

MAY DAY VS. LABOR DAY

***A COMPARISON OF THE SOCIAL
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE TWO DAYS OF
LABOR CELEBRATION***

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International Socialism is founded on the Socialist principle that there are only two nations—the exploiting idlers and the exploited toilers.

—DANIEL DE LEON.

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The strongest bond of human sympathy, outside of the family relation, should be one uniting all working people, of all nations, and tongues, and kindreds.—*Abraham Lincoln*.

INTERNATIONALLY the First of May is known and celebrated as the workers' holiday. In America, on the other, hand, the First Monday in September is officially set aside as Labor Day, and those who insist, in the international spirit, on celebrating May Day are obliged to do so in defiance of the country's established custom for the sake of greater harmony with the proletariat of the world. Why this divergence in the holiday spirit of labor between the United States and the rest of the world? To answer that question is to open the entire subject of the relations between capital and labor, and the tactics of what broadly passes for the labor movement in facing these relations.

May Day faces the relationship of capital and labor in the Marxian spirit of the class struggle; Labor Day sticks to the hollow pretense of a brotherhood between capital and labor instilled through Samuel Gompers into the American Federation of Labor. Two diametrically divergent theories of the position of labor in society and its struggle for a share of the good things of this world brought forth by its efforts. The difference in these theories centers around the right to the ownership and control of the means of production. The American Federation of Labor not only does not dispute the right to ownership and control by private capitalists but it actually champions and buttresses that control. The Marxian conception, on the contrary, is that since the tool of production by becoming a machine has passed completely out of the possibility of private operation and has become

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collective, the spirit of the age demands and commands collective ownership by the actual producers, i.e., the workers themselves.

Changes in Productive Powers.

We turn back a few of history's pages and stop at the time of our granddaddies, when "Adam delved and Eve span." The tool of production was then a more or less simple hand tool, operated by the individual, the knife, the axe, the sledgehammer, the plow, the harrow, the spinning-wheel and the loom. When the product was finished there was no question as to whom it belonged, viz., the producer himself, who owned the tool. But a new social system was already knocking on the door. The social division of labor called for more and more exchange of products, and the factory was gradually taking the place of the home workshop. The apprentice who formerly learned a trade for the purpose of becoming a master himself in due time was now turned into a wage worker, along with many others in the growing shops. The tools were improved and made specific as the division of labor in the factories grew. Then by easy stages—crude and simple at first—the tools developed into machines. A machine is a complex tool in the operation of which the actual labor process is performed by the mechanism. Animal power, wind, water, finally steam, and in due time electricity, with the radio in the offing, were employed to drive these machines.

New Class Lines Drawn.

Imperceptibly, actually unrecognized by the worker himself, a tremendous social change had taken place.

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The product of labor no longer belonged to the producer. himself. The change passed unperceived for two reasons, first, slavery and serfdom had preceded wage labor and to the downtrodden laborer the new order simply implied a change of masters. Secondly, the product followed the tool, that is, as previously it continued to belong to the *owner* of the means of production.

Actually a tremendous social change had taken place, amounting to an industrio-social revolution. Day by day and year by year this was indeed scarcely perceptible, but in a comparison of the “state of the nation” one hundred fifty to two hundred years ago with today, the revolutionary changes that have taken place are astounding.

Starting with the tool and the workshop securely in the hands of a private owner, who hired wage workers at so much per hour or week, a *profit*, however small per workman, fell to the factory owner. With each enlargement of the factory and business, the profit increased, even if the exploitation per worker did not increase. Then came the improvement of the tools, slowly, faster, tremendously, marvelously. With each such improvement the worker was able to turn out more products—products that belonged to his employer. The benefits of this tremendous enlargement of production did not in any sense accrue to the worker. If apparently a portion of the working class may be “better off” than the average wage laborer was a hundred years ago, this “betterment” does not in any way measure up to the workers’ increased productive capacity. And, moreover, the general truth is indisputable that as a class the workers have gained nothing at all—wage slaves and drudges from the cradle to the grave, poverty haunting every doorstep. The only thing that has *increased* is the

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uncertainty of the possibility of making a living and the insecurity of existence from hazardous employment and long periods of unemployment.

But the revolution that has taken place on the other side of the fence—that is, with the employing class—is none the less startling. Time was when the saying held fairly good that any one had a chance to get into business and profit thereby. The “any one,” of course, was really a piece of economic nonsense, since to have employers, employes were always necessary. But with an open country of tremendous natural resources, and with growing, building, expanding, improving the means of communication, transportation, production and general existence there were large opportunities for millions of eager minds and hands.

Where have these opportunities gone? The farmer is loud in his exclamations as to the impossibility of making a living from the land. The small business man or manufacturer, who hangs on at all, simply hangs on to the ragged edge of existence, with a plunge out of a twenty-story window as the only release from his worries. Such small businesses as are strung throughout the land and to some extent keep up the fiction of the possibility for a small man to exist are, in probably some ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, mere distributing agencies for large manufacturers, depending entirely upon these for “credit” and often enough for their very rent.

The Uncertainty Grows.

The productive powers of the nation, along with the wealth of the nation, have passed into the hands of a

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very few. Former Ambassador to Germany, Mr. James W. Gerard, some time ago stated that the actual control of the wealth of this nation rests, through interlocking directorates, in the hands of some sixty individuals. The number matters little, be they sixty or a thousand, the startling fact is here, and it is self-evident that an insignificantly small fraction of the population controls the land, the natural resources and the productive machinery (and, as a result, the products of labor) of this nation.

