

# ***The Fakir-Ridden American Federation Of Labor***

***An Indictment Which Places the Federation and  
Its Leaders Squarely on the Side of Capitalism  
and Exploitation of Labor***

***By Thomas Grady***



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## ***Editor's Note***

In her Preface to the pamphlet *Industrial Unionism*, also posted to this website, Olive M. Johnson wrote:

“Added to the main portion of the pamphlet is a supplement by Thomas Grady, of Philadelphia, an indictment of the American Federation of Labor. Such indictments of the Federation and its leaders, the ‘labor fakers’ or ‘labor lieutenants of the capitalist class,’ have been issued from time to time from the press of the Socialist Labor Party. Notable among such indictments is Daniel De Leon’s classic, ‘Plebs Leaders and Labor Leaders,’ from his pamphlet, [\*Two Pages from Roman History\*](#). Grady’s statement lays no claim to completeness as a record of recent acts of commission and omission on the part of the A.F. of L.—but it serves as a fair sample of A.F. of L. treason to the workers whom it pretends so flamboyantly to serve.”

We have deleted Grady’s indictment of the A.F. of L. to reduce the size of the *Industrial Unionism* file for posting, but present it here in its entirety.

—*Robert Bills*

# ***THE FAKIR-RIDDEN AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR***

***An Indictment Which Places the Federation and Its Leaders  
Squarely on the Side of Capitalism and Exploitation of Labor***

***By Thomas Grady***

**I**N the year 1908, at the first convention of the I.W.W., W.E. Trautmann in his “Indictment Against the American Federation of Labor,” said in part:

. . . all those who have come into the American Federation of Labor, believing that that organization after the 1886 convention at St. Louis would become an instrument of the class struggle to bring about the emancipation of the working class on the economic field, and have seen how that organization has been debauched and corrupted by the labor leaders. . . . If you file information and charges, you have to prove them, and before this convention we stand today ready to prove most of the charges that today the trade union movement has become an auxiliary to the capitalist class in order to hold down the toilers of the land. All that has been said, all that has been charged against individuals in the trade union movement is absolutely nonsensical if we do not go down to the bottom from which these crimes arise. If you realize the harmony between capital and labor; if you recognize such a thing to exist, then you should not wonder that labor leaders become the labor lieutenants of capitalism. . . .

He also exhibited documents, printed reports, and official publications of the American Federation of Labor, from which I quote in part:

“By the systematic pursuit of a policy as above illustrated (refusing to take part in the great railroad strike of 1894), the American Federation of Labor has demonstrated to the world that the spirit of the trade union movement is essentially conservative, and that in the measure of its conservation it has become the most valuable agent of social progress.”

“ . . . the programme of the common ownership of all the means of production and distribution was declared alien to the trade union movement.”

That convention took place thirty years ago. Where does the A.F. of L. stand

today? Has it altered in its principles, tactics and object? Has it become the most valuable agent of social progress? I am going to prove to you that its principles have not altered, that its tactics are the same, that its object is the same, and that instead of becoming the most valuable agent of social progress, it has become a hindrance to social progress.

Prior to 1905, the A.F. of L. preached that there was an identity of interests between capital and labor, that they could work together to the mutual benefit of both. Do they still preach it?

William Green is the recognized official spokesman of the A.F. of L. Let us see what he has to say about that particular philosophy. He said in 1933:

“Planning for national welfare; sound fundamental philosophy of the relationship between government and industry; serves the welfare of the investors of capital and producing workers.”

He also believes that “capital is labor’s best friend.” Now what does that mean? It means that the A.F. of L. still preaches the idea that capital and labor are brothers, in fact, he as much as says that capital is a darned good brother, and that labor ought to be proud to have such a brother. How do these principles manifest themselves in real life? When we mention the word brothers or brotherhood we immediately think of kindly feelings, that one would not cause any harm to another. We find, however, that there is a brutal struggle taking place between these two brothers over the wealth that labor produces. Labor lives on wages, capital lives on profits. I can do nothing better than quote Daniel De Leon’s apt illustration of this struggle:

