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EDITORIAL

FAILURES OF STRIKES.

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FRED D. Warren has an article in the *Appeal to Reason* of the 5th instant in which, amidst pictorial statistics, the gentleman endeavors to confute the enthusiasm of Eugene V. Debs for the Industrial Workers of the World. Mr. Warren's argument, in a nutshell, is this: Perfected machinery and other capitalist appliances steadily displace labor and raise the volume of the unemployed; in the measure that the unemployed increase the economic organization of Labor becomes difficult until a point is reached when such organization becomes impossible; as a consequence, hand in hand with and due to this development Trades Union victories have and must become fewer until they are bound to cease altogether. Mr. Warren reaches the final conclusion from these premises that the above state of things is responsible for the declining ability of the A.F. of L. to enroll a large membership, and he consequently pronounces enthusiasm for the I.W.W. to be unfounded. This reasoning is false, nor is it improved, except with the groundlings, by an affectation of statistical display.

Mr. Warren informs his readers that he derives his opinion from "a glance at the history of the American Federation of Labor". The trouble with the gentleman's history is that it is full of holes. As well say that "a glance at the history of the Southern Confederacy will bring out the fact" that no secession movement can succeed; or that "a glance at the history of the Franco-Prussian war will bring out the fact" that the French can not beat the Germans; or, upon similar reasoning, that "a glance at the history of the Labor Movement will bring out the fact" that the working class can only suffer defeat. These reasonings are all obviously wrong. The error in them lies in the attempt to generalize from defective or incomplete premises. True, the Southern Confederacy was a secession movement, and true enough, secessionists ever start handicapped, but not that handicap was the

determining factor in the failure of the South; the South failed because of many other reasons that combined with the original handicap and insured failure, while in many other and leading historic instances secession movements have been crowned with success. True, the French were beaten by the Germans in 1870, and true enough there is many a point of weakness with the French and of strength with the Germans, but that these facts are not enough to warrant the conclusion that the French cannot beat the Germans, appears from the great and numerous historic instances in which the French were the conquerors, the Germans the conquered. Finally, true enough, throughout the ages the worker has been the under dog, but every student of history, surely every Socialist knows that other causes, and not that of his being a worker, were the determining factors in Labor's defeats, and, consequently, that these factors being removed and new and favorable ones having set in, Labor's triumph is assured. It is so at all points with the "glance at the history of the American Federation of Labor" which "brings out the fact" upon which Mr. Warren banks.

The A.F. of L. can win no strikes; that is true; but the existence of the unemployed is not the determining factor in the A.F. of L.'s grandiose record of uninterrupted defeats since 1890, or of its assured prospective defeats during the short life still left to it; the existence of the unemployed only contributed its share to that "history"; accordingly, that "history" points to other causes besides, causes without which the mere existence of the unemployed could never have produced the "history". It is indisputable that the Chicago A.F. of L. packers lost their strike because the A.F. of L. engineers remained at work; it is indisputable that the A.F. of L. anthracite miners were defeated because the A.F. of L. bituminous miners remained at work; it is indisputable that A.F. of L. trolley men, shoe makers, carpenters, cigar makers, etc., etc., etc., have been defeated because other A.F. of L. allied trades scabbed upon the strikers by remaining at work. The fact that "a glance at the history of the American Federation will bring out" is that the A.F. of L. never went on strike; divisions did, but their kin remained at work. Of course, with A.F. of L. bodies holding the fort for the employer until he had time to round up the unemployed; moreover, with an A.F. of L. structure that, through high initiation fees, high dues, bargains with one set of employers not to organize other

workingmen of the trade; in short, with the virtual challenge to the unemployed to come and break a strike and time given him to do so—with all these and kindred circumstances, what wonder that the unemployed arrived, arrived greedily, and gave the strike its death blow? The unemployed is one factor, false organization and treason are other and more important factors in the history of the A.F. of L. Without the latter the danger from the unemployed vanishes substantially.

All of which the literature and agitation that heralded the advent of the I.W.W. has amply brought out and demonstrated. Was the demonstration false or defective? Then the way to treat the subject is not to repeat the same old trite and trituated allegation of the “pure and simple” Socialists, but to join issue with and show wherein the arguments against it are inconclusive. To merely reiterate a statement, wholly ignoring the arguments against it, is, in this instance, to trifle with a solemn subject.

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