

CARTON 9: 21

THE BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS

Dellums, C.L. Untitled Speech

1927

2017/193
c

Whether the great army of non-union workers will ever awaken to the realization that their future welfare cannot safely be intrusted to their employers, time alone will tell. Meanwhile, any remedial measures to meet changed conditions will have to be secured through the efforts of Organized Labor., which alone is responsible for the so-called high standard of living enjoyed by the American workers. No other group is apparently so deeply interested in trying to solve the problem of unemployment, which is a curse and a bitter blight the world over.

That there must be a readjustment of our economic structure, there can be no doubt: that is, if we are to provide employment for the millions now idly walking the streets.

With the ever-increasing number of labor displacing machines being used in industry and the increased production brought about thereby, it does seem that our industrial leaders should realize that, if ~~they~~ employment is to be found for all, the shorter work day and the FIVE-DAY week must be adopted.

While not all of our unemployment is technological, there is ample evidence to prove a large percentage is due to that cause. There is no industry that we know of ~~that~~ where automatic machinery has not thrown men and women out of work. Since 1910 agricultural output has increased twenty-eight percent, with labor force reduced six percent. An automobile plant in a middle western State turns out automobile frames almost untouched by human hands. In 1900 two hundred unskilled laborers found work on a job now done in less time by a gigantic steam shovel. One hundred machines have replaced 25,000 men in the shoe industry. A dough-mixing machine does what twenty men used to do. One man now turns out 32,000 razor blades in the same time required by 500 men in 1913. Seven men replace sixty in casting pig iron. Two men replace 128 in loading pig iron. Railroads now handle more freight than ever before with 250,000 less men,

What solution is there for this condition other than a reduction in hours of labor of those employed and a higher wage for all? Organized Labor is doing more than its full share to bring about an adjustment of our economic machinery so that it will function for the benefit of the masses rather than for the few. In this work it needs the help of all wage earners, and welcomes the cooperation of employers, who may be sure that our aim is not to destroy, but to restore industry to a healthy, thriving condition where employment may be found for all. A long step in this direction would be the immediate adoption of a shorter work-week without a reduction in wages. Profits may be curtailed, but the time will come when human rights must be considered first. It is either that or chaos. If the few are to continue to become richer, and the many poorer, then civilization will give way to savagery. Such a condition is too horrible to contemplate. It can be avoided if the worker will stand shoulder to shoulder and not only demand but insist upon their rights being recognized. They have the power to compel, if they will use it.

One worker today can do the same work in 34 hours as he could a few years ago in 5-2 hours

you must be secured ~~in~~ in a job. Money would be spent if workers now employed were made to know that their jobs were safe.

you must organize not only to secure jobs but also to hold those that you have.

The ownership of a job is as sacred as the ownership of Property.

The time has come when black workers must do something for themselves and not permit the white workers to make all the sacrifices, do all the fighting and pay the price alone for benefits which our people receive and enjoy, such as better hours of work, higher pay and better working conditions. At the present time there is no agency among our Race in America that is fighting against wage cuts and for the shorter work-day except the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Were it not for the Brotherhood, there would be no voice of black labor in these trying times calling for economic justice, not alone for themselves but for all workers regardless of race, creed, color or nationality.

But unless the black workers, along with the white, are able to prevent wage cuts, their purchasing power will be less, production will be less, and more workers will join the bread line. Every branch of the race, including the doctors, lawyers, preachers, teachers, business men, journalists and fraternal societies will suffer. For when the black workers have less, the professional group will suffer more.

All professional and business representatives in the country should combine to help the Pullman porters secure the 240-hour work month, which will supply jobs for two or more thousands as porters. More-over this will help the porters win their fight and thereby pave the way for the successful struggles of other groups of black wage earners. Porters are now the pioneers and shock troops on the industrial battle field. They are the only black workers in America engaged in a terrific, intensive and difficult industrial war. They have waged their war for more than six years and are more determined to fight on than ever before. When they win, it will be the most significant economic victory in the history of the Race. It will be the most fundamental byway of supplying a true key for the solution of the Race problem. For the Negro's problem is an economic problem.

