

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

JOURNAL OF AN EARLY LABOR ORGANIZER

By PHILIP S. FONER

Students of the American labor movement know that the most important development of the 1840s was the ten-hour movement, and that the organization which spearheaded this demand was the New England Workingmen's Association which came into existence in the fall of 1844 to give support to the shorter workday crusade. The Association was largely the product of the mechanics of Fall River, Massachusetts. Early in 1844 these men organized a Mechanics' Association to further the ten-hour day in their community. The Association distributed pledge cards binding the signers not to work for more than ten hours and conducted a number of strikes for the shorter working day.¹

In April 1844, the Fall River Mechanics' Association set up a publishing committee, headed by Thomas Almy, to print a four-page weekly paper, *The Mechanic*, "to advocate the cause of the oppressed Mechanic and Laborer in all its bearings." Volume I, No. 1, April 27, 1844, carried the motto: "We Ask Nothing But What Is Right, And Will Never Submit To Anything Wrong." The issue of June 22, 1844, carried on its front page the text of the "Circular to the Mechanics of New England" issued by the Fall River Association. It denounced the long hours of work required of the mechanic and laborer in New England, pointing out that "twelve to fifteen hours labor per diem is more than the physical constitution of man can bear, generally speaking, and preserve a healthy state." To remedy this situation, as well as to prevent the mechanics and laborers of New England from falling into

¹ Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States* (New York, 1947), I, 202-03.

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the "disagreeable, servile and degrading state of the English laborer," a summons was issued for a general convention of New England workmen to be held in the fall of 1844. No place or date for the convention was specified, but on July 13, 1844, *The Mechanic* announced that the assembly would take place in Boston sometime in September. In the same announcement, the paper declared: "We would say to our friends abroad that we intend to send a Lecturer into the field as soon as we are able, and hope others will do likewise."

The reason for sending "a lecturer into the field" is not difficult to understand. As many communities in New England had no newspapers friendly to labor, it was necessary to bring the news of the forthcoming convention by means of a roving speaker. He would tell of the plans for this convention and help the mechanics and laborers organize an Association to send representatives there as well as take up the fight for the ten-hour day locally. As far as can be learned, no other Association sent "a Lecturer into the field," as recommended by *The Mechanic*, but the Fall River organization kept its promise. On July 20, 1844, *The Mechanic* announced:

A LECTURER IN THE FIELD!

The Mechanics' Association of Fall River have secured the services of Mr. S. C. HEWITT, a mechanic residing in this vicinity, as a Lecturer. Mr. H. has been a public speaker for some time, and is an efficient and powerful advocate of the rights of the laborer. The object of the Association in sending out a Lecturer at this time, is to arouse the people in other places to the necessity of *organizing!* and preparing to represent themselves in Convention next September.

Readers of *The Mechanic* were already familiar with Mr. Hewitt. The second number of the paper (May 4, 1844) carried a letter from Hewitt, who lived in Dighton, Massachusetts, wishing the weekly and its sponsors well, and promising to make every effort "to obtain you some subscribers in this place as soon as I get the necessary time." Hewitt described himself as follows: "I am a Mechanic, and proud of the title. They call me a minister, clergyman, preacher &c., and so I am. But I am also a Mechanic: I have not yet arrived at that sickly state of mind that would make me view Labor as the exclusive birth-right of serfs and slaves. . . ." In subsequent issues of *The Mechanic*, Hewitt announced his firm belief in Fourierism as the ultimate solution of the problems of the working class, but conceded that until this ideal state

was achieved, it was necessary to turn every effort to gain better conditions in the present society—and most specifically, the ten-hour day.³

Evidently Hewitt was known in Fall River as a popular and powerful speaker, for on July 20, 1844, in issuing a call to working men and operatives to meet in the Town Hall, *The Mechanic* featured the fact that "Mr. Hewitt of Dighton, will be present This Evening, and address the Meeting." A few days after this gathering, Hewitt departed on his tour to organize the workingmen (and women) of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Eastern Connecticut into Associations. During the next month, he visited seventeen towns, reporting his progress in the form of a journal entitled "Mr. Hewitt's Tour" in *The Mechanic* of August 3, 10, 17, and 24, 1844. So far as I am able to discover, it is the first journal of an American labor organizer in existence.

As his Journal makes clear, Hewitt met with varying success in his energetic effort to bring the message of organization to New England's working men and women. He did succeed, however, in forming a number of Associations, and the presence of delegates from several of the towns he visited at the founding convention of the New England Workingmen's Association (Boston, October 16, 1844)⁴ indicates that his influence was felt.⁴ The letter of "J.E.D., Jr.," of Newport, Rhode Island, published in *The Mechanic* of September 7, 1844, paid tribute to the lecturer:

In justice to Mr. Hewitt, I should have written before this, but as unavoidable circumstances have prevented my doing so, I presume it will be well enough at this time.

I can but think that your "Association" was happy and fortunate in securing the services of this indefatigable friend to the laboring classes and warm, firm and eloquent advocate of their rights. The immediate effects of his lecture before the workingmen of this town was not very gratifying, but so confident am I of the success of your cause, that I am very sure its ulti-

³ *The Mechanic*, May 11, July 6, 20, 27, 1844.

⁴ Among other things, the convention adopted a resolution calling for a ten-hour law and organized a permanent association of New England workingmen to press for legislation that would prohibit any corporation from employing any person more than ten hours a day. The convention also adopted a constitution, article 9 of which read: "Female Labor Reform Associations shall be entitled to all the rights, privileges and obligations secured by this Constitution." (Foner, *op. cit.*, vol. I, 205-06.)

