

LABOR DAY

The return of Labor Day, the first Monday in September, set apart by national legislation as a public holiday, designated for the purpose of calling attention to the dignity of labor and the progress that labor has made, should be a reminder of the fortunate position labor holds in this great country of ours from that which it occupies under any other flag, and it should be a reminder also of the vast gains labor has made in our own country during the past few decades. We are only a generation or so removed from the time when the workers' day began before sunrise and ended after sunset. We are much less than a generation away from the time when labor was regarded as a commodity, to be bought in the lowest market, exploited in the most heartless way and cast aside the moment it was no longer needed. We have come to the time when cooperation has taken the place of exploitation, when employers have learned that the prosperity of their business depends upon the welfare of their employees, and when the doctrine that high wages is essential to anything approaching general prosperity is all but universally accepted.

But after all the one thing that sets the labor of America upon a plane far above that of most other countries is the great fact that our social organization affords to every American boy and girl complete freedom of choice of occupation. In the United States there is no regimentation of labor. There is no dictatorship. There is no barrier of caste or class to be overcome. There are no restraints upon the workingmen or women save those created by the ballot, by individual inclination, or by time honored custom. America knows nothing of the system so firmly established in all the countries of the old world which foredooms the son to the trade of his father and puts the servant's mark upon the servant's child generation after generation.

It is true that labor's problems have not here in America been all solved. Certainly the time should come and must come, in a land so rich in resources and so fertile in device and invention, when there shall be no protracted periods of unemployment for the man able and willing to work. The best minds in business and industry are now considering that problem with a seriousness which has never been given to it before. In some quarters already it seems to have been solved. Several great American industries have found a way by careful planning so to coordinate their sales with their production as to keep their working force steadily employed throughout the year. The lesson of these industries will gradually be learned by others. It is a tremendous problem, but it will be solved.