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FIRST EDITORIAL

FOR SHAME!

By DANIEL DE LEON

IN the midst of his toil, his long hours, his cramped rooms; harassed by want, tortured by privations to himself and his dependents, the average workingman is shut out from the opportunity himself to acquire that fullness of information that his soul aspires to, and that he needs to work out his salvation. To bring relief from that side, he organizes; squeezes himself still more by maintaining union officials, who, freed from toil, can devote their leisure to furnishing him with the light he needs; in many an instance he carries his enthusiasm for instruction so far as to set up a journal whereby, not only himself, but others may profit. The mission of such officials and such journals is a sacred one. It is a ministry clad with a trust than which none is holier. No amount of devotion put forth in its fulfillment is excessive; but neither is there any depth of infamy equal to its betrayal.

An official in point is Mr. SAMUEL GOMPERS, a journal of this sort is *The Federationist*. Both are supported with the hard earned pennies of workingmen. The mission of both is to spread enlightenment; to bring clearness of thought out of confusion; to dispel capitalist false reasoning, to light the path of crucified Labor. His is the mission to look back into the past, profit by experience, and guard with Argus eyes the columns of the journal entrusted to his keeping, lest, instead of light, it spread darkness, instead of sense, it breed nonsense to manacle the workers. Yet how does this GOMPERS fulfill his sacred calling?

In this year of grace, the workingman finds his access to natural opportunities blocked by gigantic implements of labor, held as private property. These were the product, not of their possessors or their predecessors, but of the working class; they represent the wealth produced by the brains and hands of labor but withheld,

pilfered by the capitalist. Held by private owners, the machinery of labor becomes Capital. It is used for the profit of the robber class that holds it, it becomes a scourge to the class that is deprived of it. It represents wrongdoing in the past, wrongdoing in the present, and wrongdoing so long as the system lasts. Capital is the glorification of Theft. The rights it has are no other and no more, tho' no less, than those with which civilization wisely clothes the thief caught red-handed. He is protected against injustice by a fair trial; he is protected after conviction against inhuman treatment; there his rights end. Clearness upon these principles, upon the source and the meaning of Capital is essential to the worker; without it he loses himself in a maze; it is the purpose of the capitalist to create on the subject all the confusion possible; it is the mission of the union official to counteract that.

This notwithstanding, this month's issue of *The Federationist*, of which GOMPERS is the editor contains an article by one JOHN W. EVANS on "Capital and Labor" in which, in the midst of a tangle of confusing idiocies, the statement is made clear and pointed: "Capital has certain rights that claim respect."!!!

An article like that is more responsible for the sufferings of the workers than all the "capitalist greed" such writers are fond of declaiming against. The blood of wage slaves shed at strikes, the lives of men, women and children slowly sucked out by the capitalist, all the thousand and one ills that afflict the workers fall upon the heads of the miscreants, who, unfit to guide a swarm of locusts, presume to headship in the ranks of Labor!

There are men who imagine GOMPERS and his crew may yet learn. No; they are past that, and the Labor Movement in America is past them!

For shame, ye ignoramuses and blockheads of a day that is gone by, step down and out!

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

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