⁴ Evidently Hewitt's presence was not noted by the press of the towns he visited. A search of the *New Bedford Mercury*, the *New Bedford Morning Register*, the *Massachusetts Spy* of Worcester, the *Worcester Palladium*, the *Newport Mercury* and the *Rhode Islander*, the *Norwich Aurora*, the *Woonsocket Independent*, and the *Taunton Whig* has turned up no mention of Hewitt's visit to these communities.

mate result will be highly advantageous and favorable. His reception was as favorable as could be expected, considering the opposition which the object meets with from those who exercise a little as well as much authority and the indifferent manifestations of the working men themselves. As friend Hewitt remarked, it is somewhat difficult melting an iceberg, but it would seem almost as possible, as to convince some men that they are not used well. But as a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, I am in hope that the truthful delineation of their wrongs, and fearless and manly exposition of their rights by friend H. will tend materially to bring the mechanics and working men of Newport where they ought to be.

Not all communities were as cold as Newport. At several local conventions called to elect delegates to the general assembly in Boston, a special resolution was adopted reading: "That the thanks of this convention be presented to Mr. Hewitt of Dighton, for his spirited and eloquent remarks in favor of mechanics and laboring men."⁵

Hewitt returned to Fall River during the last week of August 1844. *The Mechanic* greeted his arrival with a lead article:

WORKINGMEN, AWAKE!

Mr. Hewitt, who has been lecturing to the laboring people in other places for some time past, will address the workingmen of Fall River, *This Evening*, in the *Mechanics' Hall*. We hope there may be a general attendance. Let Carpenters and Masons, Smiths, and Machinists, Stone Cutters and Cordwainers, Weavers and Spinners, Printers and Operatives of every class, come and hear him. . . . NOW is the time for action! "Now's Your Time," is heard from every hill and valley in New England. Rise ye, toil worn citizens, and in the majesty of your might, break the galling chains which bind you.⁶

Now let Mr. Hewitt speak for himself.

MR. HEWITT'S TOUR — NO. I.

Mr. Almy.—Having been requested by you to communicate through the *Mechanic*, whatsoever I might observe in my travels of probable interest to your readers, and calculated to further the cause in which we are engaged, I now comply, hoping that the working men of Fall River and of other places, who read your valuable paper, may see in my observations, strong indications of the ultimate, and somewhat speedy success of the principles and measures you propose for general adoption. I will throw my remarks into the form of a

⁵ *The Mechanic*, August 10, 1844.

⁶ *Ibid.*, August 31, 1844.

JOURNAL.

Thursday, July 25.—I commenced lecturing this evening in the village of Pawtucket, on the great subject of the ELEVATION OF THE LABORING CLASSES. Previous notice of the meeting had been given by hand bills, and at the usual hour, notwithstanding the unfavorable weather, the American Hall on the Massachusetts's side of the river, was very well filled with the hard working men of this place. At the proper time I took the liberty to call the meeting to order, after which the same was organized by choosing a moderator and secretary. I then addressed the meeting something like three fourths of an hour upon the general evils of social life *as it is*, proposing that, in order to the remedy of the same, the working man should take the business of *reform* into his own hands and show himself a MAN!—to keep up an interest, especially among his brethren who labor and extend the same as far as may be among the employers; stating it as my conviction that, if the working man will take a stand and feel disposed to do something for himself, capitalists, to a great extent, will at last cease to prevent his efforts to rid himself of his evils; and that they will also aid him essentially, in his noble undertaking. Of this, however, time will yet more fully speak. At any rate, it seems to me that, if the workingmen of New England go forward in the present movement, and perform for themselves what they are now privileged to do, they may properly hope for something more in the shape of justice than what they have been in the habit of receiving.

Interest on the subject.—The working men in this place seemed to feel, a good degree of interest, in the general movement in which we are engaged. They feel their wrongs and seem disposed to go forward and do what they can for themselves and for the cause. May they have the *courage* to show themselves MEN!

The Laboring Man's Association.—Measures were taken at my suggestion, to form a body here to be known by the above name, which name was proposed by the Rev. Mr. Parker, formerly of Pawtucket, but now of New York City, who was present and addressed the meeting. He, I believe was the only clergyman present; at any rate, the only one who had anything to say in the poor man's favor. He deeply sympathized with the working man and highly approbated the ten hour movement.

An Incident.—As an illustration of the curse of the long hour system

of hard and incessant toil, Mr. Parker related the circumstance of his having called, that afternoon, on a family, most of whose members worked in the mills—those social hells of the present system of labor—where he had an opportunity to perceive the killing effects of such labor. Those operatives, compelled to toil through the long hours of Summer, in the pent up and impure atmosphere of the factory, having no time for relaxation and rest, were wasting away the living energies of the physical structure, and sowing the seeds of premature decay and death! One young lady, in particular, he remarked, told him that so hard and severe was her toil from day to day, that she had scarcely strength enough left at night—to drag herself from the mill to her residence; or ambition sufficient to do what she felt necessary to be done, aside from her daily task. O, when will reformers *reform* themselves sufficiently to perceive the more direct and general causes of the evils they are endeavoring to remove! When this is done, we may hope their efforts at reform, will be somewhat effective, but not till then.

The Ladies or working women.—Not one of these appeared at the meeting tonight. I was somewhat surprised at the fact and could not account for it,⁷ except it was because I made no direct call upon them in the bills, or it might be the rainy weather. In calling upon the working men, I certainly supposed the women would feel themselves inclined, inasmuch as the “women is of the man” and not the man of the woman, and therefore I made no allusion to them, father than would be implied as above. When I was at Fall River, I observed quite a number of females at the meeting of the Mechanic’s Association. This is as it should be, for females, in general, work harder than males, and hence should feel interested in any movement which aims at the amelioration of the working classes.

