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EDITORIAL

THE PEOPLE'S RIGHTS MEAN NOTHING

As some of those in authority think little or nothing of the rights of the laboring class, it is sometimes necessary to bring about intense commotions that will actually shake the foundation of the social order now existing in order to achieve our aspirations. On the other hand to seek re-vindications in any other way is to lose precious time, for it would be the same as preaching in the desert.

The head of Government in 1941 may have had the best of intentions to serve the interests of the working man of the Republic when it handed down the Legislative Decree regulating matters pertaining to labor. Unfortunately for us his efforts did not bear fruits as those responsible for the wording of the decree went about their duties in such a manner as to crush whatever benefit the laboring man might have received from its compliance.

Of the rights established in this law, these benefitting the working man are fully established in the article quoted below:

"Article 42—After eleven consecutive months of service the person in charge of an establishment, or the owner, is under the obligation to concede to his workers or to those working under any form of contract, who may also have the same time of service, a vacation of one month or its equivalent in remuneration."

Most of the workers in commercial establishment receive vacations, which are not complete in every instance; in general terms they receive vacations because to deny the fact is to tell a lie. But this is not a reason for keeping quiet and allowing injustice to be done to the most humble workers, who do not earn sufficient for the upkeep of their families. These humble workers do not get any consideration from their employers, who, in order to beat the law force their employees during the tenth month of consecutive employment, thus denying them of an indispensable human right.

Now, if the legal disposition quoted above had conceded the right to the worker who had not completed eleven consecutive months of employment to receive vacations in proportion to the time served, all workers would have equally benefitted and such injustices as cited would not have taken place.

From the time this labor law became effective workers have protested to high heavens of the injustices committed by its interpretation. The guaranteeing of rest days; the fixing of minimum salary; the collective labor contract and other rights stated in the law, are nothing more than a representation of perfidy and farse.

If the worker merits consideration, if effectively his rights mean something, from the time the deficiencies were noted Executive Decree No. 38 of 1941 would have been corrected long ago and the humblest worker would have gained much during the years of war just ended.

These deficiencies will be taken into account time to come out, and which may be worded such in the future Labor Code, which may take a long an enigmatic form to gain benefit the exploiters.

Atom Bomb Ends War, Says Green; Sees Future Benefits To Humanity

CHICAGO— Labor's views on the new atomic bomb were expressed by AFL President William Green in a nation-wide radio address over the American Broadcasting Company network. Mr. Green declared that the new weapon should end all future wars and that atomic power should be utilized in the future for the benefit of humanity, instead of destructive purposes. The text of his radio talk follows:

"American labor, which played a vital role in the successful development of the atomic bomb as an instrument of military destruction, is keenly interested in the plans of science for harnessing the power of the atom to peacetime industry after victory is won.

"Shocked as we are by the terrible and devastating effect of this new explosive, we cannot help thinking that it will eventually prove a great blessing to humanity.

"For nothing is better calculated to prevent future wars than the knowledge of the common people in every nation of the world that now warfare may mean total annihilation. No dictator in the years to come will be able to persuade his people to chance that kind of retribution for aggression.

"The assurance of lasting peace will give science, labor and industry a glorious opportunity to put the mighty resources of the atom to work for the constructive benefit of mankind. The power to destroy can and must be transformed to the power to build.

"It requires no exaggerated stretch of the imagination to visualize the tremendous economic revolution which the development of atomic power may accomplish in the future. The discovery of how electricity could be applied to improve the lives of human beings and lighten their labors may become insignificant beside this new and epochal scientific achievement.

"One thing is certain— the use of atomic power must be controlled so as not to enrich and strengthen the few, but to bring its benefits equitably to all the people.

"The seven million members of the American Federation of Labor will be glad to know that the War Department has extended official recognition and praises for their efforts in constructing the tremendous plants where the atomic bomb is being produced and in operating those plants. I received today the following telegram from Undersecretary of War Robert P. Patterson:

"Through you, I want to thank all the officers and members of your building and metal trades unions who helped which our atomic bomb are

made. You recruited skilled mechanics from thousands of build and man the plants in miles away to work on these projects even though we could not tell you what they were making. Now you have the reward of knowing that their efforts are making an important

contribution to final victory."

"The American Federation of Labor is grateful for that message and it wishes to let the American people know that the nation's soldiers of production will continue to serve faithfully and unswervingly to win the war and to win the peace."

Labor Points Way

New Wage Policy Demanded

The National War Labor Board is now entering its final phase. When peace returns, there will no longer be any reason or justification for its continued existence. Wartime wage control by government will necessarily give way to free collective bargaining in peacetime. The American Federation of Labor hopes that happy event is not far distant.

But in the meantime the National War Labor Board has an immediate and imperative duty to perform. Our nation must be spared the shock of sudden transition from a wartime to a peacetime economy. Interim adjustments of the government's wage policy can and should be made right now in order to facilitate the reconversion process, to prevent serious impairment of living standards and to provide the high and steady flow of purchasing power without which postwar production cannot find a market.

The executive council calls upon the National War Labor Board to end without further delay the wage-freeze which is jeopardizing the well-being of the entire nation.

We propose the following program:

1—Adjustment of the Little Steel formula to bring basic wage rates back into equitable relationship with increased living costs. Wage rates are still at May, 1942, levels despite admitted and considerable inflation of the cost of living. The minimum adjustment in wage rates that would compensate the nation's workers for the loss of purchasing power that has resulted from higher prices is an additional 15 percent. Labor asks and demands that such an adjustment be made now for the further reason that loss of overtime and incentive bonuses together with downgrading have caused an alarming shrinkage in take-home pay.

2—Restoration of free collective bargaining to permit voluntary wage increases to go into effect without the requirement of approval by the NWLB whenever the employer certifies that such increases will not involve a substantial increase

in the price of his product. Hitherto, the NWLB has held that such voluntary increases might have an indirect inflationary effect by inviting competitive bidding for labor at a time of manpower shortages and by increasing consumer purchasing power when the supply of purchasable civilian goods was scarce. These conditions are rapidly disappearing and the arguments are no longer valid. Due to cutbacks in war production and the slow pace of reconversion, the nation now faces unemployment rather than manpower shortages. Increasing production of civilian goods will soon end tight markets. Furthermore, the time is fast approaching when labor and management once more must assume their full responsibilities in a democracy instead of looking to the government for decisions. That is the only way free enterprise can operate in normal times. It is therefore up to the National War Labor Board to set an example for all federal agencies by beginning to relinquish government controls over collective bargaining.

3—More flexible administration. The NWLB should ask the President to restore its original power to use its discretion in deciding dispute cases instead of being bound by rigid rules. The board should have the power to grant adjustments in pay even beyond the limits of the Little Steel formula and even though price increases will result whenever it finds that failure to do so would cause suffering and hardship.

Supplementing these changes, the executive council renews its appeal to Congress to adopt legislation lifting minimum wage levels immediately to 65 cents an hour and to 75 cents at the end of three years, so that the NWLB will be able to correct substandard wage conditions accordingly.

Since the adoption of this program will require executive action, the executive council directs the officers of the American Federation of Labor to present its views on wage policy to the President of the United States.