You have seen that the wages you live on and profits the capitalist riots in are the two parts into which is divided the wealth that you produce. The workingman wants a larger and larger share, so does the capitalist. A thing cannot be divided into two shares so as to increase the share of each. If the workingman produces, say, 4 dollars’ worth of wealth a day, and the capitalist keeps 2, there are only 2 left for the workingman; if the capitalist keeps 3, there is only 1 left for the workingman; if the capitalist keeps  $3\frac{1}{2}$  there is only  $\frac{1}{2}$ , left for the workingman. Inversely, if the workingman pushes up his share from  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1, there are only 3 left to the capitalist; if the workingman secures 2, the capitalist will be reduced to 2; if the workingman pushes still onward and keeps 3, the capitalist will have to put up with 1; and if the workingman makes up his mind to enjoy all he produces, and keep all the 4, *the capitalist will have to go to work.*

Let us cast the spotlight on a few incidents in history on the struggle that took place between these two brothers over the division of the wealth and see how labor's best friend treated him.

In 1872 a strike of 100,000 men in the building and mechanical trades took place in New York City. The fight lasted several months, during which the workers got permission to parade the streets in New York. Then the permit was suddenly revoked, but it was too late to prevent the parade. Men, women and children poured into Tompkins Square, and a scene, which one of the local newspapers described as terrible, followed. People rushed through the streets followed by the mounted officers who charged upon the paraders without provocation. Screams of women and children rent the air, and the blood of many stained the streets.

From 1873 to 1880, wages were being cut all along the line, and labor could stand it no longer. Strikes spread throughout the country. The railroad workers on the Baltimore and Ohio railroad struck. In Baltimore the troops marched through the streets armed to the teeth; they fired among the strikers, strewing the streets with the dead and wounded of brother labor. In Cumberland, Maryland, the soldiers killed ten workmen and wounded twice that number. In Pittsburgh, twenty workmen were shot dead and more than fifty wounded.

In 1892, the Homestead strike took place. The Carnegie Steel Company wanted the workers to take a cut in wages. In that struggle ten men were killed and three times that number wounded.

In 1903, the miners were repeatedly striking against the encroachments of brother capital. During those strikes, miners were picked up in the streets, dragged from their homes, and locked up in hastily constructed bull-pens.

In 1914, the Ludlow massacre took place. In Colorado several thousand miners, motivated by ill treatment, were out on strike against brother Rockefeller. He engaged hundreds of "guards" or gunmen. Strikers were beaten-up and shot at. In order to protect themselves the strikers procured arms. They moved off the company's grounds and camped in tents. They dug trenches around the camps and made holes inside the tents, into which women and children might crawl in the event of attack. A battle started in which 500 miners opposed 200 soldiers. The soldiers were armed with machine guns and other superior weapons. The battle lasted 14 hours during which the machine guns riddled the tents, the camp caught fire, women and children died like trapped rats, 45 people were shot or burned to death, half of these were women and children, and over a hundred were wounded or

badly burned.

In August, 1919, the miners of the Allegheny Coal and Coke Company struck against a wage cut. One day a group of deputies suddenly rushed the pickets, opening fire on them. One striker was mortally wounded. [Fannie Sellins](#), an organizer of the United Mine Workers of America, who happened to be nearby, pleaded with the deputies who were still clubbing the unconscious picket to let up on him. One of the deputies hit her on the head with his club. She fell, tried to rise, dragging herself toward the gate, away from the officers. "Kill that goddamn whore!" shouted one of the deputies. Three shots were fired, each taking effect. "Give 'er more!" Then one of the deputies, standing over the motionless body, held his gun down and, without averting his face, fired into her once more. Mrs. Sellins was forty-nine years of age, a grandmother, and mother of a son killed in France while a soldier in the great crusade "to make the world safe for democracy." Many people witnessed this horrible murder. The guilty men were named openly in newspapers and from a hundred platforms. Yet no one was ever punished for the crime. A couple of deputies were arrested; but they were speedily released on smaller bonds than those usually set for strikers arrested for picketing. Eventually they were freed altogether.

These few incidents give you some idea of the bloody struggle that has taken place between these two brothers and go to prove that instead of capital being labor's best friend, he is nothing but a brutal and murderous foe. And don't think for a minute that the struggle has ceased. We had the spectacle manifested during the textile strike, September, 1934, of the killing of 15 workers, and the imprisonment of hundreds in concentration camps, under the New Deal at that. What a friend!

