CHAPTER X

PIONEER LABOR LEGISLATION IN ILLINOIS

OUR VERY FIRST Christmas at Hull-House, when we as yet knew nothing of child labor, a number of little girls refused the candy which was offered them as part of the Christmas good cheer, saying simply that they “worked in a candy factory and could not bear the sight of it.” We discovered that for six weeks they had worked from seven in the morning until nine at night, and they were exhausted as well as satiated. The sharp consciousness of stern economic conditions was thus thrust upon us in the midst of the season of good will.

During the same winter three boys from a Hull-House club were injured at one machine in a neighboring factory for lack of a guard which would have cost but a few dollars. When the injury of one of these boys resulted in his death, we felt quite sure that the owners of the factory would share our horror and remorse, and that they would do everything possible to prevent the recurrence of such a tragedy. To our surprise they did nothing whatever, and I made my first acquaintance then with those pathetic documents signed by the parents of working children, that they will make no claim for damages resulting from “carelessness.”

The visits we made in the neighborhood constantly discovered women sewing upon sweatshop work, and often they were assisted by incredibly small children. I remember a little girl of four who pulled out basting threads hour after hour, sitting on a stool at the feet of her Bohemian mother, a little bunch of human misery. But even for that there was no legal redress, for the only child-labor law in Illinois, with any provision for enforcement, had been secured by the coal miners’ unions, and was confined to children employed in mines.

We learned to know many families in which the working children contributed to the support of their parents, not only because they spoke English better than the older immigrants and were willing to take lower wages, but because their parents gradually found it easy to live upon their earnings. A South Italian peasant who has picked olives and packed oranges from his toddling babyhood cannot see at once the difference between the outdoor healthy work which he had performed in the varying seasons, and the long hours of monotonous factory life which his child encounters when he goes to work in Chicago. An Italian father came to us in great grief over the death of his eldest child, a little girl of twelve, who had brought the largest wages into the family fund. In the midst of his genuine sorrow he said: “She was the oldest kid I had. Now I shall have to go back to work again until the next one is able to take care of me.” The man was only thirty-three and had hoped to retire from work at least during the winters. No foreman cared to have him in a factory, untrained and unintelligent as he was. It was much easier for his bright, English-speaking little girl to get a chance to paste labels on a box than for him to secure an opportunity to carry pig iron. The effect on the child was what no one concerned thought about, in the abnormal effort she

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made thus prematurely to bear the weight of life. Another little girl of thirteen, a Russian-Jewish child employed in a laundry at a heavy task beyond her strength, committed suicide, because she had borrowed three dollars from a companion which she could not repay unless she confided the story to her parents and gave up an entire week's wages—but what could the family live upon that week in case she did! Her child mind, of course, had no sense of proportion, and carbolic acid appeared inevitable.

While we found many pathetic cases of child labor and hard-driven victims of the sweating system who could not possibly earn enough in the short busy season to support themselves during the rest of the year, it became evident that we must add carefully collected information to our general impression of neighborhood conditions if we would make it of any genuine value.

There was at that time no statistical information on Chicago industrial conditions, and Mrs. Florence Kelley, an early resident of Hull-House, suggested to the Illinois State Bureau of Labor that they investigate the sweating system in Chicago with its attendant child labor. The head of the Bureau adopted this suggestion and engaged Mrs. Kelley to make the investigation. When the report was presented to the Illinois Legislature, a special committee was appointed to look into the Chicago conditions. I well recall that on the Sunday the members of this commission came to dine at Hull-House, our hopes ran high, and we believed that at last some of the worst ills under which our neighbors were suffering would be brought to an end.

