Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

LONG DISTANCE TELEPHONE NATIONAL 3870-1-2-3-4
CABLE ADDRESS, AFEL.

Executive Council
President, WILLIAM GREEN.
Secretary-Treasurer, FRANK MORRISON
A. F. of L. Building, Washington, D. C.

First Vice-President, FRANK DUFFY, Carpenters' Building, Indianapolis, Ind.
Second Vice-President, T. A. RICKERT, 621 Bible House, New York, N. Y.
Third Vice-President, MATTHEW WOLL, 570 Lexington Ave., New York, N. Y.
Fourth Vice-President, JOHN COEFIELD, Machinists' Building, Washington, D. C.
Fifth Vice-President, ARTHUR O. WHARTON, Machinists' Building, Washington, D. C.
Sixth Vice-President, JOSEPH N. WEBER, 1450 Broadway, New York, N. Y.
Seventh Vice-President, G. M. BUGNIAZET, 1200 Fifteenth St., N. W., Washington, D. C.
Eighth Vice-President, GEO. M. HARRISON, Railway Clerks' Bldg., Cincinnati, O.
Ninth Vice-President, DANIEL J. TOBIN, 223 East Michigan Street, Indianapolis, Ind.
Tenth Vice-President, WILLIAM L. HUTCHESON, Carpenters' Building, Indianapolis, Ind.
Eleventh Vice-President, DAVID DUBINSKY, 3 West Sixteenth Street, New York, N. Y.
Twelfth Vice-President, HARRY C. BATES, 815 Fifteenth St., N.W., Washington, D. C.
Thirteenth Vice-President, EDWARD J. GAINOR, 408 A. F. of L. Building, Washington, D. C.
Fourteenth Vice-President, W. D. MAHON, 260 Vernor Highway, East, Detroit, Mich.
Fifteenth Vice-President, FELIX H. KNIGHT, 400-403 Carmen's Bldg., Kansas City, Mo.

EH

Washington, D. C. April 1, 1936.

Miss Ida M. Tarbell,

120 East Nineteenth Street,

New York, N.Y.

Dear Miss Tarbell:

Your letter dated March 24 received.

You refer to a resolution which is quoted as an action of the 1886 convention of the American Federation of Labor, urging workmen to "lay by a certain sum, say $3.00 per week; invest the same in the necessities of life before the dawn of May, 1886, and be in the position to defy defeat."

We have looked up the proceedings of the annual convention of 1886 and of those immediately preceding and following that convention but can not find that a resolution was adopted as quoted in your letter.

I herewith furnish excerpts of the declarations and actions of the American Federation of Labor conventions of that period as printed in the A.F.of L. History, Encyclopedia and Reference Book.

It may be of interest to you to know that the

Miss Ida M. Tarbell - No. 2.

International Typographical Union, of which I am a member, spent over four million dollars to establish the eight hour day, and nine years later seventeen million dollars to establish the forty-four hour week. Both of these amounts were collected by assessments upon the members of the I.T.U.

Yours sincerely,

Frank Morrison

Secretary-Treasurer
American Federation of Labor.

Enclosure.

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

EIGHT HOUR DAY

Excerpts of declarations and actions of the conventions of the American Federation of Labor from 1885 to 1891 inclusive.

(1885, P. 9) K. of L. had been requested to cooperate with the A. F. of L. in the eight hour strike but no answer was received. (pp. 11-12-14) Workmen who, in their endeavor to reform the prevailing economic conditions must rely on themselves and their own power exclusively, have found an echo in the hearts of all organized men of the country who are fighting for a principle and are willing to make sacrifices to secure improvements for themselves and their fellow countrymen. All unions under jurisdiction of the federation are called on to report before March 1, 1886, what action they have taken to introduce the eight hour day; that all unions not yet having determined to demand the shorter workday are requested to assist those that have with all the power at their command; provided, that, together with the reduction of the hours of labor they do not ask for an increase in wages. Provision made for the questioning of employers for the purpose of securing a reduction in hours by agreement.

(1886, p.6) Results of the universal strike May 1, 1886, were reported by the Executive Council: "While we are not able to record the general adoption of eight hours (with the exception of two or three industries and some of the building trades in certain localities) we nevertheless claim the eight hour agitation was the means of reducing the daily working time of no less than 200,000 workers in industries working ten hours or more a day to twelve, ten and nine respectively. The tremendous advantages obtained are plainly apparent. Much hostility has been met from employers, although the reduction in hours was accompanied by a corresponding reduction in wages. But sufficient has been gained for an incentive to renewed efforts, and we recommend still further reducing of the working time." (p. 9) Urged all affiliated Unions to take action that will be binding on every member so that harmonious and joint action may be secured, the "primary object to be the recognition of the eight hour system, and that the question of wages is for the time being of secondary importance."