Daniel De Leon, in his famous address, on July 10, 1905, at Minneapolis, Minn., then entitled "The Preamble of the I.W.W.," later changed to [Socialist Reconstruction of Society](#), said:

It is an inevitable consequence of the falsehood regarding the hand-in-hand prosperity of capitalists and workingmen that their relations are mutual, and, consequently, that they stand upon a footing of equality. Of course, if the two are getting along swimmingly, they must be peers, even if it be conceded that their peerage may be of a different rank. Down from that parent falsehood, set afloat by the capitalist professors, politicians and pulpiteers, and zealously carried into the ranks of pure and simple unionism by the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class, a long line of descent of increasingly insidious and practically pestiferous falsehoods may

be traced. Thee ancestral falsehood of the hand-in-hand progress of capitalist and workingman begets the son-falsehood of the equality of workingman and capitalist; the son-falsehood begets the grandson-fraud of “contracts”; and you will see how the grandson-fraud litters a prolific progeny of its ilk to labor’s undoing.

What is a “contract”? I am not going to give you any Socialist definition of the term. The term has nothing to do with Socialism. It is a term which has grown up with the race’s experience. The definition I shall give is the law-book definition. It is the definition accepted and acted upon in all the Courts of Equity. A contract is an agreement entered into by two equal parties; a contract is an agreement entered into between peers; a contract is an agreement entered into by two freemen. Where the parties to a thing called a contract fall within these categories, they are said to be of contracting mind and power, and the document is valid; where that which is called a contract lacks any of these essential qualities, especially if it lacks them all, the thing is null, void and of no effect; it is a badge of fraud of which he is guilty who imposes the contract upon the other.

Daniel De Leon then illustrates how the workingman is compelled to sign contracts. In substance it is as follows: The capitalist class owns the tools of wealth production, the working class owns nothing but its labor power and, in order to live, the workers must sell their labor power to the capitalist class. The capitalist will only let the workingman work when he can make a profit. No profit, no work for the worker, and no work for the worker means no wages, no wages means starvation and hunger, and because of that fact:

The workingman does not stand upon a footing of equality with the capitalist; he is not of contracting mind and power with the employer. The latter holds over him the whip of hunger that the capitalist system places in the hands of the master, and with the aid of which he can cow his wage slave into acquiescence. Why, among themselves, and even in their public utterances, when anger throws them off their guard, the apologists for capitalism blurt out the fact that “only the lash of hunger” can keep the workingman in the treadmill. At the bar of men and of justice the “contracts” that labor signs are null, void and of no effect. And yet what do we see? The spectacle is of such daily occurrence that it has assumed the nature of a “system” of a deliberate maneuver, indulged in by employers jointly with their labor lieutenants to paralyze the labor movement; aye, worse yet, to give it the aspect of a rat-pit.

W.E. Trautmann, in his indictment of the A.F. of L., showed how, through that system of “contracts” the unions scabbed on each other and so helped to defeat each



other, giving the “labor movement” “the aspect of the rat-pit.”

Does that rat-pit aspect still obtain today? It surely does, but before I prove that it does, let me prove to you that the labor leaders know that agreements between the unions and employers are not valid, that they are null and void and not “sacred.” Then we can appreciate to the full the part the labor leaders play.

Matthew Woll, vice president of the A.F. of L., speaking at the Rand School, New York, of the danger to labor under the NRA, said:

“The act is not a labor Magna Carta. It is merely a pious declaration of the right of labor to organize and bargain collectively. Then it goes on to assure the right of every employer to determine his own course as he will, regardless of the wishes of the workers. It means that the employer can say, ‘All right, boys. Come in and we’ll talk it over’; hear the demands for higher wages and say: ‘Sorry, we can’t pay more.’ If the men object, he can answer: We’ve done our collective bargaining. The act—NRA—doesn’t say anything about reaching an agreement. [Matthew Woll adds.] *Furthermore, all agreements that unions ever made with the various industries stand subject to dissolution at any time.*” (Italics mine.)

I think that is convincing proof that the labor leaders know that agreements drawn up by capital and labor are not the “sacred” things they would have us workers believe. It also goes to prove what hypocrites the labor leaders are, when the workers are on strike.

