

C. Guy Curtis

Address to Independent Oil
Field Workers Association.
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In the beginning of our history wage earners, as we know them now, were unknown to civilization. All resources were dependent upon the tilling of the soil, EXCEPT, the building of government projects and private residences and estates. Workers as we know them engaged in the production of fabrics and other such articles made by hand were independent workers for themselves. Their skill in their work recommended their products.

The workers upon government projects were slaves, prisoners of war, and others under the domination of the warrior forces. They were then, as they are now, very much under obligated to government and government regulations for their status. Machinery as we know it had not come into existence. Boys were apprenticed to skilled workers for their education. Their room and board was usually their revenue. They got a practical education.

When the Pharaohs of Egypt, when they contrived the vast monuments of rock and lime so amazing to the present day citizen, undertook their work they commandeered those of the citizenship necessary to the work and ordered their services, feeding and caring for them while engaged in the work. They were slaves in the true sense of government.

The first organization that would approximate the work unions of to-day were the Masons. They were operative, selected for their skill and workmanship. They had certain signs and pass words that designated their standing as builders. It was a craft union. That union was noted for the skill and dependability of its members. It was honored throughout the known world at that time. It made its own scale of wages and its membership voluntarily adhered to the wage scale. They were chosen for their work by employers because of the high standard of skill and workmanship. Later when they ran into the Inquisition and by the then established church were demanded to make known their secrets at the confessional, they refused to divulge their trade secrets and were forced into a real secret organization as we know it to-day.

Workers, in those days, as they should in this, offered their services because of their skill. The industrial age as we know it was far, far in the future. To-day in the United States, there are some forty odd thousand of wage and salary earners; twelve thousand and more of whom are women. They are entirely dependent upon employment for a living. The world has changed into a cooperative body of people. We are, now, dependent almost entirely upon the cooperation of others for the bare necessities of our lives. The most of us (not including the tillers of the soil who are indeed independent) if required would be practically unable to provide the necessities for ourselves if we were thrown upon our own resources to provide a living. Those who employ, by means of their aggressiveness and mental ability, are the means and source of the living of the countless thousands referred to above. We, of necessity, must classify ourselves. Nature does that, we have no choice. Some have the ability to get into the employer class while others, even after a lifetime of experience, must still be workers. This comes about because we are living in an artificial age. Artificial transportation, artificial communication and to a great extent artificial food stuffs. We are depend upon others to provide these, and in return we work for those who pay and take the medium of exchange paid to us to purchase the artificial substances provided by industry. This makes a complicated scheme that brings forward the problems we are all the time confronted with. And it is to this condition that we address ourselves this evening.

Some five hundred and four years ago today the first legislation was had in old England respecting workmen.