

BOB'S STATE GIVES LABOR POOR WAGES

Progressivism Proves Delusion for Toilers

By JAY LOVESTONE.
(Seventh Article.)

For years the liberals, social reformers, and purifiers of capitalism have held up Wisconsin as the outstanding experiment in American pure democracy.

Today Senator LaFollette points with pride to his achievements in Wisconsin, his "Model Commonwealth." He is fighting to win the presidency in order to extend the progressivism and blessings of his heralded "Wisconsin Plan."

But Wisconsin's "pure" democracy and "genuine" progressivism have failed dismally in doing away with the suffering and hardships of the working men and poor farmers.

Wisconsin's workers are amongst the worst underpaid in the country. Here the workers suffer from long hours more than in most of the other states. The Badger state is one of the most powerful strongholds of the open shop movement. Here, where LaFollette is the uncrowned king, the trade union movement is very weak.

Low Wages and Long Hours.

If working conditions are to be accepted as a sound criterion of genuine progressivism, then LaFollette's Wisconsin experiment is a sham and a delusion to the laboring masses.

According to the findings of the latest 1919 census of manufacturers, the average monthly cost of labor, or wage per month, in the manufacturing industries in the United States is \$96.50. But Wisconsin falls well below this average wage for the country as a whole, with an average monthly wage of only \$91.69. Thus

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Wisconsin holds the unenviable twenty-ninth place in the ranks of the monthly wages paid the working men of the various states.

This low wage is significantly painful when one realizes that it is in no way due to a lack of industrial development. In Wisconsin 92.6 per cent of the workers engaged in manufacturing industries are employed by corporations. Wisconsin ranks fourth in the United States in the proportion of workers employed in manufacturing industries owned by corporations, but ranks only twenty-ninth in the average monthly wage paid to these working men.

Since this investigation was made Wisconsin wages have declined sharply. For all industries, according to the April, 1924, United States Monthly Labor Review, the average weekly wage in the Badger state was \$26.87 in December, 1920. Today, according to the June Report of the Wisconsin State Industrial Commission, the average weekly wage for all workers is only \$23.93.

While the wages are low, the hours of labor are long in Wisconsin. For the United States as a whole the proportion of wage-workers in the manufacturing industries having forty-eight hours or less of labor per week is 48.6 per cent. But in LaFollette's "Model Commonwealth," only 31.3 per cent of the workers engaged in the manufacturing industries have a forty-eight hour week or the average eight-hour day. The tenth in the number of men engaged in the manufacturing industries of the country, Wisconsin ranks only thirty-ninth in the proportion of its workers in these industries laboring forty-eight hours a week or under.

Cost of Living Mounting.

With all the smoke raised by LaFollette and his forces about trust-busting and monopoly-stifling, the cost of living has been rising in Wisconsin as steadily as elsewhere.

Taking July, 1914, as a base of one hundred, as the normal point, the Industrial Commission of Wisconsin has found the cost of living to have risen in the state at least \$1.7 per cent on July 1, 1924.

And the April, 1924, United States Monthly Labor Review tells us that Milwaukee, Wisconsin's leading city, is among the six highest cities in the increased retail cost of food. In February, 1924, thirty-three cities ranked lower than Milwaukee in the rise of the cost of living since 1913.

Open Shop Movement Powerful.

Wisconsin is one of the banner states of the open shop movement of the country. Let us consult the secret minutes of the regular quarterly meeting of the Milwaukee Employers' Council, held on June 8, 1921, to get an idea of the extent of this anti-labor crusade. We quote verbatim:

"The Milwaukee Employers' Council is at present composed of twenty-eight industrial groups, representing a total of six hundred and sixty-two plants and approximately sixty thousand employees on wages.

"... All the principal industries are represented and we are organizing new groups every month. At present the council represents

INDIANA LA FOLLITES WILL VOTE IN STATE FOR OLD PARTY TICKETS

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind., Aug. 21.—LaFollette Progressive Party in Indiana will steer clear of the state issues and conduct a "purely LaFollette-Wheeler campaign," according to the Wisconsin senator's chiefs attending the state convention of third party delegates here today.

A. F. Bentley, of Paoli, state chairman of the Indiana Progressive Action League, who presided at the opening session of the convention, declared LaFollette-Wheeler men would "vote in the state election on their old party affiliations."

considerably more than half of Milwaukee's industrial strength.

"The object of the council is the establishment and maintenance of the open shop in the Milwaukee industrial district.

"Members of council groups receiving this report, who may know of other open shop employers not yet members of a council group, will confer a favor by notifying the proper delegate or the undersigned.

"J. M. Bell, Secretary Manager."

This report goes on to boast of the Milwaukee Council having membership in the notorious national open shop organization, the League for Industrial Rights, and of playing an active part in the fight against the job printers for a forty-four hour week and in the strikes of the tailors and sheet metal workers.

Turning to the May, 1924, "Members' Supplement—Freedom in Employment" published monthly by the Milwaukee Employers' Council, we further find that: "The printing industry is now overwhelmingly open shop in Milwaukee, and in due course we expect to see the allied photo-engraving and electrotyping industries follow suit. We shall not rest until this is accomplished."

