

Address delivered by Honorable John E. Fogarty, Congressman from the Second Rhode Island District, at the Semi-annual Convention of the Rhode Island State Branch of the American Federation of Labor, held at the Hotel Viking, Newport, R. I. - Sunday March 20, 1949.

I am grateful for the privilege, as well as I am conscious of the honor which is mine in addressing this convention of the Rhode Island State Branch of the American Federation of Labor.

I have always felt that these conventions were the most important part of the year's activities for all Labor leaders. Here it is we have an opportunity to examine our conduct throughout the previous six months, and on the basis of the experience thus gained, to lay plans for our future operations.

I have met with you men and women on many occasions. I have attended many of these conventions; as a delegate taking active part in the proceedings, and in recent years, as your guest - as your Representative in Congress of <sup>the</sup> the United States.

I have always enjoyed being with you. Like you, I have looked forward to these gatherings. Like you, I anticipate hearing reports on the activities of various Locals - and learning at first hand your estimate of economic conditions based on the experience you have gathered in the actual contests being waged in the economic arena.

All of us have a great deal to learn from each other - and in that sense, I have felt each year, I should endeavor to bring to you a brief report, as it were, on the events taking place in your Nation's Capitol.

Every one of us is keenly aware of the efforts being expended today - by so-called champions of stability in industry - to prevent the repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act. Every one of us is most keenly aware of the determination on the part of organized labor to wipe from the books this legislation which

has become the embodiment of a deliberate insult to organized labor.

For myself, I can recall having a great deal of patience with men who expressed the belief that some provisions of Taft-Hartley were not harmful to labor unions. Not agreeing with them, but respecting their opinions, I listened to and sympathized with their views. However, since the convening of the 81st Congress, I have been forced to the conclusion that Taft-Hartley is not merely a legislative enactment, but it has become a shibboleth to the National Association of Manufacturers. To it they cling in desperation, it seems. It is evident, to me at least, that the enactment of this legislation represented the greatest success achieved by NAM in the legislative halls of Congress since prior to the inception of the New Deal. It has come to represent to them the stinging rebuke which NAM served up to organized Labor and they refuse to let it go from the scene.

Because of this mental attitude, the proponents of Taft-Hartley are not content to use normal processes of legislating for the country's welfare - they must insist on supporting every move - noble or reprehensible - which will delay action on the Taft-Hartley repeal.

They seize upon the conduct of any individual - whether or not he is typical of Labor generally - which will support their contention that Labor's interests are inimical to the general welfare.

Crying shame because of delays caused by a filibuster by one group of legislators, they solemnly promise a virtual filibuster to prevent the outright repeal of Taft-Hartley.

In the light of such performance this convention of the R. I. Branch of AFL becomes increasingly important. The convention of every Local and international takes on added significance. It is important to all to know that you

met here - that you are as one, in advocating the advancement and protection of the sacred rights of man which find their best expression in the trade union movement.

Millions are poured out to sell to the American public the idea that Labor and liberty are not synonymous - that Unions and Usefulness are impossible together - that organized Labor means nothing but Organized Goods and growls and grafters.

We know that this is not so - but it does little good for men and women like you to meet in convention and decry the savage attacks being made on your organizations. It is vital that you take some affirmative action to counteract the influence of those who dialike and would destroy trade unions.

Because all of us possess the usual human traits and characteristics, it sometimes seems to me that, in the heat and rush of our activity, we allow our sense of values to get somewhat out of focus. We concentrate our energies in criticizing others - in pointing to the moat in our opponent's eye - with scarcely a thought to advancing the good of which we are capable.

It is with this thought in mind - based upon my own experience in associating with you men and women and those whom you represent - that I make the suggestion that a great amount of good could be done - for our organizations and for the general welfare - if only the general public could in some fashion sample and come to understand the interest which labor unions have in the common good - and the desire for the betterment of the commonweal, which is the ultimate end of organized labor. I would recommend this leavening - this contact with working people in the every-day operations of their unions - to all those who would influence labor legislation, or who would promote measures seeking industrial, social and economic stability.

Such contact, such experience, would demonstrate clearly that the ends of Labor and the ends of a happier and more prosperous America are one and the same. Labor, despite malicious diatribes to the contrary, seeks no personal advancement - but seeks, through the betterment of the lot of its members, the betterment of the lot of all Americans. Its interests are one and the same with progress and social justice and economic security.

I have had the great good fortune to sit in on the unfolding of a very vivid demonstration of the similarity between labor's ends and the common good. During recent weeks I have listened to the great of the land explain the terrific need for studies, research, construction, development, promotion - of all manner of means seeking the eradication of diseases which yearly sap our country's strength.

Many times it was brought home to me forcefully, that there was a genuine relationship between the advancement of the ends of Labor - and the promotion of the general welfare - in such fields as Social Security, Public Health, Public Assistance, and other related fields.

Some time ago - I am certain it was not per chance - some statesmen making alignments or groupings within the Appropriations Committee of the House of Representatives - established one sub-committee to attend to the needs of the Labor Department and the Federal Security Agency. I have the honor to be the Chairman of this sub-committee in the present Congress. The activities of this committee have convinced me that there is a genuine and intimate tie between the activities of these agencies.

During the 80th Congress - I think it is needless to point out to you - there was a concerted effort to emasculate the Labor Department and reduce it to a state where it would be ineffective. A great deal of progress was made toward this end. Vital functions of the Department were wrenched from its grasp -

and deposited in other places - where it was hoped time would gradually produce their exhaustion.

The present Congress, just a few days ago - approved the recommendations of our Committee and returned the Department of Labor to somewhere near its rightful stature in the Governmental set-up. I am not yet content. I know there is still much to be done. And I promise you, God willing, it shall be done.

Those who appeared before our committee pleading for a square deal for the Labor Department, were, aside from technical experts, the self-same persons who appeared before us - pleading for funds for the construction of clinics, hospitals, sanitarium, and research facilities in preventative medicine.

During the past two years, while I served on this committee, I was conscious of the great good which could be accomplished by a thorough understanding of the activities of both these vital Federal agencies; the Department of Labor and the Federal Security Agency.

During whatever time is allotted to me as your Representative in the Congress, I intend to take advantage of every opportunity to explain to every American, the important operations of these two departments.

I implore you to take this subject under serious consideration. While we explain the workings of the departments - why can't you, and other representatives of organized labor - undertake to demonstrate to all Americans the similarity between the objectives which are sought by labor unions and those who seek to promote the general welfare.

Labor seeks the security of all its members - by so doing it, of necessity contributes to the security of all Americans.

The promotion of the general welfare, demands peace of mind - as well as a strong and healthy body. It demands a freedom from fear of poverty and a

hungry and penniless old age. It demands careful and constant attention to the needs of all our people - and a determined and honest effort to provide for those needs.

All these things are intended when one says he studies to promote the general welfare. All these things are intended also - when one says he is loyal to Labor.

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