

Robert B. Wolf.* I am impressed with the need for clear definitions. To illustrate: We should be clear in our minds as to what we mean when we speak of a world which is abandoning competition for co-operation. Frankly, a world devoid of competition would not be very appealing to many of us, although I think we long for the day when we can substitute competition in gaining knowledge for competition in getting things. Tawney's "The Acquisitive Society" points out quite clearly where competition to get things is leading us; but it seems to me there is a vast field of competition in acquiring knowledge and gaining skill in the use of this knowledge, and the resultant wisdom that comes from skillful use of knowledge.

I believe that the one outstanding function of workers' organizations, but a function which they are often unable to exercise for lack of opportunity, is the accumulation and exchange of craft knowledge. Interest in a common mode of self-expression is the only real unifying force that has permanent drawing power. In other words, the workers' organizations should be primarily actuated by what Tawney calls "the functional motive," which is similar to that motive that brings men together into societies, such as the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, the Taylor Society, the American Bar Association, etc.

I do not mean by this that the workers' organizations should not look out for the economic welfare of their members, but I do mean that they will be much better able to do this if they can demonstrate that members of their organizations are more intelligent, skillful, and economical in the performance of their work than workers not members of craft unions. Work such as is now being done by the Printing Pressmen's Union, the Full Fashioned Hosiery Workers, and others, indicates very definitely that the ability to protect the economic interests of the workers is in proportion to the amount of service rendered by the workers' organizations.

I am inclined to agree with those who believe that management functions belong to management, and that the function of the labor unions is primarily to stimulate knowledge about working process methods so that they can assist management by suggesting improvements. Mr. Brown calls this "the critical function." Unfortunately, suggestions of this nature are too frequently looked upon as criticisms

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which place blame upon foremen and supervisors, who usually assume a defensive attitude which greatly nullifies the value of the suggestions.

A wise management, however, will spend much effort in an endeavor to get its supervisory group into an attitude of mind where individual and group suggestions from its working force will be welcomed.

Mr. Brown is right when he says that labor can be a great aid to industry. After all, no one knows as much about the job as the man who is doing it. He, being close to it, sees many things which can be improved. I believe that organizations where workers are constantly encouraged to exchange ideas greatly accelerate industrial progress. Perhaps one of the principal functions of labor organizations is to counsel with management as to how conditions can be created and maintained which will, at all times, encourage workers to think together in groups; for group thinking (because of the rapidity with which ideas are generated within the group) is essential to enable rapid progress to be made.

I should like to ask what is meant by "grouped employees." It seems to me that a company union, or a standard union formed along industrial lines, cannot really be considered a group. I think Miss Follett's description of a group as a number of individuals discussing or performing a particular function is to the point. Unless there is particular interest in a particular mode of expression, the group is not creative. This is the reason why the Federation of Labor idea has persisted so long—because it is made up, as I understand it, of something over one hundred craft unions. While some of them, such as the United Textile Workers, have the outward appearance of being industrial, they are in reality federations of crafts within a given industry—spinners, weavers, loom fixers, knitters, finishers, etc. Common interest in a common mode of work is probably the main cohesive force that holds these groups together. Strictly speaking, however, a national craft union is not a group. A local chapter of a craft union, dealing with a particular situation in a particular plant, is a group; and, as I conceive it, the real function of the national or international union is to encourage the exchange of ideas between groups in particular industrial localities, so as to accelerate progress in the particular craft or

profession. In the strict sense of the term, it seems to me, it is a mistake to say that labor organizations perform a social function. Their function is fundamentally vocational and this is their major purpose; and if management encourages their exercise of this function there will be little danger of their energies being misdirected into the field of state socialism, which, as Mr. Hoover so well pointed out, leads ultimately to bureaucracy.

I agree that management engineers should spend time in gaining knowledge of the labor movement and the ways in which workers' organizations can be made to function best. As I see it, management occupies an intermediate position between capital and labor. It must develop ways and means to enable these opposing forces to work together with the common interest of exploiting raw materials, instead of exploiting each other. If the primary motive of a labor organization is vocational, and its aim to accumulate knowledge or factual wealth, and if its further aim is the creation of conditions in industrial plants to permit the maximum use of this knowledge, management can have little quarrel with labor.

Furthermore, if open methods of accounting make visible the economies effected, the results of such economies are bound to be reflected in the pay envelope, to the mutual satisfaction of both owners and workers.

I agree also that "the day is probably not far distant when organized business and organized labor and a comprehensive government will unite for the intelligent team work that alone can solve our problem." I suppose, now that Mr. Hoover is elected, it will not be considered as injecting politics into the meeting when I state that my main reason for supporting him for the presidency is that I believe he, more than anyone else, understands how to bring about such intelligent team work.

The main problem, it seems to me, as Mr. Hoover has so well pointed out, is how to develop a national and state government which will stimulate industry to work out its own problems, and, therefore, to do the thing which most advances the welfare of all workers in industry, because it is the right thing to do and not because it is being coerced to do so by a form of governmental bureaucracy. Those who have spent sufficient time in Europe realize the failure of the attempt upon the part of

the state to coerce industry into doing things which it should do without coercion, and which industry would do if it realized that any other course is ultimately self-destructive.

I am using the word industry not in the limited sense of manufacturing alone, but as relating to all forms of co-operative human activity and including, in fact, those activities which are frequently classed as social.

It seems to me that the labor unions must begin to think qualitatively instead of laying so much stress upon mere numerical supremacy. If they do, there will be much less difficulty from jurisdiction fights, which are so objectionable to employers.

All forms of industrial unionism have the weakness of being motivated largely by the quantity—i.e., numerical—idea. It is only the craft union that tends to be motivated by quality ideals, for it alone has a common interest in the common motif in life. By craftsmanship I do not mean the old craftsmanship about which there is so much emotional discussion, for this old craftsmanship was largely mere manual dexterity. I refer to a newer craftsmanship, which requires greater knowledge because it finds expression in the intelligent use of power tools. I do not like the phrase "craft sectarianism," which is so frequently used.

I for one do not want to see labor go into politics in this country. We have been particularly free from such tendencies, although our communist labor leaders believe in the industrial union and are constantly advocating its adoption in place of craft unions. As long as the craft principle dominates the American Federation of Labor communism will not gain a foothold.

Perhaps those advocating the company union idea should consider very carefully the possible consequences if their plan for substituting the industrial form of workers' organization displaces the craft unions. It may be the part of wisdom, as has been suggested, for management to concentrate its efforts on releasing the potential educational capacity of the craft unions, and so give them a legitimate part to perform in our industrial life.

My observations in Europe convinced me, first, that all over the world the most potent force combating Bolshevism is the conservative right wing of the labor movement, because it is primarily concerned with the preservation of suitable opportunities for