As a result of its investigations, this committee recommended to the Legislature the provisions which afterward became those of the first factory law of Illinois, regulating the sanitary conditions of the sweatshop and fixing fourteen as the age at which a child might be employed. Before the passage of the law could be secured, it was necessary to appeal to all elements of the community, and a little group of us addressed the open meetings of trades-unions and of benefit societies, church organizations, and social clubs literally every evening for three months. Of course the most energetic help as well as intelligent understanding came from the trades-unions. The central labor body of Chicago, then called the Trades and Labor Assembly, had previously appointed a committee of investigation to inquire into the sweating system. This committee consisted of five delegates from the unions and five outside their membership. Two of the latter were residents of Hull-House, and continued with the unions in their well-conducted campaign until the passage of Illinois's first Factory Legislation was secured, a statute which has gradually been built upon by many public-spirited citizens until Illinois stands well among the States, at least in the matter of protecting her children. The Hull-House residents that winter had their first experience in lobbying. I remember that I very much disliked the word and still more the prospect of the lobbying itself, and we insisted that well-known Chicago women should accompany this first little group of Settlement folk who with trades-unionists moved upon the state capitol in behalf of factory legislation. The national or, to use its formal name, The General Federation of Woman's Clubs had been organized in Chicago only the year before this legislation was secured. The Federation was then timid in regard to all legislation because it was anxious not to frighten its

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new membership, although its second president, Mrs. Henrotin, was most untiring in her efforts to secure this law.

It was, perhaps, a premature effort, though certainly founded upon a genuine need, to urge that a clause limiting the hours of all women working in factories or workshops to eight a day, or forty-eight a week, should be inserted in the first factory legislation of the State. Although we had lived at Hull-House but three years when we urged this legislation, we had known a large number of young girls who were constantly exhausted by night work; for whatever may be said in defense of night work for men, few women are able to endure it. A man who works by night sleeps regularly by day, but a woman finds it impossible to put aside the household duties which crowd upon her, and a conscientious girl finds it hard to sleep with her mother washing and scrubbing within a few feet of her bed. One of the most painful impressions of those first years is that of pale, listless girls, who worked regularly in a factory of the vicinity which was then running full night time. These girls also encountered a special danger in the early morning hours as they returned from work, debilitated and exhausted, and only too easily convinced that a drink and a little dancing at the end of the balls in the saloon dance halls, was what they needed to brace them. One of the girls whom we then knew, whose name, Chloe, seemed to fit her delicate charm, craving a drink to dispel her lassitude before her tired feet should take the long walk home, had thus been decoyed into a saloon, where the soft drink was followed by an alcoholic one containing “knockout drops,” and she awoke in a disreputable rooming house—too frightened and disgraced to return to her mother.

Thus confronted by that old conundrum of the interdependence of matter and spirit, the conviction was forced upon us that long and exhausting hours of work are almost sure to be followed by lurid and exciting pleasures; that the power to overcome temptation reaches its limit almost automatically with that of physical resistance. The eight-hour clause in this first factory law met with much less opposition in the Legislature than was anticipated, and was enforced for a year before it was pronounced unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of Illinois. During the halcyon months when it was a law, a large and enthusiastic Eight-Hour Club of working women met at Hull-House, to read the literature on the subject and in every way to prepare themselves to make public sentiment in favor of the measure which meant so much to them. The adverse decision in the test case, the progress of which they had most intelligently followed, was a matter of great disappointment. The entire experience left on my mind a mistrust of all legislation which was not preceded by full discussion and understanding. A premature measure may be carried through a legislature by perfectly legitimate means and still fail to possess vitality and a sense of maturity. On the other hand, the administration of an advanced law acts somewhat as a referendum. The people have an opportunity for two years to see the effects of its operation. If they choose to reopen the matter at the next General Assembly, it can be discussed with experience and conviction; the very operation of the law has performed the function of the “referendum” in a limited use of the term.

Founded upon some such compunction, the sense that the passage of the child labor law

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would in many cases work hardship, was never absent from my mind during the earliest years of its operation. I addressed as many mothers' meetings and clubs among working women as I could, in order to make clear the object of the law and the ultimate benefit to themselves as well as to their children. I am happy to remember that I never met with lack of understanding among the hard-working widows, in whose behalf many prosperous people were so eloquent. These widowed mothers would say, "Why, of course, that is what I am working for—to give the children a chance. I want them to have more education than I had"; or another, "That is why we came to America, and I don't want to spoil his start, even although his father is dead"; or "It's different in America. A boy gets left if he isn't educated." There was always a willingness, even among the poorest women, to keep on with the hard night scrubbing or the long days of washing for the children's sake.

The bitterest opposition to the law came from the large glass companies, who were so accustomed to use the labor of children that they were convinced the manufacturing of glass could not be carried on without it.

