

REPORT

GLEANINGS 'LONG THE ROAD. {10}

By DANIEL DE LEON

EN ROUTE FROM NEW ORLEANS, LA., TO EVANSVILLE, IND., MAY 13, 1907.—The last week I have spent in the “Sunny South”—the land where Artemus Ward was “confiscated,” where he was ridden on rails, where, as he puts it, his experience was “thrilling enough for yellow covers.” My experience was decidedly of pleasanter cast. In Paducah, Ky., then in New Orleans I was thrown in contact with men who will “be heard from” in the days that are at hand, altho’ the Paducah contingent and the New Orleans contingent are of characteristics markedly distinct.

The Paducah men have been S.L.P. all along. During these last strenuous, critical seven years these men did for Paducah what skilled physicians do for a patient near one of whose vitals a tumor seeks to gather head. The skillful physician will in such cases cause the tumor to scatter. So did the Paducah men with all attempts of the A.F. of L.-ized S.P. to gather into an organization in the town. The descriptions the Paducah men give of the figures cut by the Gaylords and other such performers every time that, after some windy oration, a simple question was put to them before a Paducah audience, remind one of the descriptions one reads of collapsed balloons when they lie shattered on the ground. These questions always concerned unionism. The performers regularly went to pieces, utterly discredited before the crowd, and Paducah was saved the affliction of Gompersism, or, at present, Shermanism, disguised in Socialist political tinsel. In doing this and in carrying on the S.L.P. propaganda, the Paducah men were greatly aided by the happenings in and about their town. For instance—

The capitalist pretense that the employer is an abject devotee of the deity Supply and Demand, and that, in consequence, much as he would like to pay higher wages he simply cannot, seeing the supply of labor so far exceeds the demand, receives every day hard knocks—and conspicuously so. The supply of what is called

“river niggers” falls far below the demand. The “river nigger,” so-called, is a freight handler and river boatman. His wages are so low and the treatment bestowed upon him so inhuman that he “has made himself scarce.” Obviously devotion to the capitalist deity Supply and Demand points to the remedy—higher wages. But no. The deity, in this, as in all other instances in the capitalist pantheon, is a scrub-deity. It is there only to “catch flies.” When the supply exceeds the demand, then the deity is venerated and the veneration is demanded as a sacred, patriotic, sanctity-of-the-family-upholding duty. When the demand exceeds the supply then the deity is soundly cuffed by her heathen quondam worshiper, and he proceeds to “rectify” things with the aid of the policeman’s club and revolver. The police along the river are essentially “shanghaiers.” They furnish the employer with the “river niggers” he needs. Upon the slightest pretext colored men are arrested as vagrants—and there you have your “river nigger” ready made for the employer at the starvation wages of an imaginary immense supply and an equally imaginary trifling demand. The acts of desperate violence with which the “river nigger” is driven to retort are numerous and tragic.

On the other hand, that caricature of the capitalist, the craft unionist, is equally engaged in furnishing the Paducah S.L.P. with evidence. For instance: A certain contractor who does painting keeps an “open shop.” His painters are all non-union and are called “scabs.” When, however, he has “graining” to do he is compelled to employ “union men,” no non-union men being in the market of that particular craft. In such cases my contractor first gets his painting done by his “scab” labor; then he transfers these to some other job; then he hires “union” grainers; and then, with chests inflated with the wind of craft unionism, the “union” grainers walk in, and, uncontaminated by the presence or proximity of “scabs,” these union men (!) proceed to grain the work of the “scabs.” As grotesque a caricature of Socialist politics as is the S.P., is the economic reflector of the S.P., craft unionism, a grotesque caricature of bona fide unionism.

