

that their work may be more valuable. By receiving the direct benefit of better wages, we shall be another and even a nobler result; it will be the subject of labor organizations, and bring their importance, and thus give these organizations their importance. It is not now necessary to discuss the perform arduous work. It has been asserted that a woman cannot do the hard work of the world, doing eight, ten, even sixteen hours a day, in the same time as a man. It is not thus proved her right to be admitted to all your attention to another fact which has been proved, that women *do* stand the test of an emergency in labor organizations know that when women maintain the position of the employed, they are even longer than men will. They have the same energy in trying positions; and with all the burden of work, even [if] they

that we believe that the working-men have more true womanhood than is to be found in men. It is to labor organizations that we look for our interests in the future.

plies to Working Women, 1883. From the *Journal of the Federation of Organized Trades and Unions of America and Canada Held in New York City, New York*, 19.

Labor Unions of the United States and their appeal: . . . civilized country on the face of the globe, are condemned to struggle for very existence by poverty and sex. Neither sentiment nor gain. The weaker become the prey of the stronger. The market is glutted, and keen competition drives down the lowest market price. The toil of our factory operatives is exploited by hard conditions. Thousands of tragedies are daily enacted. To want, and shame springs from social conditions. The labor movement to shield and protect those who are oppressed is the creed of the labor movement that the laborer should be more than a passive subject of his labor. It is further the creed that the amount of work should bring the same

price, whether performed by man or woman. In other words, that the value to the purchaser, not the necessity of the seller, should fix the standard of a day's wages.

In the carrying out of this belief there is needed the hearty co-operation of all interested parties. The working-women of the land should array themselves under the banner of united labor. It is the hope of the Federated Trades to assist in bringing about this much needed result. Those who desire to form labor societies will be supplied with all necessary information, by applying to the Secretary, and will be either furnished with an organizer or directed to the proper source from which to obtain one.

We solicit your correspondence, and pledge you our support.

Fraternally,

Legislative Committee Federated Trades.

Frank K. Foster Secretary

3.24 Trade Unions the "Only Hope of Civilization," 1893. From Samuel Gompers, "What Does Labor Want?" An address before the International Labor Congress, Aug. 28, 1893, reprinted in Stuart Kaufman, ed., *The Samuel Gompers Papers, Volume 3: Unrest and Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), pp. 388-96.

SAMUEL GOMPERS - 1893

An Address before the International Labor Congress
in Chicago [August 28, 1893]
WHAT DOES LABOR WANT?

Modern society, the most complex organization yet evolved by the human race, is based on one simple fact, the practical separation of the capitalistic class from the great mass of the industrious.

If this separation were only that resulting from a differentiation in the functions of directions of industrial operations and their execution in detail then that separation would be regarded as real, direct progress. But the separation between the capitalistic class and the laboring mass is not so much a difference in industrial rank as it is a difference in social status, placing the laborers in a position involving a degradation of mind and body.

This distinction, scarcely noticeable in the United States before the previous generation, rapidly became more and more marked, increasing day by day, until at length, it has widened into a veritable chasm; economic, social and moral. On each side of this seemingly impassable chasm, we see the hostile camps of rich and poor. On one side, a class in possession of all the tools and means of labor; on the other, an immense mass begging for the opportunity to labor. In the mansion, the soft notes betokening ease and security; in the tenement the stifled wail of drudgery and poverty. The arrogance of the rich ever mounting in proportion to the debasement of the poor.

From across the chasm we hear the old familiar drone of the priests of Mammon called "Political Economists." The words of the song they sing are stolen from the vocabulary of science, but the chant itself is the old barbaric lay. It tells us that the present absolute domination of wealth is the result of material and invariable laws and counsels the laborers, whom they regard as ignorant and misguided, to patiently submit to the natural operations of the immutable law of "supply and demand." The laborers reply. They say that the political economists never learned sufficient science to know the difference between the operation of a natural law and the law on petty larceny. The day is past when the laborers could be cajoled or humbugged by the sacred chickens of the augers or by the bogus laws of the political economists.

The laborers know that there are few historic facts capable of more complete demonstration than those showing when and how the capitalists gained possession of the tools and opportunities of labor. They know that the capitalists gained their industrial monopoly by the infamous abuse of arbitrary power on the part of royal and federal potentates. They know that by the exercise of this arbitrary power a well established system of industry was overthrown and absolute power was placed in the hands of the selfish incompetents. . . .

The laborers well know how baseless is the claim made by the political economists that the subsequent development of the capitalist class was spontaneous and natural, for they know that the capitalists not content with a monopoly of industry enabling them to increase the price of products at will and reduce the wages of labor to a bare subsistence also procured legislation forbidding the disfranchised and plundered workmen from organizing in their own defense.