Let us see how the employers abide by the “sacred” contracts. In the *Philadelphia Record* of July 28, 1934, Patrick L. Quinlan, an A.F. of L. and United Textile Workers of America organizer, wrote:

“In a Mt. Joy cotton mill workers were cut 10 hours a few weeks ago [May] following the agreement arrived at in Washington between President Thomas F. McMahon, of the Textile Workers’ Union, and the cotton manufacturers and the NRA authorities. At that time it was stipulated if there was to be a cut of 25 per cent of labor time *there should not be a 25 per cent cut in wages.*

“But today the cotton weavers in Mt. Joy as well as in Lancaster *are receiving 25 per cent less pay.*

“Do we complain to the NRA? We have dozens of times. Has it done any good? Not that we have noticed it.” (Italics mine.)

The *Philadelphia Record* of September 16, 1934, in an editorial admitted “the fact that the textile employers also broke the agreement.”



Let me give you two more incidents that occurred in Philadelphia.

The Taxicab Drivers of the P.R.T. (Philadelphia Rapid Transit Co.) had been on strike during the fall and winter of 1933–34. They were threatening to come out on strike again in July, 1934. They demanded that “the company hold the election it promised, to determine whether the men want to continue the ten-hour day or work a nine-hour day. Such a poll was included in the terms of agreement upon which the strike was settled (January, 1934), but the election has never been held.”

The Painters District Council, of Philadelphia, ordered their members to go on strike (July 6, 1934) because “the employers failed to advance wages to 90 cents an hour as provided in an agreement that settled a previous strike.”

From the foregoing it is plain that the employer will not hesitate to break a “sacred” contract when it is to his interest to do so, and nothing can be done about it.

Now, let me give you two examples of how the labor leaders harp upon the sacredness of contracts when the workers are on strike.

In Philadelphia, December 21, 1933, a so-called “general strike” took place, in which nine unions were involved. They were the Bakery Wagon Drivers, Laundry Wagon Drivers, Milk Wagon Drivers, Taxicab Drivers, Teamsters, Dry Cleaners Drivers, Brotherhood of Transportation Workers, Piano Movers and Railway Express Drivers and Employees, all affiliates of the A.F. of L., and the majority of them are branches of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Stablemen and Helpers of America. These nine unions decided to fight brother capital and they realized instinctively that if they did not “hang together they would hang separately.” Well, what did we see? The strike was two days old, when the officials of the unions met the employers and they signed an agreement granting the demands of two of the unions, the Bakery Wagon Drivers and the Railway Express Drivers. These two unions then withdrew from the strike, because they had signed contracts and they must abide by them and so they went to work, leaving the other unions to fight it out. But they did express their sympathy for their brother unions, and these as much as told them to go to hell, they didn’t want their sympathy. The action of the two unions “created a bitter feeling, a hostility among the strikers owing to the failure of the two unions to remain in the walk-out.” By December 25 the “general strike” was declared off because after a lengthy meeting of officers of all the unions involved, a statement was issued which said in part: “We are on record to observe contracts which we have with employers and which have not been

violated.” D.J. Tobin, president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, etc., sent a telegram to Thomas O’Brien, general organizer of the union, denouncing the strike:

“As general president representing the International Executive Board I am bitterly opposed to any violation of any contract with an employer, and whether contracts exist or not unions have no right to participate in general strikes in sympathy or otherwise unless they have the approval of the International Executive Board.”

From that action of the officials declaring the strike off, there developed the “aspect of the rat-pit.”

“The taxicab drivers . . . deplored the break in the solid front of the striking unions.

“The cleaners drivers dropped out . . . in keeping with the course of action indicated by Tobin.

“The teamsters for the most part were lost to the strike when the railway express drivers decided they were held by their contracts. All teamsters whose employers had contracts were permitted to return to work.”

The effects of the break-up of the strike resulted in violence. The milk wagon drivers had 2,000 members, 1,600 remained out, while the rest delivered milk under police protection. Taxicabs were burned and drivers beaten up. You never saw such a mess in all your life.

The taxicab drivers came to an agreement with the P.R.T., but as I have shown above, the P.R.T. did not keep its agreement and nothing was done about it.

In September, 1934, the great strike of the textile workers took place. After three weeks it was ended and proclaimed as one of the greatest victories labor ever won. Francis J. Gorman, chairman of the strike committee, said: “It is our unanimous view . . . that the union has won an overwhelming victory. One of the greatest in all labor history. The workers have felt the enthusiasm of a splendid battle. They have been welded together by the great struggle.”

