

Address to be delivered by Honorable John E. Fogarty, Member of Congress from the Second Rhode Island Congressional District, at the Knights of Columbus Forum, St. Paul's Auditorium, Edgewood, Rhode Island, on Thursday evening, April 5, 1945.

One of the big difficulties under which our civilian economy labors, in war-time as well as in normal times, is the apparent belief, or idea, or conception - call it what you will - that the term Labor Dispute signifies a battle between capital and labor, or management and employees. Because this idea is entertained by so many, including many in the ranks of management, the average person thinks he must line himself up on one side or the other, and each side is encouraged to fight it out to the bitter end. This, in my opinion, is the conception that breeds much of the bitterness that we frequently find surrounding so-called Labor Disputes.

The fact is that there is a third party in all these differences between Labor and Management. That third party is the general public. Every citizen has a stake in every labor dispute. Both Labor and Management have responsibilities to the public, in addition to the specific responsibilities which a Union owes to its members, and Management owes to the stockholders of the corporation.

That responsibility, to my way of thinking, is two-fold. One phase is that which is generally understood -- to cooperate with Government and Management in the promotion of a stable economy. The other, and less willingly conceded responsibility of labor, is that of making a definite contribution to the betterment of the community by its support of a better standard of living. I use the term "standard of living" because it is one readily grasped. Economists call it by many names. My thought on the subject is just this -- those who work for a living are by and large the mainstay of the community. Their toil produces the medium of exchange by virtue of which merchants, public servants, professional people, and all members of the community are enabled to carry on their every-day existence. We all know that when wages fall off, the merchant, the professional man, and everyone in the community suffers. By devoting its efforts to the betterment of the condition of its members, the Labor Union is making a definite contribu-

tion to the life of the community. That isn't limited solely to matters of wages. It involves various concepts of Social Security, Education, Americanism, and other phases of the citizen's life. An example is the growing public interest in Government. I know there is a lot of criticism of union activities at election times. Personally, I think it's a good thing. You might say, I should think so because I have benefited by it, but the point I make is this. We live under a Democratic system. That system is founded on government by the governed. If a Union can arouse an interest among the governed, so that they'll insist on good government or throw their elected representatives out, then, regardless of how it's criticized, that activity of the union is a definite contribution to the welfare of the citizens of the State and Nation.

Strikes are generally condemned, I know. That is particularly true in time of war. I have to admit there are times when one's sense of justice and tolerance is stretched to the breaking point. However, we should be ready to admit that while there are responsibilities on labor, there are also rights. You can't have responsibilities without rights, any more than you can have the reverse. The members of Labor Unions are human. They are not articles of commerce, nor are they mere machines. They have to take a week's pay home, and they have to try to stretch that pay over the cost of the goods they must acquire in order to feed and clothe a family. In addition, that week's pay has to provide a little surplus for insurance, for the education of their children, for medical and dental care. If there is any left over, it usually goes into a little pool with the hope that it can be built into a sum sufficient to make the down payment on a home.

Those desires are only natural. They spring from the very nature God gave us. And every man who works for a living has an inalienable right to entertain those desires and to do everything humanly and legally possible to bring about their accomplishment.

Seldom, if ever, does anyone argue with the right to entertain those desires. But the moment the members of a labor union assert their right to take positive action to force from management some concession which will make some one or all of those desires

attainable, then in many quarters there is a beating of the drums and a cry that labor is resorting to un-American activities in order to persecute management.

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