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EDITORIAL

TWO FLIES WITH ONE CLAP.

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THE Milwaukee, Wis., *Wahrheit*—a “Social Democratic,” alias “Socialist,” alias “Public Ownership” party paper, which more than once has branded the *New Yorker Volkszeitung* as corrupt—has now, together with its English yoke-fellow, the Milwaukee *Social Democratic Herald*, hurled the first fulmination against the Manifesto, issued recently from Chicago, and published in these columns, for the purpose of putting an end to the labor-disrupting practices of A.F. of L.-ism; and, as was to be expected, the *New Yorker Volkszeitung*, also of that party, reproduces with well explainable satisfaction the fulmination from the columns of its one-time brander. Thus these two flies have placed themselves nicely where they may be flattened out with one clap.

The “arguments” thus jointly made by the duo fall mainly under three heads:

The duo contends, in the first place, that it is a cardinal principle with their party not to “interfere in Trades Union differences.” The assertion is false; the reverse of it is true. What, if not an “interference in Trades Union differences” was their posture of support for the A.F. of L. or Tobin Boot & Shoe Workers’ Union in the “difference” that broke out between that Tobin-Carey-Sieverman concern, on the one hand, and the Lynn and Haverhill K. of L. shoeworkers, on the other, when the former stood convicted of being leagued with the manufacturers, and of recruiting for them convicts and plug-uglies to scab it on the latter? Or their posture of venomously echoing and spreading the A.F. of L. calumnies of “Union wrecker,” “scab,” etc., against the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance in the “differences” that broke out between the two organizations, when the former, true to its labor-disrupting spirit, initiated strikes against the latter’s cigarmakers at Seidenberg’s and at Davis’s, against the latter’s machinists at Port Morris and Bloomfield, and has ever since kept up the false cry? Or their posture, at their last national

convention, in slapping the face of the A.L.U. in the “difference” that broke out between the A.L.U. and the A.F. of L. on the subject of the latter’s endearing relations with the Civic Federation?—They do not “interfere in Trades Union differences,” don’t they? Why, they are up to their elbows in interference, but always and only on the side of the labor-lieutenants of the Capitalist Class, always consequently, on the side of scabbery.

The duo next contends that “the rank and file elects the leaders; if better leaders are wanted, the process should be to enlighten the rank and file.” The duplicity of the contention is transparent. Such a contention implies freedom among the rank and file. The organization of the Gompers style of Unionism is builded upon capitalist economics, hence upon despotism for the workingman rank and file. The intimate connections of the pure-and-simple Union leaders with the employers—possible only in such guild form of Unionism—renders the leaders satraps of the capitalist class, with the Union rank and file as abject dependents, who dare not thwart the leader lest they be deprived of their bread. What about the Corregan case, where the leaders of the International Typographical Union sought to punish free speech and criticism with starvation? What about the Berry case in Tobin’s Union? What about the cases of Valentine Wagner and Schmidt in the Brewers’ Union? What about the cases untold, where goods, pronounced “scab” by the leader, are allowed to be worked upon in another and “Union” shop with the connivance of the same leader, who would forthwith throw upon the street that unsophisticated rank and file man in such a shop who would dare to interfere with the leader’s “business”? Need more be said on the subject? Well, we shall cite just one more and crushing instance. The rank and file of the machinists affiliated with the A.F. of L. voted overwhelmingly in favor of Socialism and for throwing Gompers overboard. This notwithstanding, their delegates, at the immediately following Boston convention of the A.F. of L. voted the membership solidly against both propositions. And who was it that opened wide its mouth and yelled at this act of betrayal? Why, the very papers that are now prating about enlightening the rank and file as the all-sufficient means for their liberation. It was the *Social Democratic Herald* of Jan. 2, 1904, that came out with three-column wide and flaming headlines on the “Shameless Betrayal of Labor by Its Leaders,” over statistical tables showing

that the rank and file of the machinists had cast a majority of 2,696 votes to endorse Socialism, and a majority of 1,062 votes to dump Gompers! It was the *Wahrheit* and *Volkszeitung* that echoed these denunciations and figures! And what did the “enlightenment” avail? Nothing, of course.—That the mere “enlightenment of the rank and file” will not suffice to change the leadership of bodies, whose economic and sociologic architecture places them at the mercy of their governing powers, Russia is now illustrating. Fain would the Czar and Russian Bureaucracy have the revolutionists limit their activity to “enlightening the rank and file,” provided the “enlightenment” always taught a proper deference toward the organization, and instilled a wholesome horror for the thought of upsetting the same. So, likewise, do the labor-lieutenants of capitalism gladly allow their rank and file to be “enlightened,” provided always such “enlightenment” be always accompanied with the warning—such as the “enlightening” *Wahrheit*, *Volkszeitung* and *Social Democratic Herald* are now uttering—to “be careful lest they give the death-blow” to the structural system upon which alone the labor-lieutenant of the capitalist class can stand and thrive, and by means of which alone the rank and file can be betrayed.

