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**LABOR IN ENGLAND
AND AMERICA**

A Significant Contrast

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LABOR IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA

A SIGNIFICANT CONTRAST

A CHRONOLOGICAL SURVEY of the labor movement in England and the United States which teaches an important lesson to labor in this country. The following comparison is made in three periods of history—The Early Period, The Middle Period, and The Modern Period in the two nations. Here is the story of the two movements:

The Early Period

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1774: Workers disfranchised. No trade unions. However, privileged classes often ignored suffrage qualifications and permitted many workers to vote for members of revolutionary committees. In Charleston, S. C., 15 mechanics were elected on a revolutionary committee of 30 in 1774. In 1768 mechanics of same city also elected 3 members to the lower house of the Assembly, probably the first time in history that candidates on a labor ticket were elected to a legislative body.

See notes

1792: First continuous organization of wage workers, the shoemak-

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1799: A comprehensive act was passed by Parliament prohibiting labor organizations in industry.

1800: The above act was amended but some of its worst features survived in the new act. Unionism remained a "conspiracy."

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- ers of Philadelphia, appears.
 Conducted first organized
 1799: strike in 1799. Philadelphia
 shoemakers convicted of "con-
 spiracy" to raise wages in
 1806: 1806.
 1815: From 1806 to 1815 six crimi-
 nal "conspiracy" cases are re-
 corded against shoemakers in
 a number of cities. Four con-
 victions, one acquittal, and
 one compromise. Workers
 still largely disfranchised.
 1827: Struggle for manhood suffrage
 and organization of city labor
 parties. First daily labor pa-
 pers appear in Philadelphia
 1832: and New York City. Organ-
 ized workers of Philadelphia
 outline a complete system of
 public education which be-
 came the basis of our public
 school system. Opposed by
 reactionary classes as "revolu-
 tionary." Philadelphia work-
 ers elect a number of their
 candidates. In New York
 City they elect one man to the
 Legislature and capitalist
 press demanded that he be un-
 seated. He retains seat. First
 city central body appears in
 Philadelphia in this period.

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- 1811: Rise of the Luddites, bands of
 manual workers who, in sheer
 desperation, went about the
 country destroying textile ma-
 1812: chinery and sometimes wreck-
 ing factories.
 1824: From the beginning of the
 century organized workers
 were engaged in a struggle for
 mere existence. Prosecutions
 for "conspiracy" were numer-
 ous. Laws against combina-
 tions were finally repealed in
 1824.
 1825: Reaction of capitalists fol-
 lowed. They demanded re-
 peal of the act of 1824. Or-
 ganized workers oppose re-
 peal. The new act nominally
 re-established the common law
 prohibition of combinations
 but exempted labor unions
 from prosecution for regulat-
 ing wages or hours.
 1829: Period of attempts to organize
 particular trades into national
 unions.

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1834: Ely Moore, union printer, first labor man elected to Congress. Elected in New York City. Workingmen's party in Massachusetts carried ten towns in the election of 1833. George Bancroft, the historian, was candidate of the Workingmen's party for the Massachusetts Legislature from Northampton but was defeated. Unions and labor parties were not strong and both almost disappear because of industrial depression. First national organization, the National Trades Union, organized in New York City in 1834.

1842: Down to this year unions continued to be prosecuted for "conspiracy" and many workers were fined and jailed. Decision of Chief Justice Shaw of Massachusetts held unions to be legal organizations. During this period workers were winning the franchise and courts came to have more respect for ballot-armed workingmen. However, the doctrine of "conspiracy" was

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1834: Grand National Consolidated Trades Union organized with Robert Owen as its chief recruiter and propagandist. In this year the famous "Six Men of Dorset," agricultural laborers, by a gross perversion of law, were transported to Botany Bay to seven years servitude for trying to raise wages.

1836: Chartist movement appears. Demands universal suffrage, annual parliaments, a secret ballot, equal electoral districts, abolition of property qualifications for parliamentary candidates, and payment of members.

1839: The Chartists obtained the signatures of 1,250,000 people to the Charter petition. Great Chartist demonstrations throughout England. Petition introduced into Parliament June 14. Parliament rejects it by a vote of 46 Ayes and 235 Noes.

1840: From April, 1839, to June, 1840, 380 Chartist leaders were arrested. Some tried

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shifted to other grounds by the employing classes and their lawyers, as will be seen later.

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and convicted, sentences varying from three months in prison to transportation for life.

