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tortious act or "wrong" to the other contracting party, the wrongdoer will be precluded from profiting by an enforcement of his second contract.54

ROBERT M. POST.

PICKETING—SCOPE OF RELIEF UNDER THE NEW YORK ANTI-INJUNCTION ACT

I

It is most interesting to note the first judicial dispositions of cases involving organization to secure wage increases and picketing. In 1835 a combination of bootmakers, to raise their wages, was indicted for peaceable co-operation for the purpose of maintaining the rate of wages. The court held that such combinations and confederacies to enhance or reduce the price of labor were injurious to trade, and monopolistic in aspect.1 Business was upheld as a property right which equity would enjoin from injury.2 In another action involving the right to picket, the court similarly enjoined the defendant on the ground that it was a public obstruction and a private nuisance in violation of the right to do business freely.3 Judicial attitude was rapidly changing, and, towards the end of the century, we find the first assertions that combination, appeal, persuasion,4 and picketing5 are legal means of obtaining larger wages. Legislative recognition fostered this change, and in 1870 it was enacted that the "orderly and peaceable assembling or co-operation of persons employed in any profession, trade or handicraft, for the purpose of securing an advance in the rate of wages or compensation" is now permitted.6 Thus the common law actions of conspiracy7 and enticing away of workmen8

54 11 A. L. R. 698; RESTATEMENT, LAW OF CONTRACTS § 576.

1 People v. Fisher, 14 Wend. 2, 18 (N. Y. 1835) ("He may say that he will not make coarse boots for less than one dollar but he has no right to say that no other mechanic shall make them for less").


3 Gilbert v. Mickle, 4 Sandf. Ch. 357 (N. Y. 1846) (defendant picketed the plaintiff's auction rooms to warn strangers of mock auctions).

4 People v. Wilzig, 4 N. Y. Cr. Rep. 403 (1886); People v. Kostka, 4 N. Y. Cr. Rep. 429 (1886).


6 N. Y. Laws 1870, c. 19.

7 Two or more persons who conspire to prevent another from exercising a lawful trade or calling, or by interfering or threatening to interfere with property belonging to or used by another, or with the use or employment thereof, are guilty of a misdemeanor.

8 Johnston Harvester Co. v. Meinhardt, 9 Abb. (N. C.) 393 (N. Y. 1880)
gave way to the declaration that free competition between employer and labor was worth more to society than it costs.\(^9\) On this ground a consequent infliction of damage to business is privileged, and the doctrine that picketing was \textit{per se} illegal\(^10\) gave way to the suggestion that threats, intimidations, coercion or force must be established by proof before an injunction will issue.\(^11\)

The New York Court of Appeals had attained a well deserved reputation as the outstanding liberal court in the country on labor questions.\(^12\)

II

Prior to Section 876-a of the Civil Practice Act, the Court had evidenced a marked desire to limit the injunction, and avoid judicial interference in labor disputes.\(^13\) The Court had upheld a union's right to refuse to allow its members to work on non-union materials,\(^14\) or to refuse to handle goods loaded and delivered by non-union labor;\(^15\) had condemned decisions prohibiting picketing in the absence of a strike; allowed picketing directed against a product at the place of sale;\(^16\) had refused to curtail picketing because of a terminable yellow dog contract;\(^17\) had upheld the right to picket despite the existence of a closed shop contract with a rival union;\(^18\) and had limited sweeping injunctions to specific unlawful acts.\(^19\) The legislative enactment of

\(^{\text{9}}\) Commonwealth v. Hunt, 4 Metc. 111 (Mass. 1842).

\(^{\text{10}}\) The doctrine that all picketing is illegal was followed in California, Illinois, Michigan and New Jersey. New York held it enjoinable as "injurious to trade". Atchison, T. & S. F. Ry. v. Gee, 139 Fed. 582 (C. C. Iowa 1905); Pierce v. Stablemen's Union, 156 Cal. 70, 103 Pac. 324 (1909); Barnes v. Typographical Union, 252 Ill. 424, 83 N. E. 940 (1908); Beck v. Ry. Teamsters Union, 118 Mich. 497, 77 N. W. 13 (1898); Baldwin Lumber Co. v. Brotherhood of Teamsters, 91 N. J. Eq. 240, 109 Atl. 147 (1920); Gilbert v. Mickel, 45 Sandf. Ch. 357 (N. Y. 1846).


