

# DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 12, NO. 346.

NEW YORK, MONDAY, JUNE 10, 1912.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

## GOMPERS'S GUM-SHOES PICKED UP.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HERE once flourished—for all we know he may have since been gathered to the bosom of Abraham—a gentleman named George Gunton. He was in the pay of the Standard Oil and the Vanderbilts. As their protégé he had a lecture room in which he dispensed the sort of economics and sociology that stands the unguarded upon their head in the Labor Movement. Of course he was a leading spokesman for Samuel Gompers. We called him “Professor Green Goods.”

One of the favorite gum-shoes that Prof. Green Goods manufactured for himself and Gompers whereby to come it over the workers was “the Eight Hour Day.”

Who would not favor a day of eight hours in preference to twelve, or more? Were not some of the earliest battles of the Labor Movement fought on that issue? Looked at from that side, the Eight Hour Day is positively fascinating. Nevertheless, there are other things to be considered in the advocacy of the Eight Hour Day. If left unconsidered, the Eight Hour Day may become a snare and a delusion. It may become worse. It may become sand in the eyes of the proletariat. The identical sand is now again attempted to be thrown into the eyes, of the workers by the officers of the Anarchist I.W.W.

A folder, issued by that body and advocating the Eight Hour Day contains this gem:

“The only solution of the unemployed problem is a reduction of hours of the present nine to twelve-hour workday to not more than eight hours. This would mean that more workers would be needed to turn out the same amount of product in the same period of time, thus reducing the army of the unemployed.”

The worker who swallows that bait is hooked.

The reduction of the hours of work does not necessarily mean work found for

unemployed in proportion to the reduced hours. The reduction of the hours of work, in America, at the present stage of capitalist development, means:—

1. The forcing of the employer to introduce improved machinery, for which even in the most up-to-date plants there is always room;

2. The introduction of improved machinery enables the employer to “turn out the same amount of product,” and often even a larger amount with the same number of hands, and *often with fewer*. This was experienced notably in the textile industry of Massachusetts.

3. The introduction of improved machinery intensifies labor. In eight hours with improved machinery more life-tissue is often consumed than with longer hours and machinery not quite so up-to-date. In the typesetting industry, the Journal of the I.T.U.<sup>1</sup> has admitted that the mortality among the operatives has become “appalling.” And it stands to reason.

Accordingly, the blunt statement, to the effect that lower hours means the employment of more workers, is founded upon false economics and a false conception of capitalism, and the notions that the false economics and false conception of capitalism engender will go far towards crippling the workers' mentality for his emancipation, to say nothing of the laming effect of disappointed expectations.

A half truth is the worst of lies. Such an economic and sociologic lie is the half truth concerning the power of the Eight Hour Day as a “solution of the unemployed problem.” The Eight Hour Day is a factor in the solution of the unemployed problem only when the virtues of the Eight Hour Day are not exaggerated, and they are soberly stated, and go hand in hand with the class-conscious organization of the workers looking to their unification upon the political as well as the industrial field.

The cast-off gum-shoes of Gompers are fittingly picked up and are now pranced in by the officers of the I'm-a-bummery.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official website of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
Uploaded July 2013

[slpns@slp.org](mailto:slpns@slp.org)

---

<sup>1</sup> [Typographical Journal.—R.B.]