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EDITORIAL

TWIN OPPOSITES.

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THE opposing cries, now going up in the land, of “The Closed Shop!” and “The Open Shop!” are both false cries. The one, and the other, is an attempt to graft Wrong upon an implied foundation of Right. They are both appeals to a superstition—the one to the superstition that seeks to blast as impious whosoever should dare to look behind the cloak of “Unionism”, and ascertain whether it is Unionism, indeed, that is cloaked; the other to the superstition that equally seeks to blast as impious whosoever should dare to look behind the cloak of “Freedom”, and ascertain whether it is Freedom, indeed, that is cloaked. The former cry is set up by Gompersism, the latter by Parryism.

The Union of the Working Class is an organization of, for and by wage slaves. Accordingly, such an organization recognizes only one dividing line—the line that divides the Working Class from the Capitalist Class, the plundered from the plunderer. Any organization that claims to be a Union and yet recognizes or raises any other line of demarkation is an impostor. The name of “Union” which it assumes is the false colors of the pirate to escape detection, it is the cloak of Labor to conceal the cloven hoof of Capitalism. It is a legitimate endeavor with the latter organization to seek to bar out workingmen. Seeing that the additional lines of demarkation which such an alleged Union draws, dismembers the Working Class, it is clear that the dismembering element has no use for the other. Accordingly, the cry “The Closed Shop” means the shop closed against all those members of the Working Class whom artificial lines separate from their fellow wage slaves; it means the exclusion of all those members of the Working Class who are barred out by high walls of initiation fees, high dues, frequent assessments, apprenticeship regulations, etc., or who are thrown out for the exercise of free speech and criticism. As a consequence that can not be run away from, the cry of “The Closed Shop!”

proceeds from a quarter in which Capital and Labor are seen to be hand-in-glove, despite the periodical ruptions between them, which ruptions, however, indicate no radical differences but, on the contrary, only emphasize the intimacy of their relations—just as the periodical spittings, scratchings and caterwaulings of tom-cats and she-cats together only betoken the intimacy of their rapprochements. It is an observation imputed to the observing Lincoln that the more “quarrels” there are between black cats, the more numerous are the black kittens. And so also it can be said with unerring aim that, the affluence and power for oppression enjoyed by the Capitalist Class can be exactly gauged by the number of these “family rows” between Gompersism and Capitalism: in the measure that they spat, scratched and caterwauled at each other Capitalism grew in riches and its arm strengthened. The long and short of all this is that the Gompers alleged style of “Unionism” is not of, for and by the wage slave, but OF the wage slave, run BY the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class, and FOR the benefit of capitalism. Bona fide Unionism has no workingmen to be close-shopped against; it is only the fraudulent capitalist substitute of so-called Unionism that has.

The case is just as clear in regard of the Parryite cry of “Freedom!” implied in the cry of “The Open Shop!” He is not “free” to act whom a conflagration is kindled behind, and the only way of egress left to him is an open window from a sixth story. When he leaps out and down and breaks his neck he was COMPELLED to. Equity, that part of jurisprudence that Parryism would burn out of its own law books, has long ago and eloquently pronounced itself upon the subject. “Fraud” is the name with which it stigmatizes the alleged contract obtained under circumstances of duress. The “open shop” of Parryism is the open window of a sixth story with the workingman between that and the conflagration of capitalist conditions raging behind him. Parryism says in substance that the capitalist conflagration is the ideal social condition; it seeks to inculcate the falsehood into the minds of the workers; it seeks to keep them in ignorance of the means to put out the fire and of other means of egress; it sets up the preposterous claim that unless the workers are scorched they can not be happy; and in order to prove how frisky they can be under capitalism it opens its sixth story window and says: “Jump!”

Sad were the plight of the worker if his were really the Hobson’s choice between

the “Closed Shop” of the Hannaized Gompers “Union” which is to plunder him and keep him from unity with his fellows, or the “Open Shop” of Parryism, into which he is to fall and break his neck. But the choice is not so limited. Years ago the corner-stone was laid for the economic organization of Labor that will keep the worker free from being engulfed in either abyss. Other stones have since followed. At hand, it is to be hoped, is the rise of the new economic structure to whom the “Closed Shop” of Gompersism will be an un-meaning term, seeing that the new Union will be organized, NOT AGAINST LABOR but AGAINST CAPITALISM; and to whom the “Open Shop” of Parryism will be a thing to laugh at, seeing that the new Union will not be built with the Parry blinkers clapped to its eyes so as to prevent it from discovering other means of escaping the conflagration of capitalism than by jumping down from sixth story windows.

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

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