What is the result? We have already pointed out the general result as to the complete wiping out of the boasted opportunity to independence and prosperity of the ambitious and business-eager American. But there remains the working class, now the tremendous majority of the population. It is the sheerest nonsense in these days to prate about any opportunity for the average wage worker to become a prosperous business man, let alone a millionaire. The worker's sole worry today is to keep the wolf from the door, if the creature has not already devoured part of his family.

The worker is a toolless man, lacking totally the means of self-employment. He has but one thing to sell, in a society controlled by sale and commerce. That one thing is his own ability to work, to produce useful things—produce them, of course, for the owner of the tool to sell. However, the sale of this “article,” the worker's *labor power*, is by no means certain or automatic. It may be ever so fine a labor power, he may be the most excellent mechanic, the best trained engineer, the neatest worker with needle, hammer, saw, brush or pen, and his *commodity* (his ability to produce) may yet be laid unceremoniously on the shelf, for his employment depends upon one thing only, viz., the possibility of the

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employer's making a profit out of him, and the employer's success in this line in turn depends on the possibility of profitably disposing of the goods the worker creates by his labor.

The Periodical Crises.

Now, we turn again to the revolution that has taken place in this country during the past one hundred years, viz., the Industrial Revolution. In simple words, this means that the machines, with a steady tramp, tramp, have marched into the factories, have multiplied the powers of production, communication, transportation, fifty to a hundred-fold. The wage worker received less and less of a percentage of the products of his labor, until today it amounts to only about sixteen per cent. Naturally he could only buy back this much. In time the frontier closed, railroad, bridge and ship building as well as factories and machine equipment had expanded to the end of present needs. The capitalist wasters, however extravagant, could waste only a small portion. The domestic market became glutted. Came the era of expansion. The "heathen"—the missionary going ahead—was civilized to wear shoes, hats, and his shirt—tall inside American or European pants. But several other nations expanded along with us, and, moreover, part of the commodities that went to the "heathens" from our glutted markets were machines. The heathens (witness Japan) learned to produce every bit as fast as their instructors. So the markets of the world were glutted.

Crises have been periodical during the capitalist era of production, ever greater, ever wider in scope, ever causing greater suffering among the workers cast out of

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the factories by unemployment. A gigantic world crisis was gathering in 1914 and was averted only by the World War—read: the destruction of many billions' worth of products of labor and the burying of some 8,500,000 useful members of society, And the maiming and incapacitating of many millions more, to say nothing of those who went to an untimely grave by reason of the epidemics that swept the world at the time. So the system took another respite.

However, industry during the War had taken a new and tremendous plunge into machine perfection, in order to fill the war need when men were somewhat scarcer. With peace-time readjustment the new forces were turned into production of general commodities. Despite forced sales on long-time credits, it was becoming evident, already in the middle twenties, that the markets were again becoming glutted. Unemployment increased, despite "top production," to figures that equaled previous periods of crises. Men, skilled workers, able, hale and hearty, all the age of 35, 40, 45 found themselves cashiered, replaced by the cheaper labor of youngsters who were able to deliver the goods with the aid of semiautomatic machines.

The State, the Servant of Capitalism.

Thus the so-called depression of 1929 came only as an aggravation of a condition that had already reached the running sore stage. Four million unemployed rose to six million, eight million, twelve million, to seventeen and a half million. Then in the fear of "revolution" the government took a hand and turned the richest and most self-sufficient of all nations into a gigantic pauper-house. It

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does not take either a prophet or the son of a prophet to state without fear of contradiction that the greatest portion of the millions today unemployed will not, *cannot*, see regular employment again, as long as capitalism lasts. The machine is their master as long as it remains in private hands.

Thus stands the matter as far as the economic forces of our nation are concerned. It is an axiom, based on the whole of history, that political power is but a reflection of economic power. The Political State is, in the words of Marx, the committee of the economic ruling class, the committee of oppression and suppression. More important than has been its function to ward off enemies from the outside has been its function to keep "law and order" within. This law and order, read in plain terms, implies keeping in submission the enslaved class, be this class chattel, serf or wage slave. The "democratic" American State is no exception to this rule. In fact, it is perhaps the most efficient in this respect, just because it rules apparently with the "consent of the governed," the vast majority of whom are the exploited wage workers of the land.

As an aid to secure this consent, the economic powers engage by hook or by crook a number of agencies. It is trite in these days to reiterate that the "money power" controls education from kindergarten through college, that it is able to marshal the forces of press and radio, that it "owns" the pulpit body and soul, and that the politicians are its hirelings from the spittoon cleaners in the meanest old city hall, to the highest seat in the land. If there be a doubting Thomas as to this statement yet within the domain of the United States, let him turn to the Senate Investigation of World War Munitions.

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Probably in any position of trust there was never a finer man than Woodrow Wilson. At least there is no shadow on his reputation and integrity; and yet step by step the money lords of the land (Morgan and partners) were, able to maneuver him into a position of breaking his pledge to the nation—and leading it into war. As the head of the capitalist Political State, he was inevitably the tool of the economic forces, and sooner or later was obliged to act accordingly. Daniel De Leon, already in 1912, stated that Wilson had reached the point “where the roads fork.” If he was not ready to take the step out to *Revolution*—and it was never seriously expected that he would do so—he was bound to sink into the capitalist morass. He did—and how deeply.

The Labor Lieutenants of Capitalism.

