

The Open Shop?



SPEECH DELIVERED BY

JAMES H. MAURER

BEFORE THE MINERS' SPECIAL CONVENTION

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Mr. Chairman and Brothers:

The labor situation is not only very grave, but serious. Millions of able-bodied men and women are idle, or working short time. Wage reductions and attempts at wage reductions are being made, while the actual necessities of life are within a very narrow margin as high as they were a year ago. Rents are actually going up and the burden of taxation is to weigh even more heavily upon our shoulders, in the future, than it has in the past. An artificial panic has been forced upon us. Mills and factories have been closed down. The big money lords, crazed with the great wealth they wrung out of their employes on the one hand and out of the consumers on the other, thru exorbitant profits and graft, have decided to play and fiddle while those who made their great wealth possible suffer and starve. Word has been passed along the line that the workers must be starved and their unions smashed. The "kept press" of the employers is busy feeding the public the right kind of poison to prejudice its mind against Labor. Their slogan is "The Open Shop," and, hypocritically, they pretend that it is for the individual freedom of the wage-earner, or, as they say, "the American way." Not very long ago, we fought a war, and the people were thrilled by the slogan that we were "fighting for World Democracy and to make the world a decent place in which to live"; and now these dollar-chasing patriots hope to fire the heart of the Nation with a war for the open shop.

INTERESTS BACK OF NON-UNION DRIVE.

Judge Gary, of the United States Steel Corporation, seems to be the Commander-in-Chief, with Eugene Grace, of Bethlehem, second in command but, as a matter of fact, these men, like many others of their ilk, are mere pawns and only move as the master minds behind them direct. The real power behind the drive for the open shop is the money power which dominates the financial world. The triple alliance of J. P. Morgan Company, The National City Bank and the First Na-

tional Bank of New York City, are the real heads directing the drive for the so-called open shop. The railroads, the United States Steel Corporation and the Bethlehem Steel Company, these great corporations are directed in their general policies by the Morgan group of financiers. My authority for this statement is the report of the Pujo Committee, appointed by Congress. This triple alliance is intimately allied with practically all the other leading banking institutions of the country. They dominate the leading industrial, public service and railroad companies of the country, such gigantic corporations as United States Steel, Bethlehem Steel, Baldwin Locomotive Company, General Electric Company, Westinghouse Electric Company, International Harvester Company and many others in the steel, coal and iron industries, public service corporations like the Edison Companies of New York and Chicago, the subways, the surface and elevated lines of New York, Boston, Chicago, Philadelphia and other cities, the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, the public service corporations of New Jersey, etc., Armour and Company, National Biscuit Company, American Bank Note Company, Tide Water Oil, United States Rubber Company, American Sugar Refining Company, etc., also a large number of insurance companies, including the Mutual Life and the Equitable Life of New York and all the big railroad companies from the Pennsylvania, New York Central, New Haven and the Southern Pacific on down the list. The House of Morgan is, and always has been, an avowed enemy of Organized Labor. For example, the United States Steel Corporation is dominated absolutely by them. One of the first results of the Morgan control of United States Steel was the destruction of the union and, during the last steel strike, Gary was advised by his master, Mr. Morgan, who was in England at the time and who communicated his instructions to Gary by cable. The mining industry is also, to a very great extent, dominated by this same House of Morgan. This is particularly true of the West Virginia Coal belt where civil government broke down completely, due to the coal companies which, in this case, means the United States Steel Corporation, refusing to grant to the coal miners the right of collective bargaining. It was, therefore, no great surprise when Eugene Grace admitted, before the Lockwood Committee, in New York, recently, that the Bethlehem Steel Corporation refused to furnish fabricated steel to construction companies of New York City who employed members of Labor Unions.

This survey of the power of the Morgan Triple Alliance is very incomplete. Their influence reaches into and is felt in practically every industry and home in the Nation.

WHAT THE OPEN SHOP MEANS TO THE WORKERS.

To understand just what they hope to accomplish by the

"open shop" drive, we need but look to the United States Steel Corporation, where they have had the open shop scheme in full operation for some years. Internal Revenue authorities tell us that: "The United States Steel Corporation made a net profit of \$81,000,000 during the pre-war year of 1913 and, during 1917, this same United States Steel Corporation cleared up a net profit of \$457,000,000." They work, in their open shop, more than seventy thousand of their men, **twelve hours a day** and about half of these work **seven days a week**. The annual earnings of nearly half of their employes are, and, for years, have been, below the level set by government experts as the minimum of subsistence. This is what the open shop means to the worker. In the past, they maintained this open shop policy in United States Steel Corporation thru the aid of a prostituted press, the bludgeon, bayonet, cossacks and certain dollar-mad, corrupt public officials.

AN ARTIFICIAL PANIC.