Another speaker.—Mr. Jacks, a leading carpenter of this place addressed the meeting with excellent effect. He stated that he had already established the Ten Hour System of working time among his

⁷ Hewitt’s surprise was caused by his knowledge of the role that the ladies played in Fall River. The Mechanics’ Association in that city was assisted in its activities by its auxiliary, the Ladies Mechanic Association of Fall River. The auxiliary conducted regular fairs, raising funds to support the ten-hour movement. The Mechanics’ Association itself paid tribute to the woman’s auxiliary:

We owe much of our success to their efforts in our behalf. Without their timely encouragement and assistance, many of our members would have given up the contest as hopeless. But when the opposition was arrayed against us, with all their unholy weapons, when defeat seemed to stare us in the face, the wives, and mothers and daughters of the mechanics have come forward to our aid, and bid us persevere in our work of reform. Mechanics, may we never forget their works of beneficence. (*The Mechanic*, August 3, 1944.) . . .

own help, and found it to work admirably. His men did full as much work as before, and operated much more cheerfully. They now had *his* interest in view, as well as their own, and no longer opposed it. He farther stated that the movement in Fall River was the cause of his adopting this system.

I think the working men of Pawtucket will be very likely to represent themselves in convention in September. May they be faithful to themselves, to their families and to the race!

Friday. July 26th—PROVIDENCE.—Quite a full meeting assembled at the Town House this evening, and organized by choosing the proper officers; after which I addressed the meeting for something like an hour. A greater interest was manifested here in this movement than at Pawtucket. After the address, a committee was appointed to draft a constitution for the purpose of organizing the working men, that they may more effectually resist the encroachments of avarice and oppression, and more especially take some measures to represent themselves in the proposed convention. We may be pretty sure of something effectual being done here, because the present interest seems to warrant the same, and the measures already taken to this and confirm it. And certainly there is need enough of united and vigorous action here, for if there is any thing on earth that may properly bear the name of *hell*, it may be found abundantly in Providence. Friends of Humanity, arise! and shake yourself from the dust. Let Avarice tyrannize no longer over the souls and bodies of men, and bind down in the dust the noblest faculties and powers.

Forty Children in Slavery in Providence.—I am told on good authority, that one of the Screw Factories here, employs about forty children between the ages of six and ten through the long hours of the day, giving them no time to *live*! Here they are compelled to grow up dwarfs in body and dwarfs in mind. Is not this slavery? They may not be *goods* and *chattels* personal, *nominally*, but are they not so *really*? Slavery exists *nearer home* than many are in the habit of imagining.*

* Hewitt was expressing rather mildly the view, common in working-class circles of this period, that white slavery was as widespread in Northern factories as Negro slavery on the Southern plantations. That factory owners who supported the Abolitionists were considered hypocrites was expressed in the poem, "The Factory Child," published in *The Mechanic* of May 25, 1844. After describing the death of the child from overwork in the mill, the poem concludes:

That night a chariot pass'd her,
While on the ground she lay;
The daughters of her master
An evening visit pay;

Methinks this *screw* factory is rightly named, for the very *life* and *energy* of those designed for *living* beings, are really SCREWED out of them. These children are mostly Irish, and I am told, the fact of their oppression having come to the ear of the Catholic priest, he advised the parents to take their children away as soon as they could possibly find other and more comfortable situations for them. That priest has some *soul!* which certainly cannot be said of all.

Politics.—Several friends of the cause have expressed their fears to me that this movement would soon be connected with politics, which would spoil the enterprise. I have uniformly replied that such is not the design. And in my opinion, the farther it is kept from political scheming, the better—the more sure of success. In Providence, I was told, the movement would be considered by some a "second edition of Dorrism."⁹ Can't help it, said I; let them consider it what they will, we consider it a *moral* movement, and in no way connected with any party in politics. And so we will pursue the even tenor of our way, while we are conscious of the righteousness of our cause and have hope of ultimate success. Yours, most truly,

S. C. HEWITT.

MR. HEWITT'S TOUR — NO. 2. JOURNAL — Continued.

Thursday, Aug. 1.—LYNN. Arrived in this place this morning from Boston, after a ride of some twenty minutes in the cars. My object in visiting L. at this time was to attend a convention of Cordwainers, held here to day—having received an invitation so to do, in common with two or three members of the Mechanics Association of Fall River.

This convention was composed of delegates from several towns in the county of Essex, and was called for the special purpose of securing the interests of the craft; while at the same time a higher principle than mere interest seemed to lie at the foundation of the movement.

The Morning Session.—At about ten o'clock, I repaired to the hall where the meeting was appointed, and found but few individuals

Their tender hearts were sighing
As negro wrongs were told.
While the white slave was dying
Who gain'd their father's gold.

⁹ Dorrism, of course, referred to the movement in Rhode Island led by Thomas Wilson Dorr to achieve universal manhood suffrage. By the time Hewitt visited Providence, the movement had been defeated, the Dorrite government, with Dorr as governor, had been disbanded, and Dorr himself was in prison serving a sentence of solitary confinement at hard labor for life. (He was released in 1845.)

assembled. In about fifteen or twenty minutes however, the hall—which was of pretty good size for the place—was nearly filled; and before noon the house was quite full.

The meeting was called to order by a Mr. Phillips of L. who by the way is quite a pleasant and agreeable man, and deeply sympathizes with the strugglings of the laborer to free himself from his evils—and was soon organized by choice of the proper officers. The meeting was then addressed by several individuals on the general subject of the present movement of the working men, to elevate themselves and secure their true interests, with very decidedly good effect. Among the speakers, I was happy to find our friend Mr. Pierce of Fall River, who called forth by his addresses, repeated bursts of enthusiastic applause! Many others were equally happy in their performances, and showed most conclusively that working men have the ability to go forward and do this work for themselves. They are the proper ones to speak on this subject, for they alone can feel the full depths of their own evils. Near the close of the A. M. I was called upon to address the meeting, and being introduced as the Lecturer sent forth into the field by the Mechanics of Fall River, I was greeted by a loud burst of enthusiasm from the large audience before me. This I received as a mark of approbation to our Fall River friends, whose humble servant I am in my present labors, for having done *something* in the way of endeavoring to bring the laborers of New England together in convention of Sept. I spoke for nearly half an hour on the great idea of our movement, endeavoring to impress upon the minds of those present, the necessity of keeping in view the elevation of the laborer, physically, intellectually and morally, as the vastly superior object of the enterprise in which we are engaged. I was quite happy in finding a general response to this sentiment among the speakers who addressed the meeting, as well as in the general tenor of the resolutions which were subsequently passed.