Among the forces that serve the capitalist powers to get “the consent of the governed,” that is, to hold the working class in submission and make it “kiss the hand” that exploits it, is the American Federation of Labor. Already back in the '90's that shrewdest of politicians, Mark Hanna, gave the labor leaders (already dubbed labor fakers by De Leon and the S.L.P.) the pet name of his (Hanna's) labor lieutenants. It was only a short time after this that that astute spokesman of top—capitalism, the *Wall Street Journal*, spoke of the American Federation of Labor as the nation's staunchest bulwark against Socialism. This truth was somewhat slow in dawning upon less sharp-witted of the capitalist press, but as time passed and the A.F. of L. was constantly able to deliver the goods, viz., a submissive working class, at best begging for and at worst “fighting” for a few pen-

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nies' increase of pay and ready to hurrah for any empty victory, the truth of the A.F. of L.'s great service to capitalism became clear to all but the dullest-witted of the capitalist press fraternity.

The below excellent summary of the understanding of this service to capitalism of the A.F. of L., is taken from a speech of David L. Podell, lawyer and co-author of the National Industrial Recovery Act, in a discussion on the matter before the commerce committee of the American Bar Association, as reported in the New York *Herald Tribune*, of April 12, 1934:

David L. Podell took the view that reorganization of the labor situation, wrought by the act, was necessary to avoid complete infiltration of American labor with radical ideas. He said this infiltration was stopped just before it reached a danger point by encouragement offered conservative unions in the collective bargaining clause of the act, and he concluded that NRA is certain to be upheld, if only because of the Supreme Court's sensitivity to social conditions.

Mr. Podell said flatly that any one who knew anything of the labor situation in the country a year ago knew that the country was confronted with a "red menace." He described the entire labor movement as full of violently radical agitators, all engaged in setting up their own trouble-making unions. He pointed out that if industry is to continue to function, it can do so much better by cooperating with conservative unions than by considering impossible demands of radical unions.

"The much abused Section 7A, which treats of collective bargaining, has effectively checked that radical progress," he said, by breathing new life into the American principle of collective bargaining through freely chosen representatives of legitimate labor organizations. I would rather a thousand times be in the hands of Rex Tugwell, or any other member of the 'brain trust,' than in the hands of a wild-eyed labor agitator leading an angry mob of unemployed."

We have now laid down the fundamental facts necessary for us to consider the difference in spirit between

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May Day and the September Labor Day.

The Spirit of May Day.

Except for the fact that both these days are dedicated to labor and are characterized by labor demonstrations and celebrations, they have nothing in common. In fact, they contradict each other in the same manner and degree that the International Socialist movement to which May Day is dedicated stands in diametrical opposition to the American Federation of Labor, the sponsor of Labor Day and its celebrations.

The First Day of May was created as a labor holiday, internationally, through the initiative of the delegate of the Socialist Labor Party of America to the International Socialist Congress held in Paris, France, in July, 1889. The prime object of the resolution was a proclamation to the capitalist world of the international solidarity of the working class. On this one day in the year the workers of all countries and climes, despite differences in customs, traditions and languages, could unite to demonstrate to the world that as members of the same class, the exploited, the world proletariat, their interests were the same, and that like members of one family they stand united for the overthrow of world capitalism, and the establishment of an International Socialist Republic, a world of harmony, peace and freedom to all men.

Thus May Day was proclaimed by the workers themselves, and the capitalist class the world over was not slow in sensing its significance. The workers from the first had to fight for their day—literally. To leave work and demonstrate on May Day was often to jeopardize their jobs, and many a bitter strike was fought to rein-

state these workers. Then once on the street in demonstration or at a great outdoor mass meeting, new troubles were liable to set in. Police and Cossacks of the various countries got into action by order of the powers of state, clubbing, maiming, arresting and killing the peacefully demonstrating workers. Sometimes hoodlums and rowdies, ever the slum allies of the ruling economic masters, were egged on to attack the demonstrators, causing "riots," which thus gave "legitimate" cause for the police and even the army to step in with brutal and horrifying results to the workers. In short, the ruling economic masters and their hireling, the Political State, recognized from the first that May Day was the drilling day of the international proletariat for the Socialist Revolution.

Labor Day Typifies Cowing of Labor.

In contrast to all this, the American Labor Day came as a *gift*, a bonbon, which the workers received from their masters, through their servant politicians, at the behest of the leaders of the American Federation of Labor. Samuel Gompers took great pride in his share of having finally secured this day for labor. The first Monday in September was made a legal holiday in the early '90's first by the legislature of one state, then the politicians of other states followed, quick to sense the "good" there was in it, and at present Labor Day is recognized as a legal holiday the country over.

The very placing of the day in the fall of the year is emasculating to the fighting spirit of labor. As a matter of fact—even before the First of May was officially proclaimed as labor's holiday—this day had stood out in la-

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bor's history (particularly in the battling '80's) as a day when great strikes were declared, and throughout the years this continued to be the fact. Spring is the time when the spirit and hope of labor run highest. The summer season is approaching, work is opening up, building and all manner of construction work are getting into full swing. Then, if ever, has been the time to strike with the hope of any concession from the capitalist masters, any chance of raising the workers' standard of living and position as human beings. The May Day demonstration served as the inspiration for launching many great strikes with resultant victory in regard to wages and shortening of hours and general improvement in conditions in the days when such victories were all-essential to raise the international proletariat to the realization of their position as humans.

The capitalists and the politicians—and indeed the labor fakers—were fully aware of this inspirational significance of May Day. Accordingly, when a day was chosen deliberately to present to labor, a day was shrewdly picked that could best offset the “pernicious influences” of May Day. In the fall the spirit of labor runs low. The workers face a dreary winter; seasonal labor is ended; heavy expenses for fuel and clothing stare the family in the face. To risk a strike at such a time is to risk disaster. The September Labor Day by its mere position in the year typifies the taming and cowing of the spirit of labor.

