

Reference is to review by John A. Fitch, Survey,
Jan 1, 1926

Dear Mr. Fitch:

Of course I have read your review of my Life of Judge Gary with very deep interest, and, naturally, with considerable wincing. I would not trouble you with this letter if I did not have so much respect for your work and did not feel it valuable, and also if what you had written was not temperate. Besides I know that it is completely honest.

There are two or three points that I want to take up. First, your second claim (p.44) where you refer to Judge Gary's remark in regard to shutting down mills for which they would sign, and quote Neal as saying that that happened at the meeting of June 17, 1901.

He is wrong in this, and that mistake puts the remark in a very different light. As of course you know, the Steel Corporation at the start had no labor policy. There was strong disagreement in the Board whether it should have one or not, whether the wise procedure was not to leave labor matters entirely to the subsidiaries. On June 17th there was the first long discussion that had been held on labor matters in which this division of opinion came strongly to the front. At this time Mr. Schwab as President of the company, was assuming responsibility for labor. He was entirely optimistic about the situation. He assumed that he knew what the

about the situation. He assumed that he knew what the Amalgamated was going to do. They finally ended this meeting in which there was strong division of opinion by what they called a suggestion, by which President Schwab was to convey to the subsidiaries. The gist of the suggestion was that they were unalterably opposed to any extension of union labor, that they were not going to recognize any extension of unions in mills where they did not then exist.

Between this date and July 2, the scales were signed, and Mr. Scwab declared everything was in splendid shape. That is, on June 25 the President reported that the labor question was in splendid shape and that he believed they would get through without serious trouble. The scales were signed. It was on July 2 that the President presented a letter from Mr. Schaeffer, threatening that he would call out the men in the Tin Plate Company, who had already signed the scale, if the scales in certain disputed mills in the sheet and hoop companies were not agreed to, - if three mills in the sheet and hoop companies were not conceded to the Association. The matter was put to vote and according to the minutes the Chairman stated that in his opinion it would be a good way out of a bad thing. There was a long discussion, and it was in the course of this discussion that the Chairman stated he would be willing to concede the mills so that the men would be satisfied if they gained the point, and, as I understand it, the reason for keeping the McKeesport mill shut down - although this does not appear in the minutes - was that the entire management there had threatened to walk out in a body if the Union was recognized, that being the point where, as you know, there was much trouble.

It seems to me, my dear Mr. Fitch, that there is a good deal of difference between this remark, made in the course of a long and heated discussion in which there was the most positive differences of opinion as to what should be done, under the circumstances, no labor policy having yet been settled on, and Mr. Schaeffer's calling out of men after scales had been agreed to.

You say that my treatment of the labor policy of the Steel Corporation is a defense. That must be bad writing

on my part. What I was attempting to do was to show by the documents that the Steel Corporation has a labor policy and to explain what it is, for it does seem to me, my dear Mr. Fitch, that it has attempted seriously and consistently to build up points of actual not theoretical interest between men and management.

I have been a great deal up and down the Pittsburgh district and two or three times in the Birmingham district and at Gary. I don't know much about it, my dear Mr. Fitch, but I have gotten a conviction that something very actual and very good for many human beings is coming about through the labor policies of the Steel Corporation. All I want to do is to explain them. They ought to have their chance.

I believe there should be a cessation of war in the newspapers, that the idea that labor and capital are fundamentally antagonistic is false. I feel that the strike is false as a method. I do not believe in the closed shop, I think it the most anti-democratic of institutions, just as anti-democratic as a monopoly in an industry. I believe it is more important to make citizens than to make unionists. That is not saying that I do not believe in the trade union - I do - I am a member of the Women's Trade Union League of New York City, and shall remain one as long as they will let me, to show my sympathy with the idea of organization, to understand better your trade and all its relations.

And there are other points. Of course I don't believe that every one of the 250,000 or so workers of the Steel Corporation can go to Judge Gary, or tries to, any more than every one of the members of the Federation of Labor could go to Mr. Gompers, or try to. As near as I can make out, the

4

organization for a common laborer getting a voice in the Federation is not much better than his chance of getting a voice inside the Steel Corporation. Nor is his chance of getting on inside the union much better. He is represented by a leader, whether that leader is elected or not I do not know. It strikes me the leader is selected, not elected by the men, Or is he? Is he not appointed from above, and in the same way that your foreman and superintendents, etc., are? He is not appointed for skill in steel work, as a steel maker - he is appointed for his political skill. I have never been so sure, much as I believe in the Union, my dear Mr. Fitch, that the common man had very much chance in the union, except in small, very select unions. I may be wrong about that, there has always been a doubt in my mind about it.

Now, as to the 12-hour day. All I tried to do was to show Judge Gary's personal relation to that movement. I was not writing a history of the movement. I was not trying to exploit the splendid work that the Survey did in that agitation, or tell what the Engineers did or what the Unions did. I was simply trying to show the way the agitation affected Judge Gary, what he attempted to do. He was not the spokesman of the public or the Union or the Survey. He was the spokesman of his own Corporation, first, and secondly of the

spokesman of his own Corporation, first, and secondly of the steel industry. He had to lead them, and I do feel that the documents show that he raised the question - which was the important thing - the putting it to his Corporation in 1911. That certainly was something. That is, he was showing what I think was true of him, not a defiance but a response to public opinion. And you know that they began gradually to cut it down at that time. If you remember the case of the Armco

of the American Rolling Company, which I believe is one of the classic illustrations of what could be done if the management would, they took up the case in 1913, the year after the Steel Corporation's report and the announcement of Judge Gary that a great attempt had been begun to see what could be done about it.

Of course you remember the letters that were written in 1921 or 2 by Mr. _____ giving their experiences, how it had taken them since 1913 to effect a change in a body of some six or seven thousand men, where they had a most sympathetic management, and how at the moment that report was made there were still small groups in which the change had not been effected. I am not saying that Judge Gary might not have done more, but I am inclined to think that, all things being considered, he did about as much as you could expect a man, situated as he was, could do in bringing his industry to accept public opinion in the matter of the 12-hour day; and at the last the documents show that his activity and his expressions were influential.

I have quoted what Mr. Hoover told me. Of course if I had been writing a history of the whole movement instead of singling out one man's part in it, I should have given a good deal of attention to the work of the Survey. I was rather taking that work for granted. I more than once mentioned the fact that Judge Gary from time to time called attention to public opinion on the 12-hour day and warned them that it would have to go, if for no other reason. You may think that in your interviews with him he was not sympathetic, you must remember for whom he was speaking.

Here I have written a long letter, and I suppose it

will not in any way change your judgment of what I have written. But I don't know that it is written for that purpose, rather that I meant it as a little fuller explanation of what I have written, and believe me dear Mr. Fitch, it is not account of myself that I write this at all but because I have very much at heart the betterment of the life of all American people, people of all ranks and conditions. Moreover, I distrust very much anything that looks like recreating in our democracy the class system, and I sometimes cannot help but feel that some features of the work for laboring men is in danger of doing that. I should like to keep our whole body of citizenship in flux. I do not want to think of myself as belonging to a class for whose interests I am fighting. I want to think of myself as an independent citizen, and I am inclined to think that most American labor men want that as much as they want anything else, except a steady job, under good conditions, and with a decent wage. At all events, this letter is sent with good felling. Believe me, I have never had anything else towards you, and if Mrs. Fitch has not been too shocked by my life of Gary, will you not please give her my best regards.

Very sincerely yours