The World War, of course, upset the entire financial, industrial and commercial world. The industries, for the period of the war, to a very great extent, produced for destruction only, while many millions of lives were lost at a cost of many billions of dollars, and property, the accumulation of ages, worth billions more, was destroyed. As a consequence of this awful waste and war, the world faces a panic. A panic different from any other that this country has ever been afflicted with thruout its entire history. A panic following several of our most prosperous agricultural years, food in abundance for all and yet millions are underfed and thousands are actually starving. On the other hand, there is no over-production. Railroads and their equipment are in a deplorable condition and need replacement. Bridge building and subway work has been held up for now nearly six years. Building operations, in most every city thruout the civilized world, have been, to a very great extent, also tied up. And so I might continue and prove conclusively that there are no natural causes responsible for the present panic.

EUROPEAN MARKET AND DEBT.

European countries are sick and getting sicker. They are already indebted to the United States for about fifteen billions of dollars and are now asking that the lion's share of this debt be cancelled. They admit that they cannot even pay interest on the debt, much less the principal and now ask that the United States give, or loan, them about thirty-five billions more so that they can again trade with us and put their unemployed to work and thereby help start the international wheel of industry going again. As it is, there is little or no European market. The South American Republics are suffering from an industrial

slump and cannot buy. Austria frankly admits that she is bankrupt. Germany is struggling to keep her head above water and England has a couple of revolutions on her hands. The one great European nation that is NOT crying to high heaven for American gold, is Russia. The one nation that is, admittedly, perfectly solvent, is knocking at our doors, asking for permission to buy the very things that the other nations are too poor to buy. Russia stands ready to buy more than three billions of dollars' worth of goods from the United States, but official Washington seems to take the position that, since the bankrupt nations cannot trade with us, the one that is not bankrupt and CAN, shall not.

DESTROYING OUR HOME MARKET.

In the meantime, millions of American workers and their families are suffering on account of enforced idleness and the drive for the closed shop against union men and women goes merrily on. More mills close down and the army of unemployed increases. Four million workers idle, means a loss of purchasing power to our domestic market of about twenty millions of dollars a day, one hundred and twenty millions a week, or six and a quarter billions a year, about again as much as Russia stands ready to place orders for at once. About four millions more are working short time which means another loss to our home market of about three billions, making a grand total loss to our domestic market, or trade, of about ten billions of dollars a year, to say nothing of the loss due to wage reductions. This is only part of what the American people are paying "Big Biz" for their drive for the open shop which, of course, means closed shop to the organized worker. To many merchants and business men, this drive will mean bankruptcy. To the wage-workers, suffering, privation, misery, sorrow, crime, insanity and death. But, to the Morgan and Rockefeller groups, the drive means a doubling, yes, tripling, of their billions.

EASY MONEY.

It has been openly charged that, under the Wilson administration, the Government was defrauded out of many billions during the past four years. Government expenditures, during this period, were nearly nineteen billions more than all Government expenditures during the past one hundred and twenty-eight years, and this includes the cost of all our previous wars. The total expense of running our Government for one hundred and twenty-eight years, up to 1917, was \$36,034,145,335.23. Wilson's last four years, 1917 to 1920, inclusive, cost us \$54,884,167,473.58. The fact that in this short period of less than four years, there came into existence, in the United States, a new crop of about twenty-three thousand millionaires shows where a very large portion of this vast expenditure of fifty-four

billions went. One would think that these dollar-crazed patriots would be satisfied. Not so, however. Men, with a million dollars, a year ago, could, when wheat was selling at three dollars a bushel, buy three hundred and thirty-three thousand bushels of wheat with their million or, when the wage-workers were receiving six dollars a day, they could buy the labor of about five hundred and fifty-five men for one year. Now, if these men, with their blood-soaked dollars, succeed in their drive and force wheat down to a dollar a bushel, the purchasing-power of their dollars will have trebled. With that same million dollars, they can then buy a million bushels, or three times as much wheat and, if wages are forced down from six to three dollars, they can buy the labor-power of again as many workers, as was possible a year ago. In other words, the purchasing-power of those who sell their labor energy for salaries, or wages, whether they be farmers, clerks, or wage-workers, will have been reduced by more than half, while, at the same time, the purchasing-power of the men with millions will have more than doubled. Rockefeller's fortune, estimated at about five billions, will then be worth more than ten billions.

THE SOLDIER'S REWARD.

When we entered the World War, we were told by these gentlemen and their political retainers that we were making the sacrifice for the love of Democracy and to make the world a better place in which to live, and most people believed they meant a better world for all the people. Now we know that they meant only themselves. Ninety-nine per cent. of the boys who did the fighting, their fathers, mothers, sisters and brothers who paid and will continue to pay for a long time to come for the fight, are now being robbed of their constitutional rights, and their standard of living is lowered. Enforced idleness means starvation and savage competition for jobs, no matter whether the worker belongs to a union or not. And this is to be the soldier's reward! (Applause).

