

The Fight to Break the Unions

JUST what do the chambers of commerce, the employers' associations, the "associated industries," the Republican Publicity Association, and other like-minded organizations actually mean when they proclaim the "open shop" as the new slogan of Americanism? It is important to find out, for the labor struggles of the next few months, and possibly of the next few years, will center around that issue, and the public is already being "educated" by the familiar methods of cheap propaganda to a proper attitude in the matter. The employers have tried to tell us what the open shop campaign implies; they have named it the "American plan of employment," and in the words of the "Dallas Chamber of Commerce Open Shop Square Deal Association" (we hope it is not familiarly known as the D. C. C. O. S. S. D. A.) the open shop is "the only way to cure radicalism" and has been inaugurated "to protect personal liberty and property rights by seeing that non-union workers have an equal chance with workers who belong to unions." It is inevitable that Americans should respond sympathetically to the proposal that all men must have an "equal chance." If the open shop actually means an equal chance the open shop propaganda will be easy to conduct.

What the term really implies, however, is something quite different. The open shop, as the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor has said, is in practice simply a non-union shop. The idea of union and non-union men competing for jobs on equal terms and working side by side is in fact nothing more than an amiable fiction. The primary object of labor organization is collective bargaining between the employer and the union. The object of the open shop is to eliminate collective bargaining and to substitute dealings with the individual worker. If collective bargaining is eliminated, the union is killed; a worker might as well join a golf club as a union in an open shop. The open shop, then, becomes a non-union shop and the meaning of the present campaign becomes clear. The *New York World* put the matter very plainly when it said last week that "the champions of the open shop are not actuated by any patriotic impulse whatever. They believe that the open shop is more profitable to themselves than the closed shop and that to destroy the unions would put money in their pockets. That is all there is to the controversy. The open shop advocates wear a mask of patriotism because they are afraid to meet the economic issue." In the face of the obvious intent behind the open shop campaign the noble spectacle of the embattled employers of America rising in defense of the "personal liberty" of their employees takes on a comic aspect, while the claim of the employers that they seek to increase production must, in the present state of the market at least, be largely discounted.

Winter, the industrial depression, and the disorganization of the forces of labor have joined to help the open shop drive. In certain industries unemployment is rapidly increasing; in several large cities in the East we have already read reports of missions and lodging houses filling up with hungry, unemployed workers. That business men are looking to these conditions to help break union "arrogance" is freely admitted; although one prominent employer put it perhaps a trifle bluntly when he said the other day: "The union man is not so cocky as he was just before the election. In a little while he will be eating out of his employer's

hand." The unions are weakened, indeed, as a fighting force by their jurisdictional divisions, their conservatism and preoccupation with petty politics, their uneconomic limiting of production and creating of useless jobs, their lack of intelligent, progressive leadership. The officials of the American Federation of Labor adopt resolutions against the open shop, but their actual plans for combating it amount to nothing. It is plain, moreover, that at present public sympathy does not turn to organized labor. Accusations of "labor profiteering"—largely unjustified—and revelations, such as those lately made in New York, of the corruption of individual labor leaders and unions have hurt the workers' cause in the public mind. Furthermore, apart from a few shining exceptions in the garment trades, organized labor in this country has interested itself little in problems of production and prices. Until it begins to do so, it cannot expect wholehearted popular support. Moreover, in those trades which are most affected by the present industrial depression, union defense funds are running low; and serious unemployment will do more than a hundred injunctions or propaganda campaigns to break the unions' control and lower their vitality. In these conditions the employers find their chance. From all over the country come reports from business associations, some of which have recently been collected by the *New York Herald*, of successful open shop drives. A few typical statements are worth quoting. "All Pittsburg industries with the exception of the building trades and the street railways are open shop." "About 75 per cent of the industries [of Philadelphia] run under open shop conditions." "The automobile industry and all its branches as well as all other important industries [in Detroit] are open shop, and even the building trades are generally open shop." "Ninety-eight per cent of [Toledo's] industry . . . is open shop in part or all of the departments."

Such examples, even allowing for business optimism, show the strength of the anti-union forces. With the generous assistance of the political party soon to be in power in Washington the employers have good reason to feel confident. Certain factors, however, may modify the final success of their drive. If the period of depression turns out, as wiser men than Mr. Harding believe, to be a short one, the labor situation may change. The Federal Reserve monthly bulletin, the *Annalist*, the current report of the Harvard Committee on Economic Research, the November review of the National City Bank, all agree in a general expectation that the industrial depression accompanying the process of deflation will last into the spring but that a revival is due to begin by March or April. If they are correct, it is obvious that the employers of the country cannot work their whole will upon the unions in the next four months. Even bread lines and unemployment and the vast pamphleteering campaign of organized business can do no more than crush individual unions in weak industries and perhaps shake the confidence of labor in general; and they may have the salutary effect of forcing the rank and file to think in other and more constructive terms than those of the old Gompers philosophy. Meanwhile the poor public, victimized like the labor unions by the literary deluge sent out by the employers, should keep firmly in mind the true meaning of the open shop drive.

