

EDITORIAL

THE UNSKILLED AND UNEMPLOYED.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE classic ground for craft Unionism is Great Britain. True enough, the more fertile sociologic soil of the United States has enabled the plant of British craft Unionism to grow here into rankest luxuriousness. To that extent it is best studied in America. At the same time, the place of its birth offers exceptional insight into a type. It is to Great Britain that one must go in order to become clearly aware of that Achilles heel, that fatally spot of craft Unionism, which consists in its unavoidable dislocation of the working class by its placing the Labor Movement upon false foundation, through keeping of increasing numbers of workers outside of the pale of Unionism. Not the least startling feature of the new budget proposed by Mr. Lloyd-George is the light one of its provisions throws upon this very subject.

The craft Unions of Great Britain have been clamoring for “State insurance against unemployment.” Mr. Lloyd-George states that the Government’s scheme, while including Trade Unionists, would **EXTEND ITS ADVANTAGES TO THE LARGER CIRCLE OF UNSKILLED LABORERS.**” Which means—

First, that the Trades, or craft Unions do not embrace the unskilled workers;

Secondly, that the Trades, or craft Unions do not look for the protection of the unskilled workers.

Summed up into one conclusion, it means that craft Unionism is a caricature of middle classism: it is a would-be job-Trust affair: it ignores and excludes the bulk and ever growing bulk of the proletariat: in short, **IT IS NO PART OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT, PROPER.**

Socialism often points to the phenomenon that it is Capitalism itself that plants the dragon’s teeth from which springs up the army that is to overthrow it. As machinery and methods of be production improve, in other words, as the Capitalism

grows, skill is eliminated from production and productive service. In even tread with the elimination of skill progresses the displacement of “hands,” which means the increase of unemployment.

The Labor Movement can recognize no aristocracy. So long as any such there be the Movement can not reach its “steerage way.” An “aristocracy” of “skilled labor” under conditions that are steadily digging the ground from under the would-be aristocrats, is an aristocracy of shoddy. Shoddy aristocracies are ash-barrel refuse. Not upon the skilled minority, but upon the vast mass of the unskilled majority does the Labor or Socialist Movement plant itself; and there stand also all intelligent “skilled” hands.

The ground upon which craft Unionism has drifted, and upon which it plants itself, is ground within the pale of Privilege. The train of Privilege ever trains after it, the ape-counterfeit—no worse foe to the Proletariat.

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