

EDITORIAL

ONCE MORE, POOR GOMPERS!

By DANIEL DE LEON

“OH that mine adversary had written a book!” The adversaries of Gompers must be delighted at the exceptionally long article, and, therefore exceptionally full of breaks, that Gompers affixed his name to in the current month’s issue of his *American Federationist*. More charitable than those his adversaries, it only wrings our hearts to say, once more, “Poor Gompers!”—and proceed to tell the why of the wherefore.

The first of the cardinal principles that the aforementioned article cites as the guiding principle of Gompers Unionism, “with respect to the Socialists,” is “not to consent to be committed to any political party.” The principle, couched in these words, is the same old corpse of no “No politics in the Union!” rigged in a new shroud. The corpse has often been laid bare. Let it be laid bare once more.

In his Minneapolis address entitled *The Preamble of the Industrial Workers of the World* the Socialist Labor Party speaker said:

“Who of you has not witnessed the sight of a Labor Leader jumping up at a craft Union meeting, as if a torpedo had exploded under his seat, every time the economics or sociology of Labor was expounded? The sight is common. Whatever the subject that presents itself to a Union, it can-not choose but be handled from one of two view-points—either from the view-point of capitalism, or from the view-point of Labor, that is, Socialist economics. Impassible, complacently smiling, perhaps even blissfully snoring, the Labor Fakir will sit in his seat, so long as the discussion is carried on along capitalist lines. But let the first word be uttered that has a ring of Socialist, that is, Labor economics, and you will notice a sudden transformation. Like a faithful watch-dog of capitalism, the fakir will snarl, jump up and bark. I have more than once deliberately tested the thing at the meetings of craft Unions with which I happened to be connected. I would join a discussion that was in progress, peacefully in progress, with the fakir looking on unconcernedly—discussions on immigration, discussions on boycotts, discussions on wages, discussions on tenements,

discussions on the liquor traffic; etc.; etc. I would carefully avoid the word ‘politics,’ deliberately would I avoid it. Neither the word ‘politics,’ let alone the name ‘Socialist Labor Party,’ would drop from my lips. They were as words tabooed, and alien to me while I spoke. But lo, no sooner did I deploy my argument so as to bring out the Labor, which is the Socialist, view-point of the subject, than up would jump the watch-dog of capitalism with the protest: ‘No politics in the Union!’ He was right; that is to say, Labor or Socialist economics IS politics. BY THE SAME TOKEN CAPITALIST ECONOMICS LIKEWISE IS POLITICS.”

Capitalist economics is at home, capitalist economics is safeguarded, capitalist economics is fought for by the Labor-Lieutenants of the capitalist class in the Civic Federationized guilds misnamed Unions. He who says “economics” says “politics.” The latter is the only way to enforce the former. The fact is kept secret by the Labor-Lieutenants. By keeping the secret they have been and are able to profit thereby at the expense of the membership. It is the case of a guardian concealing from his wards the hidden riches of their estate, and, on the sly, trafficking upon those riches himself.

There are but two systems of politics conceivable in America—the Capitalist and the Labor. Capitalist politics is entrenched in Civic Federationized Unionism. What else does Gompers approve himself—when he admits that, “with respect to the Socialists,” his “first principle” is “not to consent to [the Union’s] being committed to any political party”—what else does he approve himself but what we have more than once convicted him of, and that out of his own mouth, a Labor-Lieutenant of the Capitalist Class?

Wherefore, once more, Poor Gompers!

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