

LABOR REFORM

Meeting at Cooper Institute of the Labor Reform League—Addresses by E. H. Heywood and William Drury.

The Convention of Labor Reformers met last evening at Cooper Institute. The meeting was called to order by Mr. E. H. HEYWOOD, who stated that the meeting this evening was simply the commencement of the proceedings of the Convention. On Saturday afternoon and evening, and on Monday afternoon and evening the Convention would meet in this Hall, when speeches would be made by John Orvis, Albert Brisbane, Horace Greeley, Mrs. S. C. Stanton, M. M. Pomeroy, Stephen Pearl Andrews, Mrs. Victoria C. Woodhull, Miss Susan B. Anthony, Charles Moran, Mrs. E. L. Daniels and others. On Sunday morning, afternoon and evening, the Convention will be held in Tammany Hall Opera-house. Mr. HEYWOOD concluded by introducing the President, Mr. R. W. HUME, who briefly set forth the object of the Convention to be for discussing all subjects connected with the rights and interests of the laboring classes. The subject under discussion this evening would be, "Are trades-unions as now organized injurious to the laboring classes?" Mr. E. H. HEYWOOD would speak in the affirmative, and Mr. DRURY, of New-York, would reply in the negative.

Mr. E. H. HEYWOOD, in supporting the affirmative, said that the trade societies as now organized are a monopoly; that they control the market, but that they were no worse than other monopolies in money and trade. He would endeavor to show that trades-unions were opposed to liberty and hostile to the natural right of every man to acquire knowledge. He condemned the outcry against the Chinese, and argued that they had a perfect right to come and work in this country. These organizations have endeavored to crush the working girls, and opposed Miss ANTHONY when she tried to induce working girls to set type. An employer cannot fix a price for his goods without consulting the leaders of the trades-unions. Those who resist strikes act in favor of the consumer. The trades-unions are opposed to progress, and were they to succeed, it would put an end to the world's progress. The tendency of competition is to get an article at a fair price, but the unions overrule competition. The members of these organizations were only satisfied so long as they maintained a high rate of wages; they had no right to fix the hours of labor, nor to demand ten hours' payment for eight hours' work. Their system was self-destructive and utterly inefficient. In alluding to the miners of Pennsylvania, he asked what did their movement result in? They did not claim too much, nor perhaps enough, but the strike resulted in a loss to themselves. They were put down by the railroad monopoly and by the land monopoly. They should unite for the utter overthrow of those two monopolies.

Mr. M. DRURY, of New-York, in supporting the negative of the question, said that the New-England reformers should learn what trade societies were before they condemned them. They take the narrowest view of trades-unions, and do not seem to have learned what was going on for the last twenty-five years. Trade societies did not spring into the world without a cause—that cause was the low rate of wages. The black slave was liberated, the white slave should also be liberated—the working man liberated from his present condition. Trade societies were formed when the laborer was ground by the manufacturer. Trade societies would never have been formed had the employers acted fairly toward the working man. The present condition of labor was not satisfactory or just. Man was not a machine, and he had a right to what he creates. The conditions imposed by the capitalists were not just. If the working man was in ignorance, it was the fault of the capitalist who kept him there. They were not enemies of capital, but they wished to get a share of it themselves, [laughter,] and not leave it all in the hands of the capitalists to crush the working man. They wished to become a productive society, and for that end they would lay aside twenty-five per cent, of their receipts for such purpose. When they have better means at their disposal they would not remain societies of resistance, but productive societies; they will then oppose the capitalist on equal terms. They will begin to strike when they have four thousand workshops of their own. They will say to the men, "You may strike if you like; come and work for yourself." The capitalists must then look out; they will have no further profit on the working man's labor. Trade societies have advanced the rate of wages, and men were better now than they ever were, which he attributed to the trade organizations. A man had a right to what he created, and no one had a right to deprive him of it. That was what the trades-unions were fighting for, and which they must obtain. The speaker alluded to the industrial partnership system, which acknowledged that the working man had the right to something more than the wages he received. He said that before long the industry of the community must become common property, to prevent a social revolution. The capitalists must clear out; the working men were willing to give them fair terms, but if the terms were refused, then the capitalist must clear out and give place to the working men.

The Chairman announced that the discussion would be continued at the meeting this afternoon and evening, at Cooper Institute. Mr. HEYWOOD was then introduced to close the debate for the evening.

He simply repeated the arguments used in his opening, and showed the manner in which the trades organizations worked injuriously to the laboring men. Mr. DRURY replied briefly, and the Convention adjourned until this afternoon.