantage of which was not easily seen in times of peace. In the face of these hindrances the task of developing an effective and stable organization with fifteen thousand non-industrial people swooping down on Lawrence between 1905 and 1910 was well-nigh impossible.

Had there been a strong textile council in Lawrence, recognized if not encouraged by the manufacturers, the strike could not have taken place in the manner in which it flamed forth. Before the new schedules took effect conferences would have been held; and had no understanding been reached the strike must have been sanctioned by a vote of

the council and approved by the national officers before it could have been legally called.

For this lack of organization part of the responsibility must perhaps be borne by the United Textile Workers, who may not have exerted themselves to the fullest extent to organize all the textile workers into affiliated unions; and partly by the manufacturers, who did not encourage, or by their subordinates opposed, the organization of regular trade unions, one of the organized conservative forces in the country at the present time.

#### ACTION BY THE SKILLED CRAFTS.

Notwithstanding former opposition and earlier failures, the opportunity to reestablish itself, which the situation presented, was not to be lost by the United Textile Workers, and though their motive was questioned meetings were called prior to the action of the loom fixers, by the Lawrence Central Union to consider plans to organize and "to bring order out of chaos." The chairman of these meetings made it plain that they were neither asking any one to join an organization then nor antagonizing the Industrial Workers of the World with respect to the strike. Deploring the lack of organization among the operatives he declared their desire was "to bring about a settlement of the strike with benefit to the operatives." At a time when the tide was running strongly with the organization whose leaders were in command of the strikers, it was next to impossible to make much progress, especially among the foreign element, whose allegiance to the revolutionary body was hard to shake. But knowing well that the strength of that organization rises to its greatest height during the strike, and subsides after its close, the United Textile Workers persevered, until seven unions affiliated with them were organized on a solid basis and a textile council instituted.

After hearing the grievances of the several crafts, their chief demands, which were for a 15 per cent increase of wages, abolition of the premium system, and no overtime (details varying with the mills), were formulated, and on

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February 12 letters were sent, through the officers of the Central Labor Union, to the agents of the various mills asking for conferences to discuss them.. This was the course favored by the mill treasurers and opposed vigorously by the Strike Committee.

But these proceedings were retarded by the excitement caused by the detention of the children scheduled to be sent to Philadelphia on February 24. While the strike from its inception had attracted wide attention for many social and political reasons, nothing done by the authorities caused more general excitement than this action.

#### SENDING AWAY OF CHILDREN.

The sending away of children was a new departure in this country, it being a practice followed by continental syndicalists. It was justified by the strikers as a relief measure which would enable them longer to continue the contest, because relieved of the burden of feeding and caring for their little ones, whose sufferings in such struggles is the cause which often compels a return to work. While that was the ostensible reason, there were others which did not involve solely the creature comforts of the children. The persons who arranged for these parties were not in Lawrence or in the State, the active agents being the women Socialist clubs in New York, Philadelphia, and other cities. At a meeting of the Strike Committee on February 5, Chairman William Yates announced that arrangements had been made to send a large number of children to New York "to arouse sympathy and enlist support by parading in the streets of that city." Several days later it was also announced that "in the hope of securing a large number of children of the strikers for the purpose of holding a big demonstration in New York," three members of the New York Women's Socialist Club would reach Lawrence the next day. One hundred children had been secured, but "the leaders want at least three hundred." At a subsequent meeting it was announced that upon the delivery of sixty children at West Hoboken, a check for \$1000 would be sent to the Committee. Haywood felt that

by teaching the children the A, B, C of socialism, their cause would be helped, and Meyer London, Esq., of New York, declared at a meeting in Faneuil Hall, that "every child will carry a flood of protest and discontent throughout the land."