This same bulletin then, speaking for the anti-union employers, announces: "In Milwaukee we actually have a large proportion of open shop in building construction; perhaps sixty-five per cent; but we have a timidity, a lack of principle, a disregard for the public welfare and a general apathy to overcome in certain groups of our business men, in order to increase this percentage and put this great industry on the same basis with our other great industries."

And in its June, 1924, supplement the Milwaukee Employers' Council proudly declares: "The Milwaukee Branch, National Metal Trades Association, is apparently leading the country in its apprenticeship work. We are so informed at least, by George W. Jones of the open shop Review, who spent a week in Milwaukee in May.

"This kind of work is of the utmost importance to the open shop. Other industries are greatly in need of such work—notably the building industry, which in Milwaukee must soon do something constructive, either in minor apprenticeship work or in adult intensive training. The

apprentice movement in the metal trades should help other movements to get started."

Smashing the Unions.

The terrific drive these open shoppers have been waging against the workers was roundly denounced by the State Federation of Labor in its 1923 convention in a special resolution from which we produce in part:

"The railroad owners have set out to wreck the shop crafts unions by organizing scab unions or so-called company associations of employees, and are endeavoring to compel all shop crafts workers to join these scab unions, by threatening discharge and visiting other punishment upon the workers for failing to join these scab unions, and

"Whereas, the Great Northern, Northern Pacific and Soo Railways in Wisconsin are at present engaged in this insidious plan now, therefore, be it

"Resolved, that the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor hereby serves notice upon the railroad owners that the visitation upon the workers of these unfair and outrageous conditions will not be tolerated."

Private detective agencies do a flourishing business in Wisconsin strike breaking. Mr. L. B. Lamfrom, who was counsel for the Milwaukee Employers' organization at the height of its offensive against the workingmen in 1921, was at the same time also the attorney for the infamous Russell Detective Agency.

Testifying before the Milwaukee Fire and Police Commissioner on October 17, 1921, Walter G. Russell, the head of this scab-herding agency stated that his firm now employs twelve hundred detectives, and answering the question as to what line of work these agents do, said: "If you ask, do we do strike work, yes. Do we put men in factories to report information to the heads of firms? I would say yes. Do we have men in unions? Yes."

Allied With Open Shoppers.

Not only do the enemies of the workers meet with no opposition from the progressive LaFollette government in Wisconsin, but this government covertly and overtly aids and abets their anti-labor activities.

Describing the proceedings of the State Federation of Labor Convention, the Milwaukee Sentinel for July, 22, 1920, said: "Administrative bodies were flayed for alleged failure to prosecute employers who, labor says, violate the provision compelling the advertisement of the fact that a strike is in progress when labor is imported to fill strikers' places."

At its 1921 convention the State Federation of Labor was forced to protest against open shop construction in the erection of high schools. The special resolution against this policy of the government read:

"Whereas the carpenters of the Fox River Valley District Council consisting of those cities from Fond du Lac to Green Bay, inclusive, have been on strike since the first of May, fighting against the so-called 'Open Shop' which the contractors are endeavoring to impose upon them, and

"Whereas, the Ludolph M. Hanson Construction Company, one of the largest contracting firms of the Fox River Valley, trying to force the so-

called 'Open Shop' on the carpenters, is building a \$450,000 high school in the city of Two Rivers; therefore, be it

"Resolved, that the State Federation of Labor here in convention assembled appoint a committee of three . . . to visit the high school job in Two Rivers as soon as possible to use their influence to persuade the above firm to use fair labor on their construction work."

Trade Union Movement Weak.

Since LaFollette has for years been posing as a defender of the interests of the workers, it would be in order to expect a strong trade union movement in the state where his word is law. Nothing of the sort is the case. The Wisconsin trade union movement, tho on many occasions showing hopeful signs of militancy and genuine progressivism, is lamentably weak in numbers and strength to resist the aggression of the highly organized open shoppers of the state.

From its official 1920 convention proceedings we learned that in the year 1919-1920, before the fierce open shop drive was launched, the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor had a total affiliated membership of only 51,645. Of these a maximum of 30,977 were employed in the manufacturing industries of the state. At this time, there were, according to the findings of the United States Census of Manufacturers, 263,949 wage earners employed in the manufacturing industries of Wisconsin. Compare these figures with the fact that the Milwaukee Employers' Council alone represented sixty thousand or more than half of the industrial strength of the leading industrial city in the state.

Of course, even this strength of the trade unions was reduced by the vicious open shop drive of 1921, as can be seen from the following report on membership made to the 1922 convention of the State Federation of Labor:

"The affiliated unions show a decrease of but sixteen per cent in membership at the close of the year, as compared with the same months of the previous year. . . .

"The fiscal year has closed with many unpleasant memories to the workers and their families due to unemployment and the desperate efforts of capital to annihilate their organizations. . . .

How helpless the Wisconsin workers are despite their heroic resistance, before the open shoppers of LaFollette's state is thus vividly described as follows in "The Next Step—A Program of Construction, Proposed by the Wisconsin State Federation of Labor, J. J. Handley, Secretary-Treasurer: (Page 4)

"Employees who have been prominent in union activities are being discharged all over the state, not because there is no work for them, but in order that the employers may put into their places workers from other cities. The dismissed employees, in their turn, must leave their homes and families and go on to other cities at great expense to themselves and at the risk of increasing the unemployment of these cities."

This is the freedom enjoyed by the workers in LaFollette's "Model Commonwealth."