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ARMY INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE.
Washington, D. C.

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ADDRESS

By

MR. JOHN F. FREY, EDITOR,
International Workers' Journal,
Cincinnati, Ohio

Before

THE ARMY INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE.

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ADDRESS - Mr. John P. Frey, Editor,
International Welders' Journal,
Cincinnati, Ohio.

Colonel Kumpe and Gentlemen

I appreciate the opportunity which has been presented of discussing the industrial side of the problems connected with war. I thought it better, instead of bringing a carefully prepared paper which might be dryer than dust, to trust to my notes. After I have concluded my remarks, if there is anything of value in what I may have said, it will be given a much more practical application if you will feel free to ask questions. Questions will be most welcome on my part.

There is probably no necessity of telling you that industry, the capacity of the people to manufacture munitions of war, plays a very important part of the question of National Defense.

I assume that during the Revolutionary War when the War Department equipped a soldier with a good musket a powder horn a bar of lead and a bullet mold, he had practically all of the offensive weapons he required. He carried his manufacturing plant with him after the musket and powder horn had been put in his possession. We have travelled a great distance since that time. "How far", in calling upon industry to play its part, is not a subject of statistics, so we cannot measure it because it is immeasurable as compared with even the industry required to supply an army during the Civil War period.

Illustrations sometimes help us to grasp the changes that have taken place. For a little while during 1918 I was visiting the Front. My headquarters were at the Chateau Tramcourt, safely behind the battleline. We wanted to see the last battle of Cambrai, we left the Chateau and went up to the old Roman highway running between Paris and Dunkirk. There we passed by a level piece of ground, about 200 acres, very much in the same physical condition it was when Henry the Second and the French Army fought thereon the battle of Agincourt. Here was one of the critical battles between two nations fought out and won upon a 200 acre field.

Then after passing this battle field, we entered the battle line in front of Cambrai. At that time the active fighting was on a 40 mile front and so far as I could see, the battle line was 5 or 6 miles deep. I met some of the batteries who were seeing active service and were engaged about 6 miles back from out front. There was

a battle actually being carried on over some 400 square miles and it was not the critical battle, but merely a part of an engagement. I thought at that time of the difference between the battle field of 200 acres and this 400 square mile area.

Then, I saw the work which the soldiers were doing, a 12-mortar battery going into action, it was hot work, the guns got very warm, so hot - that the grease and oil sizzled filling the air with a fine spray. The soldiers looked like men engaged in a rolling mill. The industrial character of the action made a deep impression on me at that time, not only the actual service, of this battery, but the enormous amount of industrial production required to make these mortars, and secondly to supply them with the steady stream of ammunition that was going through them.

Since the war we have tried to secure some idea of the number of industrial workers required to keep one soldier at the front. We have not as yet obtained these figures but I remember that during the war we had 3 or 4 working on what was necessary to keep each soldier at the front.

The industrial situation in this country, influenced as it is by American traditions and institutions, is very different from that which exists in any other country - I want to dwell on this phase for a few moments so that possibly I can give you a better understanding of how the wage earners feel toward war, and of the motives that move them. I presume every country has its patriotic wage earners. During and since the war I have talked with some of the leaders of the German trade-union movement and I know how loyally they supported their Government for a while.

The organization which I have the privilege of being a member of is a rather old one, organized before the Civil War. One of our Presidents who organized the National Labor Union, which was a forerunner of the American Federation of Labor, was working at his trade when the Civil War broke out. He was a lay-preacher in the Methodist Church. He thought he had a duty toward his country and began to drill the molders in that foundry. It resulted in his organizing them into a company and going to the front as its captain. Another of our national presidents served in the same war, going in as a private and coming out as a major.

The trade union movement had very little influence over the workmen's minds during the Civil War period, not nearly so much as developed later on in the Spanish

American War. In that war large numbers of men who were active trade unionists indicated that their trade union membership made better American citizens of them. I remember reading in one of the papers which President Roosevelt prepared, that he was surprised to learn of the large number of union cards in the pockets of our boys who were killed in Cuba.

