

SCHWABE COLL

Tulsa, Okla., 5-31-46

*Labor & Strikes*

Hon. George B. Shwabe  
House of Representatives

Dear Congressman:

I am enclosing a copy of a letter which appeared in The Tribune recently. It concerns strikes, which is the topic most in the public mind at this time. I am asking you to read it with special reference to the suggestion in the marked paragraph.

Being a union man, I have given much thought to strikes-- their causes, their expedience (if any) and their cure. That labor has a case there can be no question. That collective bargaining is a fundamental right is also beyond question. But with every assistance from a coddling government, collective bargaining has failed to prevent these destructive strikes. So I think it is high time we found a substitute for them. In the letter herewith I have suggested a plan to remove at least the question of wages from the controversy. I would appreciate very much having your reaction to this plan.

If labor and management could be induced to try this formula, we might expect some astounding results. For one thing, wage matters would be taken out of politics. With wages leveled off and being automatically adjusted to the cost of living, prices would naturally become more stable. Competition would once more begin to function, with consequent benefit to every buyer. Industrial peace would settle on the country and we could all forget our cares and take a few days off for a fishing trip.

Would you have any suggestion as to how this idea could be put before labor and management so that they could have a fair chance to pass upon its merits?

Thanking you for any help you can give in this matter, I am,

Yours very truly,

*J. W. Thompson*

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## A UNION MEMBER'S REMEDY FOR STRIKES

Editor, The Tribune:

This is not an argument against unionism. It is rather an argument against strikes with a suggestion for a remedy. This writer has carried a union card for more than forty years, and is thoroughly sold on the worth of collective bargaining.

The strike is a weapon, not an argument. The use of weapons presupposes war and battle. At best, the inevitable result is partial destruction of both parties. And a far more serious result of a strike is the misery, discomfort, and loss suffered by people in no way connected with the strike. It is time we of organized labor should rid our minds of the fallacy that the strike is the only means of securing the wages and conditions which we think we deserve. Far more can be gained if we can devise a plan whereby we can live together in peace and harmony without the turmoil and bitterness of periodic strikes.

Let us look back about fifty-four years, at which time this writer first started working for wages. At that time the average wage was about \$9 for a six-day week, or \$1.50 for a ten-hour day. Labor organization was in its infancy. Power was largely in the hands of the employer group. They strove to keep it that way, as entrenched power always does. Force was the only thing they bowed to, so the strike might have had some justification then. Collective bargaining has gradually forced the pay check higher and the hours shorter. The methods used by labor to force these changes were often crude and destructive. Probably they never would have brought much success had not industry realized that there was justice in labor's demands.

Organized labor has gained much in the past fifty years. Most of the unfavorable conditions of employment have been eliminated; welfare insurance of various kinds shows a definite upward trend; and 44 working hours is about the average work week.

But there is one objective which has never been reached, and which will never be reached under the present setup. Though wages are now more than five times higher than they were fifty years ago, they have never quite caught up with the cost of living. Is it not reasonable to assume that wages and living costs are definitely tied up? If that is the case, will there ever be an end to this ceaseless and senseless struggle between management and labor? There must be! The relations between management and labor can be streamlined to meet the needs of both. All that remains is to adjust wages permanently to the cost of living. To do this, the following plan is offered:

Each organized labor group to agree with the employer that the wage scale now in effect (or being negotiated) become the basic wage. That the current cost of living index number become a part of the agreement. That any rise or fall of the cost of living index number shall be cause for an automatic corresponding adjustment of the wage scale either above or below the basic wage. That these periods of readjustment be at regular intervals of not less than six months. That this agreement be continuous. That each party to the agreement appoint or elect members of a joint committee to carry out the terms of this agreement.

Under this agreement, both labor and management would retain all the rights guaranteed them under the constitution and laws of the land. A faithful pursuance of this formula would probably eliminate strikes forever, and the advantages to business and individuals would be manifold. Business would be able to figure costs much more easily and accurately. The cost of living would tend to become stabilized. With the wage question settled, labor and management could find little to argue about.

Management and labor must, to preserve themselves, clean their own house together. There must come a saturation point to the rise of wages and living costs. It is up to us organized workers to choose whether we want strikes and confusion, together with restrictive legislation and regimentation, or peace and harmony through a reasonable and workable agreement with our employers.

Tulsa.

J. W. THOMPSON.