

DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 10, NO. 62.

NEW YORK, TUESDAY, AUGUST 31, 1909.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

KAUTSKY ON GOMPERS.

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THE article by Kautsky, raking Gompers over the coals, and published in *The People*,¹ is, like everything that Kautsky writes, worth reading. It is worth reading even when defective, in that the defects give occasion for useful rectification. It so happens in this instance.

Kautsky says that the Socialist party “has not a more dangerous nor a more venomous foe than Samuel Gompers.” This is true as far as the sentence goes; but the sentence reaches only a small portion, at the most only one half of the road of facts that the sentence should travel. The complete sentence should have read: “The Socialist party has not a more dangerous nor a more venomous foe than Samuel Gompers, nor has Samuel Gompers a more valuable supporter than the Socialist party.”

That Gompers is a dangerous and venomous foe of the Socialist party need not here be proved: The facts are recognized by Kautsky, and are, indeed, obvious. No less obvious, but evidently not yet recognized by Kautsky, is the obverse fact that Gompers has no more valuable supporter than the Socialist party.

Who was it that moved at the New Orleans convention of the A.F. of L. to add grease to the elbow of Gompers by raising his salary?—The S.P. man Victor L. Berger.

Is there any vote, even a solitary one, cast against Gompers’s presidency at A.F. of L. conventions?—The miracle happened at two conventions only. That happened full five years ago. Since then Civic Federation Gompers has been regularly elected by a unanimous vote, leading S.P. men like Berger, J. Mahlon Barnes, the S.P. national secretary, and Max Hayes, the “brilliant S.P. Editor,” being conspicuous among the unanimous.

¹ [To be appended at a later date.—R.B.]

When Gompers yells “Scab!” at the Socialist Labor Party, or its press, the *Daily* and *Weekly People*, for daring to promote the organization of workingmen whom the Gompers guild system of Unionism bars from membership by a variety of devices, who is there to echo and re-echo the slander of “Scab!” and thereby condone, even sanctify, the Gompersian iniquity?—Why the S.P. press. From Max Hayes’s paper down or up to the *Volkszeitung*, it is re-echoed “Scab!,” “Scab!!,” “Scab!!!” “The S.L.P. are scabs and Union wreckers!!!!”

Who is it that most enthusiastically seconds the Gompers system of substituting the class-struggle with the race-struggle?—Why the S.P., whose Hillquits, Schlueters, Lees, Simonses cross the Atlantic in the effort to debauch the International Congress, and thereby the International Movement, by inoculating it with the labor-dislocating Gompers virus.

Examples could be multiplied ad infinitum. Were it not for the S.P.’s valuable support, Gompers and Gompersism would be, if not yet uprooted, at least on its death-bed in America. As it is, the cloak of Socialism being thrown over the Gompers performances, Gompers has grown to be the ominous thing he is to-day to the Socialist Movement of the land—if not of the world.

At first blush, the sentence, “The Socialist party has not a more dangerous nor a more venomous foe than Samuel Gompers, nor has Samuel Gompers a more valuable supporter than the Socialist party,” looks paradoxical. The known facts about Gompers towards the S.P., and the facts, a few of which are quoted above, about the S.P. towards Gompers, prove the sentence true; but this only increases the puzzle. How comes it that Gompers, who derives such valuable support from the S.P., is a foe to his supporter? and vice versa, how comes it that the S.P., to whom Gompers is a foe, affords support to him?—Thereby hang all the laws and the prophets of the, superficially looked upon, puzzle presented by the Socialist or Labor Movement of America.

The discoveries that our German comrades are making, now that Gompers is seeking to invade Germany, the Socialist Labor Party made long ago, and its press exposed the ulcer by firmly sticking the lancet into it. Gompers’s flanks and rears felt exposed; he looked for protection. The split of 1899 in the S.L.P. was the open manifestation that Gompers’s search and endeavors had met with success—some

kind of success. He now had a party that denounced the denouncers of his betrayals of the Cause of Labor. For one thing, his purpose to annihilate the S.L.P. failed totally. Though greatly decimated in the matter of votes, the S.L.P. remained, in fact, gained in strength as a menace to Gompersism. With its original *Weekly* of old speedily enforced by a *Daily*, besides six foreign weeklies in German, Hungarian, Swedish, Italian, Yiddish and Lettish, the S.L.P. attested its indestructibility. For another thing, Gompers made the bitter experience of Wagner in Faust. The homunculus he had artificially created went back upon him, in a degree. While supporting the Gompers iniquities, and acting against the S.L.P. as a bruiser for Gompersism, the S.P., with its grotesque notion of the ephemeral nature of Unionism, sought to supplant Gompers's A.F. of L., along with Gompers himself. The consequence was inevitable, logical—

Gompers, as a traducer of Socialism, and a Vice-President of the Civic Federation, hates the very word "Socialism." And he hates the S.P. with the additional and complicated hatred that comes from his knowledge that the S.P. strives for his heirship as humbug, and that, for all that, he needs the thing as a barrier against the S.L.P.

The S.P., on the other hand, though aware of the hatred of Gompers, has no choice but to give him support, knowing that the instant it withdraws its support its reason for being ceases, and the triumph of the S.L.P. is demonstrated.

Looked at below the surface, there is nothing puzzling in the American Socialist or Labor Movement, and the seeming paradox of the corrected Kautsky sentence is solved.

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Uploaded by Donna Bills, October 2010

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