Exhibition Day of Voting Cattle.

But Labor Day has another significance, a significance shared equally by the politician and labor faker. It is

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placed most fittingly—in the heat of our political campaigns. Excellent! It gives the politicians a grand chance to bestow themselves on labor at picnics and other meetings, shaking hands with the—not “horny-handed,” but for the occasion—noble hands of “brother labor,” and pouring out capitalist doctrines in honeyed words. It also gives them a chance to decorate with their shining, smiling faces and sleek appearances, the grandstands at the labor parades, a form of political ballyhoo second to none.

Moreover, this holiday just before election has given the labor fakers a truly “swell” chance to exhibit their political wares. To the politicians on the grandstand, the politician labor leader at the head of his column, usually in a carriage, says in dumb show—and not so dumb either: These horny-handed sons of toll pounding the pavements behind me are my own particular voting cattle. I have their votes in my vest pocket; come on, what’s your bid; the highest will get the “endorsement.”

And now mark the police and militia in action on Labor Day—for they are in action on that day as well as on May Day. But with what a difference! The nightsticks are hidden, the bayonets and riot guns are conspicuous by their absence. The suppressive forces of capitalism—so active in clubbing and shooting when a strike is on—on this one day of the year are part of the show in labor’s “honor.” They head the parades, they clear the way, they act as the “honorary escort” of labor’s phalanx. Could irony and dumb show be carried further than that!

Truly the September Labor Day throughout the years has been a great institution.

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The True Silly Fool's Day.

A vampire, so the story goes, when settling down upon a sleeper to suck his blood, gently fans his victim, soothing his pains and thus preventing him from waking. In some such manner, American Labor Day has been created by the capitalist politicians to fan the sleeping giant, the American working class, while the capitalists are sucking our very lifeblood.

In a sense—though the politicians are probably too ignorant to know it—the American Labor Day may be looked upon as a revival of a custom originating in the days of slavery. The filthy masters, cloyed with other kinds of amusement, conceived the idea of setting aside a day to celebrate the “enthronement of slaves.” A silly fool, an obedient and humble slave, would be chosen, his chains removed. He was placed upon a mock throne, an imitation crown put on his head, fine robes thrown over his emaciated body and then the master celebrants would bow and scrape in mock humility and overwhelm him with flattery. The silly fool on the mock throne would respond to the flattery of the hour as does a modern bathing beauty. But the enthronement over, the chains were again clapped on his limbs, and there he stood, the beast of burden of yesterday.

And does the un-classconscious American workingman act any less stupidly than the silly fool of ancient days? Throughout the year, he is the beast of burden, the exploited wage slave of shop and factory. Then comes Labor Day. The chains are dropped; he is the hero of the day. The Morgans and the duPonts and the Fords and the Vanderbilts, indeed, do not appear to bow and scrape

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before him. But they send their hireling politicians and their hireling press, even their hirelings in the pulpit, and they orate and write and preach, overwhelming the modern supposedly silly fool labor with flattery and fulsome outpourings. And does he act his part as well as his ancient progenitor? Never doubt! Out goes his chest; up goes his chin; he swells with pride and never doubts that he is king. And then comes Tuesday, and back go the chains of wage slavery, the back-breaking toll, the heart-rending misery of starvation and slavery.

The Great Deception.

The keynote of the speeches of Labor Day, by politicians and labor fakers alike, from Sam Gompers and John Mitchell down to William Green (he now preaches sermons in churches) and the pettiest labor faker of today, and that promoter of false "industrial unionism," John L. Lewis, is taken from the text of "the Brotherhood of Capital and Labor" the greatest lie of our age. The American Federation of Labor, it has been definitely asserted throughout the years, was the result of a scheme cooked up between Andrew Carnegie and Samuel Gompers, to drive from the American stage the militant Knights of Labor, the expression in the '80's of the classconscious and revolutionary spirit which more or less through the years characterized manifestations of America's labor movements. By 1890 corrosion had, however, set in among the Knights and it was easy for the A.F. of L., led by the wily Sam Gompers, who was unscrupulous as to methods, to supersede the Knights as the labor movement of America, particularly as the Socialist movement was not sufficiently clear as to princi-

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ple nor had it reached such proportions as to be able to combat the degenerating influence of the advancing caricature in labor organization.

“A Fair Day’s Wage.”

The A.F. of L. struck roots. Its fundamental principle was a direct contradiction of the class struggle. It built on the false idea of “harmony between capital and labor.” What is good for capital is good for labor, it preached, and out of this parent falsehood a hundred other falsehoods grew, entangling American labor in a labyrinth of contradictions from which it will never be able to extricate itself without casting aside the A.F. of L. with all its lures and deceptions.

The first great falsehood that sprang out of the “brotherhood” theory was the slogan of “a fair day’s wage for a fair day’s toll.” Since wages imply exploitation, and represent but a minor fraction of the total product of labor, it is self-evident that wages can never be *fair*. Wages grow out of a system of unfairness, of robbery. Accordingly, for labor to acknowledge, as an organization principle, that there is such a thing as a “fair wage,” is to bow to the principle of exploitation, is to kiss the hand that robs it.

The “fair day’s toil” declaration simply goes to emphasize the infamy. It impresses on the mind of labor the “duty” to deliver its goods—its ability to produce—to the master joyfully and to the fullest capacity. It puts on the worker, by his own consent, the brand of the slave.

Divide and Get Jobs.

