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BIG LESSONS FOR A LITTLE BOY



LABOR DISPUTES are occurring somewhere in the nation almost constantly. One can read or hear about some type of dispute somewhere on almost any given day. If railworkers or garbage collectors are not on strike, hospital workers or teachers are. Some group is always striking, walking out, sitting down, or threatening to do one or more of these things.

Much of this conflict could be eliminated by following principles of good labor-management relations. Whether one is an employee or an employer is insignificant, for the principles remain the same for both.

My father, a self-employed brick mason, realized the importance of

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such principles and tried to teach them to me. From the time I was big enough to cause trouble for my mother at home until I left for college, he insisted that I go to work with him. It was on the job that he began teaching me the common-sense principles of labor and management.

While other kids were playing on Saturdays and during summer vacations, I was mixing mortar, carrying bricks, rodding joints, and building or removing scaffolding for my father. I certainly did not enjoy the work at the time, but it taught me many valuable lessons. I frequently recall them and wonder where organized labor would be if we all followed those simple principles.

First, let us look at a few princi-

ples dealing with the responsibilities of employees to their employers.

Use Time Wisely

Wasting time on the job is a common complaint made of many workers. When an employee uses the boss's time wisely, he helps not only the boss but also himself.

My father taught me to never be found sitting down on the job. If I completed an assigned task and was caught "loafing around," he quickly gave me another assignment. I remember cleaning out his cluttered toolbox countless times when there was "nothing to do."

When there is no incentive to work hard, such as in the case of hourly workers, there is often a tendency to do as little as possible and to waste time. Why should one go out of his way to find more work when he gets paid the same hourly wage for doing as little as possible?

For this reason, my father seldom paid his workers by the hour. Instead, he paid by piece-work: the more bricks or blocks we helped him lay, the more money we earned.

As a little boy, I remember working for twenty-five cents per hundred bricks. I could only carry three bricks at a time, but I kept an almost hourly account of the money I was making. I counted how many bricks I carried and compared that number with how many Dad was laying. It made me work harder and

helped Dad complete his jobs faster.

Samuel Smiles wrote in *Thrift*, "It is the idler, above all others, who is undignified and dishonorable. No idle or thriftless man ever became great. It is among those who never lost a moment that we find the men who have moved and advanced the world."

Be Loyal and Obedient

Today's workers are transient creatures. Few of us stay at the same job for any great length of time. Whenever we hear of a worker retiring after twenty or thirty years with the same company, we are amazed. A constant shifting of jobs often results in a lack of loyalty.

Staying with the same job for many years creates in a worker a sense of pride in his job and in his employer. Athletes would call it team spirit. Soldiers would call it company morale. Without such loyalty, it is easier for disobedience and disrespect to occur.

My father has worked as a self-employed mason for over twenty-five years. Most of that time he has worked for the same contractors. He has been consistent in his pricing, attendance, and work quality. During that time, however, he has had many different employees. Although many of them were good workers who retired or young workers who advanced to better jobs, others were simply job-hoppers. They wanted good pay for little effort. They