Fifteen years ago the State of Illinois, as well as Chicago, exhibited many characteristics of the pioneer country in which untrammeled energy and an "early start" were still the most highly prized generators of success. Although this first labor legislation was but bringing Illinois into line with the nations in the modern industrial world, which "have long been obliged for their own sakes to come to the aid of the workers by which they live—that the child, the young person and the woman may be protected from their own weakness and necessity?" nevertheless from the first it ran counter to the instinct and tradition, almost to the very religion of the manufacturers of the state, who were for the most part self-made men.

This first attempt in Illinois for adequate factory legislation also was associated in the minds of businessmen with radicalism, because the law was secured during the term of Governor Altgeld and was first enforced during his administration. While nothing in its genesis or spirit could be further from "anarchy" than factory legislation, and while the first law in Illinois was still far behind Massachusetts and New York, the fact that Governor Altgeld pardoned from the state's prison the anarchists who had been sentenced there after the Haymarket riot, gave the opponents of this most reasonable legislation a quickly utilized opportunity to couple it with that detested word; the State document which accompanied Governor Altgeld's pardon gave these ungenerous critics a further opportunity, because a magnanimous action was marred by personal rancor, betraying for the moment the infirmity of a noble mind. For all of these reasons this first modification of the undisturbed control of the aggressive captains of industry could not be enforced without resistance marked by dramatic episodes and revolts. The inception of the law had already become associated with Hull-House, and when its ministration was also centered there, we inevitably received all the odium which these first efforts entailed. Mrs. Kelley was appointed the first factory inspector with a deputy and a force of twelve inspectors to enforce the law. Both Mrs. Kelley and her assistant, Mrs. Stevens, lived at Hull-House; the office was on Polk Street directly opposite, and one of the most vigorous deputies was the president of the Jane Club. In addition, one of the early men residents, since dean of a state law school, acted as prosecutor in the cases

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brought against the violators of the law.

Chicago had for years been notoriously lax in the administration of law, and the enforcement of an unpopular measure was resented equally by the president of a large manufacturing concern and by the former victim of a sweatshop who had started a place of his own. Whatever the sentiments toward the new law on the part of the employers, there was no doubt of its enthusiastic reception by the trades-unions, as the securing of the law had already come from them, and through the years which have elapsed since, the experience of the Hull-House residents would coincide with that of an English statesman who said that "a common rule for the standard of life and the condition of labor may be secured by legislation, but it must be maintained by trades unionism."

This special value of the trades-unions first became clear to the residents of Hull-House in connection with the sweating system. We early found that the women in the sewing trades were sorely in need of help. The trade was thoroughly disorganized, Russian and Polish tailors competing against English-speaking tailors, unskilled Bohemian and Italian women competing against both. These women seem to have been best helped through the use of the label when unions of specialized workers in the trade are strong enough to insist that the manufacturers shall "give out work" only to those holding union cards. It was certainly impressive when the garment makers themselves in this way finally succeeded in organizing six hundred of the Italian women in our immediate vicinity, who had finished garments at home for the most wretched and precarious wages. To be sure, the most ignorant women only knew that "you couldn't get clothes to sew" from the places where they paid the best, unless "you had a card," but through the veins of most of them there pulsed the quickened blood of a new fellowship, a sense of comfort and aid which had been laid out to them by their fellow-workers.

During the fourth year of our residence at Hull-House we found ourselves in a large mass meeting ardently advocating the passage of a Federal measure called the Sulzer Bill. Even in our short struggle with the evils of the sweating system it did not seem strange that the center of the effort had shifted to Washington, for by that time we had realized that the sanitary regulation of sweatshops by city officials, and a careful enforcement of factory legislation by state factory inspectors will not avail, unless each city and State shall be able to pass and enforce a code of comparatively uniform legislation. Although the Sulzer Act failed to utilize the Interstate Commerce legislation for its purpose, many of the national representatives realized for the first time that only by federal legislation could their constituents in remote country places be protected from contagious diseases raging in New York or Chicago, for many country doctors testify as to the outbreak of scarlet fever in rural neighborhoods after the children have begun to wear the winter overcoats and cloaks which have been sent from infected city sweatshops.