These statements alone are sufficient to disclose the ulterior motive concealed in this move apparently intended to promote the safety and comfort of the children; but the manner of conducting them to their temporary homes, in the coldest weather of a bitterly cold month, confirms that impression. The party previously sent to New York, numbering two hundred and ranging in age from four to fourteen years, attracted the attention and aroused the indignation of men and women truly solicitous for their real welfare. Wearing thin apparel and marshaled by well fed, well clothed Socialists, they marched across Boston and travelled for twelve hours at a time when the temperature was so low as to disorganize railroad service. Reaching New York after nightfall, they were greeted by throngs of strangers shouting revolutionary battle cries, and carried to a hall, where they were fed, displayed, and parcelled amongst their stranger hosts. Miss Mary Boyle O'Reilly, whose sympathy for the wage earner is unquestioned, in protesting against this exhibition, wrote :

"Under existing law a child cannot beg or sing in the streets. Why should scores of children be taken from school and carried from State to State to chant revolutionary songs and plead for funds on the claim that such a course is a demonstration of conditions? In this instance the plea of poverty in the homes of the strikers goes by default. The \$500 expended to carry the children to New York would have provided them with food at home for a considerable period."

It was asserted by several engaged in relief work in Lawrence that the children were sent away to be exploited by moving picture firms, a percentage of the receipts to go to the strike fund. The secretary of the Boston Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children said there was no justification for breaking up families and taking young children many miles from their mothers, and the superintendent of

the Lawrence schools said, "The children told their teachers that if they did not go to New York, their parents could not obtain any more relief." John Golden, President of the United Textile Workers, in the name of organized labor disapproved "this inhuman act," being firmly convinced "it was a diabolical scheme on the part of the officers of the Industrial Workers of the World to raise funds for the further propagation of their unholy war of class hatred and social revolution."

Some of the children sent to New York went without their parents' consent, and the parents of others, whose consent had been given, repented and later wished their children returned. Protests were sent the Boston Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and to others in authority, against permitting the sending away of other parties. Some of the complaints were based upon the lack of care shown several sent to New York, two of whom were detained as lost children. An eleven-year-old girl, asked by a woman at the Lawrence railroad station if she wished to go to New York, accepted the invitation without the knowledge of her parents and was taken with the party. She was found with a Polish woman and her father was compelled to go to New York and fetch her home at considerable expense, reimbursement being refused by the committee of the Industrial Workers of the World. Two Italian youngsters, aged six and eleven years, children of a grocer able to care for them, were found on the Lawrence streets by the committee and sent with the party to Barre, Vt.

#### REASON FOR INTERVENTION BY AUTHORITIES.

To prevent such occurrences in the future Colonel Sweetser notified Chairman Yates of the Strike Committee under date of February 17, that he "would not permit the sending off of little children away from their parents unless he was satisfied it was done with the consent of the parents," and Assistant City Marshal John J. Sullivan <sup>1</sup> announced through

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<sup>1</sup> Hearings, pp. 299, 300.

the newspapers that no more children would be allowed to leave Lawrence until the police were satisfied that they were going with the knowledge and consent of their parents; that he would ask the parents if they knew where these children were going, whether they would be properly cared for, and whether proper provision had been made for their return. That was regarded by the Strike Committee and the leaders as a challenge, and notice was served through the papers that notwithstanding the marshal's attitude the children were going regardless of the parents or anybody, and no information would be given to any person. On the morning in question the marshal went to the railroad station and assured the women that if they were sending their children away because they needed assistance and feared they could not get it, they were mistaken; that the City and State were willing and ready to care for the children and furnish all food, medicine, and clothing needed. All willing to accept his invitation were asked to go to the City Hall where they would be taken care of.<sup>1</sup> After all but some twenty had withdrawn from the room he asked if those remaining were the parents or guardians of the children, and whether they had the right to take the children out of Lawrence. He wished to be informed whether these adults with the children knew where they were going and what provision had been made for the children's safe return. No word in response to this request was spoken by any one, and within a few minutes the attempt was made to put the children on board the car. This was prevented by the police, and the party, after resistance, was taken to the police station in an auto truck.