As to the New Orleans situation, it typifies the fact of how poor an architect slander and underground agitation are. Nine-tenths of the agitation conducted by the pure and simple political “intellectuals” and their doubles, the A.F. of L. politicians who run the Socialist party was, and still continues to be, just slander of the Socialist Labor Party. These architects sought to and imagined they could raise a Chinese wall around the S.L.P. They sought to convey the idea that the S.L.P. was

a sort of leprosy. The purpose was to keep their rank and file in the ignorance that similar capitalist methods seek to keep the working class at large in, concerning Socialism. The Chinese wall was to exclude acquaintance with the S.L.P. But slander, whispers, surreptitious correspondence that carefully omitted specification are poor architects. The star of civilization works against them. Do what the architects might, that Chinese wall could not be raised so high but that it could be looked over. The bona fide Socialists—not Socialists for revenue only—in the S.P. camp peeped over the wall; the S.L.P. likewise did some peeping. Kind recognized kind on the wall's either side. The peeps grew into similes of fraternity. Presently the wall was leaped over, until to-day, like the Chinese wall of old, the modern S.P. imitation article stands like a monumental mockery. Fraternal relations are being established among the SOCIALISTS of the land. As I said, New Orleans typifies this fact. An S.L.P. section with 30 and odd charter members, and now nearly 40 strong, has been organized mainly out of the SOCIALIST element of the S.P. that leaped the silly wall and got tired of the duplicity of revolution preached by S.P. officialdom.

Here, again, that “bulwark of capitalism,” as the *Wall Street Journal* so aptly and so injudiciously called the A.F. of L., helped the work of clarification. Only shortly ago, Pat Welch, the president (these gentry are all “presidents”) of the Central Trades and Labor Council published a letter over his signature against a proposed Moyer and Haywood demonstration! Shortly before that, that same Central Trades and Labor Council “indignantly” opposed the raising of the saloon licenses—the saloon and liquor capitalists issued the order and the “organized” A.F. of L. labor of New Orleans fought the battle. And now, even now, the scabbery that is inherent in craft unionism is exhibiting itself in the Alcus box factory—the box makers are on strike, and the A.F. of L. engineer remains at work thus scabbing upon his fellow workers. A significant incident occurred indicative of the temper that such a continuous performance of scabbery is awakening. Covington Hall, a recent S.P. man now in the S.L.P., tells the story that a bundle of admission cards for my New Orleans meetings and un-deseccated by the I.T.U. label, which fitly ornamented the printed injunction issued by the Chicago Typothetae against the I.T.U. men on strike, was returned to him with the legend plastered on the back of each card: “Returned because of absence of union label.” The cards were returned by one of the labor sub-lieutenants of Belmont’s Civic Federation. Covington Hall

proceeded to state that with no other bunch of cards did he have such success. They sold like hot cakes among the rank and file of the workingmen. It was with difficulty I secured two of them for my collection of curios. No wonder “something dropped” in New Orleans and a stalwart S.L.P. section has been born.

Columbus, Ohio, May 16.—The above could not be finished on the train from New Orleans. It was finished in this city. I can not forego the temptation of rounding up this “Gleaning”—the last I shall send from the road—with the following skit from the *Labor World*, a red-hot anti-A.F. of L. workingman’s paper, born in Columbus of the endeavor of the A.F. of L. to follow its capitalist masters’ behest to dislocate the working class.

“PIERCE, FLOOD, WYATT, FARLEY & CO.

“Expert strike breakers and dealers in scabs.

“Boycotts made to order while you wait.

“Main office, barroom of the New House.

“Charity branch, Capital Tavern saloon.

“Office hours, from 10:00 a.m. till the lid goes on.

“After midnight, representative may be found in Seventh street office,
Sign of the Red Light.

“Estimates and price lists beerfully given.

“Our work at the Franklin brewery speaks for itself.

“Give us a (cat’s) call.”

Who Farley is I need not inform *The People* readers. Flood and Wyatt are local scab herders for the A.F. of L. Pierce is the national A.F. of L. “organizer,” who was sent here to disorganize the industrially organized brewers by ripping them up into their craft component elements. The *Labor World* has a growing circulation among the rank and file of the unionists who are in open rebellion against Gompers and Gompersism.

The world do move! Cowardice and treason may somewhat delay the march of Labor towards its emancipation. Neither cowardice, nor even treason, can permanently prevent the rise of the Socialist Republic, the Commonwealth of Labor.

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