

Address delivered by Hon. John E. Fogarty, MC at the 46th Annual Convention of the Rhode Island State Branch of the American Federation of Labor, Sunday, October 27, 1946 at the Narragansett Hotel, Providence, R.I.

A beautiful thing to behold - is the calm, untroubled arrogance with which the age-old enemies of trade unions can palm off their economic nonsense through the columns of the daily press, and from the public platforms made readily available in this election year.

*some* Loudly protesting their belief in the right of men to organize - newspaper columnists and *some* radio commentators proclaim their regret that our organizations function, and every discordant note in the economic theme is attributed to Labor.

Beautiful it is because of its smoothness and its regularity - but evil it is too, because it is a deliberate attempt to woo the working men and women away from the job of protecting and maintaining their best interests.

We tread on thin ice *these* days - and it would be well if these counselors devoted half their *time* to an appeal for cooperation of all Americans so that we can work out our problems with the least possible delay.

We move in an economy on the very fringe of run-away inflation. We pay more for every article we buy - than the price our intelligence indicates is its true worth, and during all this time the daily press keeps up its steady drone - all that is wrong is the fault of Labor.

We struggle constantly against what we fear is a steadily rising price scale, and while we struggle we hope - hope that prices will not get beyond our reach. But we are told daily that this danger came about because of our inordinate greed.

I think the inflation we are experiencing is not a mere phenomenon.

It is not a necessary development resulting from the transition from war to peace. It is a cloud no bigger than a man's hand which threatens a rebirth of the economic ills against which Labor Unions - and every single working man in the Nation - organized and unorganized - has been struggling for generations.

I believe honestly and sincerely that as the present inflationary period spirals upward, there are those who see in it a weapon, ready at hand, with which Labor Unions can be weakened and their weight in National councils brought to naught.

Why else is there the constant complaint that Labor Unions are the root of all evil?

The Record discloses two things which should be of interest to the objective observer. First, the Nation's attitude toward industry in the reconversion period, and secondly the National attitude toward Labor during the same period.

We had an opportunity to shift gears in an orderly fashion. We had a chance to do this without making the average family suffer. That chance was smashed - and by whom? By those who deliberately and with cool calm judgment sought only the return, at the earliest possible moment, of the system of profit for profit's sake - regardless of its effect on the average American family.

There was the firm belief that - with the ending of the war - all Americans could continue to march along, with hands and hearts joined in a common effort to reach the common goal. In a spirit of cooperation, Members of Congress strove to promote the security of industry in the transition period. Every possible safeguard was provided to make sure the manu-

facturer would not suffer the loss of a dollar when his war contracts were cancelled. Congress provided means for speeding up payments and provided a method of taking care of manufacturer's inventories of materials valuable only for war goods. Congress provided a guarantee of profits during re-conversion of machinery and plants. We had the kick-back which turned paper losses into actual profits for Industry.

Congress did these things - not in a generous mood - but in a unanimous spirit of cooperation - because many of us felt we were all in this thing together.

But what was Labor's share in this cooperative venture? Over-time pay was done away with. Hours of work were reduced to forty a week. Some of us pleaded that wages should remain high - not high enough to enable a family man to live in plush - but high enough to enable him to have at least a fighting chance to meet the prices which prevailed at the time the war closed.

That was but a recommendation - and what happened? What was the attitude of the great system of private enterprise - what was the attitude of industry - the life-blood of our economy? That attitude was plain and simple - *you would* ~~you would~~ get a square deal".

The government of these United States is endeavoring to inspire a respect for the Democratic system. We seek to inspire the unfortunate peoples of the world with a hope that they may enjoy the fruits of Democracy. We strive to have them work and vote for a system akin to ours - because we believe it is the best yet devised for the government of man - a creature of God who is social by nature.

And what example do we offer them?

The working men and women of our country make but one request of

their government. They plead for security.

Security is not merely a job at a living wage. It is a job at a wage which will permit the individual to enjoy some of the fruits of the democracy which laborers helped to build.

It is not merely a life spent at gainful toil. It is a life secure in the knowledge that something is being laid up for the day when a man no longer possesses the physical vigor to stand at the bench.