A few weeks after that “overwhelming victory,” Francis J. Gorman crawled on his belly to President Roosevelt asking him to do something for the textile workers, for they were being discriminated against by the employers. They had closed their plants, refused to take strikers back to work, and the strikers were practically starving. In fact, the reason that the strike was ended was “because the strikers

began to go hungry, and there were 10,000 troops under arms in North and South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama.” Such was their “overwhelming victory.”

Let us see how the contract nature of the trade unions played its part, during the textile strike.

The strike was a week old when the workers of other unions were clamoring to come out on strike with the textile workers. The spirit of fighting together was manifesting itself among the rank and file. The textile workers’ fight was also their fight; they wanted to make it a general strike, but the union officials put their foot down on that.

On September 8, William Green, president of the A.F. of L., said: “One thing, however, is certain. Whatever plan is adopted, it will not be a general strike. Labor contracts now in force will not be violated.” He indicated, however, that financial aid from all A.F. of L. affiliates would be forthcoming.” It is considered most likely in labor quarters that the A.F. of L. unions will appeal to their members to assess themselves for a war chest for their textile comrades.”

On September 14, the rank and file were disgusted with the official attitude and “several thousand hosiery workers in Philadelphia went on strike to demonstrate their sympathy with the textile strike. They had held a meeting at which they declared, “We want to strike,” because they were handling cotton and silk yarns that came from the textile mills where strikes were in progress.

The union officials, however, pointed out that the hosiery federation had contracts with about 20 Mills where most of their members were employed, and that on this basis the workers could not walk out. They exhorted the workers to return to their jobs declaring, “We should maintain the sanctity of our contracts with the employers.” They were greeted with boos and jeers. A decision was reached to send a committee of ten, representing both hosiery and textile workers to confer with Francis J. Gorman, head of the general strike committee in Washington. (As usual, the generals of the unions are like the generals of the army, at the back of the front.)

Emil Rieve, head of the American Federation of Hosiery Workers, who was on the strike committee, was in Washington. He declared the Philadelphia mills would continue working under union contracts. The workers, he said, were carried away by the persuasion of the striking textile workers.

The committee of ten, which went to Washington for definite orders from the strike committee, were told that all workers in mills under union contracts must

stay at their looms. And the workers went back to work. A week later the strike collapsed and the more militant workers believed that because of Gorman's cleverness they had been sold out.

It was this same union, the American Federation of Full-Fashioned Hosiery Workers, whose (so-called) Socialist officials took the revolutionary step several years ago of accepting wage cuts from union employers to help them compete with non-union employers.

Here, again, was demonstrated how the workers are defeated by the trade union form of organization in their struggles against the employers. We have seen the spectacle of the workers at union meetings passing resolutions to assess themselves at so much per week to help the strikers to defeat the employers, then going to work the next day and, by handling goods from the mills on strike, helping the employers to defeat the strikers.

The A.F. of L. being an organization of skilled crafts, it never took into consideration the unskilled. By high initiation fees and dues, it developed into a job trust. Initiation fees range from \$5 to \$100, dues from fifty cents to four dollars a month, and it has been estimated: "Over a period of thirty years this American Federation of Labor and its affiliates of various unions have collected in fees and dues on an average of \$30,000,000 a year—\$900,000,000 in all." But did that protect the jobs of the skilled men? It did not. If it did then we would not see a decrease in the membership.

"The report [of President Hoover's Committee on Social Trends] also shows how at the same time the trade or craft unions themselves have been reduced to the point of impotency. With a membership in 1920 of 5,100,000 the American Federation of Labor in 1931 showed a total membership of only 3,300,000 [according to latest figures the membership now is 2,608,011] and this at a time when not only the total population has increased but the wage working population particularly so. The report makes it clear that this decline in membership is due, not only to 'technological changes and concentration of industrial management which have weakened the relative power of labor,' but also 'to the ineffectiveness of craft organization in dealing with the new situation . . .,' i.e., the fact of ultra-capitalist development. Again Marx is vindicated, and particularly do Daniel De Leon's Marxian contentions with respect to the ineffectiveness (to say nothing worse about it) of craft unions to cope with entrenched capitalism, here receive startling confirmation."

Let me give you a few examples of what caused the decrease in membership.