Through our efforts to modify the sweating system, the Hull-House residents gradually became committed to the fortunes of the Consumers' League, an organization which for years has been approaching the question of the underpaid sewing woman from the point of view of the ultimate responsibility lodged in the consumer. It becomes more reasonable to make the

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presentation of the sweatshop situation through this League, as it is more effectual to work with them for the extension of legal provisions in the slow upbuilding of that code of legislation which is alone sufficient to protect the home from the dangers incident to the sweating system.

The Consumers' League seems to afford the best method of approach for the protection of girls in department stores; I recall a group of girls from a neighboring "emporium" who applied to Hull-House for dancing parties on alternate Sunday afternoons. In reply to our protest they told us they not only worked late every evening, in spite of the fact that each was supposed to have "two nights a week off," and every Sunday morning, but that on alternate Sunday afternoons they were required "to sort the stock." Over and over again, meetings called by the Clerks Union and others have been held at Hull-House protesting against these incredibly long hours. Little modification has come about, however, during our twenty years of residence, although one large store in the Bohemian quarter closes all day on Sunday and many of the others for three nights a week. In spite of the Sunday work, these girls prefer the outlying department stores to those downtown; there is more social intercourse with the customers, more kindliness and social equality between the saleswomen and the managers, and above all the girls have the protection naturally afforded by friends and neighbors and they are free from that suspicion which so often haunts the girls downtown, that their fellow workers may not be "nice girls."

In the first years of Hull-House we came across no trades-unions among the women workers, and I think, perhaps, that only one union, composed solely of women, was to be found in Chicago then—that of the bookbinders. I easily recall the evening when the president of this pioneer organization accepted an invitation to take dinner at Hull-House. She came in rather a recalcitrant mood, expecting to be patronized, and so suspicious of our motives that it was only after she had been persuaded to become a guest of the house for several weeks in order to find out about us for herself, that she was convinced of our sincerity and of the ability of "outsiders" to be of any service to working women. She afterward became closely identified with Hull-House, and her hearty cooperation was assured until she moved to Boston and became a general organizer for the American Federation of Labor.

The women shirt makers and the women cloak makers were both organized at Hull-House as was also the Dorcas Federal Labor Union, which had been founded through the efforts of a working woman, then one of the residents. The latter union met once a month in our drawing room. It was composed of representatives from all the unions in the city which included women in their membership and also received other women in sympathy with unionism. It was accorded representation in the central labor body of the city, and later it joined its efforts with those of others to found the Woman's Union Label League. In what we considered a praiseworthy effort to unite it with other organizations, the president of a leading Woman's Club applied for membership. We were so sure of her election that she stood just outside of the drawing-room door, or, in trades-union language, "the wicket gate," while her name was voted upon. To our chagrin, she did not receive enough votes to secure her admission, not because the working girls, as they were careful to state, did not admire her, but because she

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"seemed to belong to the other side." Fortunately, the big-minded woman so thoroughly understood the vote and her interest in working women was so genuine that it was less than a decade afterward when she was elected to the presidency of the National Woman's Trades Union League. The incident and the sequel registers, perhaps, the change in Chicago toward the labor movement, the recognition of the fact that it is a general social movement concerning all members of society and not merely a class struggle.

Some such public estimate of the labor movement was brought home to Chicago during several conspicuous strikes; at least labor legislation has twice been inaugurated because its need was thus made clear. After the Pullman strike various elements in the community were unexpectedly brought together that they might soberly consider and rectify the weakness in the legal structure which the strike had revealed. These citizens arranged for a large and representative convention to be held in Chicago on Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration. I served as secretary of the committee from the new Civic Federation having the matter in charge, and our hopes ran high when, as a result of the agitation, the Illinois legislature passed a law creating a State Board of Conciliation and Arbitration. But even a state board cannot accomplish more than public sentiment authorizes and sustains, and we might easily have been discouraged in those early days could we have foreseen some of the industrial disturbances which have since disgraced Chicago. This law embodied the best provisions of the then existing laws for the arbitration of industrial disputes. At the time the word arbitration was still a word to conjure with, and many Chicago citizens were convinced, not only of the danger and futility involved in the open warfare of opposing social forces, but further believed that the search for justice and righteousness in industrial relations was made infinitely more difficult thereby.