Of these resolutions, I have nothing to say here, save that, for the most part, they seemed to me well calculated to further the objects of the convention.—And although I am not prepared to say I would support them on the ground of *absolute* truth or right, yet I can safely say they appeared to me *expedient*, and well adapted to the present circumstances of those who passed them. The view I take of social reform and progress is already well known to the readers of the *Mechanic*,¹⁰ as I

¹⁰ Hewitt had developed his views on Fourierism in letters to *The Mechanic*. See issues of May 11, July 6, July 20, July 27, 1844.

have heretofore expressed my sentiments on that subject through this organ to some extent. But there are thousands of laborers who are not yet in a condition to act according to the principles of that social science which I am most fully convinced is yet to be the social redemption of the world. And so bad is their condition in various respects that something must be done for them. Now, to modify and better their condition as much as possible for the *time being*, I know of nothing better to effect this result, than the movement in which we are at present engaged.

Afternoon Session.—The Convention adjourned its afternoon session to another and larger hall, which, between two and three o'clock was very well filled, for the greater part, by hard working men, determined to take some action respecting their rights. Most of the P. M. was consumed in the discussion and passage of the resolutions alluded to above. Quite a variety of thought, and a great amount of deep feeling were exhibited by the different gentlemen who engaged in the discussion.

Evening.—The evening meeting was adjourned to seven o'clock, but, on account of a very heavy shower which commenced falling about the time, but few assembled before past eight, if at all. As I left about this time, I cannot speak, of course, concerning the number present afterwards. Before I departed, however, a resolution, which had been previously introduced and laid on the table, relating to the Convention proposing to be held in Boston, was taken up for discussion. I had an opportunity to address the meeting concerning this subject, and embraced it. The resolution, in substance, was the same as the one lately passed by the Mechanics' Association of F. R., relating to the same matter.¹¹ As it will be given to the readers of the *Mechanic*, in common with the others adopted, if passed—which I cannot affirm, as I was obliged to leave while another gentleman was opposing it I will forbear farther remarks concerning the matter.

Character of the meeting.—This seemed to me of a high order, when

¹¹ The resolution adopted by the Fall River Mechanics' Association read:

Whereas, the Mechanics of New England are now depressed by the long hours of labor, and many of them deprived of their natural and religious rights by the grasping avarice of Employers, Therefore

Resolved, That we deem it of the utmost importance that a general convention of the Mechanics and Laborers of New England, should be held as soon as convenient during the coming season, to take into consideration the best means for elevating the Mechanics and Laboring Classes, and bettering their condition, Physically, Mentally and Morally.

Resolved, That we recommend to the Mechanics of the different Towns in New England to form themselves into Associations for the purpose of taking action in relation to the holding of said general Convention. (*The Mechanic*, May 25, 1844.)

all the circumstances were taken into the account. The convention was composed of laborers who feel and know the evils they are suffering. Consequently they are beginning to feel their rights. And when we consider the disadvantages under which this class of Humanity are, and have for ages been laboring, we are not to feel surprised at all if in an assemblage of men like this, much is said and done which will not commend itself to the judgement of those who have enjoyed greater advantages. However this may be, this much must be said of this meeting, that very little indeed comparatively, appeared worthy of condemnation, or that could not be approbated by the moderate conservative who feels any sympathy for the cause of the laborer.

Singing.—A great deal of enthusiasm was created at this meeting by connecting the singing of several songs adapted to the occasion with the other performances. This struck me as a good idea, and affords others a hint, from which—if they take it they may derive a great profit. When we observe the tremendous effect which was produced by *singing*, in the political campaign of 1840,¹² we should feel it a high privilege to make use of this means as a help in the furtherance of a better cause. Come on then, ye poets, and give us some songs for our convention.¹³ We shall need them, and we will endeavor to make good use of them.

Friday, Aug. 2.—WORCESTER. Arrived here about half past 9 o'clock this morning from Boston; and before noon had a meeting of the working men called. At the usual hour the hall—which I was told would hold about 500—was almost filled. I soon called the meeting to order and after trying some fifteen minutes, by strongly urging the matter, succeeded in securing the appointment of a Moderator that the meeting might be organized for the necessary business; after which a Secretary was chosen, and I immediately gave my address. I then urged others to speak, but could get nothing said, except a few words from the chairman who expressed his strong sympathy with the cause and his desire to act with others in aid of the movement. A committee, however, was appointed to draft a Constitution for organizing an Association here and the meeting adjourned for the report of the same to next Thursday evening.

¹² Hewett is referring to the 1840 presidential campaign during which the Whigs popularized their candidates, William Henry Harrison and John Tyler, with songs like "Tippecanoe and Tyler too."

¹³ Actually, *The Mechanic* regularly featured songs in favor of the ten-hour day. See for example, "Song of the Ten Hour Workingman" and "The Ten Hour Banner" in *The Mechanic*, May 4, June 8, 1844.

It may be inferred from the above, that, although there was a good deal of backwardness here respecting action on this important subject, yet there is some hope left that Worcester will represent herself in convention. May she do so most fully, and thereby show to the working men of New England,—aye, and to the *aristocracy* too, that the spirit of liberty is not entirely quenched in her; and that she is determined to arise and assert her rights manfully. She has some choice spirits yet in her midst,—enough to save her,—at least, I *hope* so. May they move now while they have life, and lend a helping hand to the laborers of our country for the attainment of the high objects before them.