#### INVESTIGATIONS AND THEIR RESULT.

This action was denounced as unwarranted interference with the constitutional rights of parents and as an interference with interstate commerce. The Attorney General of Massachusetts was directed by Governor Foss to investigate and report upon the legality of this action; another inquiry was undertaken by United States District Attorney French act-

<sup>1</sup> Hearings, pp. 185, 186.

ing on orders from the Attorney General of the United States, and the United States Senate ordered an investigation of the condition of the mill workers to be made by the Department of Labor under the direction of Commissioner Neill. The occurrence was threshed out at the hearing before the House Committee on Rules, where some witnesses testified that they saw the police take little children, pick them up by the leg, and "throw them in the patrol wagon like old rags," choke a mother into insensibility, and "beat women across their breasts, abdomen, and shoulders," although those with the children made no resistance except vocal protest against the action which prevented their departure for Philadelphia.

But these allegations were stoutly denied by Marshal Sullivan, who testified that "no person was clubbed, beaten, or abused — neither man, woman or child — at that depot. There was not a drop of blood spilled by anybody." When Marshal Sullivan was asked at the conclusion of his statement, by Representative Berger, how he harmonized the statement of the Philadelphia Committee with his testimony, he replied that the committee had heard the witnesses and it was for them to judge who was telling the truth.<sup>1</sup>

At the end of a week given to the hearings the participants went their way; and as indicating the impression created by those who testified, it is sufficient to say that Mr. Berger, who, when resting his case, asked for an hour in which to close, neglected to exercise his right, and the resolution calling for a sweeping investigation "of the relations of the American Woolen Company and its thirty thousand operatives in Lawrence" was not pressed for passage.

So much excitement was created by this action, which was attributed to the influence of the manufacturers with the city authorities and police, that they were moved to announce in a statement that "The manufacturers of Lawrence are in no way responsible for any detention of children who were being sent out of the State. The manufacturers did not ask for this; they were not consulted about it; they were not informed of the contemplated action of the local authori-

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<sup>1</sup> Hearings, p. 345.

ties." Nor was any effort made at the congressional hearing to show that the manufacturers were responsible for this action, which, instead of helping them, had the reverse effect, and it is difficult to believe that they could have devised or counseled so foolish a course.

As no final replies to the Central Labor Union letters had been received by noon of February 29, rumors spread of their purpose to begin a general strike, which meant the calling out of those at work, the number then in some mills being nearly two-thirds of their normal force. The foundation for this rumor was a statement issued from the headquarters of the United Textile Workers which indicated that unless the agents of the mills made concessions the skilled operatives, some of whom were working in the mills, would be called out on strike.

#### WAGE INCREASE ANNOUNCED.

During February strenuous efforts to bring about an end of hostilities were made by many interests in Boston, and several times these were about to succeed when some untoward event in Lawrence seemed to make the time inopportune to grant any concession. It is believed by many that the mill executives reached the conclusion soon after the outbreak that an increase of wages was inevitable. So long, however, as active rioting continued, it was considered inexpedient to adopt that course. But when two-thirds of the Arlington's employees, eighty per cent of whom were English, Irish, Scotch, or Canadians — natives of English-speaking countries — were at work, that corporation took the step which, it was well understood, would mean an equal, if not greater, advance in all the textile mills of New England and perhaps of the country. The afternoon papers of February 29 contained rumors of an advance, which were confirmed by the appearance in the next morning's papers of a notice by the Arlington Mills, copies of which must have been sent to the papers Friday morning for release that night, announcing that "A readjustment of wages will be made upon a comparative basis as to occupa-

tions involving increases in the rates now paid by the hour and by the piece. Such advances are to be equitably adjusted according to the classes of workers and their earnings, and in no case to be less than five per cent. The new schedule of wages will go into effect Monday, March 4, 1912."<sup>1</sup> This was posted at the mills that morning, and proved to be an example which was speedily followed by the American Woolen Company and the Pacific Mills. On the following day, the Atlantic, Lawrence Duck, and Kunhardt Mills granted similar concessions.

For weeks the mill executives had been subjected to great pressure from two sides: on the one hand, not only from manufacturers all over Massachusetts who were not eager to meet an increase in wages, but also from those in adjacent states, in some of which are great mills employing many operatives whose interests were bound up in the settlement of this strike; and on the other, from many persons, a few of whom were stockholders, convinced that the lowest paid men should be given a wage sufficient to enable them to live in a way more nearly approaching the American standard, who were urging an increased wage. This pressure was extremely strong against an increase, and to decide to grant it, and to be leaders in making the announcement, required a degree of courage not appreciated by those unacquainted with the situation.