The labor union movement in this country, like the trade union movements of every country, has naturally been more or less opposed to war because of many practical considerations, as well as the sentimental element in our ranks. Speakers, knowing how to appeal to sentiment, have sometimes prevailed upon some of them to become pacifists. I can remember in conventions of the A.F. of L. when the speaker who defended the colors was looked upon as a tool of some sinister interest, and the man who devoted his time referring to the horrors of war, and the private profits made by some individuals, received most of the applause.

The American Federation of Labor began to seriously study what was taking place in Europe in 1914. In 1916, it felt that the time had come to make some declaration. It was a difficult thing for such an organization to make a clear-cut statement which would establish a definite clean-cut policy so far as war went, because we had in our movement, as high officers, men who were either born in one of the countries then at war, or whose parents were, or else who, for reasons of their own, had unkind feelings toward one or more of our Allies. We were not yet involved and I think the sympathy of our movement was fairly well divided. We attempted at that time to define our position on the question of militarism as a general proposition. I will not trouble you with reading it all, but just that portion which clearly defines the attitude of the American Federation of Labor at that time. Mr. Green, now President of the A.F.L. was Chairman of the Committee which drafted the statement and I was fortunate enough to be the Secretary. I think it thoroughly represents the viewpoint of the rank and file of the American Trade Union as any statement ever made.

"Resistance to injustice and tyranny is that virile quality which has given purpose and effect to ennobling causes in all countries and at all times. The Institutions of our country and the freedom won by its founders would have been impossible had they been unwilling to die in defense of their liberties. Only a people willing to maintain their rights and defend their liberties are guaranteed free institutions". (page 383 A.F. of L. convention proceedings 1916).

As the situation in Europe grew more menacing, it became more and more apparent that regardless of how any of our people might feel, we were going to be involved. The American Trade Union movement took a step at that time which no other has ever taken. We anticipated the Government, and on March 12th, 1917 a special conference was called in Washington, by President Gompers at which the representatives of all the International Unions were present, to consider what the policy of Organized Labor should be if war was declared. That conference adopted a rather lengthy statement which expressed the hope that we would be spared a war but that if war became necessary those present pledged themselves to do everything in their power to assist their Government in winning that war.

The industrial situation in Europe the attitude of the workers had troubled all the warring governments. We have been told that one of the reasons why President Wilson held back some little time in going before Congress, was that he was uncertain as to the attitude which American labor would take toward a declaration of war. However, we were left in an embarrassing position, as to why we had shown such a readiness to do everything in our power, for after we had pledged ourselves, the declaration of war was held off a little longer than was safe.

There is something in this country of ours so different from what exists in any other, that unless we understand this particular spirit we never can quite understand the differences between organized labor in America and in foreign countries.

The American Federation of Labor held its convention in the fall of 1917; in March we had declared our attitude toward war and pledged ourselves to do everything within our power to assist the Government if our country became involved. That was the official's declaration, but the rank and file of the unions had not had an opportunity of officially passing on our program and declaration. We had our convention in November and there we had the honor of President Wilson's presence. The rulers of other countries do not attend the labor conventions but President Wilson, understanding the psychology of the American people, believed it advisable, he had the privilege of seeing men whose blood and whose ancestors might lead them to be opposed to entering the war, not only cheering him, but endorsing without any opposition the position he had taken, when as President of the United States, he had declared that a condition of war existed.

From the beginning, the trade union movement in this

country gave its hearty support to the Government itself. As the war progressed, the industrial situation apparently troubled our Allies as much as the military one. There had been a strong bond of friendship between the trade union leaders and the leaders of the Socialist party, in England, Belgium, France, Italy, Germany and Austria through a series of conventions covering many years. No sooner did the war break out than the German Government permitted the leaders of the German trade union movement to spend most of their time in Switzerland. The leaders of warring countries would journey to that land to have conferences with these men. Dissatisfaction and distrust were instilled in their minds. The war was bearing heavily upon them; they saw the enormous loss of men, the hardships of their people going without sugar, butter, meat clothing and everything they were accustomed to. They began to have doubts about a military victory. They began to talk first about a Stockholm conference - to ask themselves the question "What are we engaged in a war for; have we anything to gain? If we have nothing to gain, if we have no enmity towards each other, let us declare to that effect and go back to our respective countries, carry on an agitation among the mass of people until we can compel our respective governments to cease fighting".