The Pullman strike afforded much illumination to many Chicago people. Before it, there had been nothing in my experience to reveal that distinct cleavage of society, which a general strike at least momentarily affords. Certainly, during all those dark days of the Pullman strike, the growth of class bitterness was most obvious. The fact that the Settlement maintained avenues of intercourse with both sides seemed to give it opportunity for nothing but a realization of the bitterness and division along class lines. I had known Mr. Pullman and had seen his genuine pride and pleasure in the model town he had built with so much care; and I had an opportunity to talk to many of the Pullman employees during the strike when I was sent from a so-called "Citizens' Arbitration Committee" to their first meetings held in a hall in the neighboring village of Kensington, and when I was invited to the modest supper tables laid in the model houses. The employees then expected a speedy settlement and no one doubted but that all the grievances connected with the "straw bosses" would be quickly remedied and that the benevolence which had built the model town would not fail them. They were sure that the "straw bosses" had misrepresented the state of affairs, for this very first awakening to class consciousness bore many traces of the servility on one side and the arrogance on the other which had so long prevailed in the model town. The entire strike demonstrated how often the outcome of far-reaching industrial disturbances is dependent upon the personal will of the employer or the temperament of a strike leader. Those familiar

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with strikes know only too well how much they are influenced by poignant domestic situations, by the troubled consciences of the minority directors, by the suffering women and children, by the keen excitement of the struggle, by the religious scruples sternly suppressed but occasionally asserting themselves, now on one side and now on the other, and by that undefined psychology of the crowd which we understand so little. All of these factors also influence the public and do much to determine popular sympathy and judgment. In the early days of the Pullman strike, as I was coming down in the elevator of the Auditorium hotel from one of the futile meetings of the Arbitration Committee, I met an acquaintance, who angrily said "that the strikers ought all to be shot." As I had heard nothing so bloodthirsty as this either from the most enraged capitalist or from the most desperate of the men, and was interested to find the cause of such a senseless outbreak, I finally discovered that the first ten thousand dollars which my acquaintance had ever saved, requiring, he said, years of effort from the time he was twelve years old until he was thirty, had been lost as the result of a strike; he clinched his argument that he knew what he was talking about, with the statement that "no one need expect him to have any sympathy with strikers or with their affairs."

A very intimate and personal experience revealed, at least to myself, my constant dread of the spreading ill will. At the height of the sympathetic strike my oldest sister, who was convalescing from a long illness in a hospital near Chicago, became suddenly very much worse. While I was able to reach her at once, every possible obstacle of a delayed and blocked transportation system interrupted the journey of her husband and children who were hurrying to her bedside from a distant state. As the end drew nearer and I was obliged to reply to my sister's constant inquiries that her family had not yet come, I was filled with a profound apprehension lest her last hours should be touched with resentment toward those responsible for the delay; lest her unutterable longing should at the very end be tinged with bitterness. She must have divined what was in my mind, for at last she said each time after the repetition of my sad news: "I don't blame any one, I am not judging them." My heart was comforted and heavy at the same time; but how many more such moments of sorrow and death were being made difficult and lonely throughout the land, and how much would these experiences add to the lasting bitterness, that touch of self-righteousness which makes the spirit of forgiveness well-nigh impossible.

When I returned to Chicago from the quiet country I saw the Federal troops encamped about the post office; almost everyone on Halsted Street wearing a white ribbon, the emblem of the strikers' side; the residents at Hull-House divided in opinion as to the righteousness of this or that measure; and no one able to secure any real information as to which side was burning the cars. After the Pullman strike I made an attempt to analyze in a paper which I called *The Modern King Lear* the inevitable revolt of human nature against the plans Mr. Pullman had made for his employees, the miscarriage of which appeared to him such black ingratitude. It seemed to me unendurable not to make some effort to gather together the social implications of the failure of this benevolent employer and its relation to the demand for a more democratic administration of industry. Doubtless the paper represented a certain "excess of participation," to use a gentle phrase of Charles Lamb's in preference to a more