It is - in short - a life that is free from the fear of want and hunger. Free of the spectre of depressions and poverty. It is a life that is free of the fear of an old age spent in the unwilling, or at best charitable, quarters of relatives or the unenthusiastic quarters of a public institution for charity.

Every economic ill is now laid at our door. Every threat to our economy is presented as an evil arising in the demands of labor. Without unions we could succeed - we are told - with them we will surely fail. That is the response to the square deal labor sought in this reconversion period.

I'll take MY stand by the side of the men and women I know - and I'll proclaim again, as I have so often, that these people - the ordinary men and women of our State and Nation - make up the greatest and most fervent safeguard for our Democratic system.

A little while ago some of us proposed and fought for a program intended to guarantee Full Employment. I remember well we were laughed at. Our plan was described as visionary and impossible of performance.

I ask you people who may be listening to the radio - in all sincerity - although you may not be enthusiastic supporters of the trade union movement -

What is wrong with Full Employment?

Next to the age-old enemy of war, nothing brings upon modern civilized society so much suffering and devastation as does the paralysis of all business that strikes nations periodically under the familiar name of depression.

Depression has been one of the ills that has been peculiar to highly organized industrial life. It is the successor of famine - which man's ingenuity has worked to eradicate in every part of the world.

Its chief product is unemployment. The idleness of millions of men stops production, destroys values, creates government upheavals, shakes the foundations of man's faith in government, and invites desperate and dangerous men to prescribe cures and panaceas.

You've heard, just as I have heard, many men who sincerely oppose any inroads by communism or fascism. But you remember this - and I say this without fear of contradiction - unemployment and the unrest which resulted therefrom was the direct cause of the rise of Hitler and his Nazi philosophy.

Hitler presumably is dead. His philosophy is destroyed. But there is little, if any, difference basically between Nazism and Communism. Both are denials of man's faith in God - both are denials of the dignity of the individual man. Both are meat upon which desperate men feed. Idleness will provide fertile soil for the evil doctrines of either, and the best way to defeat communism in the United States is to make democracy function for the good of all its citizens.

It is not enough to promote wealth under the guise of guaranteeing the permanence of the profit motive in private industry; - and consider this fact - when Laborers were being condemned because they asked another ten

cents an hour, big business, already protected by the rebates on excess profits - was insisting, not on the same dollar profit - but on the same percentage of profit as before the war.

Not only did they collect from the consumer the total amount of any raise given to an employee - but a percentage of profit on that raise - and a percentage of profit on each of several dodges which were devised to boost the price of every article sold.

There is more to life than profit for its own sake - and when this Government denies the importance of its individual citizens - when Government refuses to acknowledge its responsibility to work for the security of its citizens - then it might as well fold its tents - because it will have ceased to be a Government whose purpose is the promotion of the general welfare.

There was a great deal of to-do about the money which labor made during the war. The returning veterans who were fed up to here with reports of gold in the streets have found out how much money there is at their old trade. But the record discloses some money was made.

I remember reading a report of the Federal Reserve System's Board of Governors. It pointed out that savings increased from Forty Billion Dollars in 1939 to a Hundred and Thirty Billions of Dollars at the beginning of this year. But did the greedy labor unions get that bundle? No - they did not. Better than sixty percent of it - better than 78 Billions - went to the richest ten percent in the country - and the poorest forty percent had about one percent of the savings, or about forty dollars a family.

In spite of these facts - the evidence points to a deliberate attempt to make Labor Unions look bad.

I dare say there is even the hope that some labor unions will turn in desperation to improper elements who offer the promise of victory - or will, in disgust, permit these un-American elements to take over and dominate.

This we must never permit - no matter what the temptations, no matter how tough may seem the battle.

We have been blamed - we will continue to be blamed for all our country's economic ills. I expect such blame myself, because I am one of you. But I welcome it because I am confident that in our strength lies the greatest force for good there is in the land.

Because of our strength we owe a duty to society to see to it that we expend our efforts for the common good. Under our democratic system we have accomplished a great deal. Soberly and aggressively we can accomplish more if we refuse to be scared off our course.

If we preserve our sense of balance, despite the vicious criticism of our efforts, we shall convince all thinking Americans that we are right. Our detractors will fail - and we shall win to our standard - the support of an aggressive public opinion.