1841: Petition bearing 1,348,848 signatures presented to Parliament for the release of Chartist prisoners and carried by 18 workingmen. Vote was a tie, 58 for and 58 against. Speaker cast vote against it and petition denied.

1842: Another Charter petition presented to Parliament bearing 3,315,752 names. Defeated, 287 Noes to 49 Ayes.

1843: Another Charter petition presented bearing 1,975,469 signatures. Petition denied by

1849: 222 Noes to 17 Ayes. Chartism on the decline and disappears.

The Middle Period

1861: The Civil War. Many unions disbanded and the remainder maintained a precarious existence.

1866: National Labor Union organized and for the first time the 8-hour day is demanded. Also adopted a resolution urging organization of a National

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- Labor Party. Adopted resolution again in 1867. In 1869: the National Labor Union sent A. C. Cameron to the Basle Congress of the International. General revival of labor organizations and Knights of Labor organized. In Massachusetts a Labor party elected 21 representatives to the Legislature and one Senator. Knights of Labor did not acquire any importance until four years later.
- 1872: National Labor Union. Nominated Judge David Davis of Illinois for President. Davis declined too late for party to again nominate.
- 1873: The panic of 1873 was a blow not only to the labor party but to the unions, many of which disappeared.
- 1876: Workingmen's Party of the United States organized in a national convention in Philadelphia. Changed the name to the Socialist Labor Party of North America in 1877. Mainly a propaganda organization.
- 1881: American Federation of Labor

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- 1866: London Workingmen's Union organized for the purpose of sending Liberal Labor men to Parliament.
- 1867: Extension of suffrage but still leaving many inequalities to be redressed. British Trade
- 1868: Union Congress founded.
- 1874: Two Liberal-Labor men elected to Parliament.
- 1880: Three Liberal-Labor men elected to Parliament. Labor Representation League (1869-80) backed candidates. Opposed to independent political action.

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- 1883: organized. In 1883 demanded that the old parties approve of the 8-hour day in their platforms. Demand ignored. Other demands made of these
- 1884: parties in 1884. Again ignored.
- 1886: Labor party in New York City nearly elects Henry George mayor. Haymarket riot in Chicago followed by reaction against labor for a number of years. Knights of Labor began to decline in 1887 and the A. F. of L. to take its place.
- 1890: Perlman in his "History of Trade Unionism" says that "during the eighties and nineties there seemed to have been more conspiracy cases than during all the rest of the century."
- 1893: Defeat of many strikes brought political action to the front in the A. F. of L. Convention of 1893 voted for a political program by 2,244 votes in favor to 67 against. Program approved by a big majority of the unions. Del-

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- 1884: Agricultural workers obtain the franchise.
- 1886: Labor Electoral Association succeeds the Labor Representation League. Idea of all these Liberal-Labor organizations was that Parliament required special knowledge of labor questions and that a few Liberal-Labor men in Parliament would get what Labor wanted. Ten Liberal-Labor men elected.
- 1888: Scottish Labor party organized.
- 1892: J. Keir Hardie and John Burns elected to Parliament, former as Independent Labor and latter as a Social Democrat.
- 1893: Independent Labor party organized with a little over 6,000 members. It nominated 28

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1894: egates to 1894 convention undid the work of the previous year by repudiating the program.

1895: Eugene V. Debs, president, and executive board of the American Railway Union sent to prison for "contempt."

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1895: candidates in 1895, all of whom were defeated. However, within two years it elected 800 members to municipal offices and polled 38 per cent of the votes cast. The I. L. P. continued to make converts among rank and file of the unions, but workers as a whole were supporters of the Liberal party.

The Modern Period

1901: Socialist Party organized. Elected mayors in 2 Massachusetts cities and 3 members of Legislature for a number of years. Hostile court decisions, lost strikes and enemy Congress induced A. F. of L. to frame a protest, "Labor's 1906: Bill of Grievances." Three years before suit brought against Danbury hatters. A. F. of L. supports candidates of old parties.

1899: Machinists and Welsh miners lost big strikes in 1897 and 1898. Courts were destroying protection of Trade Union Acts, outlawing picketing and making union members responsible for individual acts in strikes. Trade Union Congress adopted resolution instructing Parliamentary Committee "to invite the cooperation of all the Cooperative, Socialist, Trade Union and other working class organizations" to "devise ways and

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1908: More reactionary court decisions, more injunctions and a reactionary Congress. A. F. of L. adopts "Labor's Protest to Congress" protesting against indifference of Congress and decisions of the courts. Again supports candidates of old parties.

