
Peace, Peace, There Is No Peace! (January 24, 1902) ¹

There is nothing specially startling about the proceedings or results of the late “Industrial Peace Conference” in New York.² The captains of industry are now in practical control of their organized vassals. This has been the tendency during the past five years. The pow-wow at New York was simply the climax of “keep out of politics” trade unionism, and while things may run smoothly for a while, when the break comes the organized workers will find that they have their necks in the noose and that the hand of “arbitration” has a good grip at the other end. They are now committed to arbitration, and they’ll be damned if they don’t, they’ll be skinned if they do, and they’ll be both anyway.

Grover Cleveland is the keystone in the arch of peace.³ He has the final word. Ex-officio he is now President of the American Federation of Labor, and Brother Gompers has simply to look wise, occasionally knit his brow, and draw his salary.

The Republican papers now apotheosize Cleveland, and in a steady stream their eulogy pours upon his massive majesty in his new role of “dove of peace.”

Cleveland! Gods! Look upon his puffed and purple jowl, his bulging veins, his bloodshot eyes, his flabby neck, his sideshow girth of vulgar fat — in every feature Nature has marked him as the coarsest cormorant that ever defiled the executive seat of the nation. Look at him, you workers, and then take off your hats and bow in the dust at his feet. All hail the great Arbiter of Labor. The black slave lifting his eyes to Lincoln may now dissolve from view. Great Grover is the mighty Moses of all races.

In 1894 he traced his love for labor in crimson characters — he commanded the United States regulars to shoot the working class into submission to their pirate masters. This was his glory. He entered the White House poor and emerged a millionaire. This was his evil crown. Well qualified, indeed, is he to sit in supreme judgment between the sleek coyote of Capital and the bleating lambs of Labor.

Archbishop Ireland is another “neutral” gentleman — a priest to match the politician, and they constitute a charming pair. When an exceptional

job of labor-fleecing is to be done there always looms up a priest, who, sad, meek, and pious, rolls his eyes heavenward — and the job is done.

Archbishop Ireland is a millionaire.⁴ His flocks have all their treasures in Heaven. Verily, I am your shepherd and you are my mutton.

The Archbishop is cheek by jowl with Jim Hill of the Great Northern. They collaborate and fix things in the Northwest. Ireland, making good use of his license as priest, is the smoothest of politicians and Hill is not slow to catch on. Then Hill liberally “endows” as Ireland suggests, and between the two nothing gets away.

Bishop Potter is another commanding figure in the neutral elements of the peace commission of the Civic Federation, the final tribunal of exploited workingmen.⁵ Who is he? The spiritual advisor of John Pierpont Morgan. Every great tyrant, every colossal robber in history had his spiritual advisor — his man of God to sanctify his crimes. The saintly Bishop draws a princely salary. He rides in Morgan’s palatial private car. He touches elbows with the upper capitalists and their salaried professional lackeys, and with no others. Every now and then he drops a radical utterance. This is promptly snatched and spread by the capitalist press. The people are amazed, they hold their breath, applaud — and are fixed for another season.

On every vital issue Bishop Potter is with the capitalist class. Their interests are secure in his custody.

Rather, Morgan, Hanna, and Schwab straight than Cleveland, Ireland, and Potter by arbitration.

In the entire “neutral” element there is not a single member whose material interests are not identified with and controlled by the capitalist class.⁶

A mighty class struggle is convulsing society. No living man is, or can be “neutral” or “disinterested.” he is on one side or the other — if not for freedom he is for slavery of the working class. They are deadly opposites. A chemical law forbids fire and water to mingle even at the bidding of a peace conference. By the same analogy, an economic law forbids peace between workers and capitalists. It is the law of development and should if be suspended the spinal cord of humanity would be severed and progress would be paralyzed.

I have had some experience with the Civic Federation and want to say to workingmen and women that if they would have homes built of gold

bricks, the “Civic” adjunct of the capitalist class will take the contract to house them all.

As for the American labor movement, it is being practically emasculated. Proportionate to its increasing impotency is its growth in numbers. In its present form it is encouraged, not resisted, by the masters.

The brotherhoods of railway employees have the complete sanction and support of the corporations and their chief officers are dined by President Roosevelt.

By the way, the President is announcing the appointment of representatives of the United States government for the coming coronation of King Edward — also for posts of honor at the launching of Emperor Wilhelm’s private yacht.

Now get ready your Sunday clothes, you sovereign sons of toil, for in these stately social functions, labor, the maker of all kings and Presidents, will surely sparkle in the grand parade and carve the ’possum at the banquet.

But, as to the labor movement: the local unions have their political heelers and steerers. they sound the alarm when “politics” ventures in the anteroom. At the very mention of socialism the heeler issues the warning note: “The goblins ’ll git ye if ye don’t watch out.”

The national officers, as a rule, are in close touch with the captains of industry and guarantees are given that the trade union movement will stick to its time-honored policy of letting politics alone.

How hanna and Ireland, Morgan and Schwab (fresh convert to union labor) must dig into each others’ ribs and snort when they retire from the footlights.

Every labor union in the land ought to denounce and repudiate the New York scheme of peace at the price of slavery, and the whole labor movement must be rescued and readjusted to grapple with the conditions of today, or it is doomed to disintegration.

Peace, peace, there is no peace!⁷ There is no land in which capitalist masters and working slaves can abide in peace. The war is on and the conflict will grow fiercer until the crash comes and wage-slavery is wiped from the earth.

Not until the last inch held by slavery is conquered by freedom can peace prevail. Then only will the multiplied millions who have subdued the earth and produced its wealth come to their own.

Onward, comrades, onward to the goal.

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¹ Wire reports reprinting portions of of this article broke on Jan. 26, 1902, with an original report in the *New York Sun* datelined Terre Haute, Jan. 24. *The Toiler* was published each Friday, making Jan. 24 the most likely date of original publication.

² A conference between leaders of labor and industry held under the auspices of the National Civic Federation was held in New York City from Dec. 16-18, 1901. The “industrial peace conference” established an entity to be known as the Industrial Department of the National Civil Federation, featuring a 36 member “executive committee” that included equal representatives from corporations, trade unions, and “the public.” The committee was “to do what may seem best to promote industrial peace” by arbitrating differences between employers and employees in an effort to prevent strikes and lockouts.

³ On Dec. 24, 1901, former President Grover Cleveland accepted appointment to the Industrial Department of the National Civic Federation as a representative of “the public.”

⁴ John Ireland (1838-1918) was the Archbishop of St. Paul, Minnesota from 1888 until his death.

⁵ Henry C. Potter (1834-1908) was Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. He was active in the National Civic Federation from its establishment in 1900 and was an advocate of social peace between labor and capital.

⁶ In addition to Cleveland, Ireland, and Potter, the “neutral” members of the committee included Charles Francis Adams of Boston; former Secretary of the Interior Cornelius N. Bliss; Charles A. Bonaparte of Baltimore; former Comptroller James H. Eckles; President of Harvard University Charles W. Eliot; John J. McCook, a New York City lawyer; Franklin McVeagh of Chicago, and John G. Milburn of Buffalo.

⁷ Adapted from *Jeremiah*, chapter 8, verse 11.