

SPEECH DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES APRIL 16, 1947
DURING DEBATE ON HR3020 (Hartley Labor Bill) --JOHN E. FOGARTY, MC

One of the expressions we have heard repeated over and over again in recent years is to the effect that people all over the world look to the United States of America to see what kind of leadership we will afford to a world which is crying for a helping hand.

During the years of the war we heard the declaration that we were civilization's sole hope. We lived up to every expectation and in effect answered every prayer.

After the war we answered the pleas of starving millions with food, money and clothing. We demonstrated our sincere interest in the promotion of peace and freedom for all peoples.

We believe sincerely now that little people everywhere look to this land as the outstanding example of democracy in action - and if people looked to us for inspiration and leadership in other years - their eyes are turned this way today.

If our conduct was instrumental in inspiring the people of other lands - in the conduct of war and the working for peace - then just as emphatically is it certain that our conduct in the field of economics and social justice will set the pattern to be followed by those whom we influence in other areas of the world.

What this Congress does today to the working men and women of this Republic - will demonstrate in the clearest of all possible manners the attitude of this Congress toward those who toil to produce the industrial wealth of the Nation.

The measure which this Congress has for consideration - the measure which is labeled "Labor Legislation" is a step backward. It is a deliberate attempt to blot out the social progress which has been achieved by the

average American during the past fifty years.

I know its natural for the proponents of any measure to label a proposition with fancy title and surround it with high-sounding phrases, but there is a limit beyond which common decency cannot be stretched.

In hypocritical fashion this bill is tagged as one to relieve the American worker from a tyranny more despotic than one could think possible in a free country.

This the label that is attached to the measure which is the first step back along the road to a decadent social era when man and women who worked in mills and factories were looked upon as no more than chattels and serfs and were subjected to abuse and ridicule while industrialists grew fat and sleek on the profits created by the men and women who toiled in their sweat-shops.

This is a bill to relieve the American worker from the despots who brought them organization and made it possible for them to speak out against the foul and vicious conduct of management in the days before trade unions became a fact on the American industrial scene.

This is a bill to free the American worker from the tyrants who did away with the dawn to dark slave factories - the company store - the run down hovels where mill workers were forced to live - the slave wages which provided no more than enough to keep bread on the table and condemned children to work at the looms and machines at ten and twelve years of age.

Oh!. What hypocrisy!

It was trade unions that made the American worker free in fact - rather than in fancy. It was the labor union which freed the American worker from the tyranny of the anti-labor injunction which made it impossible for that worker to speak out against inhuman working conditions, to band together

for the betterment of his own and his families economic lot in life, to hope to live as a decent member of society - to own his own home - educate his children and look forward to an old age free of the constant fear of poverty and hunger.

This the labor union did for the American working man and woman and you can chant your fancy phrases from now till dooms day - but there is no one better aware of what labor Unions have accomplished for our society than the American working man himself.

He knows what his lot was before the advent of trade unions and he has a pretty good idea what it will be again - if measures like this succeed in finding their way onto the statute books of the nation.

Labor has but one weapon in his constant fight for a decent share of the fruits of his toil - it is the strike. The right to strike is fundamental and is guaranteed to the American worker by the Constitution which this Congress is sworn to uphold. Yet, with tongue in cheek you would restore in one fell swoop the most evil chapter in the story of industrial relations by placing the hated anti-labor injunction in the hands of industrialist who will not hesitate to use it to pin back the ears of any man who will dare to speak out against injustice in a factory or shop.

You say these men and women shouldn't strike - they should bargain and bargain and bargain interminably - all the while prices climb and climb and the struggle for food and clothing becomes more and more desperate.

The men who propose this measure now - promised a few months ago that they could reduce prices and promote prosperity if they could rid the country of price controls.

As hated as these controls were they at least guaranteed that the average American family would get enough to eat.