\(^{\text{12}}\) (1936) 5 INT. JURID. ASS'N BULL. 59.


\(^{\text{17}}\) Interborough Rapid Transit Co. v. Lavin, 247 N. Y. 65, 159 N. E. 864 (1928).


Section 876-a obviously intended to affirm these results, and limit judicial discretion still further. The lower courts adopted a restrictive attitude with respect to labor activities, and interpreted the Act as merely regulatory of the procedure of granting injunctions, without making any changes in the substantive law. In confining the right to picket peacefully, the lower courts have evolved a series of exceptions in which an injunction will issue in the absence of a finding that a labor dispute exists. For example, if the union engages in any form of extreme, violent or unlawful conduct, the requirements of the Act may be dispensed with; where an employer avoided the possibility of a dispute by closing his doors; where the lone worker struck and the plaintiff carried on with his wife and son; when the employer took over the job of his sole employee; where the parties were not in "unity of interest"; where employer signed a contract

20 N. Y. Civ. Prac. Act § 876-a: "The policy of this state is declared as follows: Equity procedure that permits a complaining party to obtain sweeping injunctive relief that is not preceded by or conditioned upon adequate notice and hearing of the responding party or parties, or that issues after a hearing based upon written affidavits alone and not upon examination, confrontation and cross-examination of witnesses in open court, is peculiarly subject to abuses in labor litigations for the reason that among other things,

(1) The status quo cannot be maintained but is necessarily altered by the injunction,

(2) Determination of issues of veracity and of probability of fact from affidavits of opposing parties that are contradicted, and under the circumstances, untrustworthy rather than from oral examination in open court is subject to grave error,

(3) Error in issuing the injunctive relief is usually irreparable to the opposing party, and

(4) Delay incident to the normal course of appellate practice frequently makes ultimate correction of error in law or in fact unavailing in the particular case."


22 Note (1940) 49 Yale L. J. 537.


24 See note 21, supra.


on the basis of false representations;30 where the union had been
denied permission to do business in the state31 or where all of plain-
tiff's employees were members of a union which was a rival of the
picketing organization.32 These decisions disregard the established
law of the state that labor has an inherent right to picket peacefully,33
and contravene the express statutory provision that no item of relief
granted prohibit "giving publicity to and * * * communicating infor-
mation regarding the * * * dispute, whether by advertising, com-
municating information, speaking, picketing * * * or by any other
method not involving fraud or breach of the peace."34 In the case of
Busch Jewelry Co. v. United Retail Employees Union,35 the Court of
Appeals enjoined all picketing on the grounds of prior unlawful con-
duct,36 and confirmed the lower court's conviction that the anti-
injunction statute was merely declaratory of the common law, and
purely procedural.37 In a vigorous dissent, Lehman, J., reiterated
that "the legislature has in effect now said to the courts that prohibi-
tion of lawful picketing shall not be granted as an item of relief where
the desired end might be obtained by prohibitions less complete."
Two recent decisions38 by the Court of Appeals39 mark a recession
by the court from the position taken in the Busch case.40 In May's
Furs and Ready-To-Wear, Inc. v. Bauer,41 the court reconsidered the
assertion made by the lower court, that violence removed the defen-
dant "beyond the pale and protection of Section 876-a", and that hav-
ing become outlaws, they were not entitled to the protection of the
statute. It held that, in the absence of unlawful conduct, no injunc-
tion can issue even in the absence of Section 876-a; that the need for
statutory safeguards can only exist where the defendant has been

246, 1 N. Y. S. (2d) 514 (1937); Weil & Co. v. Doe, 168 Misc. 211, 5 N. Y. S. (2d) 559 (1938).
39 (1939) 52 HARv. L. REV. 1183 (scalding criticism of decision).
41 It is to be noted, that on Jan. 1, 1940 three new members of the court
took their places on the bench. Judge Lehman, who dissented in the Busch
case, is now Chief Judge.
42 (June, 1940) 8 INTER. JURID. ASS'N BULL. 130.
43 See note 38, supra.
guilty of some unlawful activity and is liable to restraint.\textsuperscript{42} Further, it was stated that there can be no basis for a perpetual injunction insofar as the statutory limitation on injunctions in labor disputes is limited to six months.\textsuperscript{43} Thus, the \textit{Busch} case does not outlaw unions that fail to live up to their "legal responsibilities". The \textit{May's} case is not merely representative of a victory for labor, but serves as a "judicial correction of a former erroneous construction of an unambiguous statute."