The laborers will never forget that the coalition and conspiracy laws, directed by the capitalists against the journeymen who had sublime fidelity and heroic courage to defend their natural rights to organization, punished them with slavery, torture and death. In short, the laborers know that the capitalist class had its origin in force and fraud, that it has maintained and extended its brutal sway more or less directly through the agency of specified legislation, most ferocious and barbarous, but always in cynical disregard of all law save its own arbitrary will. . . .

The state of industrial anarchy produced by the capitalist system is first strongly illustrated in the existence of a class of wealthy social parasites; those who do no work, never did any work and never intend to work. This class of parasites devours incomes derived from many sources; from the stunted babies employed in the mills, mines and factories to the lessees of the gambling hells and the profits of fashionable brothels; from the lands which the labor of others has made valuable; from royalties on coal and other minerals beneath the surface and from rent of houses above the surface, the rent paying all cost of the houses many times over and the houses coming back to those who never paid for them. . . .

To-day modern society is beginning to regard the Trade Unions as the only hope of civilization; to regard them as the only power capable of

evolving order out of the social chaos. regarded or heeded before it is too late?] having a thorough knowledge of the capitalist class entertain no desire for revenge have deprecated the malevolent and unjust to contend in their protests and struggle ist system, yet while seeking justice have become acrid by the desire of revenge. T vative, their steps evolutionary.

One of the greatest impediments to a b of the devoted efforts of the Trade Un industrial relations, has been the pervert regarding their capital as essentially if not Trade Unions taking a more comprehensive capitals large and small, as the fruits of l inventions and institutions of many gener: theoreticians and practitioners, practically

What does labor want? It wants the ear is nothing too precious, there is nothing ennobling, unless it is within the scope a rations and wants. But to be more specific labor are first and foremost a reduction c hours to-day, fewer to-morrow. . . .

The prosperity of a nation, the success ence of our era, can always be measured power of a people.

If as it has often been said, cheap labor sary to a country's prosperity, commercial necessarily be at the height of civilization

Millions of willing heads, hands and fashion the fabrics and supply the necessities people. . . . The ordinary man may truly economist answers our demand for world and demand, from which they say there tions. Might we not say fails to regulate

The organized working men and women the world, declare that men, women and human hearts, should have a better co dormant things, usually known under the We maintain that it is both inhuman allow the members of the human family things that could and would contribute t as to the advantage of the entire people,

We demand a reduction of the hours share of work and wages to the reserve of the worst abuses of the industrial system and jails. . . .

hear the old familiar drone of the priests of economists." The words of the song they sing of science, but the chant itself is the old barren absolute domination of wealth is the laws and counsels the laborers, whom they ded, to patiently submit to the natural operation of "supply and demand." The laborers reply, economists never learned sufficient science to the operation of a natural law and the law on when the laborers could be cajoled or humiliated of the augers or by the bogus laws of the

There are few historic facts capable of more close showing when and how the capitalists and opportunities of labor. They know that industrial monopoly by the infamous abuse of royal and federal potentates. They know that they power a well established system of industry; power was placed in the hands of the selfish

Now baseless is the claim made by the political development of the capitalist class was that they know that the capitalists not content with enabling them to increase the price of prod- uces of labor to a bare subsistence also pro- duce the disfranchised and plundered workmen in defense.

Forget that the coalition and conspiracy laws, against the journeymen who had sublime fidelity to their natural rights to organization, punished them with death. In short, the laborers know that the law is in force and fraud, that it has maintained and increased or less directly through the agency of specious and barbarous, but always in cynical discretionary will. . . .

The anarchy produced by the capitalist system is first the existence of a class of wealthy social parasites; they did any work and never intend to work. This income is derived from many sources; from the profits of the mills, mines and factories to the lessees of the profits of fashionable brothels; from the lands has made valuable; from royalties on coal and surface and from rent of houses above the surface of the houses many times over and the houses never paid for them. . . .

They are beginning to regard the Trade Unions as the only power capable of

evolving order out of the social chaos. But will the Sibyl's demand be regarded or heeded before it is too late? Let us hope so. The Trade Unions having a thorough knowledge of the origin and development of the capitalist class entertain no desire for revenge or retaliation. The Trade Unions have deprecated the malevolent and unjust spirit with which they have had to contend in their protests and struggles against the abuse of the capitalist system, yet while seeking justice have not permitted their movement to become acrid by the desire of revenge. Their methods were always conservative, their steps evolutionary.

One of the greatest impediments to a better appreciation by the capitalists of the devoted efforts of the Trade Unions to establish harmony in the industrial relations, has been the perverted view taken by the capitalists in regarding their capital as essentially if not absolutely their own, whereas, the Trade Unions taking a more comprehensive and purer view, regard all capitals large and small, as the fruits of labor's economies and discoveries, inventions and institutions of many generations of laborers and capitalists, of theoreticians and practitioners, practically as indivisible as a living man. . . .