The organization that springs out of the lies preached

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on Labor Day, and the days that follow, is in direct harmony with the false doctrines. The American Federation of Labor, so far from consolidating the strength of labor, scatters it. In place of a well knit, striking fist, to use De Leon's metaphor, it exhibits five sore fingers on a hand, far apart from one another. Labor solidarity and the A.F. of L. are as far apart as the poles.

The true spirit of the A.F. of L. is best designated by the words: JOB TRUST. Whatever individuals or groups have gained through the craft union has been gained by securing the jobs—against labor at large. In the first place, by reactionary immigration laws, prejudice and hate, national and race antagonisms, a Chinese Wall has been erected against labor of other nations. International solidarity is as foreign to the A.F. of L. as is life on another planet.

However, while the politicians and labor fakers cried "America to the Americans," a whole series of minor walls was erected within the nation itself to keep the mass of labor out of jobs, monopolized by the A.F. of L. job trust. Prohibitive initiation fees (running actually as high as \$500 in some favored crafts), high dues, frequent assessments, petty fines for all sorts of petty offenses (including refusal to march with the voting cattle on Labor Day) were among the most effective methods to keep the union membership down. Added to this were apprenticeship rules, tricky examinations of applicants, and when all else failed, the periodical closing of the "books" to all new applicants. As a result the A.F. of L. at its very height was never more than a very small percentage of the actual wage workers of the United States. This was far less from the desire of the mass to be non-union than from the determined policy of the Federation

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to keep the mass out. By thus branding the mass of the American working class as “scabs” (scabs of the Federation’s own making), the A.F. of L. has succeeded, in the most favored crafts, in building up a job trust, that keeps up the fiction that the Federation has been able to raise wages and improve the condition of American labor.

But this anti-labor struggle with the workers on the outside of the A.F. of L. by no means completes the story of the iniquities of the organization and its anti-labor spirit. It is not a particularly great strain on the imagination to imagine Andrew Carnegie and Samuel Gompers as two friends with their heads together planning the emasculation and destruction of American labor. But in sociology, however, things never work so precisely according to plan. We doubt that even with the best will in the world these two master schemers could have looked far into the future and planned anything to work the multiple evils that the A.F. of L. has worked. A false conception of labor’s position in society created a false theory of labor’s relation to capital and from this rose innumerable evils throughout the years.

The Craft Struggle.

It is not alone the theory of the A.F. of L. that is erroneous, but the organization built on the theory flies in the face of the labor situation of our age. The Knights of Labor was a mass organization, an amalgamation of crafts that resulted in a conglomeration. It came too early to catch, despite its class inspiration, the basic principles of industrialism. But this very mass spirit of organization promoted class unity. Bakers, butchers, machine workers, building workers, day laborers, clerks,

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etc., etc., came together and learned to work together and respect each other. The A.F. of L. deadened the mass and class spirit from its very inception, and it fostered craft spirit and craft pride. Definite and strong craft lines were drawn for the organizations and out of the local craft body there grew gradually, with the years, powerful national and international craft organizations, that touched each other only in the loose Federation, which met in a convention of delegates, composed, as the years passed, of the high national and international officers—with the rank and file shut out as carefully as it would be from a Turkish cabal.

In these organizations the craft lines were tightly drawn. There were a dozen building crafts, several printing crafts, a number of iron, steel and machine crafts, and perhaps a score or more crafts in the food and clothing making industries. In the '80's there might have been a more or less clear distinction between most of these crafts, but as industry developed, the craft lines became interlaced and untraceable. As a consequence, the A.F. of L. conventions have throughout presented one long, howling farce of jurisdictional fights. The national representations of structural iron workers and lathers; carpenters, cabinet makers and iron workers; custom tailors and clothing workers; brewery workers and miners, with a number of trades over which each of these last two have claimed jurisdiction, have lambasted each other, and more than once came near to blows on the floor of the convention, and the cry of scab has rent the air. The A.F. of L. may have succeeded in establishing harmony between capitalist employers and the labor fakers, but among themselves there has never been any love lost when rival jurisdictional interests came into

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conflict. It is self-evident that the wider the jurisdiction, the larger the dues and fees that came to the national treasury and the greater the power and influence of the national leaders of the union. The United Mine Workers, for example, in the good days of the mining industry held the balance of power in the Federation, and the miners' union fakers, from John Mitchell down, have been able to "play ball" with the industrial masters, to the glory of the fakers and the steady detriment of the miners in a manner that probably no other union has been able even nearly to equal.

Organized Scabbery.

It is not, however, only among the A.F. of L. leaders in the higher brackets that the craft struggle has raged. The methods and tactics of the craft union organization have caused the craft struggle to spread down to the rank and file, turning organized labor into organized scabbery. There has never existed in the A.F. of L. such a thing as a united goal; even in the petty wage struggle. Each national craft organization, even in the same industry, has been totally independent of all the rest. As a result each craft has entered into separate contracts with the employers, such contracts expiring at different periods. The result is too well known at this stage to require any particular demonstration. The long, sad story has been that when one craft in an industry has been forced to strike to keep up its wages or secure a few more pennies, all the other crafts in the same industry have stayed at work, scabbing on their fellow workers, and even aiding actual strikebreakers to do their work so that the industry may be kept going, and their own work

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continue uninterrupted. Thus masons, hod carriers, structural iron workers, etc., have broken the strikes of carpenters, and of each other; pressmen have scabbed on compositors, both these on lithographers, and all these on the newsboys; and so on through every industry of the nation.