In a later case,\textsuperscript{45} the court followed the \textit{May's} case and decreed that a sweeping injunction be modified so "as to permit unionists their unquestioned right to picket peacefully."\textsuperscript{46} This right exists despite the fact that none of the employees were affiliated with any union, and were completely satisfied with their wages and working conditions. "It is the settled law of this state that the legitimate interests of a labor union are not confined to acts directed against an employer of its members."

\section*{III}

The United States Supreme Court recently had an opportunity to ascertain the status of labor's right to picket peacefully. In \textit{Thornhill v. The State of Alabama},\textsuperscript{47} the Court held unconstitutional and void on its face a statute prohibiting loitering or picketing.\textsuperscript{48} "Free

\textsuperscript{42} Learned counsel for the defendant very ably argued that "the very statute which contains the prohibition against the issuance of injunctive relief against peaceful picketing itself, contemplates that unlawful acts have been committed by the defendant." Section 876-a (1) (a): "That unlawful acts have * * * been threatened or committed * * *". Thus, even though unlawful acts have been committed, the statute deprives the court from issuing a blanket injunction. (f) "no item of relief" shall prohibit (5) "Giving publicity to and obtaining or communicating information regarding the existence of, or the facts involved, in any dispute. * * *"

\textsuperscript{43} This reversed the ruling of a perpetual injunction granted in the \textit{Busch} case.

\textsuperscript{44} See note 40, \textit{supra}.


\textsuperscript{48} A.L.A. CONG. (1923) § 3448 (The statute provided, that "any person or persons who * * * go near to or loiter about the premises or place of business of any other person, firm or corporation * * * for the purpose or with the intent of influencing or inducing other persons not to trade with, buy from, sell to, have business dealings with or be employed by such persons * * * shall be guilty of a misdemeanor").
discussion concerning the conditions in industry and the causes of labor disputes appear to us indispensable to the effective and intelligent use of the processes of popular government to shape the destiny of modern industrial society. The group in power at any moment may not impose penal sanctions on peaceful and truthful discussion of matters of public interest. 49 Affirmation of these convictions was accorded in the case of Carlson v. California. 50 An anti-picketing ordinance 51 was there considered, and held similar to that in the case of Thornhill v. Alabama, 52 and thus governed by its reasoning. "The carrying of signs and banners is a natural and appropriate means of conveying information on matters of public concern, publicizing the facts of a labor dispute by pamphlet, by word of mouth or by banner, must now be regarded as within that liberty of communication, which is secured to every person by the Fourteenth Amendment against abridgment by the state." 53 (Italics mine.) The further problem now arises as to the extent of permissible interference with such right. 54 Lower court decisions in New York construe these constitutional rights to be afforded only where the controversy falls within the accepted definition of a "labor dispute". 55

A rationalization of the problem of picketing shows that the right of peaceful picketing cannot be usurped for, if the defendant has committed acts of violence, a restraining decree will specify and prohibit only those acts allowing the defendant to do the acts not restrained, i.e., peaceful picketing. If, however, all acts are violent, then an injunction will affect all activity and there will be no remainder of peaceful picketing. Therefore, it is submitted that in no case should a court issue a sweeping injunction, as the same result may be obtained by enumerating the specific unlawful conduct. It would be overstepping the limitations of Section 876-a to include peaceful and lawful activities among the proscriptions.

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51 The ordinance forbade loitering or picketing or displaying any banner, badge or sign in the vicinity of a factory or place of employment for the purpose of influencing any person from entering or from purchasing goods, or to refrain from entering into service there.
54 (Summer, 1940) 1 BILL OF RIGHTS REV. 59.