What does labor want? It wants the earth and the fullness thereof. There is nothing too precious, there is nothing too beautiful, too lofty, too ennobling, unless it is within the scope and comprehension of labor's aspirations and wants. But to be more specific: The expressed demands of labor are first and foremost a reduction of the hours of daily labor to eight hours to-day, fewer to-morrow. . . .

The prosperity of a nation, the success of a people, the civilizing influence of our era, can always be measured by the comparative consuming power of a people.

If as it has often been said, cheap labor and long hours of toil are necessary to a country's prosperity, commercially and industrially, China should necessarily be at the height of civilization.

Millions of willing heads, hands and hearts are ready to frame and to fashion the fabrics and supply the necessities as well as the desires of the people. . . . The ordinary man may truly inquire why it is that the political economist answers our demand for work by saying that the law of supply and demand, from which they say there is no relief, regulates these conditions. Might we not say fails to regulate them?

The organized working men and women, the producers of the wealth of the world, declare that men, women and children with human brains and human hearts, should have a better consideration than inanimate and dormant things, usually known under the euphonious title of "Property." We maintain that it is both inhuman, barbaric and retrogressive to allow the members of the human family to suffer for want, while the very things that could and would contribute to their wants and comforts as well as to the advantage of the entire people, are allowed to decay.

We demand a reduction of the hours of labor which would give a due share of work and wages to the reserve army of labor and eliminate many of the worst abuses of the industrial system now filling our poor houses and jails. . . .

Labor demands the right to organize for self and mutual protection. The toilers want the abrogation of all laws discriminating against them in the exercise of those functions which make our organizations in the economic struggle a factor and not a farce.

That the lives and limbs of the wage-workers shall be regarded as sacred as those of all others of our fellow human beings; that an injury or destruction of either by reason of negligence or maliciousness of another, shall not leave him without redress simply because he is a wage worker. We demand equality before the law, in fact as well as in theory. . . .

Render our lives while working as safe and healthful as modern science demonstrates it is possible. Give us better homes is just as potent a cry today as when Dickens voiced the yearnings of the people of a generation ago.

Save our children in their infancy from being forced into the maelstrom of wage slavery. See to it that they are not dwarfed in body and mind or brought to a premature death by early drudgery. Give them the sunshine of the school and playground instead of the factory, the mine and the workshop.

We want more school houses and less jails; more books and less arsenals; more learning and less vice; more constant work and less crime; more leisure and less greed; more justice and less revenge; in fact, more of the opportunities to cultivate our better natures, to make manhood more noble, womanhood more beautiful and childhood more happy and bright.

These in brief are the primary demands made by the Trade Unions in the name of labor.

3.25 Gompers on Collective Bargaining, 1913. Testimony before the U.S. Commission on Industrial Relations from the *Final report and testimony, submitted to Congress by the Commission on Industrial Relations* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), pp. 718-21.

Mr. Thompson: Mr Gompers, will you tell us your views of the advantage of collective bargaining to the employees in your own way?

Mr. Gompers: To give anything like an intelligent answer to that question it is necessary to call attention to the industrial conditions, the industrial development of the last half century. . . . For many years, that is to say, the last 50 years, and attenuated in the last 30 years, there has been going on a great development in industry and a concentration of industry under the directions of partnerships and companies and corporations and trusts, so that, in many of the great basic industries, they are under the control and direction of a few persons or companies. Then . . . the development of the industry in the form of new devices implements, tools machines, and so on, has caused the industries to become divided and subdivided and specialized. That is, the division and subdivision and the specialization of many of these large basic industries has gone on to the extent that we seldom find one man being a practical mechanic who has the mastery in the production of any one given whole article. . . .

As a consequence of these two things division and specialization and subdivision the workman now no longer owns the possessed and with which the worker can nothing to offer but his power to labor. To say that an individual workman can industrial plan is to beg the question a facts. . . . To say, for instance that an in gain for his labor power, for his employ Corporation better than can an organization men associated and in agreement making gain for the labor of themselves and in a I am trying to put it mildly. . . .

Those who have property may find themselves speaking for those who work, the great and I speak for some perhaps who would I will speak for them nevertheless. . . .

3.26 On the Formation of Women's Unions that women should organize separate locals. eds., *America's Working Women* (New York

THE TRADE UNIONS

The commonest complaint of all is that do not attend their meetings. It is indeed with, and the reasons for this poor attendance union affairs have to be fairly faced.

At first glance it seems curious that the posed of both men and girls, should have than meetings of their own sex only. But local affords none of the lively social intercourse or even of a class for instruction. The the meeting and often are the meeting. proportion to their numbers. It is they local shall meet and the hour at which n is therefore often over a saloon, to which object. Sometimes it is even in a disreputable that the meeting should begin shortly after need to go home and return, or have hours. They like meetings to be over early o'clock as the time of beginning, but I much before nine. Then, too, the men find to talk, and talk they do while they are in course, the girls are not interested in local