

The People.

VOL. IX, NO. 2

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, APRIL 9, 1899

PRICE 2 CENTS

EDITORIAL

Marlboro a Type

By DANIEL DE LEON

It is now approaching on ten years that the conflict started between the Socialist Labor party and the Labor Fakir brigade. The policy of endeavoring to propitiate these gentlemen, and of directing the party's course according to their suggestions was abandoned. A new policy was started, the policy of seeing in the "Labor Leaders" just what they were, and not tolerating being humbugged by them. The party ran up its colors to the masthead, and nailed them there; took and kept the political field; and, keeping its head close to the wind, plowed its way forward. Such a policy had upon the Fakirs the effect that smoke has upon squirrels when made to draw through a hollow tree: the Fakirs were smoked out into the open. From that moment on, these worthies had to face the music. The method they adopted was that of charging the S.L.P. with "Union Wrecking." Thus the conflict has since been raging on that quarter around the word "Union": the Fakirs claiming that their organizations were the only real "Unions," the S.L.P. maintaining that Fakir-led organizations, run for the collection of dues, and operated in the interest of the capitalist class, are not "Unions" at all, but that the genuine Union is that organization of Labor that is organized for the daily class struggle and does not allow capitalist politicians to play with it as with a foot ball.

It can not be denied that the leading representative of the Fakirs' style of "Union" is Mr. Samuel Gompers. What he says is a "Union," such as he understands the word, must surely be a genuine sample of his genus; nor can it be doubted that what he considers the proper policy and "trade union lines" must be typical of the policy and conduct of his brand of Unionism. Now, then, at the late Kansas City so-called convention of Mr. Gompers' A.F. of L., he delivered a speech; that is to say, he delivered several; but one of his speeches, recorded on page 122 of his own "Report of Proceedings," contains a passage that, just now, read by the light of recent events in Marlboro, Mass., is of intense interest. Referring in the speech to the municipal elections, then just held in that town, Mr. Gompers said:

“We elected the Mayor and ten out of fourteen Councilmen, and ON TRADE UNION LINES, TOO.”

Stick a pin there.

During the last five weeks labor meeting upon labor meeting was held in Marlboro denouncing the Mayor, who had been elected “on trade union lines, too,” the ground for these meetings being his hostility to the striking shoemakers; and last week not only did that Mayor veto an order, whereby the city government granted the free use of City Hall Sunday afternoon for four weeks to the striking shoemakers, but the City Fathers, an overwhelming majority of whom had been elected “on trade union lines, too” à la Gompers, did not re-pass the order over the veto of the Mayor.

We have here, on the authority of the best authority on Pure and Simple Unionism, a confirmation of the charge brought against the concern by New Trade Unionism.

The Pure and Simple Union, utterly class-unconscious and led by ignoramuses and scamps, proceeds upon lines that render every of its acts a boomerang. Class-conscious politics it rejects as impractical and repulsive to “Unionism,” but the sort of politics it adopts as “trade union lines, too” is the politics that the cat in the fable was subjected to when she allowed the monkey to use her paws to draw the hot chestnuts out of the fire with. Never standing erect, being devoid of the dignity that class-consciousness imparts, Pure and Simpledome always leans on something else; that something else is its hereditary foe; it does the work for him, and—gets it in the neck.

The boast of Gompers:

“We elected the Mayor and ten out of fourteen Councilmen, and ON TRADE UNION LINES, TOO.”

is typical of Pure and Simple victories. Whether on the economic or any other field, on the Gompers “trade union line, too,” these victories are all alike,—moonshine; they all alike lead to but one end—Union Wrecking.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
Uploaded July 2004