It is the consensus of opinion of the best thinkers of America, that the reduction of hours of work is the only basic method whereby this unemployment situation can be relieved, and the four big brotherhoods are now moving for the six hour day and the five day week. And the Negro worker not only should must be a part of the organized movement in bettering the workers economic life.

The recent developements in industry indicate that large corporations are arbitrarily putting into effect wage cuts against those groups of workers who are unorganized and incidentally unable to protect themselves. Take the Steel industry, the Automobile industry and a recent occurrence, which offers an outstanding example of the benefit of organized force among workers, is illustrated in the case of the M. K. and T. railroad, which ordered an arbitrary cut of from 10 to 20 percent in wages, effecting all employees of the rail-road, excepting those who were part of the organized labor groups which had agreements with the railroad company. Had it not been for the fact that the trainmen, engineers, conductors and firemen were organized, they would have had to submit to this arbitrary wage cut.

American industry has become highly organized, most particularly the railroads. Recent reports indicate that there has been perfected in the East, a new consolidation of railroad interests unifying all eastern railroads into four systems. Such a program has been outlined for railroads all over America., east and west, north and south. In this reorganization program, there is bound to be force readjustments among the labor personnel on the railroads. The railroad workers and other workers of America are coordinating their forces with a view of being prepared to deal with the new forces of the railroad industry. If the Negro railroad workers, porters, cooks, waiters and others, are to get the proper protection in the railroad industry in America today, he must become part of the organized scheme of workers as a whole.

(1) Labor is the basis of all wealth as well as civilization, and deserves fair reward in wages, working conditions and hours of work.

(2) When depressions come labor is the chief victim, since wages fall and workers are thrown out of work.

(3) The only way for labor to meet this condition is through trade union organization, which will increase their collective bargaining power and enable them to deal with capital more nearly upon a basis of equality:

(4) The trend of society is toward increasing recognition of the rights of labor as shown by the enactment of workers' compensation laws, legislation protecting working women, minimum wage laws, laws for safety and sanitation in the interest of the workers:

(5) The Negro workers are the first fired and the last hired. They are the most overworked and under-paid, all because they are the least organized, the least educated and the only hope of the Negro workers is more trade union organization such as the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters.

(6) The Negro public represents Negro labor because nine-tenths or more of the Negroes live by working for somebody from day to day and hence the Negro capitalist is non-existent. Since the Negroes are generally working people, Negro lawyers, doctors, preachers, business men and journalists, who could not exist except upon the Negro workers, should fight to secure more wages, better working conditions and better hours of work for the Negro workers.

The struggle of the Pullman porters.

The Negroes must be a part of the labor movement of the country.

Tunnel diggers Greeks Chinese & Japanese

Hotel Oakland.

Jawn Cafe. Wilsons Cafe.

In other words, the day of individual action, whether it be by Pullman porter or what not, has passed and only through combining his efforts with others can any effective progress be made. For that reason, the Negro worker should j in the Union of his trade or if there be none, or if he can not join, then he should organize his own union and become affiliated with the A. F. of L.

The development of American industry today with the institution of labor saving machinery and other modern industrial developments is bringing about a condition whereby millions of men are being thrown out of work including many Negroes. White groups are not running away from the problems or breaking up their organizations or submitting to every indignity because of this condition, but are putting up an intelligent and strenuous fight to bring about basic changes through their organizations, which will eliminate to a large extent much of the unemployment. NEGROES WILL HAVE TO DO THE SAME THING OR ELSE HE WILL AUTOMATICALLY DISAPPEAR FROM AMERICAN INDUSTRY BECAUSE THIS IS THE TIME OF THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST. Nobody is particularly interested in any one individual. Force and power are the only things that are recognized and dealt with. Only through organization can the Negro manifest any power. As an individual, he will soon be eliminated. Therefore, in order to protect himself, the Negro had better organize economic organizations.

