

Daniel De Leon

Editorial: Pull for the Shore, Comrades, Pull!

Several weeks ago we gave an account of, and commented upon, a letter from Los Angeles, Cal., to the N.Y. Central Labor Federation, looking to the establishment in that city also of a Central Labor Federation, i.e., of a local central organization of workingmen planted upon the sound bases of economic and independent political action. In the report from the N.Y. Central Labor Federation, printed elsewhere, another letter is now mentioned from which it appears that Mr. Samuel Gompers has been endeavoring to dissuade the Los Angeles workmen from their contemplated move. This information provoked not a little mirth, and, as was to be expected from the earnest character of that body, spurred the Central Labor Federation to increased activity in the great work to which it is consecrated.

The Central Labor Federation stands in this country the conspicuous upholder of the principle of New Trade Unionism. As such, it teaches the working class that it is the sole producer of all wealth, that the capitalist is an idler not entitled to any share whatever of the products, that this idler filches the wealth of the producer and lives upon stolen goods, that between the two there is an unbridgeable antagonism, that the workers should unite in organizations of their trades to enable them more effectively to resist the encroachments of the boss class, and it points the path and the methods to emancipation. Having learned from bitter experience that the old organizations of labor moved like squirrels in a wheel, never

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progressing; that they lack that without which solidarity and compactness are impossible, i.e., the understanding of the necessity of independent political action by the working class, looking to the conquest of the powers of the State; and that consequently they were periodically rent asunder by boodle politics; it threw off that certain apple of discord, the cant phrase “No politics in unions,” it pledged its membership to strike at the ballot box for the party of Labor as it does at the shops, and it condensed its principles in the motto: “Unity of Political and Economic Action.” With this enlightened programme it took the field, and manfully inaugurated an aggressive campaign from which neither the blandishments of Utopians nor the frowns of corruptionists have been able to turn it.

Opposed to it stands the Old Trade Union, of which Mr. Gompers is an apostle. Its tenets are just the reverse of those of the New Unionism. Mr. Gompers, for instance, holds that, under the present system, the capitalist is entitled to profits, his comrade Treasurer Lennon prints it in his *Tailor* that it is sophistry to claim the existence of any antagonism between the capitalist and the working class; and both of them insist upon injecting into the unions the principle of discord by frantically insisting that “politics must be excluded,” i.e., leaving the doors wide open for boodle, corruption and disrupting politics.

True to its high mission, the Central Labor Federation of New York carries on its propaganda and spreads the light among the organized proletariat of the land, encouraged in its work by the ever recurring proofs of the truth that the form of old trade unionism is not only wholly unable to emancipate the working classes but that its continuance serves only to rivet ignorance upon and to divide the proletariat into hostile camps.

The very presence and existence of such a body as the Central Labor Federation is, as a matter of course, a rebuke to the consciences and a source of apprehension to the devotees of the old system, and to those who trade upon it; the Central Labor Federation’s active and successful work can not but

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throw that gentry into paroxysms of rage. But the more of that the merrier; the greater the perturbation and the louder the screechings of that mixed crew of owls and carrion crows, the more active their intrigues, all the more certain is the evidence of their approaching downfall. The news from Los Angeles is an evidence in point; it is a symptom well calculated to infuse, at it has done, fresh courage and vigor into the Spartan band of New York New Trade Unionists.

Pull for the shore, comrades, pull for the shore!

Heed not the rolling waves, but bend to the oar,
Safe in the life-boat, comrades, fear the past no more!

Leave the poor old stranded wreck, and pull for the
shore.

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*A De Leon editorial transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the
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