The National Window Glass Workers Union, organized in 1880, one of the most powerful unions in the country which adopted the slogan, "Never Surrender," enjoyed the highest wages and the best union conditions in this country. It opposed machinery, and would not admit the unskilled to membership, and endeavored to fit its craft form of organization to changing industry. Having 60,000 members in 1903, it disbanded in 1928, with less than 1,000 members. What was it that caused the decline of this powerful union? The introduction of labor-saving machinery in the entire glass-making industry. In the specific industry of glass bottle-blowing the Owen bottle-making machine has caused a complete revolution. This machine is entirely automatic, it gathers the glass and molds and blows the bottle at such an extraordinary speed that the glass-blower has been entirely displaced from this portion of the industry. With this machine one man can produce 240 quarter-ounce bottles per minute, and only slightly smaller quantities of the larger-sized bottles. Somewhere between thirty and forty thousand highly skilled men became technologically unemployed because of this invention.

The cigarmakers' union, one of the most influential unions 25 years ago, and a pioneer in founding the A.F. of L., had a membership, in 1919, of 51,500; its membership in 1930 was less than 20,000. What was it that caused the decline of this influential union? It was the introduction of labor-displacing machinery.

For instance, in 1917, there was patented and placed in operation the first successful machine for making a completely headed long-filled cigar in one continuous series of operations. The industry was entirely changed. The small factory, with its skilled cigarmakers catering to the local trade, was soon displaced by the mass production methods this machine made possible. A skilful cigarmaker can roll 400 cigars in a working day. Four girls operating one of the almost superhuman modern cigar-making machines can turn out 4,000 cigars a day. The four girls who operate each of these machines turn out eight finished cigars a minute. The hands of the girls attending the machines take no part in rolling, modeling or finishing the cigar. The Department of Labor estimated that during 1931 the nearly three billion cigars that were manufactured on this machine required the services of but 17,000 employes, whereas more than 38,000 would have been required had the same number of cigars been made by hand. Twenty-one thousand men were therefore forced out of employment by this development.

Again, take the powerful unions of the railroads, the Brotherhood of Railroad

Trainmen for one. Normally the brotherhood has a membership of 175,000 to 200,000. At present the membership has been reduced about 60,000. Why? Because of the introduction in recent years of larger and more powerful locomotives, larger cars of much greater capacity, as well as consolidation of former divisions, thereby lengthening the run or trips, also by the introduction of electric car retarders for switching purposes.

What of the powerful union of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers? They had an organization of 125,000. It has diminished in membership by 40,000. Why? Because of the increased length of trains, bigger engines, more efficient engines, bigger cars, heavier bridges, heavier track and more efficient operation.

There is no difference between what is called the corruption in the unions and what is noticed in shipwrecks when men become cannibals. I cannot think of any of the numerous corrupt labor leaders, whom we all know of, who did not start honest enough. But coupled to his honesty was IGNORANCE. He did not know the kind of weapon that Labor instinctively raises its arm to ward off when it shapes itself into unions. He failed, of course. He then imputed the failure to inevitableness. The capitalist helped him along. He lost all hope in the working class. He then decided to feather his own *nest*.—*Daniel De Leon*.

During 1933, under the NRA, the workers began clamoring for higher wages and union recognition. Strikes were taking place throughout the country. Under the NRA, strikes were not made illegal, but the apparatus of the NRA was mobilized to discourage, prevent and “settle” strikes. The discouragement of strikes and the driving of workers back to work was assisted by the reactionary labor leaders.

This was demonstrated during one of the coal strikes involving 75,000 workers. At one o’clock in the morning President Roosevelt telephoned to Philip Murray, vice president of the United Mine Workers of America. This was the conversation:

Roosevelt: “Philip, I want you to get these men back to work.”

Murray: “If there’s anything in God’s world I can do for you, I will be glad to try.”

In reporting the conversation to the strikers, Murray added:

“Any union or union officials who refuse to obey the President’s command will not live very long.”



At this writing, this same man, Philip Murray, vice president of the United Mine Workers of America—I suppose to compensate him for the dirty work that he did—has been appointed to the National Industrial Recovery Board, by President Roosevelt.

In 1934, the rank and file of the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers [A.A.] were threatening to strike for higher wages and recognition of their union, and it was taking the old reactionary officials all their time to hold them in check. They urged the workers to have patience but the rank and file were becoming more and more impatient, and threatened to remove the reactionary officials from office.

