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EDITORIAL

TAKE NOTICE, AND TAKE WARNING.

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An explosion has taken place in the camp of that “Holy of Holies,”—the Trade Union movement of the pure and simple brand. Whoever does not yet quite appreciate the nature of this Old Style or British Trade Union should hasten to turn his telescope upon Cincinnati. He can now see there “the genuine thing in operation.” By the light of the sparks that fly in that conflict of “genuine Unionists” he will be able to gain quite a number of photographs of many a feature of the beast.

The United Brewery Workmen is an organization affiliated with the A.F. of L., and has a branch, named Beerdrivers’ Union No. 175, located in Cincinnati. Also directly affiliated with the A.F. of L. is the International Teamsters’ Union, and it also has a branch located in Cincinnati, Teamsters’ Union No. 13. Both organizations, together with their branches, are, accordingly, sister organizations, being constituencies of the same central body, the A.F. of L.

On general principles one might be led [to](#) predicate upon these facts the strongest bond of solidarity: the solidarity that is claimed for Old Style Unionism, strengthened by the added solidarity supposed to flow from central unity. At any rate, one would think that the “scab” or “scab methods,” said by such organizations to be the characteristics of “opposition Unions” would be here conspicuously absent. Such is the theory, with the unsophisticated. The facts, telling a different tale, are now talking in very obstreperous language through the lungs of these “Unionists.” Sifting the facts, as well as one can out of the volumes of wild and ribald denunciation, frequently punctuated with the epithet “scab,” this is what’s happening:

Beerdrivers’ Union No. 175 and Teamsters’ Union No. 13 are both of the same trade. Animated by the ignorance of the Labor Question that their pure and simple officers cultivate, the membership of the two organizations look upon the Union merely as an “Employment Bureau”: each member seeks to get a job, and, if he fails,

he blames his officers (with perfect right, be it admitted.) The pressure upon the officers for jobs, the denunciation of them by their blinded pupils, the rank and file, push these officers to the next logical step, to wit, “deals” with the employer. The officer presently blossoms into a Fakir. Originally chosen to watch against and fight the employer, he becomes the employer’s agent—a Labor Lieutenant of the capitalist in the Union. In consideration of the services that these Fakirs render the employer, the employer renders other services to the Fakirs. Thus the national and subaltern officers of the United Brewery Workmen have long ago been essentially advertising agents, pullers-in, in some cases, “gougers” and “bruisers” for certain breweries and combinations of breweries; in return for these services the employer helped the Fakirs by putting them in the way of dues. He would “consent” to the Fakirs’ organizing his brewery workmen and ordered these to join. In that way the Fakirs were enabled to pacify the clamor of their members, or to hush it with potent threats.

This style of “Labor Movement” can, in the nature of things, establish no permanent relations. Capitalist development itself takes charge of the law that undermines such relations, through the increasing number of displaced workmen. One of the inevitable manifestations of this undermining process is the rising of new pure and simple “Unions,” or “Employment Bureaux,” upon lines that cross those of existing ones, and not infrequently run upon close parallel lines. Teamsters’ Union No. 13 is one of these.

Born out of and carefully nursed in the same ignorance of the Labor Question as her elder sister, Teamsters’ Union No. 13 developed her Labor Fakir officers upon the identical lines that did Beerdrivers’ Union No. 175. What these and their national officers had done to keep their places and line their nests, could be and was done also by the national and local officers of Teamsters’ Union No. 13. They became approved Lieutenants of the employers, and demanded from these reciprocal services. It seems the brewery employers in Cincinnati had, just now, more use for the Teamsters’ Fakirs; or, perhaps the employers felt nauseated by the bombastic pretences of Socialist knowledge and purity that characterizes the Organized Scabbery of the United Brewery Workmen;—however that may be, the employers now did for the Teamsters exactly what they had done before for the brewery men: they granted their “consent” to the former to organize the men, and ordered them to join the Teamsters.

That is the story in a nutshell. And thus it happens that the officers of the

Brewery Workers and the officers of the Teamsters—both affiliated with Gompers—are in each others' hair; each set throwing bouquets at the employers who stand by it, and each set, with perfect justice, hissing “scab” at the other,—a picture of pure and simple “solidarity.”

The pure and simple Union cannot unify the Working Class. Such organizations are becoming more and more what these brewery organizations are,—children of the temporary interests of the employer, footballs kicked and rolled according to his whim.

The only organization of Labor that can unify the working class on the economic field is the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance, which, built and firmly kept upon the lines of the class struggle between the Working Class and the Capitalist Class, owes its existence, not to the good will of the employer, but to that soundness and sternness of convictions, put into practice, that make it dreaded both by the Union-building capitalists, and the Capitalist-built “Unions,”—such as Messrs. Zorn, Bechtold and other worthies are now officering, and Messrs. Kurzenknabe, Franz and other worthies officered before them.

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