Blindness.—In endeavoring to find a hall in which to speak for humanity this morning, I happened to stumble unexpectedly upon a poor *blind* man who fell in my way; blind, I mean, in the eyes of his *mind*,—not in the organs of natural vision. Neither did I *stumble*, *literally*, as some might suppose; but it was a sort of *spiritual* stumbling. I called on the chairman of the committee, who has the care of the Town Hall, for the purpose of obtaining it for a lecture. I showed him one of my bills; he looked at the motto which struck his spiritual optics very much askant, as was abundantly shown by his subsequent observations. The Motto speaks of *oppression*; but he said he knew not what I meant by it,—he did not see any oppression among the laborers of New England! I endeavored to explain in what the oppression consisted, but the monotonous response was “we know nothing of such oppression here.” This man is a brother of Ex. Gov. Lincoln,¹⁴ and a Sheriff. No wonder he does not see the oppression of the hard working man! Let them change places for a while, and perhaps he might see fit to change his opinion. I pitied this poor apology for a man, from the very bottom of my heart, while I hated most perfectly the manner and selfish spirit which he manifested. More anon.

S. C. HEWITT.

MR. HEWITT'S TOUR — NO. 3.
JOURNAL — Continued.

Monday, August 5th. NORWICH. Arrived in this city about one o'clock today, designing to lecture here to the workingmen; but found the public halls occupied by others, and the operations at them of such character as to be quite likely to attract the class we wish interested in our cause. So concluded not to lecture here at present.

¹⁴ The reference is to Levi Lincoln, governor of Massachusetts from 1825 to 1834.

Phrenology. The Fowlers are here, lecturing on this science,¹⁵ and are creating a great interest on the subject. Very large audiences attend the lectures and seem much gratified by the information given them. I attended this evening with the intention of calling the attention of the people to the Ten Hour System, if liberty was granted. I consulted Mr. Fowler—the Senior—on the subject, and found him quite favorable to my object and very much interested in our cause. So, after he had got through with his lecture, I called the attention of his very large audience to the movement of the workingmen in this part of the country—stated the object for which I came to this city, and the reasons why I did not lecture. I farther stated that I should probably, within a few weeks, take a trip to Springfield, Hartford, New Haven, &c. and return by way of this place, and would then endeavor to address them on the Elevation of the Working Classes. Meanwhile I urged them to take the matter into consideration, and those at all interested, to endeavor to create as much interest on the subject as possible. Mr. Fowler seconded my observations, and said to me that he should make the matter of labor and its perfection the subject, in part, of his next evenings discourse. So things are getting along here much better than I expected, when I first found I could not lecture.

Aug. 6th. NEW LONDON. Took the Steam Boat this morning at 7 o'clock for this namesake (in part) of Old England's Capitol, with the certain expectation of speaking to the *workers*—not particularly of *iniquity*—but of all those things which are of use to the world; the creators of wealth; the bone and saw, the heart and soul of industrial life and of general society. But here also, as in Norwich, I was disappointed. The public halls were pre-engaged; and Dr. Charles Douglas, to whom I had previously written on the subject—and who is very much engaged in our cause, advised me, as I was expecting to visit Norwich again soon, to come to this place also, and he would in the mean time interest the people as much as possible in the matter, and do all he could to get them out to hear. The Dr. tells me the Ten Hour System was carried into general practical effect here some years ago, and that now there is a great deal of apathy felt, on the part of the working men themselves, in regard to the higher objects of our movement. He is very desirous I should lecture here as soon as possible, and promises me his

¹⁵ The brothers Orson Squire and Lorenzo Fowler were the leading champions of the cause of phrenology in America. Orson Squire, the elder brother, was the first to become converted to a belief in phrenology.

best exertions to obtain an audience and to further the objects we have in view.

Stonington. Being disappointed, as above, I concluded it best to visit this place to-day and commence operations immediately if possible. I arrived here after a tedious ride, partly by private conveyance, and partly by stage, about 7 o'clock in the evening. I immediately applied for a hall to lecture in to-night, and found the only one which was not occupied or prohibited, could not be obtained, on account of a man was sick in the house of which the hall was a part. So I concluded to call a meeting in the *street*! At about 8 o'clock I had about 100 anxious hearers gathered around the steps of a cabinet ship, in a somewhat central part of the borough. I addressed them about an hour, and found a good degree of interest manifested. As one of my principal objects in lecturing is to form Associations of the working men in all places I visit, and as the street was quite inconvenient for such business, I put the motion whether we should have another meeting for this purpose, and also for speaking on the subject. The voice of the assemblage was unanimous in its favor. Another meeting was accordingly appointed for the next evening, in a suitable house, if possible to obtain one,—otherwise in the street again.

Aug. 7. Several houses were applied for to-day, in which to hold our meeting, and every one *refused*! So we had to meet again in the street [sic]!! The audience was much larger to-night than the first. We organized the meeting as well as we could in the dark! and took the necessary steps to the formation of an Association here. The friends of the cause expressed a determination to do what they could to this end, and spoke favorably of the Convention to be held in Boston, and of their representation in the same. May they be up and going while the day lasts.

WESTERLY. *Aug. 8.* This is something of a manufacturing village, lying partly in Connecticut and partly in Rhode Island, about five miles from Stonington towards Providence. The Long hour system, with its general evils, prevails here I believe in all departments of labor, and the souls and bodies of immortal being are continually wasted to fill the pockets of the avaricious capitalist, who worships no other God so faithfully; if at all, as he does the "Almighty dollar!" O' avarice! what havoc dost thou make!—How are the noblest elements of the human soul chained to the earth by thee, instead of being free to fasten upon

the high objects, and to have that harmonic exercise which the God of Heaven designed.

The friends of our cause here have organized an Association, and already had several lectures delivered them by Dr. Douglas of New London. They have also, it seems, been alive to the necessity of holding frequent meetings when no lecturer was present, to discuss the subject of their rights, and their general condition and also to keep up the necessary interest required for efficient action in the cause.