The wording of several announcements, some of which were prepared in evident haste, was not as explicit and as free from uncertainty as could have been desired, but soon after their posting it was made known by interviews and statements that the largest increases would be given to those receiving the lowest wages, in some cases the advances rising to 11 per cent and averaging 7 or 8 per cent. The lowest increase, of 5 per cent, would apply to the highest paid, skilled workers, and time would be required to work out the details.

<sup>1</sup>Orders had greatly increased during the strike, and though conditions were still unsettled the trade outlook was distinctly improved.

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## A CAMPAIGN OF MISREPRESENTATION.

Then began a great campaign of misrepresentation of what the announcement really meant, some of the newspapers and the Strike Committee referring to it as a "5 per cent increase," many strikers believing that the increase really amounted to only  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent on the 54-hour schedule.

Although a large number of foreigners were satisfied with the terms announced, and would have been glad to return to work, it was reported at the Strike Committee meeting that their people were opposed to accepting the offer, and it was voted to "reject the 5 per cent increase offered, because it was indefinite," to stand for their original demands, and to insist that Ettore and Giovannitti, the leaders, should be released before the strikers would return to work.

At a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Central Labor Union, on Friday night, the announcements met with a no more friendly reception, the Committee refusing to accept the offer and claiming that better terms should have been given by the American Woolen Company, because conditions were better in the wool than in the cotton manufacture. At a meeting of the Strike Committee March 2, it was asserted that "We will win," "The interests are yielding," "Taft is taking action," and "Governor Foss is weakening."

With the offers rejected by the Strike Committee and by the Executive Committee of the Central Labor Union, the prospect for a settlement did not seem promising, but doubt was dispelled when the rank and file of the skilled operatives, many of whom had been enrolled as members of the United Textile Workers of America, reversing the action of the Executive Committee of the Central Labor Union, voted Monday evening, March 4, to return to work "on the same conditions as other crafts went in. That is, they would return on condition that the mill owners give 5 per cent increase on a 54-hour basis and adjust their grievances at the earliest opportunity." The Industrial Workers of the World leaders immediately claimed that a smaller number of operatives would be at work on Monday than formerly, that the



concessions were an evidence that the employers were weakening, and that if they held together they would get a greater advance than that offered.

At this juncture the Legislative Conciliation Committee, which had been holding daily sessions with the representatives of the American Woolen Company, again requested the Strike Committee to meet officials of the company and confer over the meaning of the offer. The next day a committee met President Wood and after a conference they returned to Lawrence "without getting a clear idea of the full significance of the proposed 5 per cent increase," although the officials explained that the 5 per cent was only a minimum, their "intention under the schedule to be adopted being to make the increase average 7 or 8 per cent, the greatest increase going to the lowest paid, the details of which would be worked out in two weeks."

#### OPPOSITION TO A SETTLEMENT.

For days these conferences were continued on the pretence that they were needed to clear up a misconception on the part of the operatives of the real meaning of the offer. There was good reason for this attitude, inasmuch as each day's delay in reaching an agreement meant hundreds of dollars to the strikers' treasury, the work of financing in mid-winter a strike involving so many thousands being as efficiently done as that entrusted to Ettor and his successors. The strike was not many days old when a stirring appeal, falsifying the real situation at Lawrence and intended to arouse not only the sympathy and secure the support of the trade unions (whose bitter and relentless enemy the Industrial Workers of the World are), but of the public generally, was widely distributed. Others of a similar character followed in quick succession, the last one being issued March 21, eight days after the concessions were accepted by the Strike Committee. One typical of all, printed in red and black, carried a fake illustration showing soldiers halting a crowd with "charge bayonets," and a blood curdling caption.