The Stockholm conference idea finally fell through. Then there emanated from German sources propaganda for a negotiated peace. In other words, they set the propaganda in motion in the Allied countries through German labor resources, circulating the thought that Germany was undefeatable; that millions of young men, Germans, Austrians and Allies, would have to surrender their lives and, inasmuch as the German military machine was invulnerable, the only thing was a negotiated peace while Germany held invaded territory. That idea met with a very cordial reception by many of the workers in Great Britain, France and Italy, and also received more or less public support.

In the winter of 1917, serious as the military situation was for the Allies, the governments were equally disturbed over the morale of their industrial workers. A call came for assistance from this country and it was arranged that a mission composed of trade unionists should visit the other side to see what could be done. After completing its purpose it returned and reported to President Wilson. Then a second mission was sent over with Mr. Gompers as its chairman, and we found some of the reasons why labor in other countries had not responded, as it had here. In March 1918, when we visited the headquarters in France we found that not a single representative of the French trade unions had been permitted to get into the fighting zone, unless serving

with colors. The Government was afraid, or unwilling to deal with the trade unions of its own country and it was true that a very active anti-Government and anti-war sentiment was to be found among the workers of France. We took the matter up with the Government and asked how it was expected to accomplish results in changing the attitude of the French trade unionists unless they were given an opportunity of seeing just what this war meant to their own flesh and blood at the front. With some hesitation the Government finally agreed to have four of the leaders of the French Trade movement go to the front. As I was the only one who spoke French they were assigned to travel with me. I found the attitude of the French leaders altogether different from our own, and to some extent for good reasons. There was no satisfactory labor contact between their movement and the Government. There was nothing but arbitrary regulations in their industries. They could not sit down with their employers and discuss terms of employment and conditions of labor as we do in America, that did not come into the French minds at all, the mass of the people had to do what they were told to do, and sometimes it was willingly done and frequently not.

In the United States the situation was entirely different. As an illustration of the American method what occurred in Ohio serves as a good example. Immediately war was declared, Governor Cox sent a message to some eight or nine National officers having headquarters in the state. We went to Columbus. He said, "We are going into this war and I want Ohio to make the best showing of any state in the Union. I know we are going to do that so far as sending men under the colors is concerned, but we are a great industrial State and we are going to be called upon to produce. I am convinced that we cannot produce efficiently unless we have the thorough cooperation of the trade union in this State. I want you men to become my War Cabinet". Throughout the war Governor Cox would send for this industrial War Cabinet every time a difficult question arose which was related to industry. One of the questions which this Cabinet helped Governor Cox to decide has a most important bearing on this very problem of the country's industrial resources in connection with war time.

Ohio, like many of the other states, had a volume of labor legislation on its Statute Books and all of this labor legislation, from one point of view, seemed to limit the capacity of the people to produce. It provided that a room must have so much air space, there were many regulations affecting labor and other laws defining regulations. All of these things are what some call restrictions on production, and they were

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from that narrow and unsound point of view. There was a movement, as some of you may recall, to have the factory legislation of the several states set aside during the period of the war so that we could produce in unlimited quantities. But Governor Cox looked beneath the surface, he consulted with the trade-union leaders. Then he said "What is this legislation on the books for? It is to protect health and life, to keep workers in as good physical condition as possible. The workers who are going to remain in our industry are going to be called upon to produce as they never produced before, and this war may last for several years. If you begin by removing the restrictions that exist for the sole purpose of maintaining physical fitness and vigor, instead of accomplishing your purpose you are going to have the same experience that the British had."

