

**THE LABOR MOVEMENT:
ITS CONSERVATIVE
FUNCTIONS AND SOCIAL
CONSEQUENCES**

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The labor movement: its conservative functions and social consequences by Frank Tannenbaum

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By

Frank Tannenbaum

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G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
The Knickerbocker Press
1921

THIS BOOK
IS HUMBLY DEDICATED
TO
JOHN DEWEY

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

MR. TANNENBAUM has produced an account of the purposes and methods of the Unions which is written with authoritative knowledge and which gives information of distinctive interest and value. His monograph is restricted to the presentation of the advantages secured by union organizations in the larger matters of the protection of the rights and the furthering of the welfare of the members. He points out also the value of the organization in developing among the unionized workers a social relation, and in so doing, in furthering their development and education.

The organization of the Labor Unions is, as is now generally admitted, desirable, not to say essential, for the purpose of protecting and furthering the rightful interest of the workers, or at least of that portion of the workers which is prepared to accept membership in the Union. It is further desirable as giving means by which agreements can be made and negotiations carried on between the employed and the employers.

Mr. Tannenbaum's study presents only the favorable aspects of the purposes and the results of the

Unions of organized labor. The book, while suggestive and valuable, would, we believe, have been more complete if the author had seen his way to discuss the following matters which seem to many people outstanding characteristics of the labor movement as the public knows it.

1. Under the Constitution, all citizens have a guaranty of equality before the law, and it is the theory of the Constitution that no class or group of citizens shall be able to secure special privileges. One instance of such contention on their part is their refusal to accept incorporation. If, therefore, a Union commits a breach of law,—and there are too many instances of such breaches,—proceedings can be taken only against individual members.

A further evidence of the policy of the Unions of maintaining special privileges was their success in securing, in the act appropriating money for judiciary proceedings, a provision that no such money should be utilized for proceedings affecting the Unions.

2. The frequent failure of the Unions to give any cooperation to the authorities for the tracing of crime and for bringing penalties to bear upon criminals whose work has been done under the direction of organized labor, or for the purpose of forwarding some immediate aim of organized labor. There are innumerable instances of a policy of terrorism and of criminal action from the time of the blowing up of the *Los Angeles Times* to the present day, and we can find no instance on record of action on the part of the authorities of the Union to

expel or even to reprimand a member for criminal activity.

3. The Constitution guarantees to every citizen equal protection under the law. The Union claims the right to prevent fellow citizens who prefer not to accept membership in the organization, from carrying on work, that is to say from getting a livelihood, and this claim has too often been maintained by force, by the breaking of heads or assaults of other kinds.

4. The community further criticizes the policy which has been increasingly manifested by the Unions for diminishing output. It is the insistence of the Unions that the standard of work shall be kept to that of the laziest, or most ineffective worker. They refuse to permit for the industrious or skilled worker the advantage of the additional product that he is able to complete. It is a well established fact that since the reduction of the hours of the working day, the output per hour has in many trades been materially lessened. This has been measured, for instance, specifically in such an industry as the laying of bricks.

It is to be hoped that in some future volume, a writer who has, as Mr. Tannenbaum has, first-hand knowledge of the methods of Union organizations, and is in substantial sympathy with the legitimate purposes of these organizations will be ready to put before the public a consideration of these issues between the Unions and the community.

G. H. P.

April 20, 1921.



The Publishers' note and the book which follows represent differences of opinion, "G. H. P." and the author agreeing to disagree.

F. T.