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emphatic one used by Mr. Pullman himself. The last picture of the Pullman strike which I distinctly recall was three years later when one of the strike leaders came to see me. Although out of work for most of the time since the strike, he had been undisturbed for six months in the repair shops of a street-car company, under an assumed name, but he had at that moment been discovered and dismissed. He was a superior type of English workingman, but as he stood there, broken and discouraged, believing himself so black-listed that his skill could never be used again, filled with sorrow over the loss of his wife who had recently died after an illness with distressing mental symptoms, realizing keenly the lack of the respectable way of living he had always until now been able to maintain, he seemed to me an epitome of the wretched human waste such a strike implies. I fervently hoped that the new arbitration law would prohibit in Chicago forever more such brutal and ineffective methods of settling industrial disputes. And yet even as early as 1896, we found the greatest difficulty in applying the arbitration law to the garment workers' strike, although it was finally accomplished after various mass meetings had urged it. The cruelty and waste of the strike as an implement for securing the most reasonable demands came to me at another time, during the long strike of the clothing cutters. They had protested, not only against various wrongs of their own, but against the fact that the tailors employed by the custom merchants were obliged to furnish their own workshops and thus bore a burden of rent which belonged to the employer. One of the leaders in this strike, whom I had known for several years as a sober, industrious, and unusually intelligent man, I saw gradually break down during the many trying weeks and at last suffer a complete moral collapse.

He was a man of sensitive organization under the necessity, as is every leader during a strike, to address the same body of men day after day with an appeal sufficiently emotional to respond to their sense of injury; to receive callers at any hour of the day or night; to sympathize with all the distress of the strikers who see their families daily suffering; he must do it all with the sickening sense of the increasing privation in his own home, and in this case with the consciousness that failure was approaching nearer each day. This man, accustomed to the monotony of his workbench and suddenly thrown into a new situation, showed every sign of nervous fatigue before the final collapse came. He disappeared after the strike and I did not see him for ten years, but when he returned he immediately began talking about the old grievances which he had repeated so often that he could talk of nothing else. It was easy to recognize the same nervous symptoms which the broken-down lecturer exhibits who has depended upon the exploitation of his own experiences to keep himself going. One of his stories was indeed pathetic. His employer, during the busy season, had met him one Sunday afternoon in Lincoln Park whither he had taken his three youngest children, one of whom had been ill. The employer scolded him for thus wasting his time and roughly asked why he had not taken home enough work to keep himself busy through the day. The story was quite credible because the residents of Hull-House have had many opportunities to see the worker driven ruthlessly during the season and left in idleness for long weeks afterward. We have slowly come to realize that periodical idleness as well as the payment of wages insufficient for maintenance of the manual worker in full industrial and domestic efficiency, stand

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economically on the same footing with the “sweated” industries, the overwork of women, and employment of children.

But of all the aspects of social misery nothing is so heartbreaking as unemployment, and it was inevitable that we should see much of it in a neighborhood where low rents attracted the poorly paid worker and many newly arrived immigrants who were first employed in gangs upon railroad extensions and similar undertakings. The sturdy peasants eager for work were either the victims of the padrone who fleeced them unmercifully, both in securing a place to work and then in supplying them with food, or they became the mere sport of unscrupulous employment agencies. Hull-House made an investigation both of the padrone and of the agencies in our immediate vicinity, and the outcome confirming what we already suspected, we eagerly threw ourselves into a movement to procure free employment bureaus under State control until a law authorizing such bureaus and giving the officials intrusted with their management power to regulate private employment agencies, passed the Illinois Legislature in 1899. The history of these bureaus demonstrates the tendency we all have to consider a legal enactment in itself an achievement and to grow careless in regard to its administration and actual results; for an investigation into the situation ten years later discovered that immigrants were still shamefully imposed upon. A group of Bulgarians were found who had been sent to work in Arkansas where their services were not needed; they walked back to Chicago only to secure their next job in Oklahoma and to pay another railroad fare as well as another commission to the agency. Not only was there no method by which the men not needed in Arkansas could know that there was work in Oklahoma unless they came back to Chicago to find it out, but there was no certainty that they might not be obliged to walk back from Oklahoma because the Chicago agency had already sent out too many men.

