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# THE NATIONAL GUARD MAGAZINE

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## The Attitude of Employers Toward the National Guard

THE first to ask for protection against real or imaginary attack and, if that protection be not forthcoming or inadequate, the first to raise a plaint and double the watchmen employed, is the employer who is in a dispute with his employees. Behind him stand, in more or less uncertain and timorous array, the other employers of labor, merchants, tradesmen and so-called business men. In some cases the local police are able, by neglecting their regular work and doubling up, to control the situation. In other cases the sheriff is called upon to furnish protection and business men are compelled to give up their business and, armed with tin badges, a club (which they don't know how to use), and possibly a cheap revolver (which they know still less about) perform a service for which they are not fitted, either by organization or training, to do. The history of the posse comitatus, in our Eastern states at least, is not something to be proud of or to inspire confidence.

In the Western states where the days of the frontier are not so far distant as to have rendered the possession of and skill in the use of firearms a thing of the forgotten past, the record is not so bad.

The posse comitatus being generally unreliable there are but two courses open, when disorder prevails and life and property are threatened. One is open to the threatened property holder and invariably leads to increased disorder—the employment of private watchmen or guards. These men are readily recruited in any large center where there are agencies who make a business of raising these bands of industrial mercenaries. The agencies ask no questions of a man's previous record, they only stipulate that he will take a chance for a handsome daily wage.

Once installed, employer and strikes are at the mercy of these fellows whose jobs depend on the continuance of violence, and who are often responsible for serious outrages which they seek to blame upon the strikers and their sympathizers.

To one who has seen the working of this system the attention is riveted on the similarity between these gangs and the bands of mercenary cut throats who laid Italy waste during the middle ages.

To an American who loves the flag and reveres the institutions of his country, the ally is anything but reassuring for the future, and its consideration by all citizens is rapidly becoming imperative.

At first glance one would suppose from the attacks that are made upon the Guard from certain quarters, and from the use that is often made of it as a posse comitatus, that employers would be most friendly toward it and anxious to have it kept at its maximum strength and efficiency. That they do expect this is unquestionable, but what do they do to help? By sending their sons to enlist?

No. By encouraging their clerks and confidential employees to enlist? No. By protecting their employees who do enlist and seeing to it that they are assisted in the performance of their duty and given the opportunity to attend the drills and encampments? With a very few exceptions no.

A young Guardsman obtained employment with a well-to-do broker, whose interests in the city they both resided in were large. The Captain of the organization was given by the young man as reference. In a telephone conversation about the young man the employer objected to the fact that the calls of the Guard would interfere with the man's duties and tried to stipulate that he would not be required to respond to emergency calls. After getting the employment the man ceased to attend drills, owing to the requirements of his time. No co-operation there, but the broker would be very wrathful if he were accused of hampering the efficiency of the Guard.

The mayor of a certain town openly stated that he would not let his son enlist in the Guard as it would distract his mind from his business. In the next breath he spoke grandly (the usual American brag) of the United States as a world power and ability to whip the world. He also bragged of the record his local National Guard company had made in assembling for a riot call.

Rioters held a central western city in terror for almost two months. The Guard was ordered out, but was to be withdrawn in a few days. A mass meeting of the business men was held and measures of protection were discussed. At the end of the meeting several of the more active members sought out some Guard officers for advice. Various plans were suggested by the alarmed citizens, all of them foolish and impracticable. Two of the officers present finally spoke up and said, "Send your sons down here to enlist and we'll take care of the situation." The conference dissolved instantly. Not a single son or relative of these men offered himself. One organization enlisted twenty-one men in the course of a few days, a few of whom were actual residents of the city; most of them were country boys who came for the scrap.

In one of our states that boasts a dependable National Guard there arose not long since a dispute between a large corporation and a portion of its employees. Rioting marked the strike from the outset, and in a few days it was necessary to call out a large portion of the Guard. Among the troops thus called there was a regiment generally recognized as being a first-class military organization. The first crisis having passed, the number of troops was cut down and the regiment mentioned was among those relieved. There was no hint of criticism of there having been dereliction of duty on the part of this organization. On the way to their home station a subscription for the strikers was made up and a fair sum realized. This money, contributed by individuals, was sent to the strikers and the name of the organization was used by the papers.

At once there came a protest from all quarters and the entire Guard was condemned by every employer and business man as being untrustworthy and in league with the law-breakers they were called upon to overawe. Business men who saw their property imperiled took alarm and vigorously denounced the entire Guard and suggested Federal interference.

Again and again have young men who wished to enlist in the Guard been advised by their employers not to do so as it would

interfere with "business" to have the employees subject to call by the state. It would upset the routine of the office or bank if John Jones' work had to be spread over the entire force while the said Jones was away at camp. The best reason the writer ever heard was one advanced by a militant banker (militant for others to do the fighting) which was to the effect that the annual trip to camp of a certain employee destroyed the discipline of his force of clerks because the date for camp came at the time that had been set for the vacation of a senior employee. He could not let both go, and to change the vacation would necessitate letting some senior employee take their vacation after a junior.

Encouraging, wasn't it, for the company commander who needed every man he had for camp.

Cases innumerable might be cited where employers have done everything in their power to discourage employees from enlisting and if enlisted make no effort to enable them to perform their duty or show any appreciation of the real sacrifice the young man was making for an ideal.

Time and again the writer has written to or interviewed employers to get them to release an employee for camp. The releases were almost uniformly given but the man usually found himself handicapped on his return.

A banker was asked for a contribution of money. He refused, saying: "The state ought to do that." The bank has since failed.

During a long continued tour of riot duty that a certain organization had in its home city, the Captain was asked by the president of a large manufacturing company to release one of his men who was employed by the company, as his work was getting behind. The Captain refused and the request was made of the Governor of the state who also refused.

Both refusals were based on the grounds that the public safety demanded the presence of the organization and there were other men whose personal business was suffering from their absence, who would have to be relieved also if such a thing were done, and the efficiency of the organization would thus be impaired. The case quoted is not an exceptional one nor could anyone charge the manufacturer with any ulterior motive. He simply was affected with the usual American habit of selfishness and the putting of business ahead of patriotism. The same selfishness leads to our appalling roll of industrial killed and wounded.

Thus the strong young men who would gladly enlist and who would make ideal men are deterred from doing so by this indifferent and hostile attitude of the majority of employers.

Of course the employers "know their business," but as they are the first to expect, and often ask for, the service of the Guard in the very duty that makes the organization so very distasteful to the bulk of the workingmen, it would seem that their business acumen would lead them to do everything possible to strengthen and increase the efficiency of the force they are so quick to turn to for protection, and which, to its credit, has seldom failed.

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*Dedicated to the patient and patriotic officers and enlisted men of the National Guard of all the States and devoted to the service they so nobly represent*

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