

# DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 8, NO. 183.

NEW YORK, MONDAY, DECEMBER 30, 1907.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

## THE A.F. OF L. AND GOLDFIELD.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**A**N esteemed contemporary, one of the organs of the Socialist Party, has been in agonies during the past three weeks over what the A.F. of L. would do in Goldfield. As might be expected, the aforesaid esteemed contemporary very carefully kept out of sight what the A.F. of L. is and also what it has done in Goldfield, not to speak of other places, in times gone by.

Had it considered what the A.F. of L. is, the chances are that its readers would have had an idea as to what it would do when confronted with such a contingency as that lately presented in Goldfield. But the notion was carefully inculcated that, contrary to the law which declares that a stream cannot rise higher than its source, the A.F. of L. could, if it would, do something toward backing up the striking miners of Nevada in this fight.

What the A.F. of L. has done is not an open question: it is a matter of fact. When the I.W.W., being first on the ground in Goldfield, brought the camp into the organization, magnificently strong in spirit and substance, the A.F. of L. was brought into the field to do the work in which the mine owners had conspicuously failed—the disruption and defeat of the I.W.W. and its basic principle, Industrial Unionism.

The tale of that day is a sorry one, sorry yet glorious. Sorry in that men who called themselves friends of labor and sponsors of a “labor organization” were seen doing the dirty work of the capitalist class, even to the persecution to the death of men whose only crime was that they stood by the class to which they belonged; sorry, that the object of the A.F. of L., led by M. Grant Hamilton, was the overthrow of an organization which stood openly and unafraid for the emancipation of the working class; glorious, in that the organization vested with the work of emancipation of the working class was not overthrown; that then, as to-day, it kept the flag flying; glorious, that men were found willing to sacrifice all that seemingly

makes life worth living in support of their convictions.

What the A.F. of L. did in that day it has done and is doing to-day, and this not because, as our esteemed S.P. contemporary infers, Samuel Gompers is at its head, but by reason of the fact that it is the A.F. of L., the leading exponent of craft unionism in America, the “greatest bulwark against the rising tide of the revolution.” Notwithstanding all the tears and all the agonies of the S.P. press, beseeching it to do the “right thing” and “demonstrate the solidarity of the working class,” the A.F. of L. in Nevada, in entering into a compact with the mine owners looking to the elimination of the “radical element”—the revolutionary element, let us remind our friends of the S.P.—has done the work destined for it from the beginning of things. To expect it to do otherwise than serve the capitalist class and knife the revolution is to expect the impossible.

It is said that in every tragedy there is a touch of farce; that even a funeral may provoke a smile. The smile, however, has bitterness of spirit back of it. The farce in the tragedy now enacting in Goldfield is the silence of the S.P. press on the entire affair, or its effort, as in the case noted, to lay the blame on the fat shoulders of Samuel Gompers. Craft unionism, so runs the inference, is not {to} blame. Given another and better set of leaders, the A.F. of L. would be all right.

All of which is a lie; a lie told with intent to deceive those hesitating between the A.F. of L. and the I.W.W. “You can no more put the soul of a man into the body of a dog than you can put the spirit of Industrial Unionism into the body of craft unionism.” Thus spoke a lecturer on Industrial Unionism some nights ago, and if ever there was a truth which needed to be taken home by those in whose minds the great question is being agitated, this is it.

The A.F. of L. has done nothing more than live up to its principles in this, its latest crime against the working class. Not Samuel Gompers, but craft unionism, is the guilty party, and elimination of the man, leaving as it is the movement of which he is but one of the figures, is a child’s solution of the most pressing question of the age.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
Uploaded November 2009

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