This investigation of the employment bureau resources of Chicago was undertaken by the League for the Protection of Immigrants, with whom it is possible for Hull-House to cooperate whenever an investigation of the immigrant colonies in our immediate neighborhood seems necessary, as was recently done in regard to the Greek colonies of Chicago. The superintendent of this League, Miss Grace Abbott, is a resident of Hull-House and all of our later attempts to secure justice and opportunity for immigrants are much more effective through the League, and when we speak before a congressional committee in Washington concerning the needs of Chicago immigrants, we represent the League as well as our own neighbors.

It is in connection with the first factory employment of newly arrived immigrants and the innumerable difficulties attached to their first adjustment that some of the most profound industrial disturbances in Chicago have come about. Under any attempt at classification these strikes belong more to the general social movement than to the industrial conflict, for the strike is an implement used most rashly by unorganized labor who, after they are in difficulties, call upon the trades-unions for organization and direction. They are similar to those strikes which are inaugurated by the unions on behalf of unskilled labor. In neither case do the hastily organized unions usually hold after the excitement of the moment has subsided, and the most valuable result of such strikes is the expanding consciousness of the solidarity

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of the workers. This was certainly the result of the Chicago stockyard strike in 1905, inaugurated on behalf of the immigrant laborers and so conspicuously carried on without violence that, although twenty-two thousand workers were idle during the entire summer, there were fewer arrests in the stockyards district than the average summer months afford. However, the story of this strike should not be told from Hull-House, but from the University of Chicago Settlement, where Miss Mary McDowell performed such signal public service during that trying summer. It would be interesting to trace how much of the subsequent exposure of conditions and attempts at governmental control of this huge industry had their genesis in this first attempt of the unskilled workers to secure a higher standard of living. Certainly the industrial conflict when epitomized in a strike, centers public attention on conditions as nothing else can do. A strike is one of the most exciting episodes in modern life, and as it assumes the characteristics of a game, the entire population of a city becomes divided into two cheering sides. In such moments the fair-minded public, who ought to be depended upon as a referee, practically disappears. Anyone who tries to keep the attitude of nonpartisanship, which is perhaps an impossible one, is quickly under suspicion by both sides. At least that was the fate of a group of citizens appointed by the mayor of Chicago to arbitrate during the stormy teamsters' strike which occurred in 1905. We sat through a long Sunday afternoon in the mayor's office in the City Hall, talking first with the labor men and then with the group of capitalists. The undertaking was the more futile in that we were all practically the dupes of a new type of "industrial conspiracy" successfully inaugurated in Chicago by a close compact between the coal teamsters' union and the coal team owners' association, who had formed a kind of monopoly hitherto new to a monopoly-ridden public.

The stormy teamsters' strike, ostensibly undertaken in defense of the garment workers, but really arising from causes so obscure and dishonorable that they have never yet been made public, was the culmination of a type of trades-unions which had developed in Chicago during the preceding decade in which corruption had flourished almost as openly as it had previously done in the City Hall. This corruption sometimes took the form of grafting after the manner of Samuel Parks in New York; sometimes that of political deals in the "delivery of the labor vote"; and sometimes that of a combination between capital and labor hunting together. At various times during these years the better type of trades-unionists had made a firm stand against this corruption and a determined effort to eradicate it from the labor movement, not unlike the general reform effort of many American cities against political corruption. This reform movement in the Chicago Federation of Labor had its martyrs, and more than one man nearly lost his life through the "slugging" methods employed by the powerful corruptionists. And yet even in the midst of these things were found touching examples of fidelity to the earlier principles of brotherhood totally untouched by the corruption. At one time the scrubwomen in the downtown office buildings had a union of their own affiliated with the elevator men and the janitors. Although the union was used merely as a weapon in the fight of the coal teamsters against the use of natural gas in downtown buildings, it did not prevent the women from getting their first glimpse into the fellowship and the sense of protection which is the great gift of trades-unionism to the

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unskilled, unbefriended worker. I remember in a meeting held at Hull-House one Sunday afternoon, that the president of a “local” of scrubwomen stood up to relate her experience. She told first of the long years in which the fear of losing her job and the fluctuating pay were harder to bear than the hard work itself, when she had regarded all the other women who scrubbed in the same building merely as rivals and was most afraid of the most miserable, because they offered to work for less and less as they were pressed harder and harder by debt. Then she told of the change that had come when the elevator men and even the lordly janitors had talked to her about an organization and had said that they must all stand together. She told how gradually she came to feel sure of her job and of her regular pay, and she was even starting to buy a house now that she could “calculate” how much she “could have for sure.” Neither she nor any of the other members knew that the same combination which had organized the scrubwomen into a union later destroyed it during a strike inaugurated for their own purposes.