Organized scabbery, indeed, has become a fundamental principle with the A.F. of L. If, as sometimes happens, the rank and file of the union, fired by the true class spirit of labor, which not even the A.F. of L. has been able to eradicate, should decide to stand by their own fellow workers on strike, determined action is at once taken by the national leaders of their union. The rank and file are emphatically told to keep hands off; they have a sacred contract with their own employers that only miscreants could think of breaking. Legal trumpery and even patriotism are called into action to keep these workers, inspired by labor solidarity, from aiding their fellow workers. If all else fails, the national leaders, with a simple stroke of the pen, revoke the union charter, organize strikebreakers to take the place of the "miscreants," and play the game of the capitalist masters to the last trump. Thus hundreds of strikes have been broken by what passes for organized labor itself; thus thousands upon thousands of workers have been shunted out of their jobs; thus the mass of American labor has been kept subservient to the capitalist exploiters of America.

It is in this noble manner that the A.F. of L. leaders have fulfilled their role of being the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class. They have had still another role, viz., that specified long ago by the *Wall Street Journal* as being a *bulwark against Socialism*.

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“No Politics in the Union.”

In the late '70's, after the fall of the Paris Commune and the collapse of the International Workingmen's Association, there was a great wave of immigration into this country of workers who had been connected with the movement abroad. Many of these held cards in the International Workingmen's Association which they deposited with the Knights of Labor, etc. A number had been more or less associated with Marx in the organization work in England or Germany. With these ardent workers in labor's cause, Gompers, a young aggressive cigar-maker, came in contact, some of them actually working with him in the shop. In his autobiography Gompers relates the fierce discussions that arose. These men talked of the class struggle and the abolition of capitalism and it is easy to read between the lines that Gompers had a hard time holding his own in these discussions and that he built up at this time his undying hatred of "Marxists." It was, he relates, in the clashes between these aggressive unionists and the authorities during the crisis in the middle '70's that "I [Gompers] learn the weakness of Radical tactics," and it is then too that he determined—long before Hitler—that Marxism must be killed.

The "Knights" had entered politics, had fought labor's battles at any front that presented itself. Gompers coined the slogan: *No politics in the union*. The Socialists who, in the early days, tried with vigor to "bore from within," were soon effectively silenced, for under the designation "politics" the fakers soon learned to include everything that comes under the' head of sound labor eco-

nomics and the class struggle. Like efficient watchdogs for the capitalist class, these labor lieutenants would cry "politics" to anything that concerned labor beyond the mere wage struggle for a few pennies more a day. Thus they effectively silenced any working class agitation or education in the union halls.

That this cry of "no politics" was designed entirely to check "labor economics," which per se are politics since the labor question is primarily a social question, was evident by the fact that so far from politics being taboo in A.F. of L. assemblies these fairly oozed with politics. With capitalist politics, however.

We have already seen how Labor, Day is used by the politicians to advertise themselves, by the fakers to exhibit their voting cattle. To the slogan, "No politics in the union," was soon added: "Reward your friends, defeat your enemies." Every shrewd politician would pose as a "friend of labor," "shake hands" in the approved manner with the leading labor leaders of the day, secure the endorsement, on a lot of empty promises, ride into off Ice on the labor vote, promptly forget his pledges until next election rolled around, when he would either renew his pledges and be again rewarded, or be punished, as a labor enemy, while a newly fledged "friend"—and higher bidder for the vote of the voting cattle would slide into office.

Thus by the cry, "No politics in the union," Socialist politics and Socialist economics have been effectively kept out, while capitalist politics have run riot to labor's undoing.

If there was nothing else to demonstrate that the foundation of the so-called "industrial union" movement which has arisen out of the A.F. of L. is as "pure and

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simple,” as subservient to the interests of capitalism, and consequently as detrimental to the true interests of labor as is the old pure craft spirit—if there was, as said, nothing else to demonstrate this, its avowed political entanglement with one of the corrupt, old, labor-enslaving capitalist par. ties would be all-sufficient. In spirit, in its lack of classconsciousness, in its efforts to tie labor to the chariot wheel of capitalism, this imitation “industrial union” outbreak differs not one iota from the old, hidebound craft union.

The Reward of the Labor Traitor.

It is a matter as open and well understood as the existence of the speakeasy during Prohibition that the A.F. of L. has served capitalism well. The fakers, though pretty cheap skates as a whole, have had their rewards, and in the higher brackets these rewards have been ample.

Long and imposing—if indeed the word imposing may be used with propriety in connection with anything that savors of treason to the labor movement—is the list of labor leaders who have gone to their rewards within the capitalist class. The number of “sparklers” at an A.F. of L. convention is the joke of the age. The “labor” leaders travel through the country in the grandest style, stop at the “swellest” hotels—often as not, manned with non-union labor. Where they go, liquor flows expensively and, plentifully—sometimes swinishly. They live in high class houses, drive expensive cars, stint at nothing at home or abroad, and yet many of them have died and left fortunes that could not be accounted for even by the ample salaries.

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With the cry, "No politics in the union," many a labor leader has found his way into local and national politics, from Congress down to local legislatures and aldermanic chambers. There have been, moreover, innumerable appointments to political sinecures that even by the longest stretch of the imagination could not be interpreted as a gift of the people. Such are the rewards from politicians, and these are notoriously given only for services rendered. These appointments extend from that of Secretary of Labor (labor minister) down through state "services" to the meanest of city jobs for petty little capitalist errand boys.* The "labor ministry" of the United States was really created as a gift to the A.F. of L. and that the labor leaders consider it as their own particular sinecure was amply demonstrated when Franklin Delano Roosevelt dared to ignore the A.F. of L. contingent and gave the plum to Miss Perkins, as a reward for campaign services which he no doubt considered greater than what the A.F. of L. had rendered. The racket that went up from the labor faker camp was only quieted by the appointment of one of their number, Edward McGrady, as Assistant Secretary of Labor. Roosevelt, however, did all he could to honor and advance the prominent labor fakers through the NRA. That this failed should not be laid to him personally since greater

* Such a one was handed out as a New Year's present for 1936 to Joseph Schlossberg, General Secretary-Treasurer of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. Schlossberg deserved the compliment bestowed on him 'by the mayor. Years ago Schlossberg betrayed the Socialist Labor Party by aiding a group of conspirators whose avowed object was the elimination of the Socialist Labor Party in behalf of the Socialist party, the staunchest bulwark of the A.F. of L. against revolutionary Industrial Unionism. 'Since then, he has added to his "glory" by aiding his fellow "leaders" effectively to push the once-upon-a-time would-be Socialist Amalgamated back into the A.F. of L.

