

## Governor Henry Allen to J.C. Bell

In this letter Kansas Governor Henry Allen, of Topeka, writes to J.C. Bell, President of the Central Labor Union. Governor Allen seeks to win the support of the labor unions in proposed legislation that creates a court of industrial relations. The governor has called a special session of the legislation to create an entity where labor disputes can be settled in a fair and civil manner. In this letter Governor Allen asks the labor leader to "take the trouble to get the view point of the public". The Court of Industrial Relations was signed into law in 1920 but dissolved a few years later when it was declared unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court.

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January 10, 1920.

Mr. J. C. Bell, President,  
Central Labor Union,  
Fort Scott, Kansas.

My dear Mr. Bell:

I have read your letter with deep interest. I am satisfied that when the law which is now under consideration by this legislature has operated for a year your union will be one of its most enthusiastic supporters. It would be wrong for us to take away the right to strike if we did not give you something better to take its place, and the court we propose has exactly the same balance of justice in it for you that it has for capital. It is perfectly apparent that civilization cannot make progress through continued industrial warfare. It is also apparent that it has made very little progress through arbitration. The proposed court guarantees your rights and it guarantees the rights of the public at the same time. It is rather absurd to intimate that anyone should do what I am trying to do through "lust for power and wealth". You have reminded officials too often that it is necessary for their political life that they keep the good wishes of organized labor, and if I did not have full faith in the power of this bill to benefit labor I would realize, of course, that I arouse the full hostility of organized labor when I suggest legislation which allows in any way the use of weapons which it has regarded as necessary to its welfare in the past. What we are trying to do is to make the strike unnecessary.

Your letter is written with the perfectly proper feeling, but with insufficient knowledge of this bill. You have taken the view point of the radical labor agitator, who has been much more harmful to labor than he has been helpful. I am sure if you could take the trouble to get the view point of the public upon this legislation you would approve it as a great many sane and constructive labor leaders have already done. It does not affect any craft except those concerned in the production of food, clothing, fuel and transportation. Out of the 1500 men you mention in your community, probably only a few of them are directly affected by the legislation and they will be affected advantageously. The others of the 1500 will be indirectly benefited because the essential industries of the state will no longer be menaced by illogical



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shut-downs and lock-outs on the part of operators, or strikes on the part of the laborers. A just tribunal with power to solve controversies and fix the minimum wage will take the place of the strikes. There is no occasion for any such despair as you manifest in your interesting letter. The law does not take away the right of collective bargaining. It protects that right.

Yours sincerely,

Governor.