

# DAILY PEOPLE

VOL. 8, NO. 319.

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, MAY 14, 1908.

ONE CENT.

EDITORIAL

## HELPING TO TUNE THEIR OWN DEATH KNELL.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HAT is a remarkable contribution that comes from Chicago to the Marxian law that the capitalist is driven by the very law of his own existence to raise, drill and weld together the revolutionary class that is to overthrow him.

The Chicago dispatch<sup>1</sup> says that there is trouble between the Chicago Railways Company and its employees. The trouble arises over the company's refusal to compel the delinquent union members to pay their dues to the union by subtracting the said dues from their wages. In other words, the union officers demand that the company act as Financial Secretary for the union. The company declines the job, or, rather, gives up the job.

The habit or practice of employers acting as the collecting agent for the union is one very much in vogue with A.F. of L. organizations. The practice, or, rather, scheme was a means by which, for instance, the bituminous mine owners managed to keep up the strike of the anthracite miners in 1902, and thereby raise, through the scarcity of anthracite during the strike, the price of bituminous coal from \$4 a ton to over three times that price—and make millions by their operation. Their *{sic}* withheld from their employees the “strike benefit” for the anthracite men on strike, and thus prolonged the strike to suit themselves. Apart from such special opportunities for a display of the brotherhood sentiments on the part of Bro. Capitalist toward Bro. Labor, the practice has hitherto had its general use. By its means Bro. Capitalist could keep the rank and file in subjection to the salaries-drawing A.F. of L. union officials, and these returned the compliment, or, rather, favor to Bro. Capitalist by keeping the rank and file docile to the Bro. Capitalist—passing resolutions to Congress in the interest of that particular

---

<sup>1</sup> [To be appended.—R.B.]

capitalist's business; or, surrendering a strike; or, ordering a strike against a competitor of that particular capitalist; or, hushing up any iniquity that that capitalist might commit, either against his employees, or in his civic or private family capacity. In short, the practice of making a capitalist virtually a union officer, and an officer, at that, of no less importance than watch-dog of the union's treasury, is a practice akin to the worst practices of Craft Unionism, or A.F. of Hellism. The union is shackled, the officers corrupted, and the capitalist runs the thing to suit his own interest. It would seem that such a practice is ideal for the capitalist class, and that, so far from discontinuing, they would extend it. But the practice of performing the functions of Financial Secretary for the union, ideal though it is, is no more ideal than so many of the things, once done by the capitalists, but abandoned by them.

The abandonment of ideally good things by a wrongdoer never is done willingly. There ever is a supreme power that compels. In this way the capitalist has had to abdicate many a "prerogative"; not because the A.F. of L. forced him to—Gompers, on the contrary, would break a leg to keep the thing up—but because the law of capitalism itself drives the capitalist thereto. Gompers strains, for instance, to play into the capitalist policy of dislocating the working class through the craft union system: the law of capitalism, by concentrating industries, marshals the working class into the battalions of solid Industrialism; the capitalist policy is to create and keep up an aristocracy of labor in the ranks of the working class as a means of keeping the workers divided: the law of capitalism, which produces the "heartless financiers," as manufacturers call them, so completely monopolizes the commodity money that the employer has to cut down wages, and, seeing wages can not be cut much lower among the lower ranks, he is driven to crop the crest of his "aristocrats," etc., etc. And so with the practice of officiating as a union's Financial Secretary. The practice is in line with capitalist interests and is approved, aye, and needed by the Gomperses and Mitchells: but the law of capitalism produces, even normally, an ever larger supply of labor-power in the labor market; in times of panics, like the present, the supply overflows all bounds; the price of labor takes a header downward; what is the capitalist to do—continue collecting the dues for the salaries of the union officers and pay the higher price for labor?—or submit to the

law of “Supply and Demand,” purchase his labor so much more cheaply, and let the union officers themselves hustle for their salaries? He has no choice. Competition in the world’s market compels him to take the latter course. For the moment he manages to keep his head above water; the actual, or lasting result, is to emancipate, first, the individual workers, and next, the new organizations that these same individual workers will, with ripened experience, set up—and run without the services of Bro. Capitalist, rendered free, gratis and for nothing. The development imports a divorce between employer and employee, and that can only accrue to the interest of class consciousness.

Class consciousness is the bell that rings the knell of capitalist supremacy—that bell the law of capitalism compels the capitalist himself to polish up and keep in tune.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.  
Uploaded January 2010

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