Sometime it might be of value to you to go over the mass of data which the British Government prepared in connection with its industrial experience. The old men and the women who went into industry were carried away by a very proper spirit of patriotism, and the eight hour day gave way to 10 and 12 hours. Those who work in industry without proper periods for rest, those who work feverishly begin to grow stale after a year or so. They burn up the normal amount of vitality that a human being requires to work steadily in industry, so that 12 or 14 hours forced labor produces less than 8 hours steady labor by vigorous minds and bodies. Briefly, the workers in industry are not like soldiers at the battle front or camps, who are confined to just one thing and have every possible scientific care applied, so that their physical and mental powers will be developed to the highest possible degree.

The British system drove their industrial workers into a condition of mental and physical staleness, while the policy carried out in Ohio by Governor Cox and by the other states kept them all on their toes, so that in all probability the method carried out by him, and by other governors as well, kept our industrial workers fit, and resulted in greater production than would have been possible if labor laws had been set aside.

When the American Trade Union movement was called upon to send labor missions to the other side, particularly when Mr. Gompers went over, this was the situation. Many of the labor and Socialist leaders in the Allied countries had declared themselves in favor of a negotiated peace, while Germany held invaded territory or were on the fence, talking one way to keep within the bounds of good citizenship and talking in

another way in private.

Mr. Gompers had exceptionally clean cut American ideas. He was in every sense as thorough going an American as any public man I have ever come into contact with. He believed there was only one thing to do - to call a conference of the Inter-Allied labor and Socialists representatives, a group which had been meeting since the beginning of the war - some one hundred all told. This conference lasting three or four days opened its sessions in London, England Sept. 17, 1918. Because of the position which the American Labor movement had taken in pledging itself unreservedly to stand by the United States Government, Mr. Gompers decided that something of that same kind should be injected into the Allied labor movement. At this conference Mr. Gompers presented several propositions, an important one being that every representative present would pledge himself to return to his respective country and do everything which lay in his power to assist his Government in carrying on the war until such time as the Central Powers held no invaded territory and their armies were no longer a menace. That was a clean cut position. After some three days of wrangling and vigorous talk, by the Americans, the representatives of the Trade Union movement and Socialists parties recognized the fact that if they refused to accept our proposition they could not very well go back home. They finally fell in line.

Ambassador Page informed us that three days after this convention had adjourned, printed copies of the proceedings were placed on certain desks in Berlin and Vienna. The mass of the German people had been led to believe that the American Trade Union was not supporting its Government; that Mr. Gompers did not represent our movement, and the result of that convention helped to dissipate the idea that many Germans held.

I want to draw this conclusion as a result of what I have just said; that the American Trade Union movement was able to work in such close cooperation with the Government of the United States and with the military forces, because we have in this country something which you cannot find in any other. I am somewhat familiar with the labor movement on the other side; I know the differences between their forms of Government and our own; here we honestly believe that whatever government exists, is what the people are willing should exist, that the Government derives all of its power and authority from the people. That conception establishes a different relationship on the part of the

people toward the government, than can be found in any other country. We have in our country this great trade union movement, more basically patriotic than it is sometimes considered to be by its critics. When a crisis like the last war arises and the government very promptly shows a desire to secure our cooperation, then we can do with a hearty good will what would be very difficult to do in any other country. We had industrial problems arising during the war, some strikes during the war, but on the other hand, some of the warring countries had some regiments that mutinied on the field of battle. However, the strikes that we did have amounted to nothing; there was no tie-up of production or transportation. That was because this American ideal, based on our American Institution, carried us thru, instead of the dissatisfied workmen being told, "If you don't like this is what you have to do anyway", satisfactory agreements to all were reached by personal contacts, thru necessary conferences with management. Voluntary cooperation took the place of compulsion.

