

SUGGESTIONS IN AID OF THE SETTLEMENT
OF LABOR DISPUTES.

1. There is a wide spread feeling in the country that many strikes are caused by a minority in the unions who seize control of the management and impose a strike vote. While this may not be true in any large proportion of the cases, the belief that it may be so often influences public opinion and creates a sentiment which makes a conciliation of labor disputes difficult. The suggestion is that elections and strike votes in all industries employing large numbers of men be conducted by the appropriate public authority that conducts our state and municipal elections.

The history of election laws in California may be cited as an illustration of the way in which this is apt to work. Originally the ballots of the Democratic and Republican parties were prepared by the party leaders and contained a list of the candidates,

and if one did not wish to vote a straight ticket he "scratched" a name and wrote in another. As there was no regulation of the shape or size of the ballot or the kind of type to be used, the system was abused until on one occasion the so-called "tape-worm" ticket was presented. The ballot was printed in such small type and the names were so close together that there was no possible way of "scratching" one and inserting another, the object being to force people to vote a straight ticket. This abuse ultimately led to the enactment of the Australian Ballot law providing that the ballots should be prepared by public authority and should conform to certain requirements making a fair vote possible. The abuse then shifted to the nomination of the party candidates whose names were to appear upon the official ballot. Now we have a primary election law which provides for a fair vote at the primary election and for a simple and easy method of nominating candidates at the primary. Latterly, a movement has commenced for eliminating one of the two elections, by providing a system of preferential voting, whereby second and third choices are counted if the first choices do not

elect by majority. Election frauds are now practically eliminated in California.

The objection that may be urged against having the public take charge of votes in the unions - that they are unofficial and are not governmental organizations - was one that was urged when our primary election law was passed, as our political parties had no official or legal sanction. The answer is that the unions are an important group in the community and that their action affects the public interest to an extent which justifies the public in insisting that their control be democratic and that their action be a correct reflection of the majority will.

The expense attached to conducting such elections should be borne by the public, though there can be no objection to its being borne by the unions themselves and the employers, or either, until such time as public opinion places the burden where it properly belongs.

2. Where a strike vote is proposed, it should be accompanied by a statement on the part of those favoring it of the pre-

cial reasons why the strike should be called, and a similar statement of their position should be required of those opposed, or of the employers,- these statements to be referred to a standing or special commission of the public for investigation and report within a predetermined period, before which it should be illegal to strike. In this way there may be an informed public opinion before the date set for the strike, and the chances for an arbitration or agreement will be much improved. However, the right to strike after this procedure, should be absolute. The intention is to have a procedure somewhat similar to the League of Nations for settlement of international disputes.

3. If the rate of pay be in dispute, the new rate should be retroactive from the date set for the strike, though the proceedings of arbitration or conciliation, if adopted, may take some time, and meantime the employees should remain at work - thus protecting both sides.

The foregoing plan can be used in conjunction with other means devised to bring about industrial peace.