

A Forerunner: Although the first national organization of employers in any single industry ^{specifically to resist unions} was not formed till 1886, the movement for united action among employers had been going on much earlier. Thus, in 1872 the following circular letter and question blank was sent to numerous employers:

Rooms of the
Employers' Central Executive Committee
Hoffman House Broadway 24th & 25th Streets
New York July 1872

Desiring to avail itself of the wisdom and experience of Thinkers and Employers, with a view to an equitable solution of the present and anticipated difficulties, arising from the demands of Combinations of workmen and others, assuming to regulate the conditions of Labor, this Committee earnestly solicits from you written Answers to the following Questions, which you will please forward to the above address.

1st-What, in your opinion, are the best possible means of avoiding Strikes?

2d-What are the most desirable means of resisting Strikes, consistent with a proper regard for the interests of the community in which they occur?

3d-Would it be possible to enact and enforce laws, without encroaching upon the liberties of the people, ~~that~~ that would wholly, or to any considerable extent, prevent the interruption of industry and the other evil consequences of Strikes? If so, what legislation would you advise in that direction?

4th-Is a combination of employers advisable for the purpose of resisting Strikes of workmen? If so, how should such a combination proceed?

5th-Would a Combination of Employers engaged in ONE business be able to successfully overcome a Strike of workmen if the Strikers were supported by means of assessments levied upon workmen of OTHER trades, then in employment?

6th-Would a GENERAL Combination of Employers, representing diverse business interests be successful in such a case as is supposed in the last question? If so, what would be the most advisable method of proceeding?

7th-Do you employ in your establishment any Officers, Agents, or other members of "trades Unions" or Combinations of workers? If so, have they given you any trouble? Can you arrange to replace them with others who are not members of such Combinations? Do you consider it advisable to make the effort?

8th-What restrictions are imposed upon you as an Employer by combinations of workmen assuming to regulate the pay or other conditions of labor?

9th-What Restrictions, if any, are imposed by "Trades Unions" or other Combinations, upon persons who seek or obtain employment in your establishment?

10th-Assuming that a large proportion of workmen

are opposed to the Restrictions and aggressive measures sought to be enforced by the "Trades Unions", can you suggest any means of organizing this element so as to make its influence felt? Would you consider such a course advisable?

11th-Can you suggest any condition more favorable for the workman, seeking the largest results of his labor, than that which leaves him free liberty to dispose of it to that Employer who will freely pay him the greatest value therefore?

(Capitalization is the same as that used in the circular.

Enough space was left after each question to allow the recipient of the circular to answer it.)

I was unable to find the results of this canvass, but it seems the whole movement just died off without leaving any practical results.

Employers' associations had appeared in the 'thirties and 'sixties along with the small trade unions that cropped up from time to time. But as soon as these disappeared, the associations followed suit, there being no need for them any longer. However, when the labor movement began to loom large again, in the form of organizations such as the Knights of Labor and the American Federation of Labor, employers once again united the better to cope with organized labor. These employers' associations are of two general types. The one kind favors, or at least does not oppose the labor union movement, and is formed simply so as to make collective bargaining possible, for where the union bargains with individual employers, that is not at all collective. These associations send representatives to meet representatives of the trade unions, and then formal trade agreements are entered into. The other type of association is formed for the specific purpose of resisting trade unions. The members of these associations, which count many private anti-unionist citizens in their ranks, are determined to break the organized labor movement and to see that every laborer has complete liberty of contract as well as liberty of action.

In their form of organization these associations, both those that favor unions and those that do not, are quite similar to the latter. In the words of Mr. Willoughby:

"As regards methods, it is interesting to note to how large an extent the employers' associations have profited by the experience of the trade unions, and have copied the means of action developed by them. Almost every important feature of trade union organization finds its counterpart in the employers' organizations. Each attempts rigidly to control the action of its members in respect to the inauguration or settlement of trade disputes. Each has its defence fund and aids financially and in other ways the member involved in a dispute resulting in a cessation of work. While the trade union seeks to limit the opportunities for employment to a body of men professing its

principles, the employers' organization through its employment and registration systems and the giving of certificates of recommendation, attempts to secure another labor force that will make it independent of such union labor. Just as the unions also have found it necessary to employ salaried business agents, or 'walking delegates' as they were formally more usually called, so the employers' organizations have their commissioners with analogous functions."*

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THE S.F.N.D.A.: On June 14, 1886, thirty members of the old National Association of Stove Founders held a meeting in Cincinnati and proceeded to organize the Stove Founders' National Defense Association which had "for its purpose the unification of its members for protection and defense against unjust, unlawful, and unwarranted demands of labor." The "labor" in this case referring in particular to the Iron Moulders' Union, a well-organized, aggressive union which had given the employers quite some trouble. This is the first instance of an organization on a national scale of the employers in a single industry formed expressly for the purpose of opposing the trade unions. The old association had also been national but it was formed about thirteen years previously for trade purposes, not to combat the unions, and furthermore it was only a loose union which had no real strength. (A few unsuccessful and short-lived local associations had been formed previously, such as the Iron Founders' Association in Connecticut in 1871, and the Stove Manufacturers' Association of Albany and Troy in 1884.) This S.F.N.D.A. was so successful that it served as a model for most of the later employers' associations. The Association itself grew rapidly until it numbered about sixty firms out of the 250 or 260 stove manufacturers in the country, but these sixty firms employed ~~about~~ half the molders engaged in the stove-molding industry. **

