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EDITORIAL

“UNIONIZING,” FOR WHOSE BENEFIT?

By DANIEL DE LEON

UPON a gigantic scale, that fills the public eye, a gigantic fraud is being perpetrated upon workmen to the tune of “unionizing.” The fraud goes by the name of the “Steel Strike.” The capitalist press, partly out of ignorance and partly against its better knowledge, floods the country with reports intended to convey the idea that workmen are interested in the conflict. The impression intended to be conveyed is false. Workmen are “interested” in this conflict only in the sense that drafted soldiers, torn from their homes by quarreling overlords, and hurled at one another’s throats, can be said to be “interested” in the affair: They surely are interested only in so far that they are being used as food for cannon by their masters; they certainly are not interested in that which their masters have in mind and are pursuing.

It was but nine years ago when a bloody conflict broke out virtually over the same region now covered by the Steel Strike. The race, then nine years younger, did not “see through” the affair. It believed the conflict to be one between Labor and Capital: and the more clear-sighted, observing the inadequate methods and tactics of Labor on the occasion, drew hope that experience would tutor, and that that much profit would be drawn from the calamity. Nine years have, however, run by since then. During that interval the surviving strike leaders, who had been emphatic in their love and affection for the workers and their hostility to the “employing vampires,” have been seen to land, one after the other, into fat political jobs, by the grace of the very folks they had been fighting: William Weihe, the then President of the Amalgamated Iron and Steel Workers, now draws salary as “Immigrant Inspector” at Ellis Island, N.Y.; M.M. Garland, the then Assistant President, fills the sinecure of “Collector of the Port of Pittsburg;” W.A. Carney, then Vice-President of the Homestead district is a Deputy State Factory Inspector; P.H. McEvoy, a then leader, is flourishing as Street Commissioner in Youngstown, Pa.—, while, on the other hand, the rank and file was left bleeding on the field and “Potter’s Villes” rose for the vanquished. The “great strike” of ’92 turned out to be a

falling out between capitalists and their Labor Lieutenants. The latter, in the now well understood Labor Fakir style, utilized the ever smoldering class-resentment of the working class; called out a strike under the pretence of promoting the interests of the workingman; and after they had in that way shown the employers how disagreeable they could become, made their peace, “settled,” got their jobs.

The same thing is up now. It is not in the absence only of the slightest utterance, on the part of the leaders, of facts and figures that may tutor the rank and file of the workers to enter the class-conscious field of battle, where, once started, the battle is bound to continue despite all desertions of leaders,—it is not in that alone that the present conflict looks identical with that of nine years ago. It is identical also in the presence of certain other manifestations. Now, as then, the attempt is being made to render the rank and file “fighting-drunk” with the bad whiskey of false promises and illusions. One Thomas A. Flynn, “National Organizer of the A.F. of L.,” has started on this special mission. He promises the strikers ample funds through the A.F. of L., funds enough “to enable them to fight to a finish;” and, so as to impart solidity to his words, he does not use phrases but comes down to figures. The A.F. of L., which, in an evidently inspired article from the venal pen of Henry George, Jr., in the *Federationist*, of this very month, is credited with “900,000 paid up members,” is stated by Mr. Lynch to have “2,000,000 members who are now paying dues;” upon these figures Mr. Lynch proceeds to pile others: an assessment of 25 cents per capita a week is to be levied upon these 2,000,000; and Mr. Lynch, with the brazen front of the Fakir, concludes: “This will yield \$500,000 a week, and will give the Amalgamated Association a fund that would enable it to fight to a finish.”!!!!!!!

It is not unlikely that enough men may be bereft of their senses by these preposterous figures, and the preposterous reasoning that underlies them; it is not unlikely that the, in round figures, 250,000 paid up members of the A.F. of L., of whom the strikers themselves are a portion, may be taken for 2,000,000; nor is it wholly unlikely that enough men will fail to consider the difference there is between an assessment that is ordered and one that is collected and available; and, possibly, the preposterousness of the idea of raising “to a finish” \$500,000 a week from the starvation wages of the workers may escape not a few. Those taken in will strew the field; when the present leaders will have made their peace with the employers and got the jobs they are after.

By the lurid light that these facts cast upon the situation, the intrepid Socialist

workingman should be able to find a way to reach the ears of his fellows, open their eyes, enable them to perceive that they are being ground between the upper and the nether millstone of Capitalists and Fakirs, and lead them to organize upon the field of class-consciousness there to do battle till the capitalist system is overthrown, and the Socialist Republic reared.

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

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