*appeal to  
public  
sympathy*

But nothing was of greater assistance than the action taken by the National Executive Committee of the Socialist party which, at the solicitation of Haywood, passed a resolution at their February meeting, directing each one of the fifty-five hundred socialist locals in the country to raise funds for the strike, and to voice a protest that would bring supplies from other quarters. The purpose of the leaders was to gather cash not so much for relief use as for themselves and propaganda work, which was easy so long as the struggle was continued. Money flowed into the treasury in amounts so large as finally to cause questions to be asked concerning the accounting methods used, in view of the comparatively small sums spent for actual relief work and support of the soup kitchens which had been opened. Men who had contributed to the fund because they wished to relieve women and children in distress, and not to pay for delicacies for Ettor while in jail, nor for the salaries of certain officials and agitators, nor the expenses of sending children to cities for exploitation purposes, called so insistently for a statement and the privilege of examining the books that finally the Strike Committee on February 24 promised that "An itemized statement of receipts and expenditures will be sent to all donators," the reason given for refusal to make public an earlier financial statement being "fear of an injunction to restrain them from using the funds for giving relief to the needy strikers." This promise was never kept and was never intended to be kept, and it was necessary to get the Attorney General, in the name of three contributors, to file a bill in equity asking for an accounting, the purpose being to have the question, whether committees appealing to the public for contributions may use the money for purposes other than those set forth in the appeal, answered authoritatively by the Courts. To this bill the respondents demurred on the ground that the appeal for funds was not for the sole support of the strikers and their families who might be suffering and in want, but for "a general strike purpose."

*Lawrence  
Strike used to  
raise funds for  
transmission*

#### STRIKE CONTRIBUTIONS DISAPPEARED.

An examination of the books, which were kept in a very haphazard manner up to February 12, showed that at least \$62,564 had been received up to March 16. The bank account showed that but \$46,188 had been deposited to the credit not of the Strike Committee but of the Industrial Workers of the World, leaving the large balance of \$16,376 unaccounted for. It was also disclosed that the sum of \$10,800 had been transferred from the Lawrence Trust Company to a bank in New York City, from which it was later distributed, all of which confirms the suspicion that the strike was prolonged not so much for the larger wages secured for the striking operatives, as for the private gain of the leaders and promoters of the strike.

After each conference with the legislative committee and the officials of the American Woolen Company, it was announced that an additional concession had been yielded by the company, and by continuing them longer the original demands would finally be secured. After many conferences and the submission of schedules as they were worked out, it was announced March 9 by Chairman Ellis of the Conciliation Committee that those who go back will work 54 hours a week and receive a wage on the average  $3\frac{2}{3}$  per cent higher than on the 56-hour basis. This is the result of working out the guaranty of the American Woolen Company that the increase will be not less than 5 per cent and the average at least 7 per cent over the 54-hour schedule. In other words, the result of all the conferences and the delay from March 1 to March 9 was simply the translation into dollars and cents of the offer originally made.

#### A CAMPAIGN OF VIOLENCE TO PREVENT RESUMPTION OF WORK.

While these conferences were continuing, the Industrial Workers of the World leaders made a determined effort, by violence and intimidation of various sorts, to prevent those wishing to resume work from reaching the mills. The end-

less chain system of picketing was put into force, and women in delicate condition who did not work in the mills, along with "strong arm" men, were quite generally pressed into service. Women were assaulted by men, and pepper was thrown in the eyes of operatives and police officers. Early in the morning, powerful men followed, threatened, and seized girls on their way to the mills, twisting their wrists, snatching their luncheons, and terrorizing them generally. During the night strangers visited the homes of the workers and threatened to cut their throats if they persisted in going to work, and the sheds and barns of a special police officer, whose house had been bombarded with rocks some weeks earlier, and badly damaged, were set on fire and burned.

#### MILLS RESUME WORK ON NORMAL BASIS.

But as the days passed it was increasingly difficult for the Strike Committee to hold their forces intact, signs of restlessness and dissatisfaction on the part of certain nationalities appearing at different times. To keep them in line, a proclamation was issued March 8, imploring the workers to "remain from work until the strike is settled;" but on March 13, at an executive session, the Strike Committee endorsed "the concessions granted by the American Woolen Company," that action being ratified later at a mass meeting. The next day the ban was lifted from the Atlantic and Kunhardt Mills; but because the Arlington, the International Paper Mill, the Lawrence Duck, the Everett, the Pacific, and the United States Worsted Company<sup>1</sup> declined to furnish to the Strike Committee detailed schedules, showing the increases and the new rates, the strike against them was continued, the work of the Strike Committee not being finished, according to leader Yates, "until it had brought every mill owner to his knees."

