

## **Pauper Labor of the South Newspaper Article**

## **Pauper Labor of the South Newspaper Article**

This editorial appeared in the February 2, 1887 edition of *The Tobacco Plant*, a Durham newspaper.

A complete transcription of the article is below.

**THE "PAUPER LABOR" OF THE SOUTH.**

Some of the Northern newspapers are devoting more space than leads to an alleged "discussion" of the "pauper labor of the South." As a rule, the men who initiate these editorials are as ignorant of Southern institutions, the people of this section and the relations existing in 1876 between employer and employed as a man-of-back-log is of artillery practice; but, like the meddling abolitionists of a quarter of a century ago, these Northern pencil-pushers are very sure that we are not capable of regulating our own affairs, and they are equally certain that we should accept the teachings and obey the instructions which proceed from the omphaloscope of their infinite minds and pens. It never occurs to these journalistic missionaries that their own neighborhoods furnish the largest unworked theoretical fields, nor that they could find more work than they could perform in their own cities and States by getting down off their theoretic stilts and undertaking the job of practicing and making their neighbors practice what they preach. This anti-bellum Pluricultural attitude of assumed infallibility is, to us, as disgusting as it is ridiculous. It is a chestnut, and we don't like chestnuts.

Now, the writer has seen a good deal of the North, and its "institutions" of late years. It is a great country—a very great country, in many respects. There are a great many things, animate and inanimate, to be seen there which we do not have in North Carolina or in the South. Their cities are larger and their business buildings are bigger than ours. Their hotels are conducted on a more "extensive" scale—we stopped at one in Ohio where whites and blacks occupied adjoining rooms, sometimes the same room, and ate at the same table. At another hotel in the same State the proprietor was found to be a very black man and his wife a very white woman, and the "guests" of both races were waited on by tolerably white servant girls. That is one of the "animate" things which we do not have here, to the chagrin of District Assembly 49, he it said. It is a matter of taste. But our "guardians" of the North are slow to concede that we have a right to taste as we do. Indeed, some of them tell us we have no business to taste at all unless we taste as they taste. Social equality has a bitter taste to us, although it is a sweet morsel to some people of the North, and because it is not palatable to our social stomachs they want to force it down our throats, *velociter*. By "they" we mean an element, a racial element, in the North. We know many most conservative and estimable people in the North—the majority of our Northern brethren are such, perhaps; but this meddling, racial element is already too large and constantly growing, and a man with half an eye can see the tendency of the effort that is now making to sow the seeds of dissension and unrest among the negro laborers of the South, and some of the Knights of Labor assemblies of the North, we are sorry to see, are mixed up in the nefarious plot. We use the word "plot" advisedly, for it is a deliberate attempt on the part of somebody to disrupt the entire labor system of the South, the farm hands included, and it is to this class of negro farm labor that this article has special reference.

Now, we desire to have it clearly and distinctly understood, in the beginning that THE TOBACCO PLANT is the friend of the workingman, as such, and that this paper is kindly disposed towards the Knights of Labor, as an organization designed (as is claimed) to better the condition of the workingman. We despise the right of no man to join any labor organization, and it is clearly his privilege to say what he will and what and who he will not work for, and to exercise himself in any honorable and lawful way to obtain the maximum price for his labor. But we do say, and we say emphatically, that it is not his right to set a price on the labor of other men, and it is not his privilege to decree whether or no his neighbor—who does not happen to be a member of, and is unwilling to join his order—shall work for an employer for wages which he and the members of his organization decline to accept. On the same principle we submit that no employer or other representative of capital has a right to say what wages his competitors in business shall pay or whom they shall employ. Such a position, whether taken by an employer or an employe, is unjustifiable under ordinary circumstances, and any attempt on the part of either on any occasion to put into practice such views would be, not only an unreasonable and unfair undertaking—it would be an UNLAWFUL proceeding.

In the next issue of THE PLANT we will follow up the subject by publishing the contributing portion of this editorial.

**Citation (Chicago Style):**

"The Pauper Labor of the South." *The Tobacco Plant*. February 2, 1887.