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social forces than he could possibly control were asserting themselves to tear asunder many a “well laid plan” by professors and politicians.

The Labor Racket.

An organization built entirely on false principles and social lies could not possibly in the long run escape total degeneracy. The high-up leaders might possibly succeed in putting on a cloak of service to labor and society so that the workers whom they have misled and whose minds they have jumbled by the brotherhood theory believe still to some extent that they are benefited by their union. But in many quarters, particularly locally, labor fakerdom has degenerated into a complete racket in which both labor and petty capitalists are bled for all that the traffic can bear. Extortions of the rawest sort are practised on the workers; jobs are sold to the highest bidder, rackets of every sort are practised, and when all else falls, rival crews of fakers organize rival unions, workers are pitted against workers and are made to beat each other up or mow each other down for the greater glory and pelf of the racketeers who exploit these “unions.” Nor are the capitalists, particularly small contractors, exempt from the extortions of these vultures. Unless these cough up as ordered, jobs are struck, material ruined, sometimes even fires are kindled and acid thrown about. Murder itself is not absent from the annals.

Thus the lies upon which the American Federation was built have multiplied themselves as they came down through the years until there is nothing too vile to be committed in the name of labor unionism. Even the hon-

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ored name of Industrial Unionism is not free from its corrupting influences. As we have already shown, there are those among the “leaders” who recognize that the form of craft union is no longer supportable the world today. These leaders ‘ clamored for “vertical” unions, i.e., unions that cut right through an industry without reference to craft lines. Then some bright soul misnamed this Industrial Unionism, a caricature of Socialist Revolutionary Industrial Unionism, Which may perhaps serve for some time yet to confuse the awakening workers and smooth the way for collapsing capitalism still a little longer.

Labor’s Funeral Dirge.

Such is the true character, aim and spirit of the American Federation of Labor under whose auspices the, American Labor Day was inaugurated and has been celebrated throughout the years. Though the above indictment is but a rough sketch that by no means exhausts the list it is enough to show that the American Federation of Labor and its national holiday have actually served like injections of narcotics as antidotes against the spirit of Socialist Revolution.

Quite evidently then, when the “host of labor” is called out to march on Labor Day, they do not march to the strains of the International, the battle hymn of the international proletariat. No, indeed. The tunes that carry the American Federation of Labor marchers through the streets are vulgar ragtime and outworn capitalist patriotic hymns that have lost both spirit and meaning in the modern world. Modern jazz and obsolete hymns alike send a strain of cheer and joy through the capitalists and

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politicians, for they serve truly as a pledge from the labor leaders that the workers who follow the band are still meek and humble slaves the service of capitalism. To the ears of the awakened and classconscious workers, however, these tunes sound like a funeral dirge—and the Labor Day parades will indeed partake of the nature of a funeral procession to the hopes and aspirations of labor until a new spirit shall have seized upon the American working class.

And it is just that spirit which marches with the international working class on May Day.

The International Labor Day.

First of May belongs to the International Socialist movement. Whosoever may attempt to steal the day or turn it from its purpose—patriotic societies, the American Legion, school boards or what not—May Day will stand as the day designated by the workers of the world for fraternal interchange of greetings, for celebration, demonstration and reaffirmation of loyalty to the movement.

May Day has immemorially been the day of “the folk,” the day when the downtrodden, who lived close to the soil, with floral wreaths, songs and dances, greeted the return of summer with its abundant yield of their “Mother Earth.” With the advent of capitalism, the masses, the workers, were separated from the old mother, the world of labor turned into city slums and the change of the seasons meant only a change of misery.

However, with the advent of the labor movement, as new hope arrived, a new light appeared on the social horizon—of this light and hope May Day became the sym-

bol. But even as the Earth Mother had not rendered to the folk of her abundance without labor, so a new social order of peace and justice could never come to the workers without a severe struggle, a class struggle to the bitter end, with their oppressors. The labor movement from its inception manifested itself in clashes between capital and labor. Strikes and strife grew incessantly. The workers had awakened to the realization that they too were humans, not mere beasts of burden, and that they had a right to a decent share of the good things of this earth. Then came the science of Socialism which showed that they were actually entitled to all, since all social wealth is the fruit of labor.