We must enforce our industrial rights, which are more important than civil rights because civil rights mean absolutely nothing unless we industrial rights. The right to work is as sacred as the right to own property. The right to make a living, and the right to be paid a living wage, for the work that is done, and the right to work under standard American conditions. And unless we move to enforce our industrial rights through organization, it is simply a confession on our part that we are incapable of taking our places among those of other aggressive American workers, and we can not maintain the proper self-respect among workers of America unless we become part of the general organized scheme.

A letter was addressed to William Green, President of the American Federation of Labor, inquiring as to the attitude of the labor organization with regard to the unionizing and employment of Negro labor. Green was questioned as to the admittance of Negro workers into the various union groups, and as to the general policy of the American federation of Labor with regard to the placing of these men at work. Declaring that the Federation has thousands of colored workers as members of many international unions affiliated with the parent body, Mr. Green makes the assertion that thousands of additional colored workers would be included in the membership of these international unions "if the colored workers would respond to the appeal and invitation extended to join."

Continuing, Mr. Green writes: The International Hod Carriers, Building and Common Laborers' Union of America, the International United Mine Workers of America, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, the Brick Layers, Masons and Plasters International Union, and many other national unions have accepted and are accepting thousands of colored workers and are accepting all those who will join and become members.

"The American Federation of Labor has been especially active in its efforts to organize the Pullman porters. We regret that notwithstanding the appeal we make for this class of workers to join the Pullman porters Union; and notwithstanding the thousands of dollars we spent in the effort to persuade them to join, a great many of them manifest unusual indifference. Mr. A. Philip Randolph, a most capable colored worker, is giving his entire time and attention to this work.

"There may be some local instances, even in California, as well as elsewhere, where local organizations discriminate against colored workers. That action does not represent the policy of the American Federation of Labor. There are some locals in some Cities that discriminate against white workers; they discriminate against men because of racial characteristics. This does not represent the attitude of the American Federation of Labor.

"The colored workers of the country have no better friend than the American Federation of Labor. I wish we could organize all colored workers, and I wish that we could raise their standard of living and improve their working conditions. I might also state that one of the fundamental principles of the American federation of Labor is the organization of all workers, irrespective of color, creed, sex, or nationality.

UNEMPLOYMENT

CAUSED BY THE MECHANIZATION OF INDUSTRY

Admittedly, six million persons are without employment in the United States. Inasmuch as periodic employment has been counted as regular, the actual figure of employment probably nears nine million.

Using the accepted six million estimate of unemployed, and allowing one thousand dollars as an average annual wage, it means a loss of six billion to the purchasing power of the nation. Six billion dollars that failed to reach the pockets of the workers and thereby failed to enter the channels of trade has spelled DEPRESSION to the nation. Six billion dollars taken out of circulation has closed the factories, stilled the steel mills, sealed up the mines, ravished the agricultural industry, stunted railroad transportation, shrivelled the savings of unknown thousands of people, wrecked banks, tied up marine shipping, quieted the advancement of aviation, deprived babies and helpless children of life's nourishment, and seared the lives of more than a hundred million people. ALL THIS while so-called captains of industry, governmental administration officers, economists, industrial engineers, and others are holding their hands high to Heaven pretending a supplication. They know the "why" and the "cure," but like little children they shudder at taking or administering the pill. It would be bitter to them, but oh! such a relief to the humble ninety-eight per cent of the people!

Depression and unemployment can be eradicated in the United States as well as the world, but not without the release by the employers of the savings produced by the mechanization of industry. The mechanization of industry had its inception with the discovery by primitive man of the use of a club. All down the pages of history its progress has been slow until the last century and a quarter. During the last hundred and twenty-five years its progress has been rapid. The production of goods has been absorbed by the advances in the standards of living, individual wastes, wastes of wars, and increases of population.

