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EDITORIAL

## A RINGING SLAP TO GOMPERS'S FACE.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**F**OR some time past, Samuel Gompers—whose Union card is issued by the International Cigar Makers' Union of which he is vice-president—has been giving out statements about high-handed proceedings against the members of his cigarmakers' Union in Tampa, Fla. The statements increased in numbers and vehemence—Florida authorities, it was stated, had joined hands with the Tampa cigar manufacturers and "Citizens Committee" in outraging, browbeating, imprisoning and even deporting Gompers's cigarmakers Union-men. Finally, at the late A.F. of L. convention in St. Louis, Gompers summed up all these statements, and they were re-issued as a protest of Labor against the misdeeds of Florida manufacturers and officials during the last eight years.

Gov. Gilchrist's answer to the charges divides them into two categories—

One category comprises charges that allege wrongful acts committed more recently, that is, since eight years ago;

The second category comprises charges that allege wrongful acts committed eight years ago.

As to the charges under the first category, Gov. Gilchrist declares them true in part:—it is true that one Johnston and two others of Gompers's Union left the town, but they did so, he alleges, "of their own free will, being convinced that it was better for them so to do"; it is true that members of Gompers's Union were and are now in jail, but these men, he alleges, "were arrested, tried and convicted, and were now in jail pending sentence for various violations of the criminal code."

So far the presumptions remain in favor of the Gompers charges. Everyone knows the lengths to which manufacturers and their "Citizens' Committees," backed by their political officials, will go to crush a strike. The mere statement from such sources that a Union-man left the seat of a strike "of his own free will" is far from

conclusive: the “free will” may have had, and usually has a policeman’s club, if not more persuasive weapons, for its stimulant. The mere statement that Union-men who were on strike and are now in jail are there awaiting sentence after being duly tried and convicted of crime is far, very far from conclusive: how these “trials” and “convictions” are often conducted and brought about constitute one of the black pages in the iniquities peculiar to capitalist rule.—So far, accordingly, Gompers is on top.

But not for long. So soon as Gov. Gilchrist takes up the charges under the second category, the Civic Federation Vice-President lands at the bottom in a plight that is pitiable.

Taking up the charges under the second category, and referring to the complaint of Gompers that in the strike of eight years ago a number of cigarmakers had been deported for which act no one had been brought to Court, the Governor does not deny the allegations, and he proceeds to remind Gompers that “at that time the contention was between rival Unions, the International [Gompers’s Union] and La Resistencia,” and that “members of La Resistencia were deported, BUT IN DEPORTING THESE MEN THE DEPORTERS HAD FAVORED THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF WHICH GOMPERS WAS AND IS NOW THE FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT.”—And down comes Gompers, rolled in the dirt with a stinging, ringing slap administered to his brazen cheek.

Gov. Gilchrist’s statement is true to the letter.

In 1902—under cover of the outcry “Anarchy in Tampa!” raised by the capitalist press throughout the land—the then “Citizens’ Committee” of Tampa, aided by the henchmen furnished it, from the North especially, by the Gompers Labor-lieutenants of the cigar manufacturers, and, of course, supported by the then Governors Gilchrist in office, fell like a pile of bricks upon the newly organized Union known as La Resistencia.

La Resistencia, originally organized by Cuban workers in Tampa, received from its founders a Spanish name, which means The Resistance. They being cigarmakers, their Union was originally a cigarmakers’ organization. But originally only. The original La Resistencia was guided either by a clearer class instinct, or by a clearer light than usually guides the formation of a craft Union. It perceived the

futility, if not the harmfulness, of the autonomous craft formation in the worker's efforts to improve his condition. La Resistencia proceeded to organize all the crafts engaged in the cigar industry within its own body. The increased effectiveness that that imparted to it also imparted to it a fuller vision. It perceived the intimate interdependence of the several industries. The consequence was the organization of one Tampa industry after another—bakers, restaurant workers, etc., etc.,—all, however, subdivided according to the output, and re-subdivided according to the tools used in each branch of the several industries—yet ALL within ONE Union, with ONE central directing authority, and capable of moving and actually moving as ONE man. La Resistencia was a further development of the Socialist Trade & Labor Alliance, set up in 1895, here in New York. In short, La Resistencia was the first plain enunciation and illustration of Industrial Unionism in the land.

No sooner did the new body start to functionate when its ominousness to Capitalism was realized by Tampa capitalists. The decision was immediate to stamp it out. A "Citizens' Committee" was organized. The capitalist press began to thunder its denunciation in articles obviously furnished by a central source. La Resistencia having been originally a cigarmakers' organization, the fire of its foes was directed against that branch at first. And, birds of a feather flocking together, the Gompers henchmen flocked into Tampa as allies of the "Citizens' Committee." In New York, the Gompers Labor-lieutenants of the cigar manufacturers had fought the S.T. & L.A. cigarmakers by declaring strikes against these men whom they had refused to organize, as at Seidenberg's; or by declaring strikes against them for organizing open shops, as at Davis's; and these Gompers Labor-lieutenants of capitalism, themselves egregious scab-herders, added insult to injury by screaming, "Scab!" at the S.T. & L.A. In Tampa the Gompers crew of Labor-looters fought with more serious weapons. As fast as they arrived—equipped, of course, as Boot and Shoe Worker Tobin's scabs trooping into Brooklyn are now, with "Union cards"—they were made constables, were furnished with arms and were let loose upon La Resistencia. The immediate consequence was intimidation outrage, murder, deportation and shanghaiing; the ultimate consequence was the destruction of La Resistencia—and the establishment of Gompers's International Cigarmakers' Union enjoying fraternal relations with the cigar manufacturers. Gov.

Gilchrist is right not to deny the allegation that none of the deporters was brought to court. They were not. True, also, as the Governor expressly states it, the deporters had favored Gompers's International Union.

These facts are known to readers of the *Daily People*—the only paper that published and protested against them. To have Gompers now reminded of them by Gov. Gilchrist, by one, at that, who was virtually a *particeps criminis* with Gompers, and to have the Governor do so now, in answer to Gompers's charges of highhanded outrages against his Union, adds to the slap administered to Gompers's face a sting that is fruitful of good to the Labor Movement:—

As the Capitalist Class prepares the economic conditions for the Emancipation of the Workingmen; as itself recruits the soldiers that are to dethrone it; so, do we now see it, through its politicians, materially assisting in bringing home to these soldiers the army-formation that they must organize themselves into by enlightening them regarding the Gomperses who would keep them in a state of virtual disorganization, impotence and janissariship to their masters.

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