

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
WAGE AND HOUR DIVISION
Washington

Inactive

LABOR DID THE WORK, FLEMING INSISTS

Says Manufacturers' Head Failed to Credit Labor for Defense
Achievements

The anti-labor statements in a recent talk by the President of the National Association of Manufacturers were cited by General Philip B. Fleming, Administrator of the Wage and Hour Division, U. S. Department of Labor, in a speech today before the Southern Master Printers Federation at Birmingham, Alabama.

"Walter D. Fuller, President of the Curtis Publishing Company and President of the National Association of Manufacturers, is one of those who believes the straight-time workweek should be lengthened," said General Fleming. "Yet it would appear that even Mr. Fuller is convinced that, Wage and Hour Law or no Wage and Hour Law, we have not done too badly. In a recent address at Philadelphia, he said:

"More than two and three quarter billions of dollars already have been spent in plant expansion. The machine tool industry, a natural bottleneck, has increased production by 2,000 per cent over the depression low. By 1942 the airplane industry will have outstripped the production progress made by the automobile industry in 30 years. Ordnance production--part government--has been expanded 14,000 per cent over the average of the last 20 years. Small arms output increased 1,000 per cent in 9 months. One hundred 13-ton tanks are now being produced each month. Twenty-one new powder plants are almost ready for production. In ten months we have absorbed 13 billion dollars worth of orders; 99 per cent of the orders are already in production and our February survey shows that 86 per cent of the manufacturers expect to deliver on or before contract delivery date."

"I have not checked these staggering percentage figures, but I dare say they are correct. Such achievements could not have been made without the toil of American labor. But Mr. Fuller gives all the credit to 'industry,' no credit whatever to labor.

"I am not going to repeat here the arguments Mr. Fuller used in this same Philadelphia address against the overtime provision. It may be of interest, however, to indicate the manner in which he characterized industry, on the one hand, and labor, on the other.

"He said of industry:

'A few months ago came cries of "industrial sit-downs against defense," that "industry sabotages defense" or "demands its pound of flesh in profits." No one ever offered or found justification for such charges.'

'The fact is that American industry in ten months has performed a modern miracle of defense.'

'...we have made more progress than Hitler did in two and a half years...'

'Manufacturers have lived up to their pledge against profiteering. The record shows they are keeping down inventories, and other encouragements to inflation.'

'...by efficiency and management industry will do its patriotic best in spite of all obstacles.'

'In this crisis every manufacturer is anxious to meet any request from his government.'

'...the patriotic, hard-working mass of industrialists.'

'From every source has come recognition of the efficiency of industrial management in the defense program.'

'Industrialists, inside and outside of the government, have responded magnificently and effectively to the nation's call.'

"Now by way of contrast, let's see what Mr. Fuller has to say about labor:

'Strikes in defense industries have been labelled "criminal" by Mr. Knudsen. He ought to know.'

'Some labor leaders want all the privileges of the old laissez-faire order, while enjoying the full protection of the new social order.'

'Peaceful picketing has become a riotous mob.'

'Constitutional rights do not include the right of intimidation, assault and destruction of property.'

'The right to work is not reserved for holders of pink or red cards--but for all Americans.'

'News pictures are shown with clearly identifiable participants in violence, assault and trespassing.'

'Has labor put itself above the law?'

'It is estimated that some 20 to 30 millions of dollars have been taken by unions in initiation fees. Some of it is plainly racketeering.'

'Manufacturers will be the victims of a "squeeze" play.'

'Wages, apparently are being allowed to increase regardless.'

"That's what Mr. Fuller has to say about labor.

"Let's go back over these excerpts and pick out a few descriptive words for further consideration.

"Of manufacturers: 'a modern miracle...lived up to their pledge...efficiency...patriotic best...patriotic...hard working...magnificently...effectively...the nation's call...'

"Of labor: 'criminal...privileges...riotous mob...intimidation...assault...destruction of property...pink or red cards...violence...assault...trespassing...above the law...racketeering...'

"Mr. Fuller will say that I have torn these words from their context. Of course I have. But here are the words that give the tip-off to Mr. Fuller's thinking on industrial relations, that color his approach to a critical situation in which we must depend upon the wholehearted cooperation of all our people. By their adjectives shall ye know them. I submit that we are not going to solve our problems in any such spirit as this."

"In conclusion, I would say that the Wage and Hour Law, in my estimation, is doing what Congress intended it to do. It is eliminating from interstate commerce practices detrimental to the health, efficiency and well being of workers; it is promoting fairer competition among employers, and it is, because of the penalty on overtime, putting America back to work at a time of national crisis when the maximum productivity of the entire nation is urgently needed."

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