The audience assembled to-night, I was told, was twice as large as any which had before convened in this place for similar object. I had nothing to do but to lecture, as all the necessary organization had been had previously to my coming here. Every thing was in readiness for me, and I was ready to do what I could for them and the cause. From present appearances, we may hope much of Westerly—she will most fully represent herself in convention.

PROVIDENCE. Aug. 9. I came here to-day with the design of lecturing again to the working men of the depraved city; but soon learned that the state of feeling in relation to the cause, would render it expedient for me to postpone the contemplated address to some future time.

The Providence Industrial Reform Association. Such is the name given by the working men of P. to the association which I have been the humble instrument in starting. The name is appropriate and significant, for Industry needs reforming as much as any department of life, an associated effort can alone effectually reform it.

Unfavorable influences. There are many of these here which seem for the present to retard the progress of our cause in this particular locality. The movement of the *working men*, has been called by some of the "contrary part," an *insurrection*, *Treason* and the like—which startling discovery has produced not a little excitement in this waspish city. Is it then *insurrectionary* in R. I. for the poor, hard working men to organize associations, discuss *peaceably* the subject of labor and its inherent rights, and take the necessary action to secure those rights, without infringing, in the least on the *rights* of others? *Insurrectionary!*—for the toil worn laborer to do what he can for his own, and the elevation of his children and his fellow laborers from the physical, the moral and the intellectual evils they are at present suffering? Truly, there must be a very singular principle at work in the hearts of those with whom this startling term is so familiar under such circumstances. It has been said, and truly, that evil doers are startled

at even the *rustling* of a leaf! and in a certain ancient Book of note, I think I have read that "the wicked fleeth when no man pursueth"; from which truthful sayings a certain article called a *Coat* may perhaps be envolved, suited to the contour of those concerned and can, of course, be put on the worn if such be the fact. But enough of this. Our movement is a peaceful one, it conflicts only with evil, but with no man's real rights and interest. And whatever may be the character of the *opposition*, we hope the Association in P. will maintain an unbroken front of *moral* power alone, until the great object before it is gained.

I go next to WOONSOCKET, which, if I mistake not, will not be essentially *harmd* by a FIREBRAND of TRUTH! thrown unto her midst. *May be* she needs some *burning* of this sort. We shall see.

S. C. HEWITT.

MR. HEWITT'S TOUR — NO. 4.
JOURNAL — Continued.

Monday, Aug. 12. WOONSOCKET. Most of the readers of the *Mechanic* are doubtless acquainted with this place somewhat, and know it to be a rather large manufacturing village on the northern border of Rhode Island. The place is said to have greatly improved in outward appearance, and also in morals, within a few years past. But however this may be, one thing is certain, and that is, it is yet *bad enough* in both. Rum drinking, gambling, licentiousness and profanity, form the principle amusements of certain class here, which class is somewhat numerous. Then all the evils of the present system of labor seem, as it were, to be here concentrated. All sorts of people, and all sorts of business move on here rapidly in the vortex of life, which is but another name for *death*! If any people may be said to have a "living death" it is the people of Woonsocket. To be sure, there are a few good souls here who live as true a life,—in so far as that life is affected by *outward* conditions, as present circumstances will permit.—But even they, such are the laws of sympathy by which the whole social body is invariably governed, are more or less affected by the general evils of social life. Woonsocket, however, may yet be saved, if she will, notwithstanding her extreme depravity.—It is time for the good and the true in motive to be also good and true in action. Mere *motive* life is *passive*, and can produce no result for good. Let those who have sympathy for the oppressed, then, *arouse*, and act for the good of those who oppose themselves.

The Lecture. I addressed some three hundred laborers here to-night, who listened with good degree of interest to the developments I was enabled to make concerning the general condition of the working class, and the Remedy we propose in the commencement of this great moral movement. The proposition to form an organization here to act in concert with others, also met with decided favor, as was shown by the immediate action that was taken thereon. We may hope that W. will give us a good delegation at Boston.

Misrepresentation. However careful I am to avoid any thing which seems calculated to beget a still greater *hardness* between the employer and the employed, I am nevertheless quite unsuccessful in this respect: consequently the sin is laid to my charge.—I am accused of endeavoring to set the two classes at sword points with each other, and thus to engender broils and contentions which will be sure to make the condition of the *laborer* worse than it is at present. This accusation gives me *courage* to pursue the even tenor of my way and labor with still greater zeal in this worthy cause. I can say to all concerned, however, that I have invariably labored to fill up the awful chasm which is already existing between the laborer and the capitalist—to heal the breach which their present antagonism is continually making more alarming. I have always endeavored to show that the *true* interests of all parties are most intimately connected,—that to separate them is to essentially injure the whole social body and produce chaos and confusion in social life. Such is now the fact. There is little or no harmony in the interests of the producing classes and the capitalists; and it is almost impossible to make this antagonism greater than it now is. But suppose our movement does produce the effect of which it is accused—i.e. set the employed against the employer, &c, are we to be accused of *designing* such evil? Truly such must *judge others by themselves!*—which, considering who the judges are, would most evidently, be no very hard matter. The employers and the cold conservatives are those who invariably sit in judgment here, and having such *data*, we might be at no very great loss to draw our conclusion, and that very readily.

But we are willing to allow that, in one sense, the effect stated, is the result of the working man's movement. But in what sense is such the fact? Certainly not in any *positive* sense. Evils, it is very well known, are always incident to transitions. When the body is diseased, in order to expel the cause, the patient must sometimes be made to feel the *greater disagreeable effects of medicine*, for a short time. And the *apparently*

greater evil, in the case, is considered, and truly, the best evidence of returning health and life. So in the *social* body: If the application which we make to its diseases show us what *appears* a bad result, we should show ourselves very unwise indeed to pronounce it at once and without consideration the positive and *designed* effect of our application. We should rather term it *incidental*, and regard it as the strongest evidence of a *social cure*.