1912: A. F. of L. supports old party candidates, including Woodrow Wilson. Latter elected but received several hundred thousand less votes than Bryan received in 1908. Elected not because of A. F. of L. support but because of "split" in the Republican party.

1913: Mulhall scandal in Congress. Many "friends of labor" shown to be in the pay of the National Association of Manufacturers, including McDermott "union card" Congressman from Chicago. Mr. Gompers admitted before the investigation committee of Congress that "we are behind England 10 years; we are behind Germany 20 years" in "the protection of the life, health and limb of the workers." In

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means for the securing of an increased number of Labor members in the next Parliament." Adopted by 546,000 votes in favor to 434,000 against.

1900: Taff Vale strike. Railroad

1901: owners sued union and were awarded damages. Cost to union nearly \$250,000. Panic in the labor movement. Labor party organized by 120 delegates meeting in London in 1900. First known as the Labor Representation Committee with 375,931 Trade Unionists and Socialists affiliated. Two Labor men elected in 1900.

1902: Membership of Labor Representation increased to 861,200

1903: and one by-election won. In 1903 two more members elected to Parliament.

1906: Membership of the British Labor Party, as it is henceforth called, increased to 900,000 and 29 members of Parliament elected. Two more members elected.

1908: Famous Osborne decision that union members could not be

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Colorado A. F. of L. claimed to have elected "friends" on old party ticket, including Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of State, Auditor, and 24 members of the Legislature. In that state under this "friendly" administration the horrible Ludlow massacre of miners, their wives and children occurred.

1915: Supreme Court of the United States gives decision to D. E. Loewe and Co., which awards three-fold damages against Danbury hatters.

1916: A. F. of L. again supports old party "friends" in election. Beginning of war period alliance between A. F. of L. and Wilson administration.

1917: Supreme Court declared illegal the attempt of miners to organize if they signed "yellow dog" contracts in West Virginia. Espionage Act, censorship, conscription and mobs. A. F. of L. paid \$214,911.20 damages assessed against Danbury hatters, the money being contributed by unions. A. F. of L. reported such a decision

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taxed by their organizations for party purposes, a blow aimed at the Labor party by the courts. Injunctions followed and party suffered severely. Labor party forces bill through Parliament exacting payment of members of Parliament and relieves financial distress of party. Membership of party in 1910 increased to 1,430,539. Members of Parliament, 40.

1913: Labor party obtains Trade Union Act legalizing unions voting funds to party if decision of union represents a majority vote. However, a dissenting member may obtain a return of his share of contribution if notice is given of his personal objection. In 1914, 63 unions voted on party contributions. 678,063 members voted in favor and 407,356 against, only three small unions casting a majority against.

1917: Labor party amends its constitution declaring its objective to be: "To secure for the producers by hand or brain

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- not again likely owing to passage of the Clayton Act. Federal Child Labor Law declared unconstitutional by Supreme Court.
- 1918:
- 1919: Attorney General Palmer's amazing injunction against the United Mine Workers. Labor Party of the United States organized at Chicago by over 1,000 delegates. End of the war. Open shop drive. Wage cuts. Reactionary court decisions. Another protest by A. F. of L., "Labor's Bill of Rights," against reaction in the steel strike, the attitude of capitalist group in President Wilson's Industrial Conference, government by injunction, anti-strike legislation, and other injustices.
- 1920: Labor party of the United States changes name to Farmer-Labor party and nominates Christiansen and Hayes. Socialist party nominates Debs and Stedman. Combined vote of parties nearly 1,200,000. A. F. of L. continues support of "friends" in old parties.

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- the full fruits of their industry, and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of common ownership of the means of production and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control of each industry or service." Also provided for enrolment of individual members. Adopted its famous reconstruction program, "Labor and the New Social Order." Membership increased to 2,244,945. Members of Parliament, 70.
- 1918:
- 1919: Labor party acquires such prestige that in England and other countries discussion begins of its prospects of becoming the ruling party in England. Membership increased to 3,511,290. Members of Parliament, 70.
- 1920: Labor party's increasing supporters alarms Liberals and conservatives. Press and politicians seriously discuss necessity of uniting old parties against Labor party. Membership of party increased to

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- 1921: Supreme Court decision in Duplex Printing Company case wipes out supposed guarantees of the Clayton Act.
- 1922: Coronado decision of the Supreme Court affirms that unions can be prosecuted under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act and that they can be held for damages arising in strikes. President Gompers declares the decision "the worst blow ever delivered to labor in America." Attorney General Daugherty's injunction against railroad workers similar to the Palmer injunction against miners. Big victories of the Farmer-Labor party in Minnesota make marked impression on workers of the United States. A. F. of L. continues support of old party "friends."
- 1923: Supreme Court annuls minimum wage law for women and children in District of Columbia. Same old reactionary Congress, except for two Farmer-Labor Senators, Shipstead and Johnson, and a Socialist in the House, Berger of Wisconsin. A. F. of L. maintains old political policy of supporting old party "friends."

