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EDITORIAL

CRAFT UNIONISM AT WORK IN ROCHESTER.

By DANIEL DE LEON

THERE is trouble in the labor world of Rochester, N.Y. Great trouble. So much trouble that the Rochester *Post-Express* of the 10th of this month devotes extensive space to statements by “Both Sides of the Controversy.”

Which are the two sides?

Ah, there’s the rub!

Is one of the two sides workingmen, and the other employers? No; both sides are workingmen—one side a Rochester constituency of the A.F. of L.; the other side a Rochester Local of the Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers’ International Union of America.

The essence of the “controversy” is as follows:

There is in Rochester an organization known as Local 39, Bricklayers, Plasterers and Stone Masons. Local 39 has nearly thirty years of existence, and is affiliated with the International Union of Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers, a body unattached to the A.F. of L.

There is also in Rochester an organization known as the Building Trades Council, which, either directly, or through its constituents of carpenters, etc., is affiliated with the A.F. of L.

Things had been moving smoothly, the Building Trades Council’s constituents attending to their work, and Local 39 doing the bricklaying, masonry and plastering that came its way, all harmoniously, when suddenly a new, or third body popped up—the “Operative Plasterers’ Association,” which, with the backing of the Building Trades Council, began to compete with Local 39 for its plasterers’ jobs, with the consequence that Local 39 was forced to go on strike, bringing about a virtual tie-up in the building industry.

Whence came the “Operative Plasterers’ Association”? What was its purpose?

The answer to the two questions is gleaned from the statement of that one of the “two sides of the controversy” that is chaperoning the Association—the Building Trades Council itself. The “Operative Plasterers’ Association” is a paper organization; it is not considered a “side” at all; it is a pawn in the game; it is set up by A.F. of L. agencies to force the Bricklayers, Masons and Plasterers’ International Union into the A.F. of L. by means of threatening the existence of the International Union’s Locals through scabbing on their jobs.

The statements of “Both Sides of the Controversy” constitute a prime document to the history of the American Labor Movement—especially the statement of the second side, the Building Trades Council.

Employers do not “swap Unions” except lower wages are swapped for higher. With the aid of the employer, the A.F. of L. officials are found at their usual game in Rochester. With the scab as a wedge these officials are seeking to corral unattached Unionmen into the dues-paying pen of the Civic Federationized Gompers.

And that is what craft Unionism almost inevitably leads to in America. Organized upon the theory of the Brotherhood between Labor and Capital, and framed together upon the principle of trade autonomy, Union wars upon Union, and Unionman upon Unionman.

The Rochester “Controversy” is a tragic spectacle that should contribute its share towards purging the American Labor Movement of the Civic Federation pestilence, and towards urging the Industrial Unionist program—the program that sets up as the goal of Unionism the overthrow of the capitalist system of exploitation, and as the means to the goal that compact system of organization that leaves no room for scabbery, seeing that it removes all opportunity and inducement therefor.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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slpns@slp.org