

EDITORIAL

A “BLUE PENCIL NEEDED.”

By DANIEL DE LEON

THE *Cigar Makers’ Official Journal*, organ of Gompers’s cigarmakers’ organization, makes the editorial statement that “the amount expended in strike benefit has never been surpassed in any other single year while in existence, and effectively refutes the claim of certain would-be detractors that we are merely a sick and death benefit association.”

This passage is encouraging reading, not because the allegation regarding the strike expenditures is true—that is substantially untrue—but because the passage contains an expression that warrants the conclusion that even the rhinoceros hide of the intellect of G.W. Perkins, the Cigarmakers’ Union’s president, is not quite impervious to the poundings of Sense which it has received from the Socialist Labor Party.

Time was when the sick and death benefit feature of this Cigar Makers’ Union was the thing gloried over most loudly by the Union’s officials. These, in chorus with their likes of other Unions, rolled in their mouths the thousands of dollars expended upon their dying and their dead, and struck the pose of “See, what true pure and simple unionists we are.” The reference, in the passage quoted above, to those who ridicule the idea of a Union being an insurance, instead of a fighting body, an ambulance concern, instead of an army to do battle; and who brand as ignominious to Unionism the boast of large sums spent on sick and dead while paltry sums are dribbled out on strikes—the reference in that passage to these critics as “detractors” is a sign of mental progress.

When that which one holds to be a good thing is pointed out as bad by another, then this other is not a “detractor.” He tells the truth but is too stupid to appreciate its excellence. And such, indeed, at one time was the language of Perkins and his Perkinses. Those who contrasted the huge sums paid for the “ambulance service”

with the petty figures paid for war, and who, contrasting the figures, branded such a body as a "bogus Union,"—they were not called "detractors." They were called "ignorant professors," men who "know nothing of the interests of the workingmen," "visionaries who should learn to understand Unionism before they criticise it," "theoretickers who talk through their hats." Now the tune has changed. Now they are called "detractors"—that is, people who point their criticising finger to a thing that does not exist, and which if it existed, would be a defect.

It has taken time for Perkins to make the admission. He does so unwittingly. True. That matters not. He, no doubt, is of his old opinion still. All the more significant is the lapse of his pen. It is all the stronger evidence that the pounding that the "detractors" unterrifiedly administered to Perkins and Perkinsism is "taking." All the more certain the certainty that Unionism in America will be cleansed of the smut of "ambulancism," along with its other Civic-Federation-and-Militia-of-Christism.

So cheering is the paragraph quoted from Perkins's editorial, that we propose to give him a touching proof thereof. When one feels very happy he feels very benevolent. In the benevolence, born of our happiness, we wish to give Perkins the good advice that he hire an assistant, the special tool of whose office shall be a "blue pencil," and the sole function of which tool shall be to "blue pencil" such passages on the editorial page as are in conflict with and place other and leading editorial utterances in an unfavorable light.

With such an amanuensis to protect Perkins's efforts against Perkins, the lie direct would not, for instance, be given, on the same page, and in a contiguous column, and almost on parallel lines, to Perkins's statement about the amount expended in strike benefit by his Union last year having "never been surpassed in any other single year." Almost parallel with that statement, in a column smack up against the column that contains that statement, occurs this other: "While the total amount expended in strike benefit was \$221,044.70, of this amount about \$205,000 was expended in the Tampa strike and lockout, which leaves about \$16,000 expended in other strikes."—In other words, the amount actually expended in actual strikes was about \$16,000—the regulation strike dribble for weak-kneed skirmishes. Whereas the bulk of the \$221,044.70, to wit, about \$205,000 was not a

strike benefit in any legitimate sense. It was a fine, paid by Perkins and fellow officers, Gompers included, to the Logic of Events for the crime they perpetrated in Tampa, ten years ago, upon the Tampa cigarmakers of the Resistencia Union, and upon the Working Class in general, when Perkins, Gompers and his fellows made common cause with the Tampa employers; acted as scab-herders for them; and furnished them with “good Union men,” who like veritable Cossacks, hired and armed by the employers, sabred and pistoled the Resistencia workingmen on strike—sabred and pistoled them into submission, or out of town. That fine HAD to be paid—and paid it was, at least the first instalment, when last year the Tampa employers, placed firmly in the saddle by the treason of Perkins and Gompers to the workers, kicked their obscene allies of 1901 in the face—and made them “pay the fiddler.” The about \$205,000 paid the fine that the Logic of Events decreed. That \$205,000 was no “strike benefit.”

A “blue pencil” assistant would have “blue-penciled” the contradictory passage.

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