The *agitation* which is now going on, with respect to labor and its interests, instead of creating new prejudices and antagonisms, is only *showing* those more clearly, which have already too long *slumbered and slept*. We are beginning to perceive thereby the extent of social evil; and we shall soon begin to see the necessity of doing something to bring life and health again into the social body.

Aug. 13—MILFORD. Farming and shoemaking interests are the principal ones of this town. The latter prevails to a greater extent than the former; and the working men in both, compared with most laborers—are somewhat *independent*. The shoemakers, for the most part, work by the *job*, and pretty much as they please, as respects the *hours* of labor—a fact with which I was wholly unacquainted before coming here, and which, if I had known previously, would probably have kept me away. I lectured however to about *one hundred and twenty-five* of the citizens this evening, with scarcely any apparent effect for our enterprise. After the lecture I proposed an organization, and tried the feeling and opinion of the audience on the subject. The vote was *not to act*—the first instance of the kind I have met with since I commenced lecturing. By the apathy manifested, and some few hints I had previously received, I conjectured the cause of the manifestation. So I endeavored to excite some little sympathy for *humanity*, by showing the necessary *connection* which exists between all departments of social life and all classes of the great social body. But no: men can be touched where their *selfish interests* are concerned; but where *higher principles* of action become the basis of movement, coldness and indifference are too often all the response we get. I do not so much wonder at this, however, when I observe the fact that, the working classes have always been depressed and forbidden the opportunity necessary, for the development of their better natures, to very great extent. But, from my previous knowledge of the enterprise, industry and activity, of the citizens of M., I did hope for a very different expression in relation to our cause, either from considerations of interest, or those of a higher character. But I was disappointed,

and so must make the best of it. Such coldness in every place would have a tendency to discourage me in my labors; but I am truly thankful that such is not the fact—this is the only instance of the kind; may it also be the last.

HOPE DALE. Many of my readers have undoubtedly heard of this place long ere this, and know what it signifies.¹⁸ There may be others who are ignorant of the matter; and for the information of such, I would say that H.D. is the name of an Association, located in the southerly part of the town of Milford, which owns some four hundred acres of land, very pleasantly situated on a small stream of water, which courses its way through a beautiful valley, and which affords two or three very good mill privileges on the present domain of the Association. —There are some fifty persons who are *resident* members of this community, and quite a number of *non-resident* ones. They seem to live a very peaceful and happy life and appear very well contented with their situation and prospects.

Their object is to realize a better social order than that of *Civilization* as it is, by ASSOCIATIVE UNITY in industrial pursuits, and the simultaneous development of a higher spiritual life. These results they hope to obtain *ultimately* to the fullest extent, and presently to a greater extent than can otherwise be accomplished, by a *harmony of interests* that shall destroy all false competition, and give the necessary ground or basis for the establishment of justice and good will among men, and also all those high Christian virtues which, in present society, are but little exhibited; and that little so amalgamated with general selfishness as to deface the god-like beauty, and destroy the harmonic character of the soul's immortal nature and tendency.

Their prospects—which, to the world, are a *dead letter*—to themselves are quite encouraging, although many obstacles present themselves, in the present transitional state of the movement, seemingly to the detriment of the cause, but which, it is hoped, will be of much use in disciplining the gradually developing powers, which, were it not for associative action, would still have slumbered, in their dormancy and

¹⁸ The Hopedale Community (Dale of Hope) was founded by Adin Ballou, Universalist clergyman and reformer. Hopedale, based on Fourier's principles, was the first of the Utopian communities in the United States in the decade 1840-50. Organized in the spring of 1842 by some thirty men, women and children, with Ballou as president, Hopedale lasted until 1867 when the area of the community became the town of Hopedale. (See George L. Gary, "Adin Ballou and the Hopedale Community," *New World*, vol. VII, December, 1898, 670-83.)

death. May Heaven abundantly prosper them in their righteous undertaking.

Aug. 14. MILLVILLE. This is a small factory village situated on the Blackstone river, about four miles north-west of Woonsocket. I lectured here to-night to a *fair* audience as to *numbers*, and for ought I know as to *manners* also; and I am very sure of this as to the *fairer* portion of creation, for I was honored by the attendance of a *fair* number of the FAIR. These *fair* ones however would be FAIRER still, if the present very *un-fair* system of labor were superseded by one we may most properly term the FAIREST.

Organization. I succeeded here, after some little effort in inducing the friends of our cause to form an Association, so that the working men may act in concert locally and generally. The subject of labor has been agitated here before to some considerable extent; and the people generally are somewhat in advance of the times as to the general reforms of the day. They might therefore be expected to be in readiness to hear what might be said on the ten hour system, and also to be ready to act should occasion seem to require. I trust they will do so.

Aug. 15. WATERFORD AND BLACKSTONE. These are what most people would denominate very *flourishing* (?) manufacturing villages, located about midway between Millville and Woonsocket, on the same stream. And I am very willing to allow that even in two *very important* senses they are extremely *flourishing*. In the first place they *flourish* a great heap of money into the pockets of the owners, which certainly is a matter of no small weight or importance; and in the second place they *flourish* the *souls* of their SLAVES out of their bodies, in order to make the former flourish; and both flourishes together make them, villages, whose condition is very FLOURISHING!!

