

XIX:

Industrial Conference

The work was spiked from the start.

(See Introduction) As soon as the body was organized there came a resolution purely political from Samuel Gompers, head of the Labor group. At that moment ^a serious strike against the steel industry was under way. Watching the strike I had been convinced that Mr. Gompers was being pushed beyond his candid judgment by the radical groups inside attempting to control the Federation of Labor. It happens time and again of course in strikes, that this boring within has driven experienced labor groups, steadily making their way towards the machinery of co-operation through arbitration, to turn to force. It is happening now. But this Conference had not been called by the President ^{existing} to settle/labor troubles. or It was called to form a plan for the ^{peaceful} future/conduct of industry and before any step had been taken towards that plan here came this purely political group. It ^{into} threw the Conference/confusion. It was like a brand of fire thrown ^{to} in/a yard where building materials had been gathered. What were we to do with that brand? Could it be put out?

Story of First Industrial Conference - why it broke up.

It was a complete collapse of the cooperative spirit. Back of this discourse was complete failure all around to understand what real cooperation meant. If we could have gotten the principles of Frederick Taylor before that Conference, put it into its preamble, say, as principles it might have been different. As soon as I accepted the invitation to it I had a strong feeling that now was a chance to make a large number understand what it

meant. I appealed to my friend Morris Cooke whose work in connection with the Taylor system has been so vital. Could it not be brought before the Conference? Mr. Cooke put down for me his ideas, but there never was an opportunity for that soundest of body of industrial principles. The Conference was not organized before politics had been thrust before it, the whole object cast aside by its all-powerful labor leader Samuel Gompers.

When the first Industrial Conference was over, what was called a blot, there was a second one. They put out an admirable program, a program which has what I believe to be the sense of sound industrial organization. It fell flat.