What was to be done to avert the strike? William Green, president of the A.F. of L., called Michael J. Tighe, president of the A.A. to Washington, and very probably with the full approval of the A.F. of L. panjandrums, the National Labor Board and the White House, a plan was cooked to squelch the strike. Michael J. Tighe returned to Pittsburgh and announced he would reconvene the delegates of the last annual convention, and let them decide what the organization would do in the matter of the threatened strike.

During the convention the aggressive delegates presented plans for the strike, but through parliamentary trickery the old officials kept stalling off the discussion. After a lot of squabbling over “time-wasting resolutions” the convention adjourned “. . . to give William Green time to see President Roosevelt . . . and to come to Pittsburgh.”

Green arrived at Pittsburgh and stepped before the boys as a “fellow worker,” a “miner,” and begged them to be calm and not allow their judgment to give way to their feelings. He proposed a peace plan which he was sure President Roosevelt would accept and support. As a matter of fact, the plan Mr. Green brought with him to Pittsburgh was not his plan but the President’s and General Johnson’s, which, as Mr. Green spoke, was on the way to Congress to be (and was) made a law. The convention promptly accepted Mr. Green’s proposition and “postponed” the strike. And then the farce was carried still further for there was a very important question: “Who will present President Green’s plan to President Roosevelt?” There was a little squabbling over that. Then some one rose and said: “Boys, let’s show we have confidence in our executive officers. . . . Let’s authorize them to take our proposition to Washington.”

What hypocrites and betrayers of labor! To think that men would stoop to such



dirty work, and in the case of one of them actually dare stand up in the pulpit and preach. It's a wonder the church doesn't fall in on him and bury him.

Most leaders of the A.F. of L. "are prosperous looking, Babbitt-like, middle-aged or elderly men, well-dressed, carefully barbered, fat-cheeked, double- and triple-chinned, vast-bellied, with gold watch-chains across their paunches and stickpins in their ties. They drive good cars or travel in taxis between their hotels, which are the best in town, and the convention hall. Their hands are soft and pudgy, eager for the shake. . . . They all know one another, these panjandrums of American labor. They are, for the most part, presidents and vice-presidents and chief organizers of the various national and international unions with salaries ranging from \$7,500 to \$20,000 a year 'and expenses.' Prosperity or depression, their salaries never stop. Under their brilliant leadership some of the unions have so amended their constitutions that now the presidents—"Tsars"—can raise their own salaries almost at will. But these salaries 'and expenses' are only a part of the income. When they get together in their hotel rooms during conventions they talk of stocks and bear and bull markets and short-selling, and compare notes on Buicks and Chryslers and on private schools for boys and girls. . . . They are solid citizens, go-getters, full of upper-middle-class respectable pretensions and ambitions. They belong to Elks, Moose, and Odd Fellows. They play golf, belong to country clubs. They have no interest in Tom Mooney and Warren Billings. What impresses them are such facts as that 'Bill' Green's boy Harry is a junior at Princeton, where one of the Rockefeller boys is a student, too, and, according to report, on good terms with him. . . . In the convention hall they all look as impressive as they can and listen to speeches . . . against strikes. . . . On real issues they flounder and spend too much time on mouthy protests. At the 1930 national convention in Boston, it was discouraging to see so many dumbbells on the platform trying to look wise."

At the 1934 national convention, in San Francisco, Henry Vandeleur, president of the San Francisco Central Labor Council, introduced Brother Casey, to say something. So the honest old brother opened in this way:

"Mr. Chairman, friends, and delegates. This is the first time that I have ever been put up against killing time. The chairman' asked me to step up here and say anything that I felt like, just so long as I killed time."

While these hypocrites, betrayers, ignorant dumbbells, live in the best hotels, draw salaries anywhere from \$150 to \$400 a week, the rank and file of the unions

draw wages anywhere from \$10 to \$20 a week, and some of them at least live in dumps. And during strikes, the rank and file do the picketing, stand up to a lead diet, tear gas and clubs, and the leaders—behind the backs of the rank and file—betray them. The scoundrels!

The “political” concept dominates the economic aspirations of a Union; hence no Union is worth the name whose economic aspirations are not dominated by Socialist thought. . . . The word “political” in the maxim, as correctly quoted, means the conception that a Union may have regarding the social structure. A Union whose conception of society is capitalistic will find its economic aspirations dominated accordingly. Ignorant of the wage slave nature of its membership, it will seek to deal with employers as peers. . . . Indisputable is the fact that most of the economic efforts on the part of workingmen today—despite their material conditions, which no longer furnish a basis for “conservatism”—are conservative. The circumstance is only additional argument why such efforts are fatedly ineffective. On the other hand, a Union whose conception of society enlightens it on the wage slave status of its membership, together with the rest that thereby hangs, such a Union will not circumscribe itself to conservative aspirations.—*Daniel De Leon.*

Is the A. F. of L. still conservative, and the common ownership of the means of production and distribution alien to it? It is.