Data on manufactures by the Bureau of Census, U. S. Department of Commerce, show:

Year	Average Annual Wage of Employees	Average Annual Production per Employee	Per Cent of Value of Production per Man to Wage.	Per Cent of Wages to Value of Production
1849	\$ 247.37	\$1,064.82	430%	23.21%
1927	1,179.55	7,459.70	632%	17.42%

The 1927 worker produced as much as seven such workers did in 1849, while his wage increased 4.77 times. If the worker shared in production in 1927 to the same extent as he did in 1849 his average annual wage would have been \$1,738.11, an increase of the annual average wage for 1927 in that industry of 47.36%. 47.36% of the wage payroll for 1927 is \$5,133,475,931.94, which is lost to labor and the cause of prosperity by reason of the inability of labor to maintain a proportionate share of its production. The constant drive to lower wages is insidious and demoralizing of public welfare.

The workers of this one industry being deprived of this vast sum spells disaster and depression for the whole nation. Add to it the producers' losses in agriculture, mining, transportation, and other endeavors, and it will aggregate fifteen to twenty billions of dollars. That is what mechanization of industry does. When earnings are paid out for wages the dollars are spent for living costs and become prosperity dollars. When a machine is installed to save the wages paid employes, these savings, invariably, go into capital account, the profits of which pile up in staggering amounts unable to find investment.

Huge sums, billions of dollars scheduled as credit, are withheld from the channels of trade, thereby effectually damming prosperity and PRODUCING DEPRESSION.

There is no other cure for this disastrous condition other than distribution of the savings of the machine to the workers. Then the dollars will trickle back into the commercial channels as regularly as they are earned, and peace, happiness, and contentment will be with the people.

To prolong this condition insures disaster to the nation. Do not forget that the people love their country, their fellowmen, have a joint feeling of interest, approve of our intellectual and moral training, and are ready to die for the nation's needs, but six million men will not stand idly by and unobtrusively starve or freeze to death. WATCH OUT! THEY MIGHT COME TO THINK. THERE IS POWER IN THOUGHT.

We make this point to capitalism: That under its regime we have built a great industrial nation out of a wilderness notwithstanding its policy of "dog eat dog"; that opportunities have been afforded for the exercise of individual initiative and that as a nation we are on "top" of the world. But do not forget that in the evolution of industrial progress, capitalism must conform to the Law of Change. Absolutism, oligarchies, slavery, feudalism, and even the people themselves, have bowed to this law. Let us preserve our nation, our political unity, by changing our industrial aim. Let us forget our selfish purpose to profit by our neighbor's misery. Let us remember that everyone's happiness is dependent on the happiness of the whole. Let us remember that he serves best who serves all.

Let capitalism's aim be to serve the needs of the people without first serving itself a major portion. With the machine displacing thousands of workers the savings of which accrue to the machine owners, the worker and his family are robbed of his wage and the nation's market is robbed of a buyer.

Let us not forget the primary and fundamental principles of our government: Peace, justice, public welfare, and liberty for ourselves and our posterity. It is as much threatening to the security of the

nation today that its people be HALF STARVED and HALF WELL FED as it was in the day of the immortal Lincoln when it was HALF ENSLAVED and HALF FREE. W. W. ROYSTER.

The Future of the Negro in Politics.

THIS would be a difficult question to answer if it related solely to my own race. It is much more difficult when it relates to the affairs of another race. The salvation of a race depends so fundamentally upon experience, upon test and trial, that general advice from the outside is ordinarily not very practical advice. It is difficult for us to see under such circumstances as others see.

If you mean practical politics, seeking office and political place, I would say that such things should be an incident in the Negro's struggle for success and by no means a dominant or controlling factor in his life. If you mean acquainting one's self with the duties and obligations of citizenship, familiarizing himself with the great precepts of liberty and his own rights and guarantees under the Constitution, these things should at all times engage his earnest attention and study.

