

# John Earl Baker Agrees Certain Practices of Labor Unions Are Evil—

Thomasville, Ga.  
June 26, 1942

Thomasville Times-Enterprise:

I was much interested in your editorial on Labor Unions last evening. I quite agree with your view that certain practices in certain unions are as undemocratic as Hitler. And many of the agreements which they force upon the employer are more contrary to the public interest than they are to the interest of the employer.

For example, I would cite the milk delivery situation in Chicago. Various factors in the cost of production and distribution resulted in the delivery men receiving some three cents for putting a bottle on and off the truck for every two cents which the dairyman received for producing the milk and delivering it at the pick-up station.

At the same time the retail price rose until the per capita consumption took a downward course for several years.

At this point, the milk interests conceived the plan of delivering milk in quantity to food stores, leaving the housewife, or her children, to complete the delivery. This resulted in such savings in labor, bottles, collections, credit losses, etc., that prices to the consumer were lowered substantially, and milk consumption per capita took a decided up-turn.

The saving in labor, of course, attracted unfavorable notice from the Driver's Union, with the result that the dealers agreed to pay the drivers a commission on bulk sales. According to recent testimony from one of the principal dealers in Chicago, the lowest earning by any driver who worked a full twelve months in 1941, was about \$5,500—the highest earning was \$10,600.

Not one of these drivers has an investment in the business beyond the clothes on his back. Not one has a skill greater than that of a 14-year old farm boy who knows how to drive a truck. Yet now they are demanding an increase in pay so that the lowest paid man in 1941 would earn \$11,000 and the highest paid \$19,000!

The avowed purpose of these demands is to force dealers back to the old individual delivery system. What shall be said of a union that would force the diversion from the war effort of the men, trucks, tires and gasoline that would be required for the more wasteful system of individual delivery?

But no one believes for a minute that the men are asking for this increase in pay, that they would actually get it or even that they are getting, net, their present rates of pay. No; the extra pay, by one device or another goes into the hands of the union officials who give no accounting for it.

What do they do with it? Probably they spend some in riotous living. A few years ago they spent some of it on "goon" squads that met milk trucks out in the country, emptied cans in some cases, put kerosene into the milk in other cases and merely intimidated drivers in still other cases in the effort to dictate terms to the milk trade. Farmers put men with shotguns on their trucks after a few days, and the gangsters lost interest. Are they planning a better arsenal for a bigger blitz? That is what the farmers who supply milk to Chicago fear. The mothers of Chicago are due a similar fear.

Until Labor Unions are required to keep accounts of receipts and expenditures according to standards prescribed by the government, and open them to the public in the same manner as the accounts of railways, electric light plants, telephones, and every corporation that keeps its shares or bonds listed on the exchanges, it will be impossible to know whether dues and extortions collected from workmen are used for purposes contrary to the public interest. Until such publicity attends union accounts, denials by union officials carry no weight. Every union official opposing such public accounting, by such action stands convicted of actions or purposes contrary to the public interest or to honest stewardship.

Congressman Gibson's bill covers many other features—too many, in my opinion. I would concentrate on publicity of accounts as a first step, or a division of the bill into two or possibly three bills. But that is a matter of tactics. Certainly it is time that the half billion dollars collected annually from union members, should be accounted for, at least to the donors.

Sincerely yours,  
JOHN EARL BAKER.

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