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EDITORIAL

GLEANINGS FROM CONGRESS—THE MATRIX OF PURE AND SIMPLE UNIONISM.

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IT is quite certain that the representatives of the capitalist class in Congress would deem it a mortal affront to their dignity if their attention were called to the evidence of the close affinity there is between their political guild and the economic guild of craft Unionism—despite the falling out of Gompers and Cannon. The fraternal relations between the craft Unionists and the capitalist politicians begin and end with election campaigns. During campaigns the politician can not express himself too strongly upon the actual brotherhood between him and the craft Union. After campaigns that is all forgotten; yet forget as the politician may, the fact survives. It could be no otherwise. Capitalism is the Original, craft Unionism the Caricature. Of this fact the transactions of the late Congress furnished many an illustration. The gleaning under this particular head may not be as conspicuous as the gleanings that have been considered in these columns under other heads. It nevertheless has its interest in the anatomy of modern society.

The craft Union has for its fundamental principle the procuring of jobs for ITS members—and, to hell with the rest of the Working Class. The first practical working of the principle, under capitalist exigencies, is that the craft Union braces itself generally against the bulk of the members of its own trade. As jobs decline, at least relatively to the supply of Labor, the necessity of shutting the door in the face of other workers is imperative from craft Union premises. The second practical working of the craft Union principle is a result of the further capitalist development which increases the supply of Labor so much more that the jobs are not enough to go around, even among the charmed circle of the members; the result is that a charmed circle is formed within the charmed circle. The inner charmed circle consists of the fakirs or placemen. These places consist in delegationships to

conventions, pickets at strikes, and such other offices. Finally the development is reached that jobs are created expressly to be filled, and with no other purpose. These offices are to be supported by the tax on the membership, and “a traitor to Unionism” [the Craft Unionist calls his job “Unionism,” and there is none else beside it] is he who raises the faintest voice of criticism.

At all points a similar development has been going on in Congress. The debates of the late session are sprinkled with evidences thereof. The economic development, brought along by the class that runs Congress, has caused the capitalist class to run the gamut of the experiences, which, as the echo of its own, were made by the Craft Unions—while preaching “competition” capitalism has been smoking out the competitors and centralizing; as “opportunities” declined for capitalist “competitive cleverness,” the capitalist class began to discriminate against its own kin; presently the time was reached when even the charmed circle thus formed was overcrowded, as a consequence of the continuous shrinkage of the capitalist sun. The final result is the “Original” of the “Caricature” above described in the conduct of the Craft Unions—jobs are created for the express purpose of being filled, and woe was to the innocent who suggested retrenchment by the suppression of useless placemen. Such superfluous and useless places were created in the Agricultural Department, they were created in the printing offices, they were created in the Census office, they were created in the Judiciary Department, they were created in the land offices. Facts showing that not less than 110 of these extra places in the land offices were not of the slightest necessity were circulated in Congress, accompanied by tables of the savings that could be made by abolishing the places. Secretary Hitchcock naively said in the matter of the land offices that the facts “would have convinced any business man that the changes should be made at once.” He discovered that instead of “convincing” he raised a hornets’ nest around his head.

What “business principles” and “methods” are, the recent investigations and trials of railroads, meat-packers, gas companies, insurance, etc., etc., have shed a flood of light upon. Congress, as the focus of these “business methods,” can not but be truthful condensation of what it focalizes. As a matrix, moreover, of Craft Unionism, we find Congress acting, on a national and huge scale, upon the identical principle that animates its caricature the Craft Union—creating jobs to keep the

dependents upon the inner charmed circle in bread and butter.

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