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- 1921: 4,359,807. Members of Parliament, 70.
- 1923: Labor party becomes the second party in England in number of votes cast and in members of Parliament. Members in Parliament increased to 144. Membership declines to 3,311,036 because of widespread unemployment and consequent idleness of members of unions affiliated with party.
- 1923: December Elections—Labor Party increases its representation in Parliament to ONE HUNDRED AND NINETY-TWO members and is followed by serious discussion whether Labor Party should form a Labor Cabinet.

Some Conclusions

It has been impossible to note all the achievements of the British Labor party or to mention all the anti-labor legislation and court decisions in this country. Only some of the more conspicuous facts could be included in the above survey. One other important contrast may be noted. It is a notorious fact that in this country the city governments have done little to check the greed of the rent hogs. Housing accommodations have also become abominable.

Although the Labor party is still a minority in the London County Council it has been able to put through its program for municipal housing. From 10,000 to 20,000 new homes are being built by the city to relieve the housing congestion. The rent hog is eliminated in this program. His "vested rights" have no standing whatever in the face of the great needs of London's workers. Contrast this one item alone with the rule of the rent hogs in New York and other American cities!

The great value of historical comparisons is the lessons they teach. It will be observed that in the early period of the two countries the history of both is largely similar. Labor organizations were "conspiracies" under the common law and the great working masses did not have the franchise. Organization, struggle and sacrifices won the franchise and eventually won a legal standing for the trade unions.

However, there is one difference in this early period. The American workers adopted independent political action at an early period and the record shows that they had some marked successes to their credit. American workers were the pioneers in labor party organization. If these early parties disappeared so did most of the

unions that created them and they eventually failed because of industrial depressions. During this same period it was the British workers who did not organize their own political parties.

The middle period in both countries is similar. It was the period of the rise of the large national unions. Towards the end of this middle period, the close of the nineteenth century, organized capital becomes more aggressive. It uses the courts to strangle the trade unions. In both countries the workers were compelled to consider independent political action, in the United States in 1893 and in England in 1899. In this country the decision was overwhelmingly in favor of independent political action but in the next year, 1894, the decision was reversed. In England the decision in favor of independent political action was final.

The modern period practically begins with the dawn of the twentieth century. Labor in the United States officially remains within the old corrupt parties of the employing class. In England Labor leaves the old parties. It establishes a party of its own. The record is now a marked contrast between the autocracy of organized capital, its servile Congresses and courts in this country and the curbing of the courts and increasing power and prestige of labor in England. Over there trade unionism is secure and protected behind its ram-parts of political power. Here trade unionism faces an uncertain future with courts more arrogant than in any other period while labor barter away its political power to the parties of the employers.

The conclusion to be drawn is irresistible. Labor cannot organize and strike against the employers and then vote the tickets of the employers. Labor must organize its political power and formulate its own program. It must be independent of the corrupt

influences of the parties of capital. It must have respect for itself and be confident of its own power. It needs no "friends" outside of its own ranks if it will independently take care of its own interests.

Educate and organize for the new day when Labor in the United States will be the power that it is in England. Urge independent political action in the union, the shop, on the street, and everywhere we come in contact with our real friends, the workers themselves. The powerful unions and independent parties of the workers now organized in the states and the nation can now federate in a national party of the workers. The workers must be independent to achieve the ideals and advance the interests of the working class.

State parties of rural and urban labor are now organized in Minnesota, Idaho, Washington, South Dakota. The Farmer-Labor party and Socialist party are national organizations. Among the national and international trade unions declaring for independent political action in recent years are the United Mine Workers, the Typographical Union, the International Ladies Garment Workers, the Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, the Molders, the Painters, Paperhangers and Decorators, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the Brewery Workers, Brick and Clay Workers, the Fur Workers, the Machinists, the Cloth, Hat and Cap Makers, the Leather Goods Workers, the Maintenance of Way Workers and others.

Circulate this document. Help to federate these organizations in support of an independent party of the working people.

THE AMERICAN LABOR PARTY
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