We have had some talk since the war of the necessity for conscription. There has never been any doubt, particularly in Europe, but that conscription of men when war occurs is the necessary step. There has been some talk of conscription in this country. Since the war, there has been some consideration of industrial conscription, of its being manifestly unfair for men to have their bodies taken by their government and their lives placed in jeopardy on the battle field, while others who are not risking their lives should be permitted to do as they want to in industry; that all the resources of a nation should be conscripted, men money and industrial establishments. I would like to leave this thought with you, and it is my own, as the American Federation of Labor has not yet expressed itself on this phase, - that if it is necessary to have conscription go beyond the men who are to serve with the colors. Conscription should be applied to industrial establishments and finance and not to the men who are going to work in them, whether these men are managers or workmen.

Our industries of today are carried on very differently now from a few years ago. Industry is carried on in enormous establishments; there is no longer the "Old Man" as the owners used to be called, instead there are hundreds of thousands of stockholders who never come near the plant, know nothing about the actual management which is carried out by hired men.

I doubt from my own experiences, whether satisfactory results would follow an effort to conscript

management and labor. I think that industry is something different from war, just as I think a religious institution is different from a military institution. In military life you must have a supreme command, a prompt obedience to all orders, but I doubt if churches would survive or flourish if military methods were applied to them, or if our religious associations were carried on in the same manner. In the same way I think industry is something altogether different. There must be a cooperation between management and labor that would be more or less injured, or perhaps destroyed, if the element of conscription entered into it.

The American workman can be led to do almost anything, but he appreciates his liberty and opportunity as a citizen. If this country is ever again confronted with a crisis like 1917, my opinion is that the personal efficiency of industry would be injured instead of improved by attempting conscription in industry itself. The limited amount that took place in England, France, Italy and Germany instead of bringing about satisfactory results brought about the very opposite.

I hope that I may have touched upon one or two thoughts which interested you. I would have preferred to have stood here and presented no thoughts of my own so that you could have taken the time to ask questions to be more beneficial.

QUESTION.

In connection with labor hours, how will you speed up your production to its maximum? Is the 3-shift idea a satisfactory arrangement?

ANSWER

That would depend very much on the type of labor. If a man or woman were at some task not requiring great concentration and physical effort, they could work longer with safety than the locomotive engineer who is driving a train at 60 miles an hour. He cannot stand that for more than 3 or 4 hours because he has used up so much energy that he must be a short-hour man, whereas I suppose a person who is feeding a punching machine could do his work successfully for a longer period. Men who are standing before a hot furnace where the heat strikes them cannot work as long as men who are working in comparative comfort and only have to use a minimum of effort and dexterity. There is no way of gauging the hours, the only safe rule is this - that the more labor is called upon to produce, the more care should be exercised to see that it is not worked

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so long that it grows stale.

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QUESTION

What do you think about the exemption of highly skilled labor from conscription?

ANSWER.

Probably some highly skilled labor should be exempted but I think that any law making it mandatory that highly skilled labor be exempted would immediately, if we had a condition of war, lead to the question as to what was highly skilled labor. To give you an illustration - when war was declared, the Metal Trades Association in one city, very much opposed to the existence of trade unions, made this statement thru the daily press that conscription would be a good thing because it would take the "agitators" out of the machine shops and leave the "faithful" employed at their work. Imagine the effect of that. Then too, who would determine who were the skilled mechanics?

Some laborers, because of their knowledge, have as much necessary skill as the so-called technician on the job.

QUESTION:

Have you had any experience with priorities with respect to the control of labor in time of war?

ANSWER:

I think the Government should do that. The Government did try in the last war and the result was that the workers went into those priority industries. Priority of work is much more adaptable to the American spirit.

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QUESTION

Have you any opinion as to the approximate percentage of women labor that might be injected into our labor in time of war?

ANSWER

I have no idea. It would depend upon how long war would last and how long women could endure the pace.

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QUESTION

Would the union try to prevent women labor to any extent?

ANSWER

It would depend upon how it would be done. If the Government said "10% or 20% women must be put in this plant", it might not take so well but if the management said, "We are trying to release some men because the country needs them. If we put women in, do you think you can help teach them to do the work", we would get active labor cooperation. Whatever we do, we must try and maintain the methods of co-operation in industry in war time.