**Read the related**

Primary Source: Opposition to the Knights of

article: Labor

Transcript:

## THE "PAUPER LABOR" OF THE SOUTH.

Some of the Northern newspapers are devoting more space than brains to an alleged "discussion" of the "pauper labor of the South." As a rule the men who indite these editorials are as ignorant of Southern institutions, the people of this section and the relations existing in Dixie between employer and employed as a razor-bagk hog is of artillery practice; tut, like the meddling abolitionists of a quarter of a century ago, these Northern pencil-pushers are very sure that we are not capable of regulating our own affairs, and they are equally certain that we should accept the teachings and obey the instructions which proceed from the omniscience of their infinite minds and pens. It never occurs to these journalistic missionaries that their own neighborhoods furnish the largest unmown theoretical fields, nor that they could find more work than they could perform in their own cities and States by getting down off their theoretic stilts and undertaking the job of practicing and making "their neighbors practice what they preach. This ante-bellum Pharisical attitude of assumed tutelage is, to us, as disgusting as it is ridiculous. It is a chestnut, and-we-don't-like-chestnuts.

Now; the writer has seen a good deal of the North and its "institutions" of late years. It is a great country a very great country, in many respects. There are a great many things, 'animate and inanimate, to be seen there which we do not have in North Carolina or in the South. Their cities are larger and their business buildings are bigger than ours. Their hotels are conducted on a more "extensive" scale we stopped at one in Ohio where whites and blacks occupied adjoining rooms, sometimes the same room, and ate at the same table. At another hotel in the same State the proprietor was found to be a very black man and his wife a very white woman, and the "guests" of both races were waited on by tolerably white servant girls. That is one of the "animate" things which we do not have here, to the chagrin of District Assembly 49, be it said. It is a matter of taste. But our "guardians" of the North are slow to concede that we have a right to taste as we do. Indeed, some if they tell us we have no business to taste at all unless we taste as they taste. Social equality has a bitter taste to us, although it is a sweet morsel to some people of the North, and because it is not palatable to our social stomachs they want to force it down our throats, nolens votena. By "they-" we mean an element, a radical element, in the North, We know many most conservative and estimable people in the North the majority of our Northern brethren are such, perhaps ; but this meddling, radical element is already too large and constantly growing, and a man with half an eye can see the tendency of the effort that is now making to sow the seeds of dissension and, unrest among the negro laborers of the South, and some of the Knights of Labor assemblies of the North, we are sorry to see, are mixed up in the nefarious plot. We use the word "plot" advisedly, for it is a deliberate attempt on the part of somebody to disrupt the entire labor system of the South, the farm hands included; and it is to this class of negro farm labor that this article has special reference.

Now, we desire to have it clearly and distinctly understood, in the beginning that Tjie. Tobacco Plant is the friend of the workingman, as such, and that this paper is kindly disposed towards the Knights of Labor, as an organization designed (as is claimed) 'to better the condition of the workingman. We dispute the right of no man to join any labor organization, and it is clearly his privilege to say what he will and what and who'h'e will not- work for,! and to exercise himself in any honorable and lawful way to obtain the maximum price for his labor. But we do saj-, and we say emphatically, j that it is not his right to set a price on the labor of other men, and it is not his privilege to decree whether or no his neighbor who does not happen to be a member of, and is unwilling to join his order shall work for an employer for wages which he and the members of his organization decline to accept." On the same principle we submit that no employer or other representative of capital has a right to say what wages (is competitors in business shall pay or whom they shall employ. Such a position, whether taken by an employer or an " employe, is unjustifiable Under ordinary circumstances, ind any: attempt on the part of either on any occasion to put into practice such views would be, not only an unreasonable and unfair undertaking it would be an unlawful proceeding.

In the next issue of The Plant we will follow up the subject by publishing the concluding portion of this editorial. use consider say alone much will abolished. assertion-It take example to the bill authorize too permit

**Usage Statement:**

## Public Domain

Public Domain is a copyright term that is often used when talking about copyright for creative works. Under U.S. copyright law, individual items that are in the public domain are items that are no longer protected by copyright law. This means that you do not need to request permission to re-use, re-publish or even change a copy of the item. Items enter the public domain under U.S. copyright law for a number of reasons: the original copyright may have expired; the item was created by the U.S. Federal Government or other governmental entity that views the things it creates as in the public domain; the work was never protected by copyright for some other reason related to how it was produced (for example, it was a speech that wasn't written down or recorded); or the work doesn't have enough originality to make it eligible for copyright protection.

---

Source URL:<https://ncpedia.org/media/image/pauper-labor-south>