That a Settlement is drawn into the labor issues of its city can seem remote to its purpose only to those who fail to realize that so far as the present industrial system thwarts our ethical demands, not only for social righteousness but for social order, a Settlement is committed to an effort to understand and, as far as possible, to alleviate it. That in this effort it should be drawn into fellowship with the local efforts of trades-unions is most obvious. This identity of aim apparently commits the Settlement in the public mind to all the faiths and works of actual trades-unions. Fellowship has so long implied similarity of creed that the fact that the Settlement often differs widely from the policy pursued by trades-unionists and clearly expresses that difference does not in the least change public opinion in regard to its identification. This is especially true in periods of industrial disturbance, although it is exactly at such moments that the trades-unionists themselves are suspicious of all but their “own kind.” It is during the much longer periods between strikes that the Settlement’s fellowship with trades-unions is most satisfactory in the agitation for labor legislation and similar undertakings. The first officers of the Chicago Woman’s Trades Union League were residents of Settlements, although they can claim little share in the later record the League made in securing the passage of the Illinois Ten-Hour Law for Women and in its many other fine undertakings.

Nevertheless the reaction of strikes upon Chicago Settlements affords an interesting study in social psychology. For whether Hull-House is in any wise identified with the strike or not, makes no difference. When “Labor” is in disgrace we are always regarded as belonging to it and share the opprobrium. In the public excitement following the Pullman strike Hull-House lost many friends; later the teamsters’ strike caused another such defection, although my office in both cases had been solely that of a duly appointed arbitrator.

There is, however, a certain comfort in the assumption I have often encountered that wherever one’s judgment might place the justice of a given situation, it is understood that one’s sympathy is not alienated by wrongdoing, and that through this sympathy one is still subject to vicarious suffering. I recall an incident during a turbulent Chicago strike which brought me much comfort. On the morning of the day of a luncheon to which I had accepted

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an invitation, the waitress, whom I did not know, said to my prospective hostess that she was sure I could not come. Upon being asked for her reason she replied that she had seen in the morning paper that the strikers had killed a “scab” and she was sure that I would feel quite too badly about such a thing to be able to keep a social engagement. In spite of the confused issues, she evidently realized my despair over the violence in a strike quite as definitely as if she had been told about it. Perhaps that sort of suffering and the attempt to interpret opposing forces to each other will long remain a function of the Settlement, unsatisfactory and difficult as the role often becomes.

There has gradually developed between the various Settlements of Chicago a warm fellowship founded upon a like-mindedness resulting from similar experiences, quite as identity of interest and endeavor develop an enduring relation between the residents of the same Settlement. This sense of comradeship is never stronger than during the hardships and perplexities of a strike of unskilled workers revolting against the conditions which drag them even below the level of their European life. At such time the residents in various Settlements are driven to a standard of life argument running somewhat in this wise—that as the very existence of the State depends upon the character of its citizens, therefore if certain industrial conditions are forcing the workers below the standard of decency, it becomes possible to deduce the right of State regulation. Even as late as the stockyard strike this line of argument was denounced as “socialism” although it has since been confirmed as wise statesmanship by a decision of the Supreme Court of the United States which was apparently secured through the masterly argument of the Brandeis brief in the Oregon ten-hour case.

In such wise the residents of an industrial neighborhood gradually comprehend the close connection of their own difficulties with national and even international movements. The residents in the Chicago Settlements became pioneer members in the American branch of the International League for Labor Legislation, because their neighborhood experiences had made them only too conscious of the dire need for protective legislation. In such a league, with its ardent members in every industrial nation of Europe, with its encouraging reports of the abolition of all night work for women in six European nations, with its careful observations on the results of employer’s liability legislation and protection of machinery, one becomes identified with a movement of world-wide significance and manifold manifestation.

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