The *Audience*, here to night, which was made up of operatives principally from both these villages, numbered over *three hundred*. The meeting was held in the vestry of Elder Burlingame's Church, which was filled to overflowing. I found Mr. B. very favorable to our cause, and very willing to take hold and do something to aid the poor toil worn laborer in elevating himself. He has spoken on the subject from the desk, and even took some of my bills and helped me to post them, which latter circumstance would be considered by most ministers as beneath their *dignity*, whatever *Christian* truth and duty might teach them concerning the *righteousness* of the act, and the blessings such conduct might yield to the suffering race. Ministers are out of their proper

element when they clothe themselves with that *false dignity* which shuts them out from that intercourse with humanity, which alone can teach them the wants of the world, and prepare them to be the proper instruments through which those wants may be satisfied. Mr. B. has my warmest thanks for the interest he takes in the workingman's movement, as also the gentlemanly treatment he gave me while at Waterford. The worn-out laborer, will I doubt not, be alike thankful for this expression of interest. Two other preachers deserve the like commendation for the interest which they manifest in this cause, and the encouragement which they give to these specially engaged in the work. I allude to Mr. Fish of Millville, and Mr. Baydon of Woonsocket.

To NEWPORT next, I wend my way. They tell me 'tis an *eden a paradise on earth!* I am doubtful of this, however, but shall soon *know* when mine eyes have *seen it*. *May be* there is a mixture of *hell* there, with the much praised *heaven!*

S. C. HEWITT.

MR. HEWITT'S TOUR — NO. 5.
JOURNAL — Concluded.

Aug. 19. NEWPORT. Came to this place this morning, in the Steam Boat Ioalas from Providence, with some expectation of speaking to the people here to-night, on the great and all absorbing subject of LABOR, but am obliged to defer the meeting till to-morrow evening.

Aug. 20. Arrangements were made and full notice given of the Working Men's meeting this morning, and to-night we had a fair audience convened at the Town Hall. I presented the subject of our movement to them in my usual manner, but found but little interest manifested. No desire for organized action was manifested on the part of the audience, but a few friends who have for some time manifested an interest worthy of the cause, and who are well acquainted with the state of feeling here, gave me encouragement to hope that at least, a small association will soon be formed, & N.P. be represented in convention. We need not hope much from her at present, however, for she has too much aristocracy, besides a good deal of *millocracy* in her midst, which for the time being, have power to make slaves of the poor operatives. These will ultimately throw off the yoke, however, asserting and

maintaining their rights manfully, as the cause moves onward to its final victory. But before this can be done they must have less *fear* of the worthies named above, and less respect for their power and influence.

Sympathy and opposition. The discussion of this subject, or even the circulation of the bills, giving notice of the same, brings out *two parties* who manifest (as is to be expected) more or less hostility against each other, as well as for and *against* the cause. This was somewhat strikingly manifested here to-day on the part of two gentlemen, who, I think, are merchants of some sort. One of my bills was carried into the store of one of these men, and posted. On reading it, he manifested his disposition quite *tearingly*, in tearing it down and destroying it, remarking at the same time that Massachusetts must not think of sending such *TREASONABLE stuff as that into Rhode Island!!* Wonderful! that man has an astonishing faculty for perceiving *treasonable* projects in operations of those who do not even *dream* of any such thing. It may be however he is only *aping* his brethren of a certain city north of him, who first manifested the wonderful power of perception of which I speak. If so, he is thereby exonerated from the imputation above, and may, of course, take his position among the *apish brotherhood!*

Another bill was carried into the store of the other gentleman to whom I allude, which he himself posted and took every opportunity to make the fact of the meeting known, and to interest people in the subject. This man will be beloved and respected by all whose respect is worth having, while the contempt and execration of all lovers of the race, will follow the other and his class while they exist.

Aug. 22. NEW BEDFORD. The Ten Hour system has been established here several years, and its blessings are realized to some considerable extent. Yet there is not that advancement in human elevation which we ought to expect from the establishment of this system. The reason of this is found not in the system itself, but in the fact that but little, if anything, has been done to keep up an interest in the working classes as to the *higher objects* of the movement—the employment of their extra time in their general mental cultivation and improvement. These higher objects of the enterprise can now be better secured than heretofore, on account of the *systematic action* throughout New England, which, it is hoped, will soon be had and carried on from year to year by conventions and other gatherings which are felt to be necessary to the success of the cause.

The Meeting. About *three hundred* assembled at the Town Hall tonight, and a good portion of these seemed very much interested in the object we have in view. The larger part, however, were quite indifferent, which was manifested by their leaving the hall when the necessary action was called for. There was a decided voice, however, for organization, on the part of those who remained, but the necessary business preliminary to this was not performed, principally on account of those individuals, who generally take the lead in such matters, being absent. I think, on the whole, that some aid may be expected from N.B., at our gathering in Boston, notwithstanding her sons and daughters are not suffering the curse of the long hour system like most others. May they feel disposed to lend us a helping hand, and thereby bless humanity and themselves.

Aug. 24. TAUNTON. The most decided expression in favor to our enterprise was given in this place to-night. In no place I have yet visited—save Providence—has the interest been so general and so promptly manifested. The audience, which was large, was quite ready and willing to organize immediately, and the business to this end was well and promptly performed. Several mechanics had previously pledged themselves to appear in the convention whether there were an organization formed there or not. Now they will be doubly sure to attend, for we may be sure of decided associational action by them, both in relation to the general enterprise, and especially in reference to the convention.

About *thirty* mechanics, all operating in one shop, take the "Mechanic," feel deeply interested in the subject, and were every one present this evening. And to their influence may be attributed mainly the favor with which our causes is regarded in Taunton. Much may also be hoped for in future from the stand they have taken and the tokens already given of interest in the movement. May other shops speedily follow this noble example, till all the working men in T. are organized into one solid phalanx, presenting a bold front to the enemy of human rights, and battering down the opposition of avarice and of general selfishness.

I thus conclude my journal—my first Tour being ended; and should I "commence a second," I may perhaps communicate something in relation to it, in some form through the "Mechanic."¹⁷

S. C. HEWITT.

¹⁷ Hewitt never made another organizing tour, but he did continue to write for *The Mechanic*. See issue of January 18, 1845.