

# The People.

VOL. VIII, NO. 19

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, AUGUST 7, 1898

PRICE 2 CENTS

EDITORIAL

## The Uses of “Unionism.”

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**H**erbert Spencer somewhere calls attention to what he terms the “unforeseen effects of legislation.” A law is passed; it aims at a certain object; the object may or may not be covered, according as the law may or may not have been wisely drawn up; but say it is drawn with all the wisdom at command, and the specific object aimed at is indeed substantially attained; nevertheless, effects will speedily be noticed that were wholly unforeseen, never thought of or contemplated. This is just what is now happening with McKinley’s “Industrial Commission,” or “Labor Commission,” as it is frequently styled.

More than once in previous issues, this “Industrial Commission” has been dealt with. Its purposes, ostensible and covert, were pointed out. It was and is meant to furnish a conspicuous place from which to promulgate opinions on the Labor and Social Question that should blur the issue, jumble up the class interests of wage-slave and capitalist, and, in the confusion thus created afford capitalism increased chances of life. Incidentally, the Commission was to furnish jobs to broken-down politicians and available laborites.—That was the object in view.

But now the unforeseen results begin to manifest themselves. Among these, the most interesting one is the uses that the thing called “Unionism,” i.e., class-unconscious conglomerations of workingmen, are and can be put to.

There is in Washington, D.C., one Jack Hayes.<sup>1</sup> He is virtually all there is left of the K. of L. Hayes is hungry and thirsty; dues don’t come in; how can they, when there is none to collect them from? That things have come to this pass is none of his fault. For “industry” and “activity” none can compare with him; he has scurried and he has tugged,—all in vain; few would listen, fewer would join; and there sits Hayes, stranded like Cervera’s navy on the surf-beaten beach. Suddenly the “Industrial Commission” strikes his eyes; and he goes to work, his mind inspired with a luminous thought.

<sup>1</sup> [John W. Hayes (1854–1942) was General Secretary Treasurer of the Knights of Labor from 1888 and Grand Master Workman after 1902.—R.B.]

A baker's dozen of men, gathered into a body and called a "Union," can not of themselves yield wool enough for the fakir's shears; he might claim them to be a hundred, a thousand, a million,—the claim would not bring him in one more cent as dues; that sad experience Hayes had made. But now, the "Industrial Commission" offered a novel chance. A baker's dozen of dupes, duped into forming an organization, could not, it is true enough, yield sufficient dues, nor could the inflation of their number perform the feat. But there is one thing they could do, to wit, be the basis for a claim that they were millions, and thus become the title-deed for a seat and salary on the "Industrial Commission." Hayes went to work. He swooped down upon the miners in the Pittsburgh, Pa., district. Made such a clatter that the papers took notice of him. And now he claims that untold thousands of miners are enrolled in the K. of L. With such backing he expects to hoodwink McKinley into the belief that he wields a large force of Labor. It matters not whether Hayes' cheat will succeed or not. We can drop him here.

The important thing is to contemplate the miners' union he has got together. It is, of course, a "pure and simple" affair; none other could answer for his purpose. The very word Socialism or class-consciousness introduced into the concern would blow it up to splinters.

Thus the latest use the pure and simple method of organization or "Unionism" is put to is to constitute the fraudulent basis for a demand for a political job.

Smash the fraud!

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
Uploaded December 2003