The controls were removed and the law of supply and demand commenced its functioning - but although months have passed it is still all demand and no supply.

I shudder to think of the men and women in my district who work in the mills for 90 cents an hour - some 83 cents an hour - and have to provide a home and clothes and food and medical care for a family with four or six children.

Everyone recognizes the serious condition which prevails - but does this Congress address itself to an attempt to restore prices to a sane level. No, quite the contrary. It solemnly and cold-bloodedly tells the American worker - you shall not make any attempt to increase your wages. It tells the American worker - whom it now professes to free from tyranny and despotism - that he - he alone is responsible for the plight in which he finds himself. He is responsible for high prices and little food - but never a word is said about the fattest profit picture in the history of the country.

Some of our papers direct their vicious criticism against this oppressed American worker because he has struggled to get a few more cents with which to make an effort to make ends meet. But never a line do they write in criticism of the selfish greed of the profit seekers whose goal is all the traffic will bear.

The proponents of this bill profess to believe that big unions are detrimental to our industrial life - and through this measure they have set out to break the unions - except - more pious language - for neighborhood groups.

The effect will not be to restore industrial order - but to produce chaos. The bill professes to abolish the closed shop and put an end to

industry wide bargaining. Actually, what it endeavors to do is break Labor unions now in existence into small segments which can be taken on piece-meal and destroyed. The proposal is but the fore-runner of a wave of so-called company unions and the yellow dog contract given the blessings of the Congress of the United States.

But, while this move goes forward with vigor and determination, not a sound is heard in criticism of the constant growth of monopoly in this country - much of that growth fostered by the millions which this Government pumped into the industrial machinery during the war years. Big business alone is in a position to take advantage of the gigantic construction program, the research and development that went into the industrial set-up to produce the badly needed material of war.

This government provided all sorts of aid and incentive to industry during the war and provided tax refunds and other aids after the war.

Yet this Congress smilingly overlooks the growth of monopoly in business but violently objects to the growth of labor unions - growth which has been made possible solely by the desire of the men and women in the shops to be represented at the bargaining table by effective and intelligent agents.

Just a few days ago this house labored over an appropriation bill which was to provide the funds for the operations of the Department of Labor. A great many pages were filled with words of economy. The Labor Department was to be curtailed in its operations - and running through all those pages is the same theme - the Labor Department was under attack because it was pro-labor. What a commentary on the great American love of Democracy.

A Cabinet post is to be reduced to impotency - all because its people have the intestinal fortitude to speak out occasionally in behalf of the rank

and file American.

Now the Department of Labor is to be smashed at again. One of its chief functions is to be made an independent agency. Why - there can be but one answer - as presently set up the National Labor Relations Board is pro-labor. Why is their a curse on being pro-labor? What is wrong about raising a voice in behalf of Americans? Don't these men and women pull their share of the load? Haven't they a right to expect that some branch of this Federal system will seek to protect their interests?

Then, what is to be the attitude of the new independent agency proposed? You say it is not to be anti-labor, it is to be fair and impartial. I deny that. How can you say fair and impartial when you arm it, as you do here, with all the machinery for anti-labor injunctions, union busting mandates, company union guarantees and the rest of the provisos of this legislation? I say it is to be anti-labor and for that reason alone is it proposed.

This is not legislation for the common good - this is punishment because labor unions have grown so powerful. American workers now have a voice in the functioning of our industrial machinery and some industrialists resent this. They are determined that, at whatever the cost, these men and women must be returned to the position of humble and suppliant employees, glad to work for whatever pittance is awarded them.

This Congress, if it passes this measure, is lending its weight to that plan. This Congress is notifying the people of other lands - the people who look this way for leadership and inspiration - that Democracy is a great thing on paper - but it doesn't work out here in fact.

All Americans have a right to share in the great possibilities of this

great Nation. This legislation denies the members of labor unions a right to participate and drives them to the rear where they are expected to be seen and not heard.

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