First, let us see what the capitalists think about it. About thirty-five years ago the *Wall Street Journal*, an organ of the top-capitalists, designated the A.F. of L. “a bulwark against Socialism.”

During the textile strike of September, 1934, the *Philadelphia Record*, a capitalist organ, in an editorial said: “The A.F. of L. is this nation’s most conservative labor organization. To injure with attacks like [General] Johnson’s is to invite one of two alternatives, either we destroy the A.F. of L. and drive workers into radicals for protection, or we destroy the A.F. of L. and create a Fascist state with the workers at the mercy of their employers.”

Senator Burton K. Wheeler, of Montana, on November 27, 1934, before Justice Humphrey, in the Brooklyn Superior Court, in warning the Merchants Association who wanted an injunction against a union, said:

“When great corporative bodies attempt to break the conservative labor organizations [he meant the A.F. of L.] they are sowing the seeds of their own destruction.”

So much from the capitalist point of view.

What of the labor leaders, what have they to say of their organization?

At the convention of the A.F. of L. in Chicago, Ill., 1925, 20 years after the first convention of the I.W.W., Roscoe H. Johnson, president of the Commercial Telegraphers Union of America, in his report, said:

“The goal of the S.L.P. is the ‘Workers’ Industrial Republic,’ perhaps better understood as the ‘Socialist Cooperative Commonwealth,’ and the road to that objective remains securely blocked so long as the American Federation of Labor and its affiliates are maintained and intact.”

William Green, president of the A.F. of L., in November of that same year, in an interview said: “I know of no group in America . . . that can so successfully meet Communism as the American Federation of Labor. We meet it in the first line trenches. We meet it face to face. If we should be compelled to yield, what would become of America?”

“American labor has neither place nor use for Communism. It is defending capital against Communism better than capital is defending itself.”

At the convention in San Francisco, 1934, Green said: “So long as organized [he should have said disorganized] labor remains sound, Communism will not gain a foothold in America.”

During the elections in November, 1934, the Pennsylvania State Federation of Labor endorsed the candidates on the Democratic ticket both for national offices and in the State of Pennsylvania, and William Green sent a telegram to John A. Philips, president of the P.S.F. of L., saying: “Please rely upon the support of the A.F. of L. in the election of candidates for office in Pennsylvania endorsed and approved by the P.S.F. of L.”

We have a Democratic Administration which is making an honest and sincere effort to bolster up capitalism and here we have a labor organization that supports and endorses Democratic candidates. Let me add right here, all those organizations, the S.P. and C.P. in particular, that pander to and support the A.F. of L. are, in turn, supporting capitalism, and inasmuch as they do that then they are against the interests of the working class.

To sum up, then, I have proved that the A.F. of L. is now, in 1935, as it was before 1905, an organization which preaches the idea that there is an identity of interest between capital and labor and, by its system of contracts, the working class

is being crucified in its struggles against the employers. The A.F. of L. is debauched; it has produced a crop of Judas Iscariots who betray and sell out the working class; it is declining in membership, it cannot protect even the skilled men, it is conservative and “the common ownership of the means of production and distribution is alien” to it. It does not recognize that there is no identity of interest between capital and labor, that there is a class struggle between them, and that labor produces all the wealth and capital has no right to any of it, that capitalism is not a permanent form of society, but one link in a chain of social evolution, and that it is now in the dying stage with the death-rattle in its throat. Therefore, the A.F. of L. is unfit to become “the most valuable agent of social progress.” Because of these facts, if society is to continue in the future as it has done in the past, then we, the working class, skilled and unskilled, employed and unemployed, no matter what race, creed or color, must organize on the industrial field as a class, for the purpose of taking and holding industry, and on the political field under the banner of the S.L.P., with its slogan, “*Capitalism must be destroyed.*” Insofar as we so organize OUR organization will be “THE MOST VALUABLE AGENT OF SOCIAL PROGRESS.”

THE END