The Association started out as one of the militant organizations, determined to resist labor to the finish, and from 1886 to 1891 it was successful in every combat with the Iron Moulders' Union. Finally the latter was willing to come to terms, and on March 25, 26, and 27, 1891 a conference was held at Chicago between representatives of the two groups. Here "it was agreed that there would be no strikes or lock-outs and that all differences be amicably settled upon a basis outlined in the conference agreements." The result was described by the Association in these words: "Conferences have been held each year since and agreements which have been closely adhered to by both organizations, with the result that better and more substantial results have followed and all serious trouble has been avoided since the first conference was held." ***

- * Willoughby, W.F., Employers' Associations for Dealing with Labor in the U.S., in Quart. Journ. of Econ. Vol. XX, 183
- ** Hilbert, F.W., Employers' Associations, in Studies in American Trade Unionism. Pp. 194-195
- *** Manual of S.F.N.D.A. P. 3

Since other employers' associations modelled their methods after those of the S.F.N.D.A., it might be well to see how this Association dealt with strikes prior to 1891 when the conference agreement was entered into and rendered this feature obsolete. If the employees of a member struck, he was helped in one or more of the following ways:

1. Other members of the Association had to do his casting for him; 2. The Association helped him get men to carry on his work up to 70% of the number regularly employed by him; 3. The Association gave him not more than \$2.00 a day per man employed, to compensate for loss of production, of course. Furthermore the Association paid for police protection and legal persecutions. (Constitution & By-Laws, Art. 8 Secs. 4, 6)

On becoming a member of the Association, an employer had to deposit a sum of money in an emergency fund, and to sign the following pledge:

"We, the undersigned, do hereby covenant and agree to and with each and every person composing the membership of the Stove Founders' National Defense Association as follows:

"First.—Any unjust demands made upon a member of said Association by his workmen, or others, shall be resisted by the united action of all members in protecting said member upon whom such unjust demand shall be made.

"We bind ourselves to obey the Constitution, By-Laws and lawful regulations of this Association." *

The Association was ruled by a General Executive Committee and four district committees, one in each of the four districts into which the territory covered by the Association was divided. These committees were elected annually as were also the National President, the two Vice-Presidents, and the Treasurer. These latter four, together with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of each of the four committees made up the General Executive Committee. (These verbs might all be in the present for the Association still exists and the organization is the same.) As for the functions of the Executive Committee, it "shall make such assessments as are requisite to provide for necessary expenses, and shall have full power to act in such manner as it may deem advisable for the effectual fulfillment of the object of the Association." **

In addition to the conferences with the Iron Moulders' Union, the Association arranged for conferences with the Stove Mounters' International Union of North America and the ~~Metal~~ Metal Polishers, Buffers, Platers, Brass Molders and Brass Workers' International Union of North America. Perhaps the best measure of success of the Association is the fact that from 1886 to 1900 the average expenses per year of the Association were only \$4000.

* Bonnett, C.E., Employers' Associations in the U.S., P.39

** Quoted Ibid P.38

So successful was the S.F.N.D.A. that the founders who manufactured other articles in their foundries (other than stoves) decided to form an association too. They had had almost constant trouble with their workmen, especially with the Iron Moulders' Union, and they felt that an organization was absolutely necessary. "So bad was the situation, it is said, that a trade-union official suggested to the machinery foundrymen that they should organize to lessen the trouble." (Bonnett 67) The Association was formed on January 26, 1898 in New York as the National Founders' Association. From the very beginning it did not oppose trade unions, indeed it was formed "with the distinct understanding and the knowledge that a labor organization existed, and a right to exist; that men had a right to join each other for their mutual benefits." (Ibid 68)

In accordance with these principles, an agreement called the New York Agreement was entered into by the Union and the Association, providing for conferences, negotiations, and prohibiting either side from stopping the work until any disputes that might arise could be fully considered. This agreement did not work quite so well and in 1904 it was abrogated and replaced by an Outline of Policy drawn up by the Association. A rather novel means of preventing strikes has been adopted by this Association, to wit, the sending of its publication, the Open Shop Review, a monthly, to the homes of the workmen. This magazine in every which way aims to show the workmen that his condition is not so bad, to show that the high cost of living is to a large extent due to the restrictions of unions, to present the employers' side of the labor problem, to "counteract the influence of the socialistic and radical unionism of the time," to show the advantages of individual contract and so on. (Ibid 84-85).

Extremely important is the attempt by this Association as well as by many of the others, to oppose labor legislation both in state and the national legislatures. According to the Open Shop Review, "it is not a question of laws that we want, not a question of more legislation; what we want is obedience to our present laws." It criticized very strongly the methods used by Chairman Walsh of the Industrial Commission at the hearings, and it condemned the final report of that Commission. It must also be noted that many of these Associations are interrelated, the members of one being also members of another, etc. Bonnett gives fourteen different ways in which these associations were interrelated. (P.551) Naturally this made their influence much greater.

According to statistics compiled by the Dayton Employers' Association, one of the most aggressive ones in America, there were in 1903, 59 national associations of employers and citizens, 66 district and state associations, and 335 local organizations.

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