

This is sheer gain, but these laws still focus on doing something for the man who has met with an accident, rather than on driving full steam into eliminating causes for accidents. When a ship is sinking, then the whole weight of responsibility rests on manning the life boats and getting the passengers and crew off the vessel. When an auto has gone hurtling off a thruway then the weight of moral responsibility is to rush medical care.

But neither life boats nor ambulances are the full measure of moral responsibility that rests upon us today when ships still sail the high seas and cars ride the highways. Our moral sense has grown up beyond that level of moral satisfaction. In its modern concept moral responsibility stresses preventing the worst from happening on the oceans and

on our roads rather than being content with picking up the pieces after the worst has happened.

Total security is a goal that is beyond our reach, but great progress can be made when men of competence and good will and devotion join together to help each other in every way possible to promote safety measures against accident hazards. The symbol of this step is, I suppose, the National Safety Congress itself. It stands for moral responsibility toward these hazards at its best, for our deepest responsibility toward the victim of accidents is to see to it that all is done to keep him from becoming a victim. And that is a worthy cause for all of us, wherever we are—in labor and in management, in education and in government. ▲

LABOR'S STAKE IN SAFETY

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I don't intend to stay within the limits of this title because I am certain little new information could be said about "Labor's Stake in Safety." It is obvious that no one could have a greater stake in industrial safety than the men and women who are the direct victims of industrial accidents.

To an employer — matters of industrial safety, occupational disease, accident prevention and workmen's compensation—are all tied up with economic considerations. They are important insofar as they affect—and can be made to reduce—insurance costs, training costs, and material costs. But these are all money costs—cash costs—costs that are measured in dollars and cents.

To a worker, on the other hand, an industrial accident is a matter of something that is even more tangible than money. It is a matter of a man's blood, bones and sinew—of tragedy, suffering and sorrow. And sometimes, in fact, more than 50 times a day—on every working day—it is a matter of life itself to someone, somewhere, in this country.

That is why I say that labor's stake in safety is pretty obvious. Therefore I will touch upon aspects of the subject that are not often discussed—aspects that are somewhat controversial. Perhaps they are not discussed because they are controversial.

ETHICS IN SAFETY

Since my views and public statements on the "corruption in unions" issue have been as frank and honest as I can make them, I see no reason to be any less candid in stating my views about matters of industrial safety. I assure you, however, that I am not injecting controversy for its own sake, but because these are matters that concern the men and women who run the daily risk of being injured, diseased or killed on their jobs.

Safety—and accident prevention—have an ethical as well as an economic side. I think none of us—whether we represent labor or management—would disagree with certain basic ethical principles in the field of industrial safety. We would all agree, for ex-

ample, that the objective of industrial safety should be the preservation of human life and the protection of human health. We would further agree that an employer has a moral responsibility to protect his workers against disease, accidents, mental stress and infections from the conditions of employment.

We all profess to agree that human life is not cheap; that man is not something to be sacrificed to a machine. And yet, these ethical principles are not always applied in day to day life nor are they self-enforcing. In practical application they come into conflict with individual economic interests, and thus must be enforced either through group action, or by society as a whole through political action.

As a rule, society does not move as fast as the need would indicate. We all know, for example, that the first industrial revolution had run its course for more than 100 years before society got around to adopting and enforcing rules and regulations of industrial safety. For more than 100 years industrial workers were given no legal protection against the risks and hazards of industrial employment.

Here and there, a lone individual employer might attempt to provide decent and healthful working conditions for his workers. But on the whole, the story of factory employment in the 19th century—and through the early 20th century—was a pretty ghastly one.

I don't need to go into the details that are indicative of the cold indifference with which human life was held in American mines and factories. Suffice to say, it did not seem to matter how many men, women and children were killed or crippled in the course of a day. There were always more waiting at the gates the next morning—driven by raw poverty to plead for a chance to jeopardize their lives and limbs.

SOCIETY BROUGHT CHANGES

The point I am getting at, of course, is that change—when it came—was not the result of any regeneration of moral and ethical conviction on the part of employers. It came rather because society as a whole was thoroughly revolted. It came because the American people were finally shocked enough to correct a condition that had prevailed—and grown worse—for 100 years.

Labor Safety

So we finally got factory laws—and workmen's compensation—and an organized effort to make mines, factories and mills safer places to work. But of all the legislation aimed at this objective, workmen's compensation was the key. For until employers were made directly and financially responsible for the results of workers' accidents, they had no economic reason to prevent accidents. The whole pattern and fabric of our industrial safety program throughout the nation rests entirely on how good and how effective our workmen's compensation and our occupational disease laws are.

ECONOMIC REASONS

Oh, of course, you can point to many other good economic rationalizations for industrial safety. You can say industrial accidents add all kinds of direct and indirect costs to production. You can point to the cost of hiring and training a new employee, of equipment damaged in a work accident, of the time lost by other employees when an accident occurs.

But I will throw them all right back to you and say that these considerations were present long before we had industrial accident programs—and that it wasn't until accident prevention was reinforced with workmen's compensation and occupational disease legislation that employers really became safety conscious.

So it seems that the thing that counts here is how good our workmen's compensation and occupational disease legislation really are.

And that's a good question! I've spent my whole adult life in the labor movement. As a matter of fact, I was projected into it by the very thing we are talking about here today—an industrial accident. I went to work at 17 years of age because my father was totally disabled by a work injury—an injury that eventually killed him.

In the course of many years of studying and dealing with the problems of my union—which are, of course, the problems of the members of my union, I realized that our present system of workmen's compensation and occupational disease legislation is completely and wholly inadequate to meet the needs of our complex industrial society.

I am not alone in that conclusion. There are, in fact, many men in the labor movement today who feel even more strongly