

The Cooperative Commonwealth

(June 1, 1897)

Terre Haute, Ind., June 1, 1897

The main purpose of the approaching special convention of the American Railway Union, to be held at Chicago beginning June 15 [1897], will be to declare in favor of the cooperative commonwealth, and to widen the scope of the organization so that all persons favorable to cooperative industry, regardless of color, sex, or occupation, can unite in one body for the promotion of this great object.¹

It is conceded by practically all economic authorities that the present industrial system, in the light of modern progress in the methods of production and distribution, is not only a failure, but that it is fruitful of cruel injustice to labor, and utterly demoralizing to society, and that these ills can not be remedied until the system which breeds them is abolished.

Uplifting of Humanity

In other words, the competitive wage system, under which labor has been reduced to a commodity, and thousands of workingmen depend for employment upon the assent of an individual, is to be supplanted by the cooperative system under which all may engage in useful occupation and work together in harmonious cooperation for the emancipation of labor, the uplifting of humanity, and the advancement of our civilization.

It is proposed to organize branches in all the villages, towns, and cities of all the states and territories in the Union, and by voluntary monthly contributions to provide sufficient means to colonize the unemployed in some Western state, to be hereafter agreed upon, and to secure lands and establish industries upon a cooperative basis, in which they shall find employment and gradually build up their institutions, and thus prepare the way for the fraternal commonwealth.

Million Supporters

It is believed that the time is propitious for the new movement, and that within a short time after it is launched it will have a million active supporters.

By uniting at the ballot box, political control of the state selected for colonization can be secured, and the organic law can then be modified so as to admit of the cooperative commonwealth being established, subject, of course, to the limitations of the federal jurisdiction.

This will be but the beginning, for the movement is national in its scope, and, as it is designed to emancipate labor from wage bondage and clothe American citizenship with its intended liberty, equality, and dignity, there is no doubt that the new life will spread from state to state until the Republic is redeemed and we are a nation of free and happy people.

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¹ Note that this marks an expansion on all three fronts — race, gender, and occupation — from the previous membership requirements of the ARU, which was constitutionally limited to white railway workers, and thus was essentially all male.