(1887, pp. 9-25) Called attention to the rapidly increasing number of unemployed because of the introduction of machinery. Is it not time something be done to reclaim from misery the many thousands of good and true union men whose only fault is they have stomachs to fill, with ready and willing hands to supply their wants, bur continually receiving the stereotyped reply in answer to their appeals for work: " No jobs open." This evil can only be met by reducing the hours of labor and this answer is suggested to be given all opponents of the shorter workday: "That so long

as there is one man who seeks employment and cannot obtain it the the hours of labor are too long."

(1888, pp. 9-25) It is true, as many say, the eight hour movement in 1886 was not entirely successful. It is also true no movement that has for its object the improvement of conditions of a whole people ever could succeed in the first, aye, even in the second attempt. It is always a hard struggle to achieve any improvement, but the benefits we gained in 1886 and since then by reason of the eight hour movement are sufficient to encourage us to make the venture again. We should not lose sight of the fact that as a result of the movement in 1886 a number of trades have reduced their hours from ten and twelve to eight; others from twelve and fourteen to ten and nine, and many thousands of workmen who before that time worked fourteen to eighteen hours a day have had their hours of labor reduced to twelve. May 1, 1890. was selected as the date for another general demand by all trades for the eight hour day. The program for agitation adopted provided for mass meetings Washington's Birthday, Fourth of July and Labor Day by all labor organizations to agitate for the shorter workday. The Executive Council was instructed to gather statistics of the hours worked by the various trades and to send circulars to all employers requesting them to meet representatives of labor so the reduction of hours could be brought about by friendly arrangement.

(1889, pp. 14-15-19) The eight hour movement had reached tremendous proportions. In the whole history of the labor movement there had not been any question upon which the thoughts of the civilized world had been so thoroughly centered. In 1888 the combined forces and influences of the employing and speculative classes so thoroughly held the master hand over labor, they had become so overbearing, had so thoroughly awed the working people into submission that every meeting night of labor organizations was but the repetition of the various notices of a reduction in wages, the imposition of obnoxious rules, the presentation of ironclad obligations to sign away the right to organize for self-protection, propositions to increase the hours of labor--in a word, labor seemed to have no right, economic or political, that capital was bound to respect. It was at that time the proclamation to the world was made to enforce the eight hour day May 1, 1890. From that moment a change took place. Hope was instilled into the hearts and minds of the workers to supplant despair. The rallying cry of eight hours was sounded. The working people again stood erect and staunch in their manhood. The tide had changed. This refutes the idle talk of failure and to assert our movement already has been fraught with good results. To further organization and the agitation for the eight hour day 60,000 copies of pamphlets written by the best economic thinkers were distributed. They were: "The Eight Hour Primer,""by George E. McNeil; "The Economic and Social Importance of the Eight Hour Movement," by George Gunton, and "The History and Philosophy of the Eight Hour Movement," by Lemuel Danryid.Executive Council was instructed to select one or more trades to make the struggle for the shorter workday. (pp. 29-30) An assessment of 10 cents a member per week was levied to support the trades that would

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

enter the shorter workday struggle. To all who love liberty and are loyal to the principles of free government; to all who look forward to an increased wealth more widely distributed; to all lovers of the human race everywhere; to union men and those not now under the banner of organized labor we appeal, in the name of justice and humanity, of increased wealth and diminished poverty, to concentrate their energies upon the single issue of reduction of the hours of labor. The agitation for the shorter workday spread to Europe. The International Labor Congress at its convention in Paris in 1889, in sympathy with the labor movement in the U. S. voted to hold simultaneous meetings in every city in Europe, May 1, 1890. The carpenters were selected to make the eight hour struggle May 1, 1890.

(1890, pp. 13-42) The carpenters' eight hour strike was successful in 137 cities, benefiting 46,197 workmen directly and countless others in every branch of the building industry. The establishment of the eight hour day will not be the end of the efforts of the working people for economic and social improvements and reforms. Yet the great good a substantial reduction in the hours of labor will bring to the toilers of our country, the hundreds of thousands it will save from poverty and degradation, will clear and prepare the working people to see the wrongs and injustice practiced on them in subtle and ingenious ways. (p. 42) To all who have aided in the triumph of organized labor the A. F. of L. tenders its most hearty thanks and summons them anew to grander fields of action. Eight hours is the voiced instinct of the human race. It means the scientific, economic, peaceful solution of the labor problem along the line of industrial development. It means more wealth today and more tomorrow, the added wealth keeping pace with the increased value of each hour of toil. The miners were chosen to make the next fight for the shorter workday May 1, 1891. (p. 36) An eight hour day means a 48 hour week.

(1891, pp. 12-46) Agitation to aid the miners' struggle was continued until May 1, 1891, when they notified the A. F. of L. officials it had been postponed. The International Typographical Union had previously postponed a shorter workday strike because the miners had been selected. Executive Council requested to select another trade to make the eight hour campaign, May 1. 1892.

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.