



THE NEXT SHOVE

"The Pennsylvania News," the dexterous and lambent mouthpiece of the Pennsylvania railroad system, has unlimbered its joshful columns to the discussion of such material things as flannel shirts and white collars:

"From blue flannel collar to white collar has been the traditional general conception of advancement in the world of work." (Emphasis ours). How's that for No. 1?

But a shortage of *skilled hands* to do necessary tasks has caused a New York institution to search out white collar men there and set them to learning various manual trades." (Emphasis ours). That's a hot one. All the *skilled hands* seem to be doing unnecessary work. They are to be educated to perform labor. Say editor, ain't that a hot one—or is it?

Thus comes a rerouting of human endeavor, a departure from an accepted program." Shure! The arbiters of our destiny are figuring on how to enlarge the supporting class and at the same time save on our laundry bills; it being good reasoning that a man with only one shirt—a blue flannel one—*isn't* going to take it off every week.

They are trying to convince us that a white collar is as unnecessary as a steeple on a church, (or a pulpit, in one), and that every available man is being put to useful work, to help us support the very few best people. Damfino. Beats me.

In connection with this it may not be out of place to say the ladies, who have been employed shredding our collars and mangling our shirts, will be given other employment—washing linousines probably.

"City Faces a Labor Shortage," screams the Cleveland News, hysterically—no doubt fearing some of the leading parasites will be compelled to do their own work, thereby earning an honest living. It would seem that any bunch of men can get together, call themselves a company (purveyors of employment, job-trustees, non-official caretakers of manual labor) and straightway proceed to call on Labor for support. And failing to get proper support they howl their heads off about a labor shortage; not enough roughnecks to look after their genteel needs—and try to get Mr. White Collar to ditch his celluloid shirt-guard.

It would seem a shortage of labor exists. But in reality it isn't so at all—the cause for the apparent shortage of men can best be explained as a surplus of would-be bosses—employers—and, indeed, too many employers find it profitable to hire men "to work for almost nothing." Call it what you will, a surplus of bosses or a shortage of labor (to support them), it can mean only one thing for those who *earn* their living—a shirt, pint and a jazz. That is what we get in return for our too damn heroic efforts in behalf of those who neither work nor starve.

But useful labor is raising its wages all over the country. The man with the coarse (collarless) neck is succeeding in "jacking-up" a bit—two bits—so the Pennsylvania News, the master's voice, is trying to persuade non-essential labor (flunkies) to peeling off their collars, rolling up their sleeves, to function as labor surplus directly on the jobs where increases in pay are about to happen—temporarily of course, just temporary scabs.

No I'm not jumping at shadows:

"Practically all of the 4,000 building trades laborers who went on strike two weeks ago to force acceptance of their wage demands for 87½ cents an hour were back at work Friday." The (Cleveland) News.

The wages did go up.

Chicago is experiencing an increase of seven and eight cents per hour (whether the men like it or not). And so too, an increase is threatening the maintenance-of-way men in the railroad industry where there is no organization to speak of.

Now let us see what have we:

We have too many bosses—would-be bosses. Too many call themselves manufacturers and do no work—nothing in manufactured without work.

Not a few function as stool pigeons.

Some function as harness bulls in the mills where we work in a barbwire enclosure.

Not a few function as bootleggers—spiritual and material—here and hereafter.

All these functionaires get a good living without doing any useful work.

And so the white collar must go!

What is the world coming to? For years it has been preached that the collar was a mark of distinction. Everybody wore them holding their chins the higher. Alas, the master's press says a man's dignity remains, though the collar is discarded. Woe is me! No pie no more! (no booze), no butter, no collar. If we use no collars the boss can save on our laundry bills.

Patriotic khaki bloomers put the ladies into the Milwaukee railroad shops.

Russian rubber boots will eventually break them into digging sewers. Fashionable ladies led the way with riding britches; but not to the shops.

Thus fashions fall before wage slavery. Rapidly, indeed, are we forming into two classes—the supporters and supportees.

If you take off that white collar, my friend, you are lost. You will be handed a shovel (with all its use implies), backache and loss of respect, the parasites notwithstanding. Especially so since it is considered polite to let a machine do all the shoveling.

Especially since the automatic skill of the machine has made it LESS necessary to have skilled laborers, on the soft jobs.

Still we find a New York concern searching for skilled, collared men, to introduce to manual labor. What does it mean?

Jumping at shadows? 'Guess not.

Does it mean that our white collar is finding disfavor in the eyes of those we support? Does it mean the output of our industry does not justify the use of so much collar? And finally does it mean the parasites themselves, present and prospective, are to be done away with?

Cheerfully, I confess, I don't know. But I do care—and I will say:

If this shift of transplanting labor goes far enough, it will inevitably result in fresh emphasis being placed not on the "dignity" of those who toil with their hands, but on the indignity of those who neither work or fight.—(T-Bone Slim).