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EDITORIAL

## POOR GOMPERS!

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**I**N the *American Federationist* for this month Mr. Samuel Gompers makes, in one article, four times mention of the Marxian law of “Surplus Value,” all four times disparagingly, calling the theory one time “a notion”; another time speaking of it as a machinery thrown out of “working order”; and generally pronouncing it an error.

Nor does the article justify the suspicion that its writer simply slings around words, the sense of which he has no inkling of, when he uses the term “Surplus Value.” Of course, as usually happens with these anti-Marxians, the writer of the article never read Marx, knows him only at second-hand, and proves the fact by quoting, instead of Marx himself, Kirkup’s rendition of the Marxian law. The rendition, however, as quoted, though far from complete, gives pretty correctly a general idea of the trend of the law: “after the laborer has been paid the wage necessary for the subsistence of himself and family the surplus of his labor is appropriated by the capitalist who exploits it.” Kirkup puts it that way, and Gompers says: “Fudge!

The Marxian law of Surplus Value flows from the commodity, or merchandise, status of labor-power in the capitalist world. As the merchandise cattle-on-the-hoof has two values—the special “use-value” of being a meat food, etc., and the “exchange-value” of being the depository of the socially necessary labor-power to produce it, whereby the amount is determinable of other use-values for which it is exchangeable—so the merchandise labor-power. It has its “exchange-value,” and it has its special “use-value.” The use-value of the merchandise labor-power is the quality of producing a larger quantity of wealth, or values, than its own exchange-value amounts to. The excess of the values produced, over and above the exchange-value of the labor-power which produced the excess, is Surplus Value. Under

capitalism, this surplus is appropriated by the capitalist who bought the merchandise labor-power, upon the identical principle that every purchaser appropriates the quality, or “use-value,” of whatever article he buys. Accordingly, the Marxian law of Surplus Value comes down to this:—The emancipation of the working class requires the abolition of the social system under which Labor is a merchandise, and requires the establishment of a social system under which, having pulled itself out of the company and category of merchandise, Labor will be able itself to enjoy the surplus yield of its mental and physical efforts.

This is the theory that Gompers says is false. If the theory is false, then, when the workers (in the favorite language of Gompers himself) demand “more, and more, and more” of the fruits of their toil, they are burglarious thieves; and Gompers himself is an abettor of burglarious theft.

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Did we say Gompers says the theory is false? The statement is not quite accurate. Gompers, though the article bears his name, never wrote it. Editor Gompers has become a hen under which all sorts of eggs are shoved, by lay and clerical birds, who clap his name to the same. A crow shoved this particular egg under sitting-hen Gompers—and when that egg is hatched Gompers will have to eat crow.

Which is why we say—Poor Gompers!

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