



Coe- Operation A Hunch

(Continued from Previous Issue)

As a result of this movement, (lately) advertisements appear in street cars, Patronize Your Neighborhood Grocer, Druggist, etc., (be it said, a business man would move his store in your front yard if thereby he could gain your trade).

This boycott has been going on for some time and it is said that the smaller business will be put out of business.

It seems that the smaller business man is not evincing the proper interest in the welfare of labor, and that it is for that reason that the gods are forsaking him. Members of the working class have been jailed and not a peep of protest do we hear from the neighborhood merchant—and so, by patronizing the big stores labor hopes to drive sense into the head of the middle class—yes.

It is said the co-operative movement was born of an economic cause—a system that keeps a man broke while fully employed. But we do not have to believe it. We can just as easily believe that it was born in the head of a man looking for a manager's position, or, we can believe, (as I believe) that it was conceived by employers of labor to distract labor's attention away from the antics of the boss, at the point of production—the ambitious manager, of course, being the instigator of the conception. (Come near giving employers credit for brains). A writer can't be too careful, so let us note right here that: The original price of commodities is set at the Point of Production. Also let it be noted that every increase in the cost of living "calls" for an increase in wages. Therefore, labor must be left free to strike for more wages every time the price of butter goes up; else, it might be made to appear that "the prior wages" were unduly high during the period of lower living costs; he must not be tied down with contracts, unless the cost of living is also tied down.

Also: let us carefully note, an employer of labor is not entitled to remain in business if he cannot afford to pay living wages. His inability to pay wages brings out such ridiculous figures as: 37½c, 43c, 39½c, 41c and 35c per hour, when they should be \$1, \$1.25 and \$1.50 per hour to conform with present living cost and the high cost of old age. This 40 and 1-10 of 1 per cent of business indicates that too many employers are in "his particular line of business" and that he cannot arrive at a living unless we hold "a benefit," in the way of cheap labor, for his special advantage.

Why should we fight "his" battles at the point of consumption when our "bringing up" fits us so admirably for job action; on the point of production? Co-operation, in the sense handled here, is not job action in concert. It is merely a movement of limited co-operation adrift in a sea of competition; even so as a craft unionism is an island in the trough of the sea of capitalism, periodically swamped by the tide—open shop drives. A crafts man is the "sheik" of the labor world; and his union its "flapper."

In England, the home of the co-operative movement, its (the movement's) manifestation finds its fullest expression. Coupled to political action and craft unionism (trade unionism) it has functioned as remedy No. 3, for economic (household) evils—a sort of a third wheel on labor's cart. For the past 80 years, since 1843, the co-operative movement has been raising labor's wages at the point of consumption. From the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers has grown the "GREAT" British co-operative movement of today, supplying over half the people of the country with the necessities of life at cost of production, without profit or graft to individuals. In addition to this, the government has inaugurated a system of pensions which makes it practically impossible for an English "worker" to starve to death in that country.

With trade unionism fighting the low wages at the point of production; the co-operative movement fighting the high cost of living at the point of consumption; the government fighting starvation at the point of benevolence, the Britisher evidently finds comfort in dividing his attention between his co-operative business affairs, striking, and in petitioning his government for the means of subsistence.

Because of a certain interdependence, the co-operative movement has been called "the right arm of organized labor"; the ballot its left arm—pensions is the leg on which it stands. Truly an unfortunate comparison (Albert F. Coyle, acting editor, Locomotive Engineers Journal; Executive Secretary All-American Co-operative Commission will bear me out) for this comparison leaves no function for trade unionism at the point of production. Can it be that unionism is merely an artificial limb? He says "organized labor has two arms"; the ballot and

co-operative movement. It would seem that "a strike" is of little significance in the eyes of Mr. Coyle. It's a pity his labor hasn't more arms, so that it could get more fingers in more pies.

In embracing the co-operative movement, the craft unionist admits that his unionism is not sufficient. His failure to wring a livelihood at the point of production is proof that his unionism is at fault. The more he saves at the point of consumption, the less will the boss give him—not having the power to raise wages, on the job, how can he expect to resist wage cuts, in the same place.

Throughout Europe co-operation and the labor movement have gone hand in hand—that's where we get our "immigration". The co-operative movement is strictly un-American in origin and adaptability. We are at least 40 years behind England in political maneuvers—that is: it will be at least that long a time before co-operation will bless us politically with a pension. Therefore let us plug along organizing "industrially" the one big union of labor, to fight the one big union of bosses, at the point of production—on the job.

Let us not become ambitious as traders, legislators or financiers—some one's got to work—let us not aim to become employers of labor—that is competition—let us rather remain workers, manufacturers, producers, organized industrially to run the industries of the world for the benefit of a new humanity—produce for use.

Organize in the I. W. W. to get your living where you produce it—at the point of production. You can't save it if you don't get it. In conclusion let me say: Labor has two arms—both are industrial unionism; it has two legs—both are solidarity. You've heard of them—that's what we stand on, solidarity of labor.

Besides, labor has eyes to see; ears to hear; brains to think—and teeth.

(To Be Continued)