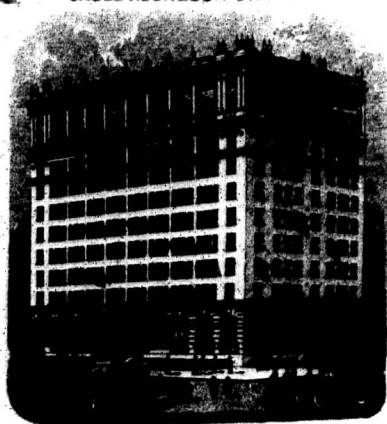




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PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE

EIGHTEENTH AND H STREETS

E. C. OWEN,
MANAGER.

Washington, D.C.

October 25, 1919.

Secretary Lane,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Secretary Lane:

new I want you to know that I personally was utterly opposed to the decision of the Public Group of the Industrial Conference to give up the work which they had been asked to do. I do not consider the report we turned in as an adequate answer to the request made of us by the President and so ably interpreted by you. I made as good a fight as I could in the sub-committee of which I was a member and of which Mr. Barzuch was chairman for a program of suggestions which would have something in it of the spirit of the new movement which is going on in industry in this country. The Labor Group, as led by Mr. Gompers, are afraid of this new movement. The majority of the members in the Employers Group of the conference did not see the meaning of this movement at all, but they are afraid of any kind of industrial organization of workers. They were fighting Gompers and Gompers was fighting the new movement in industry, and so wellfell into a hopeless tangle. The depression and skepticism resulting from the two weeks' struggle was so heavy in our group that they were not able to rally. If they had been directed by the President to go away and return with some fresh material, which he might have mentioned, at the end of two weeks, possibly we might have gotten something, but that is only a guess. My position was at the end that while we ought to go on it was hopeless to go on in the mood of the group.

Rockefeller

My judgment just now is that it would be a mistake to call together the Committee of Fifteen, which is suggested in our report. This conference is dead and any attempt at the moment to substitute something for it will be futile. Something entirely new may suggest itself somewhere. My own feeling at the moment is, my dear Secretary, that we should each go to work in our own way to try to interpret the liberal spirit that is abroad in industry, to keep it to the front as much as possible, largely as an industrial revolution bound to bring great changes, but not changes in any way to be feared as they can come about by liberal education and liberal experiment. Whatever happens in the way of revolutionary attempts should not be allowed to disturb the liberal minded.

It seems certain to me that there are certain things which must be adjusted in securing new Industrial Relations; the first is a thoroughgoing Co-operative Management. Every possible attempt to organize workers from the simple shop committee up to the more elaborate trades unions ought to be considered in this. Somehow we ought to keep to the front all the new methods of handling hours, wages, conditions of all sorts. I succeeded in getting into the report to the President a motion which I believe is sound and which came to me in the course of the conference here from an outside party, and that was that some kind of Consulting Bureau the Labor Department which should give to forward-looking employers a sort of a clearing house for industrial relations.

There must be some kind of arbitration and I am convinced that it ought to begin in the shop, with courts of appeal leading up to some kind of a federal head. There is no end of hopeful experiments going on in handling the unemployment problem; there are numerous plans that ought to be encouraged; there are efforts at cooperation, all of which ought to have come out in this council, and which possibly might yet be put out by the Government if you could get together a group and let them work on it quietly. But such a group should be an entirely new group. Nobody in this conference should be connected with it, of that I am convinced. We all have come out of this with varying degrees of intellectual and and spiritual paralysis and if the Government desires to go on it should take a new set of victims.

I have taken the liberty of writing this long letter, dear Secretary Lane, because as I said at the first, I wanted you to know that I did not willingly lay down and because I do thoroughly believe that there are new relations working out in industrial life and that they are going to decide the future conduct of industry; that they are stronger than the revolutionary forces now at work, but at the same time I am not sure but it is going to be necessary to have the revolution to break through the crust and give the new thing a chance to work, and if that is the only way we shall have to grin and bear it. Revolutions are costly, but it sometimes seems as if they were the only way by which we could get the jam out of the river of progress.

Please permit me to express my appreciation of your handling of the conference and particularly of your insistence of what I believe to have been our duty.

Faithfully yours,