Finally, the duo advances the dogma that “a Trades Union is no political organization, and must be none.” Insofar as the theory is true, it has no application to the point at issue; insofar as it is sought to be applied to the point at issue, it is false. Of course, technically, a Trades Union is not a political organization. Political organizations are constructed along the lines of existing political demarkations. These are, to-day, Assembly, Senatorial, Congressional, Aldermanic, Judicial Districts, and so forth. Trades know no such fictitious boundaries. They are entities of a different category. But why are they? This is the rub. They are entities of a different category because they are CONSTITUENCIES OF A DIFFERENT SOCIAL ORDER—of the Parliament of the Socialist Republic. In other words, the very circumstance, that compulsorily renders the Trades Union non-political to-day, forces to the fore the essentially political character of the Union. In short, the Trades Union is to-day a child a-borning—not yet freed from the ligaments of capitalist society, yet pulsating forwards into the life of the Co-operative Commonwealth. The evidences of the political character of the Trades Union are

innumerable; nor does any quarter furnish these in larger numbers than the very quarter from which the dogma originates. Let a pure and simple Union—that is to say, a trade organization that ignores or even denies the irreconcilable class struggle between the Capitalist and the Working Class—let such a body meet, and watch it. In nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand instances, lobbying committees to political bodies, or discussions on favors received, or injuries suffered from political quarters, will engage, often absorb its attention. A striking illustration of how utterly unable the labor-lieutenants of the Capitalist Class themselves are to suppress the solemn fact of the Union's political character was furnished in last week's installment in these columns of Comrade Henry J. Brimble's matchless narrative of "The Irrepressible Class Conflict in Colorado." Brimble there quotes John Mitchell, the President of the United Mine Workers' Union, as declaring last year: "If there is one Union coal miner in Colorado who is for Peabody—I say this so far as I am concerned—he will be put out of the Union. I say this with a full realization of what it means."

The Trades Union cannot escape its political essence. A droll proof, and withal pathetic, is found in the hysterics of rage that the labor-lieutenants of the Capitalist Class are instinctively thrown into the moment a member of their organization utters Working-Class economics. He need not mention the word "politics"; he need not breathe the word "party"; he need not even whisper the word "Socialism." His utterance of economics that reflect the class struggle is all that is needed. The labor-lieutenants of the Capitalist Class will jump up with the cry: "No politics in the Union!" It is an instinctive act. No mouse scents the dreaded cat more unerringly. And brilliant is the fact. It illumines the field of the Labor Movement. By the light it sheds, two closely connected facts, both of transcendent importance, leap to sight:—

First—That the properly constructed Trades Union, under healthy social surroundings, need not mention the word "politics." IT IS UNDERSTOOD;

Second—That a bona fide party of Socialism cannot ignore the Trades Union; that the party that calls itself Socialist and does ignore the Union, either is sincere, and then breaks its own back; or it is fraudulent, and then it must have its back broken.

The dogma that a "Trades Union is no political organization, and must be none"

is an old, old acquaintance. There never yet was a labor-lieutenant of the Capitalist Class who did not mouth, nor yet an “intellectual” freak or fraud who did not rant it.

These three are the straws with which the *Wahrheit-Volks-zeitung* duo seeks to oppose the Manifesto issued from Chicago—the herald of the second, and, it is to be hoped, the culminating wave in a Movement, the first wave of which was the S.T. & L.A. And well befitting such straws is the whisk with which the duo binds the bunch. That whisk is: “We shall refuse to join!” Who are the “we’s”? If the “we’s” are to be understood to mean the private owners of the two papers and their two English poodles, who cares! Nor do the “we’s” mean their own wee bits. By “we” they mean their party. They assume to speak for it. In other words, they are doing again what they did once before when they (privately owned concerns) initiated “referendum” votes in a party that they have sought to palm off on the Working Class of America as a party of Socialism—they are issuing orders to their menials.

Like a bunch of straws, like binding whisk. It is impossible to be Socialist in a manner more perfectly bourgeois.

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