Baseball and Football

A PHILOSOPHER who attended a game of the World Series without any elemental preference for either the Indians or the Robins, and also witnessed the Harvard-Yale game at New Haven with his blood unstirred by any partialities for Yale or Harvard whatsoever, and on both occasions devoted the right kind of reflection to the two sports, must easily have come to some conclusions as to why baseball is the true entertainment of the American masses, and football that of the colleges and universities.

At first glance these facts might seem strange to our philosopher, who could not help realizing how much the more beautiful of the two, on the whole, baseball is—more light, more swift, more plastic. The very season helps its beauty, the bright, hard sun and sky, the vivid heat, the dry, clear atmosphere of the American summer. Instead of going clad in harness and mail, as in football, and lumbering a little in their gaits, baseball players seem always on their toes, lithe and incomparably agile. The ball flashes across the field with a velocity no football can attain, and back and forth with the rush of meteors. Base-runners cover the ground as no half-back ever manages to do through the finest field, behind the most competent of interferences. Flying balls and flying runners weave over the diamond a brilliant net of interest, as if the stars should flash wildly about in the dark for an hour or so. Baseball has none of football's heavy piling up of hundredweights of humanity in masses from which some bystander must disentangle the members. In baseball all is in the open, every player is obviously an individual, every play stands sharply by itself. The game, once certain intricacies of rules and customs have been mastered, is as lucid as noon.

In football there is more to be watched. Individual playing amounts to less, or at least has less opportunity to attract attention. The punter means less to his team than the pitcher to his. The stupendous personal triumph won by a player who can take the ball on the kick-off and run with it to a touchdown is a sign how rare a deed he has accomplished. And even in his case the credit lies largely with his team. What essentially matters in football is the nice articulation of human beings into a corporation in which each plays his most strenuous part with the neatness and delicacy of wheel or cog or ratchet or piston. Only an expert can ever know how hard it is, or what painful repetition is necessary, to make a machine out of eleven men. Only a person considerably expert, moreover, can perceive the nicer points of generalship displayed by the player who conducts a football game. He is a driver with ten steeds who must set his own shoulder to the wheel as constantly as they; he is an organist who must touch many keys and pull many stops, his mind full of his repertoire of tricks and yet able at any moment to improvise new ones; he must spare his own men and yet send their weight against men in the opposing line who show signs of weakness; he must diagnose the play of his opponents no matter how much they may try to conceal all their symptoms. Nor does all this responsibility lie with the quarter-back, or whoever runs the game. The other players have more to do than follow instructions implicitly. Each of them, too, must diagnose the coming play; each of them must sway with the rhythm of the contest, original and yet always adaptable in a dozen

directions, heated with the rush of the conflict and yet cool with the discipline of the rules.

We here speak, of course, of perfect conditions on perfect teams; but the matter is everywhere essentially the same, so far as the audience is concerned. From that point of view, baseball, for all the marvelous skill required to play it, and for all its technical brilliance and finish, is to football as vaudeville or melodrama to higher comedy. The baseball fan, like the onlooker at melodrama or vaudeville, watches what at the moment is before his eye, delighted or suited with that, and concerned only secondarily with the larger drift of the game, for the reason that there is less of it to consider. But the spectator at a football match has a different function. Like the players on the field he too sways with the rhythm of the organized cheering; like them, too, he fixes his attention not upon the brilliance of the individual moment or episode, but upon the coherence and solidarity of an entire undertaking. There has to be, therefore, a greater community of sentiment among the watchers at such a game than among the heterogeneous crowds who cheer the professional players of baseball. And such a community in America only the colleges and universities can furnish.

The Nation's Poetry Prize

THE NATION takes great pleasure in announcing an annual Poetry Prize of \$100 for the best poem submitted by an American poet in a contest to be conducted by *The Nation* each year between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day. The rules for the contest in 1920 are as follows:

1. Each manuscript submitted in the contest must reach the office of *The Nation*, 20 Vesey Street, New York City, not earlier than Friday, November 26, and not later than Saturday, January 1, plainly marked, on the outside of the envelope, "For *The Nation's* Poetry Prize."
2. Manuscripts must be typewritten and must have the name of the author in full on each page of the manuscript submitted.
3. As no manuscript submitted in this contest will under any circumstances be returned to the author, it is unnecessary to inclose return postage. An acknowledgment of the receipt of each manuscript, however, will be sent from this office.
4. No more than three poems from the same author will be admitted to the contest.
5. No restriction is placed upon the subject or form of poems submitted, which may be in any meter or in free verse. It will be impossible, however, to consider poems which are more than 200 lines in length, or which are translations, or which are in any language other than English. Poems arranged in a definite sequence may, if the author so desires, be counted as a single poem.
6. The winning poem will be published in the Midwinter Literary Supplement of *The Nation*, to appear February 9, 1921.
7. Besides the winning poem, *The Nation* reserves the right to purchase any other poem submitted in the contest at its usual rates.

The judges of the contest are William Rose Benét, Ludwig Lewisohn, and Carl Van Doren. Poems, however, should in no case be sent to them personally.