AIM AT ABSOLUTE SERVITUDE.

The political and economic powers of the people are to be destroyed by starving them into submission, making them humble, weak and meek, as a prominent capitalist recently said: "Make them crawl and they will then eat out of our hands." And the only barrier that stands between America's imperialists and their hellish plot to give them a free hand to rob the American people of their government and give them free rein to do as they please, is Organized Labor. And this gives another angle and most serious view of what the drive for the open shop means.

The open shop drive, in its final analysis, means, really, anarchism and chaos. Based on the philosophy of individual-

ism, it assumes that every workman is free to compete in the same way as a combine or a trust. In other words, it is based upon the idea that a worker, standing alone, has an equal opportunity to secure as good a bargain for his labor-power as, for example, the United States Steel Combine has for its manufactured products. What a ridiculous absurdity to make this assumption! Fancy the individual workman standing at the gate of the employment office of a large corporation, with hundreds of others like him, seeking the same job, attempting to bargain for the highest wage for his labor-power and then compare his pitiful position as against the all-powerful and dominating position of the United States Steel Trust, the Meat Packing Combination, the Standard Oil Company and the Morgan group of bankers!

It was for the purpose of helping the individual workman in his struggle for an existence and in his efforts to improve his social and economic position that the Trade Union Movement came into existence. The worker, realizing his helplessness as against the all-powerful corporations of wealth, aligned himself with his fellow-workers so that, collectively, they could protect their interests in the same way as the employers, thru their Manufacturers' Associations and Chambers of Commerce, protect their interests. And, in their organized capacity, the workers have not only sought to improve their own conditions, but to lift the human race to a higher level of civilization. When they secured higher wages and a shorter work-day, they helped not only the organized workers, but the unorganized as well, even those who opposed them in their efforts.

THE LABOR UNION.

The history of the Organized Labor Movement, in the United States, is a narrative of the most glorious and patriotic accomplishments. It was the first to demand a free public school system and free text-books. It was the Organized Labor Movement that was, largely, instrumental in the securing of a universal franchise, compulsory education laws, Child and Woman Labor regulations and laws, laws protecting miners. Workmen's Compensation, Mothers' Pensions, the Federal Eight-hour law and hundreds of other laws and labor standards. And this is the Movement that the unscrupulous employers and greedy demagogues, so-called "captains" of industry, aim to destroy! Most of them, probably, are not even conscious that they are merely being used as puppets by the master minds of capital which control them in an onslaught against our very civilization. To destroy the organized working class movement would mean to go back to a state of practical serfdom, it would mean the lowering of wages to a degree that would necessitate the enslaving of our wives and children in the factories. It

would mean the abolition of all the protective laws that required decades to put upon our statute books; it would mean the substitution of anarchy, chaos, misery, degradation, crime and ruination of our race, instead of the orderly development of a steadily progressing civilization and humanity. (Applause).

WORKING FROM WITHOUT AND WITHIN.

Organized greed is using every means within its command which gold can buy and corrupt to destroy our organizations. The employers have our unions honeycombed with spies, our legislatures are being invaded with their bills, providing for endless litigation to drain our treasuries and rob us of our homes. Anti-strike and constabulary bills, in more than a dozen States; most every day, some new scheme is discovered which shows their attempts to outlaw, or harrass, Organized Labor. Our constitutional rights are constantly being violated, the right of free speech and public assemblage is daily becoming less secure. To tell the truth, if it comes in conflict with their schemes, is branded as "seditious," while a most vicious lie in their defense is hailed as "patriotic." Prostitution of the intellect, servile hypocrisy and betrayal of human rights to the god of greed, means respectability and golden reward, while loyalty to one's honest convictions and love for humanity, means ostracism, persecution, humiliation, poverty and sometimes a prison cell. And they who profit by this mad-house of savage society, are the gentlemen who say, "The Labor Union must be destroyed." And, while every power, that their great wealth can wield, is being used to crush us from the outside, their emissaries are busy working on the inside. Racial, religious and national prejudices are being aroused by their agents in our unions, in a mad attempt to get us fighting among ourselves, weaken our forces and thereby make the destruction of the union possible. But their efforts are meeting with no success. Men have learned the difference of working under human union conditions as against the inhuman non-union. They also know that, no matter what a man's religious conviction is, it has nothing to do with his union affiliation and that people are not responsible for their color, or nationality. (Applause).

UNIONS HERE TO STAY.

No, the unions will not be destroyed by internal dissention, or from external attack. While we may suffer, temporary defeat at certain points and serious wounds at others, the army of the Organized Workers, as a whole, is growing stronger day after day and it is natural that it should. Our enemies are driving the workers together and opening their eyes to great truths; and, for this, we, of course, are very thankful. (Prolonged applause).