The labor and Socialist movement—particularly in Europe—was then in the stage which we may well designate “The Great March.” The giant was *awakening* and *demanding*. From the slavery of the ages, from the filth, slum conditions and incessant toll of the early status of capitalism, the worker was stepping forth with slogans and programs that implied his recognition of himself as a human being. Wage demands were put forth and enforced by tremendous and bitterly fought strikes. The slogan, “the eight-hour day,” resounded through the capitalist world. Sometimes it was amplified to read: eight hours for work, eight hours for sleep, eight hours for education and recreation. In short, the demand for the eight-hour day was a declaration that the laborer no longer looked upon himself as a beast of burden that could be driven at the owner’s will oftentimes sixteen and eighteen hours a day. There were numerous other demands—sanitary working conditions, abolition of night work, of women’s work in unhealthy and heavy labor, of child labor, etc. The worker, by a severe and often very

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costly struggle, was lifting himself, figuratively, by his own bootstraps to a higher level in the social scale. This uplifting, by its own efforts, by, a portion, at least, of the world proletariat was, during the as yet undeveloped stage of capitalism, an important historic requirement as a preparation for its final struggle for emancipation. The vermin-infested, cringing slum dwellers, with the souls of serfs of the earliest status of capitalism, were not a class fit to “Inherit the earth,” govern and regulate a Cooperative Commonwealth, A new spirit, a feeling of solidarity, infused by its own efforts, had to take possession of labor.

Moreover, the demands of the rising hosts of labor were not always merely economic. As the worker’s consciousness was awakened to his worth as a member of society, he made his demands for his place as a citizen. Tremendous universal suffrage demonstrations in various countries, sometimes followed by nationwide strikes, were instrumental in wringing the right to vote from frightened governments.

This era of “uplift” closed with the World War and the collapse of the “Second” Socialist International. The sordid capitalist reaction, that has made a charnel-house of most countries of Europe, is offset only by the clear note of the workers’ revolution that comes from Soviet Russia.* There May Day is still celebrated in the old international spirit, with the added note of triumph of a prole-

*[This was written before the true state of affairs in Stalinist Russia was completely understood and fully appreciated by the SLP, which had been inclined to give the Soviet Union the benefit of every doubt that had arisen by the mid-1930s. For further information on how the SLP’s position evolved thereafter, see *The SLP and the USSR* and *The Nature of Soviet Society*.—Editor.]

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tariat that has taken possession of the earth and the means of production, and has gained the right to work out its own destiny with the means at hand.

The S.L.P. May Day Spells Education.

The spirit of May Day gives the lie to the servile spirit of brotherhood of capital and labor proclaimed on Labor Day. May Day stands for the solidarity of the working class of the world in its struggle to overthrow capitalism and the wage system and the inauguration of internationally spirited Socialist Republics. In the United States this spirit of May Day is clearly and staunchly upheld by the Socialist Labor Party alone.

The Socialist party, the Communists and other groups who pretend to pay homage to the great day of labor, actually turn their celebrations into caricatures by their pleas for reforms, doles and other governmental charities. The day for reform has passed. The working class is passing through a second great degradation, from which there is no uplift except when the workers themselves take, hold and operate the means of production and make secure for the producers the products of labor.

In opposition to the American Federation of Labor, to the Socialist party and the Communist party and all other reform groups the S.L.P. says:

The history of mankind has been a struggle for progress, taking the form of struggles for power between contending classes. Whenever a ruling class had fulfilled its mission, and its interests ceased to be in harmony with social interests, it was supplanted by the class below, which, by increasing economic and political powers, attained its revolutionary goal. This class, in turn, be-

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came a carrier of social progress until it had outlived its usefulness and, becoming reactionary and a stumbling block in the path of humanity, had to give way before the combined forces of social progress and a new revolutionary class.

With capitalism there remain in society just two contending classes, the capitalist class and the working class—the capitalist class, the owner of the means of production, which ownership today is wholly destructive of the life, liberty and happiness of the mass of the people; and the working class whose interests demand the abolition of private ownership in the means of life.

The interests of the working class demand the institution of collective ownership and control, guaranteeing to all the right to work, and by securing to all the full fruits of their labor, ending for all time the destructive class wars which have up to now torn humanity asunder.

Where a social revolution is pending and, for whatever reason, is not accomplished, reaction is the alternative. Every reform granted by capitalism is a concealed measure of reaction. He who says reform says preservation, and he who says that reforms under capitalism are possible and worthwhile thereby declares that a continuation of capitalism is possible and worth while. But capitalism has grown into an all-destroying monster that must be destroyed if humanity is to live.

To end this condition the Socialist Labor Party calls upon the working class and all other intelligent citizens to place the land and all the means of production, transportation and distribution in the hands of the useful producers as an organized industrial body, under a national industrial administration to take the place of the present outworn political or territorial government. And

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we further call upon the workers to hasten this work of social and human regeneration to the end that a speedy termination may be put to the present state of planless production, industrial war and social disorder, substituting for it the Socialist or Industrial Commonwealth of Emancipated Labor—a commonwealth in which every worker shall have the free exercise and full benefit of his faculties, multiplied by all the factors of modern civilization.

It is to this end that the Socialist Labor Party celebrates May Day as a day of agitation and education to awaken the workers of America to an understanding of their interests as a class. The Socialist Labor Party also utilizes May Day to impress on the workers the necessity of classconscious revolutionary organization on the political field as represented by the Socialist Labor Party, to take possession of the Political State, in order to abolish forever this outworn instrument of class rule; and to organize on the economic field into Socialist Revolutionary Industrial Unions, with the clearly defined purpose of taking, holding and operating the means of production and the reconstruction of society into a Socialist Industrial Union Government.

Thus May Day is made to serve the purpose for which it was originally designated as a labor holiday, namely, to act as a harbinger of a future of freedom, peace and justice for all men.

Thus May Day continues to echo the inspiring battle-cry of the international proletariat:

*Stand up! ye wretched ones who labor,
Stand up! ye galley-slaves of want.
Man's reason thunders from its crater,*

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*'Tis th' eruption naught can daunt,
Of the past let us cleanse the tables,
Mass enslaved, fling back the call,
Old Earth is changing her foundations,
We have been nothing, now be all.*

(THE END)