

LABOR DAY.

This is a day which very few Americans are debarred from celebrating. America is a land of labor, Americans are a race of laborers, from the water boy to the multimillionaire.

With us, save for a negligible few, the dignity of labor is not an empty phrase. The man who works is respected, and there is less of distinction drawn between the varieties of labor than in any other land under the sun. Class distinctions exist. It would be hypocrisy to deny it. But they are far less rigid and less important than elsewhere.

There are forces in American life which tend powerfully to divide and stratify us. The growth of material wealth and luxury, the influx of foreigners accustomed to classification, the growth of great cities and of great fortunes, all tend this way.

But it is encouraging to see that there is a strong moral and social counter current, assisted by our considerable distribution of wealth, especially through farming, and kept active by our political institutions and our common schools. That this counter current will prevail must be the hope of every true American.

But Labor day is primarily dedicated to organized labor, and for this cause, as well as for the larger one of human labor in general, it is possible for Americans to join hands whole heartedly. The right of the worker to organize in the furtherance of his economic and social interest is now no more challenged than the right of men to organize in corporations or associations, or in society itself. Neither is the wisdom or even the necessity of such organization seriously challenged.

Union labor seems to be passing into a new stage of progress. Its war of independence, its fight for the idea, for existence, is drawing to a close. But as this becomes apparent, it also more clearly appears that union labor's chief enemies are within itself. This was true of the American republic and is apparent in America today. Having won our freedom we have to fight our own weaknesses.

This fact ought to be considered by the public, as well as by union men. The union movement has developed evils just as the whole political union has. On a smaller scale it is the same fight, the fight to make an efficient democracy.

Comfortable citizens find it easy to scold union men for not discovering and expelling grafters, for not attending meetings, and for not doing their whole duty. But how about these same faults in themselves?

What is needed by us all is a greater sense of our responsibilities and a less selfish disposition to shirk our public duties and our duties to one another.

Union labor may look back over the year with great encouragement. In Illinois a notable victory was won in the ten hour law decision. Committees on industrial accident legislation and on occupational diseases are at work, and the whole tendency throughout the nation is toward the raising of the condition of labor, the abolition of social injustice, and the realization of a larger democracy.