

The Indianapolis Times

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Member of the Scripps-Howard Newspaper Alliance • • • Client of the United Press and the NEA Service
• • • Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations
Published daily except Sunday by Indianapolis Times Publishing Co., 214-220 W. Maryland St., Indianapolis
Subscription Rates: Indianapolis—Ten Cents a Week. Elsewhere—Twelve Cents a Week. • • •
PEOPLES—MA in 3300.

No law shall be passed restraining the free interchange of thought and opinion, or restricting the right to speak, write, or print freely, on any subject whatever.—Constitution of Indiana.

THE CONTEMPT CASES

Judge Baltzell has repeatedly announced that men have the right to strike.

Parker and Armstrong, officials of the national union of street car workers, are now in jail, guilty of violating an injunction preventing interference with the operation of street cars.

Some part of the violation consisted in speeches delivered before a meeting of the men who voted to strike.

These men were not charged with inciting men to dynamite and violence.

That charge was made originally, but was withdrawn by District Attorney Ward when a demand was made for a trial by jury provided for under Federal statutes when contempt charges would in themselves constitute crimes.

That law was passed after many years of struggle by labor, which, until it was passed, found that the injunction in the hands of an unfriendly Judge, could be used to deprive men of the right of trial by jury when charged with actual crime.

So it may be taken that these two men did not commit crimes which are punishable as such.

These two officials have been arrested many times since they first came to this city to attempt to organize a union. The police charged them with vagrancy. At times they had several thousands of dollars in bonds. No case was ever pressed. They were never convicted of crime.

The trial disclosed some other facts which are not pleasant, but which are significant.

Two men employed as organizers were also employed by the company to report to its officials.

Truly the right of collective bargaining, so universally approved by political parties and very recently emphatically endorsed by President Coolidge, has its difficulties in Indianapolis.

Government by injunction was once a very heated issue in this country. It would be bad if it should again rise to demand an audience.

It may be a necessary policy in this city that it will not permit any officials of labor unions from the outside to come here to obtain a following.

If that principle is established and maintained, it can be broadened and amplified. Attorneys for owners of the public utilities living in Philadelphia and elsewhere may be kept away when they come to ask for more money.

This city has taken a stern stand against any violence, but that question does not enter into the cases of these two men. If they should be punished for any part they had in it.

Employers the Nation over, and also workers, will be interested in the final outcome of this case.

For under it all may finally know and understand just how the right to strike may be asserted and whether it is limited to any degree by advice from those who are not actually contemplating a strike as a means of protest.

We may finally discover just when and how and for what men may strike.

ONE QUESTION

Let it be hoped that Governor Jackson will take some notice of the appeal of a citizens' committee that he investigate the conditions and causes which led to the strike of four or five hundred street car employees.

The Federal Court has found two organizers, who came here from the national union, guilty of a violation of its injunction.

To that body can be left the duty and the responsibility of protecting such rights as have been intrusted to its care and the punishment of those who violate its orders.

But this citizens' committee did suggest a question which is basic and fundamental and which does not make its appearance in court pleadings.

It told the Governor that these men had asserted that the wage of 37 to 42 cents an hour which they received did not permit them to live in decency without working more hours than should be demanded of any one.

It told the Governor that the matter should be investigated and that the public be given all the facts.

It is the public that pays the bills. The people who ride really pay the wages. No matter what the opinion of the management of the company may be, it is not conceivable that those who ride cars desire to trust their lives and their safety to men who are not paid a decent wage.

The people can be counted upon for a willing ness to pay those who serve them enough to permit them to live in decency.

The present situation is not one that makes for permanent peace and will not be as long as the company employs its men on a war basis, paying a bonus because of this strike.

For in the end the people must finally pay the cost of the strike, which is not inconsiderable.

The whole trend of public thought is for arbitration and reasonable adjustment.

The modern and enlightened way is to consider such conflicts as unnecessary and avoidable through inquiry and investigation and the pressure of public opinion.

THE CANTON LESSON

No one should be surprised that the forces of vice and crime which dictated the murder of Don Mellett of this city because he had waged a war for decency and law, now resort to bombs to terrify and perhaps kill his friends and relatives.

The killing of this able and courageous editor was the logical chapter to the political events of that vicinity.

These men and women who openly violated the law and were protected in their crimes by officials of the law, had no other recourse but murder when they were menaced in their activities by one who dared to speak for public sentiment.

And in a new strange situation, where the sentiment for decency is powerful, they must still resort to death and violence to protect their business in crime.

Any city and any State which permits its political bosses to connive and deal with violators of the law is laying the basis for a Mellett tragedy.

The city of Canton in Ohio is not alone in its unenviable infamy.

The good people of that city, as in this and other cities, had permitted themselves to be divided on questions of party politics or prejudices

and the result is a Mellett tragedy.

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