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# **Steel Strike May Begin Labor's Last Big Battle With Industrial Barons: Bitterness and Violence Seen as Certain Results — Wilson's October 6 Conference Mildly Amuses Wall Street Interests**

**by Laurence Todd**

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 20 [1919].— With the calling of the great steel strike, which begins Monday [Sept. 22, 1919], organized labor in America enters upon what may be the last battle with the industrial overlords of this nation.

Out of this strike will come bitterness and violence, if the steel barons, headed by Judge Gary, can have their way; the cry of "Bolshevism" will be raised against every striker and every strike sympathizer; gunmen and even state troops, if the masters prevail, will be used to bruise and torture and kill the workers who picket the plants. But finally the whole vast army of more than 4,000,000 of organized workers in this country will be mobilized to win the strike, if that be necessary. And when the strike is won no other industry will remain strong enough to make war against the trade union movement with any hope of success.

Unless all signs fail, this steel strike will be long and costly. Steel is fundamental to all manufacturing industry, and there will be endless millions of dollars at the disposal of the steel trust, coming from the other employers that are standing out against democracy in the shops. Not only will the bosses employ every sort of intimidation, from blackjacks to machine guns, but they will try all kinds of trickery to stampede the men back into the plants. One trick is in evidence already — a campaign to

discredit William Z. Foster, who has been in general charge of the field organizer in the steel mills for the past year. Foster organized the workers in the stockyards and meat packing plants two years ago. The packers hate him. The game is to represent him as a dangerous anarchist.

Of course the junker press will immediately begin to curse the committee to organize the steel workers, because they refused to delay the strike until the President's special committee, which is to meet here on October 6, should get a chance to deal with the steel industry as well as with the railroad industry and all other industries.

But what right has anyone to expect the responsible representatives of 24 of the international unions in the American Federation of Labor to give a vote of confidence in the future action toward labor's rights of the President's own selections for that October conference?

Look them over. See who they are. The names of 22 men have been given out by the President as being the citizens he has selected to speak for the "public" in this attempt to "put the wage system on a new footing."

### **They Speak for "the Public."**

There is Judge [Elbert Henry] Gary himself, the arch-enemy who is setting gunmen and thugs against the organized steel workers in order to perpetuate human slavery in the steel plants.

There is [Fuller Earle] Callaway of Georgia, leader of the National Association of Cotton Manufacturers, whose organization has employed every means of keeping the children in the cotton mills, and of keeping the organizers of the textile workers out.

There is John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who, just before the Ludlow massacre, sat unashamed before a committee of Congress for three hours and defended the acts of his underlings in crushing out the revolt of the coal miners in Colorado.

Or take Dr. [Charles] Eliot, retired because of his age from the presidency of Harvard University. When he was already an

old man he declared his belief that the real hero in America is the strikebreaker.

The Standard Oil Company has one ex-employee and one recent lobbyist in this choice collection. L.D. Sweet of Colorado, a big business man in the beet sugar and potato line, used to work for Standard Oil in New York City — and not so very long ago. Louis Titus of San Francisco and Oakland is known as an oil millionaire, real estate magnate, and Washington lobbyist for Standard Oil. He represented Standard Oil and another oil company, then under Federal indictment for grabbing naval oil lands, when he testified for the Phelan oil lands bill before a Senate committee three years ago.

### **“Smash the Unions Now.”**

So you may go down the list. Barney Baruch, who won his millions as a Wall Street gambler, has been, apparently, in charge of all arrangements for the October conference, and will be one of its members. Jones of Chicago is an International Harvester Company magnate, while James of Memphis is likewise tied up with the steel and other interests that make their nest in Wall Street. According to labor men here the one big business man in the lot who has shown a sense of fairness and understanding in industrial affairs is [Henry Bradford] Endicott, the shoe manufacturer, whose plants are located in Massachusetts and Endicott, NY. At least 16 of the 22 chosen to speak for the “public” are of the old order that neither learns nor wants to learn anything of industrial democracy.

Wall Street is taking no more stock in the notion that any real gains for labor will come out of the October conference than the trade union leaders are. Any delay of strikes is welcomed by a group of bit financiers that is afraid of what the after-war industrial unrest may lead to, but there is another and more powerful element in the Street that takes the tip from Gary to “smash the unions now.”

### **Amused at Conference.**

This element is merely amused by the October conference plan. They are going into the conference both as spokesmen of the business interests and of the "public," and while they kill time and wear down the patience of the labor spokesmen in discussions of the right men to belong to labor unions and to establish the eight hour day, these same conferees will be buying riot guns and barbed wire to express their real views as to how the demands of organized labor should be met.

However, the need for serious discussion of the best means of securing industrial democracy in this country is not going to be ignored by organized labor. A genuine and sincere conference on the future of the railroad industry, the coal industry, the steel industry, the shipping industry, and other basic industries will be held here under the auspices of the Conference on Democratic Railroad Control within a few weeks. Frederic C. Howe is director of the conference, and while the Plumb Plan for democratic control of the railroads will be first on the program, Howe and his committee realize that the water transportation, the fuel and the steel industries must be taken up in any broad study of the railroad problem.

### **Question Is — How?**

Since the United Mine Workers have officially endorsed the Plumb Plan for the railroad workers and a similar plan for the coal mining industry, and have formed a close alliance with the organized railroad workers, the issue which labor and the nation must seriously consider is no longer whether industry shall be brought under democratic control, but what shall be the details of establishing democratic control. It is coming, anyhow.

In contrast with the sort of men whom Baruch has picked for the President's labor conference to speak for the people of the United States as a whole, there are Governor Henry J. Allen of Kansas, former Governors [Edward F.] Dunne of Illinois and [Joseph W.] Folk of Missouri, and Chief Justice [Walter] Clark of the Supreme Court of North Carolina taking part in the con-

ference, which is being arranged by labor itself. There will be public utilities experts and economists, such as Professor E.W. Bemis of Columbia, Professor Irving Fisher of Yale, and Morris L. Cook of Philadelphia. There will be no professional stockholders or plungers, nor men who have grown old in the belief that shooting and clubbing workingmen is the best way to settle an industrial dispute.

### **Realize Their Power.**

Behind all this noise of immediate battle is one big fact that cheers the souls of labor organizers — the rank and file in the industries have discovered their power. They are going to use it, and not merely by strikes. They are organizing for emancipation, and like good Americans they see the power that rests in the ballot. They feel for the first time, the advantage that would be theirs if they had a hundred Labor Party men in Congress and two or three resolute and aggressive Labor men in the Cabinet. Illinois, California, North Dakota, Washington, and Minnesota have thus far definitely declared, through state labor conferences of union delegates, for union with the organized farmers in the coming political campaign. In half a dozen other states the same idea is near the point of becoming action.

Arthur Henderson, leader of the British Labour Party, is to be in this country next month to tell big mass meetings of organized labor what British labor has done for itself by using three weapons — the trade union, the Labour Party, and the cooperative movement. All three organizations make the fight of each.

*Edited by Tim Davenport*

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