Notwithstanding this adverse action of the Committee, the operatives, weary of idleness, flocked back to all the mills on the 15th, dissatisfaction appearing because some operatives

<sup>1</sup> The officials of these mills had no dealings with the I. W. W. committee at any time during the strike.

were permitted to return to work while others were forbidden to do so by the failure to declare the strike off against the mills mentioned, the understanding having been that all would go back together.

The strike, which had stirred the country for nine weeks, whose toll was two deaths, a loss exceeding a million dollars alike to mill owners and mill workers, and an expense to the city of \$75,000 for extra police and to the State of \$180,000 for the services of the militia, was ended and the wheels of industry, though creaking, were again in motion.

From the beginning of the struggle the strikers, deceiving themselves, believed that every man's hand was against them. On the contrary, the citizens of Lawrence and people the country over sympathized with their desire for higher wages, but that sympathy was largely forfeited by the violence practised, the class war so defiantly proclaimed, the acrid denunciation of trade unions and labor leaders long respected throughout New England, and the intimidation used to force from the mills those who, though approving the demand for increased pay, disapproved the plan of campaign adopted and the leaders selected.

#### LESSONS OF THE STRIKE.

Out of this bitter experience lessons of value should be learned by employees, citizens generally, and the employers. The operative must be taught the advantages to be gained by upholding, not destroying trade unions, and the folly of accepting leaders more concerned for the overthrow of the social structure than for the present good of their followers, who were aroused to attempt that impossible task at the present time in one community.

The public, too, must take heed that the gates admitting these foreign millions to the privileges of the land are more closely guarded, for with more carefully selected immigrants there would have been no Lawrence upheaval, and there would have been "much less social unrest and much less extreme radicalism imported from Europe."

The employers should learn that it pays to deal with their employees with frankness and absolute justice, and that it is unwise to withhold information for fear trouble may happen,

such action bringing about, in nine cases out of ten, precisely the situation sought to be avoided.

They should clearly understand the value (to them) of an organization of their employees, officered by local men of ability and fairness, and led by national officers of stability and character. Thus banded together and thus led, they will make the greatest bulwark against similar outbreaks in the days to come. Safety for employers, employees, and the public alike lies in organization under sane and reasonable leaders, rather than in the unorganized, undisciplined, and easily inflamed masses.

The too-often despised and little understood leaders of trades unions are as a rule far more conservative than the mass of their followers. They do not urge organized labor on, as is usually though erroneously supposed, but they are constantly trying to hold it back. The way to prevent the demagogue from getting control of the labor movement is not to attempt to thwart organization and refuse to confer with local or national officers, but to deal with these officers and encourage these regular organizations. This danger, — the ascendancy of the demagogue and the radical, — which is more imminent now than ever before, cannot be averted by any attempt to crush the unions. On the contrary, that attitude will surely increase the perils now threatening industry and the nation. Employers should recognize the fact that labor organizations are with us and will remain with us; and those who seek to do justice and at the same time wish to promote the interests of industry, should attempt to work through the unions and develop everything that is good in them; for it should be remembered, as Professor Richard T. Ely has said, "that every employer and indeed every man of wealth and position on the side of the working-man is a conservative element in society."<sup>1</sup>

And if the general public but knew the anarchy which would follow the suppression of labor organizations, they would thank God for their existence; for as a recent Commissioner of Labor in New York has said, "You may like the labor unions or not, but the time is coming when you will be grateful to them as the only thing that stands between you and anarchy."

If these lessons can be driven home upon all three parties concerned in our industrial life, the loss and sufferings caused by the Lawrence outbreak will not have been in vain.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Labor Movement in America*, pp. 162 and 322.