But I have always felt that the path of success for the Negro is through the economic field. In proportion as he makes himself a real factor in our industrial life will he succeed, both economically and politically. By advancement in education, by the acquisition of property, by securing those things which make for independence and self-reliance, which demonstrate his capacity for self help, he also wins in politics, or political affairs. Without these he is more or less the plaything, or pawn, of party strategy.

The Negro should have his rights and guarantees under the Constitution. They should be fully protected. But the best guarantee of this is his strength and his position in the industrial world.

Wm E Beecher

The People of the United States has begun to recognize that their political power is curtailed by organized capital in industry and that in this industry, democracy does not prevail.

existence.
"There is no reason that I can see,"
said Mr. Ethridge, "why the 7,000,000
unemployed persons in this country,
and the 28,000,000 dependent upon
them, should feel any great, heart-
throbbing loyalty to a system that has
deprived them of work when they
wanted to work; that drives them to
breadlines instead of pay windows to
obtain food; that puts them on public
charity instead of at the lathe; that
degrades and humiliates honest, will-
ing workers and sends them out to
beg.

Unemployment Permanent

"The depression is not responsible
for all our unemployment," ~~continued~~
Mr. Ethridge. "Permanent unem-
ployment has been growing in this
country for ten years, with the im-
provement of the machine and the re-
fusal of industry to do anything for
the workers the machine has thrown
out of employment.

"Capitalism has resisted shorter
work hours and is now fighting the
five-day week. The President of the
United States had to swing the club
of moral suasion over the Steel Trust
to make it abandon the 12-hour day.
Capitalism has tried to preserve prof-
its while making the wage earner
carry the burden of hard times.

"American capitalism has the
greatest genius for production of
wealth; but it has made a monu-
mental and disgraceful failure of
distribution.

Concentration of Wealth

"It has centered 45 per cent of the
corporate wealth of the country in
the hands of 2,000 directors of the 200
largest corporations. It has brought
a condition in which 1 per cent of
the people own 90 per cent of the
wealth.

"It has produced breadlines in the
richest country on earth, a country
that holds 50 per cent of the gold of
the world in its vaults. In this coun-
try, people go hungry because there
is too much wheat; ragged because
there is too much cotton; homeless
because too many homes have been
built; penniless because too much
money lies idle in the banks."

It could be said, likewise, ~~Mr. Eth-
ridge declared~~, that capitalism had
produced the war which paralyzed the
world, that it had brought five na-
tions—Italy, Spain, Germany, Russia
and England—to, or over, the verge
of economic collapse.

Congress a Battleground

"The coming session of Congress
and the campaign of next year will be
the bloody ground upon which will
be fought out the battle between op-
posing economic ideas in America,"
~~Mr. Ethridge asserted.~~

~~He said~~ that it is not at all im-
probable that the country will adopt
a program "that has for its purpose
the restoration to the 99 per cent of
the American people the capacity to
remake their own destiny, break down
evil monopolies, decentralize wealth
and power, and equalize opportunities.

"The capitalism of Mark Hanna
and Jim Fiske and Jay Gould and
the elder Morgan and Andrew
Carnegie and Jim Hill and John
D. Rockefeller—that capitalism
which ruthlessly exploited and
openly robbed the people—was
only a passing phase, a phase that
belonged to raw, pioneering days,
and has no place in present civil-
ization.

Must Clean House

"Those who complain of regulatory
laws should remember that the abuses
of capital produced all these laws.

"The purchase of legislatures by
railroads was responsible for the di-
rect election of senators. The fraudu-
lent flotation of worthless securities
produced the railway commission, fa-
vortism in transportation produced
the Interstate Commerce Commission,
growth of monopolies produced the
anti-trust laws—which have been as-
siduously disregarded.

"Unless capitalism cleans house,
purifies and shrives its soul, sets its
foot upon a new path, demonstrates
its right to live as an economic sys-
tem, it will be so badly mangled this
winter and in succeeding sessions of
Congress and the state legislatures
that even Midas, whose touch was
gold, will not recognize the features
of his child."