

EDITORIAL

## GOMPERS A JOHN BURNS?

By DANIEL DE LEON

**Q**UITE clearly does Bryan announce the appointment of Gompers to a cabinet office in the event, now more than probable, of a Democratic victory. “If elected I shall name a labor representative for the Cabinet,” are the words of the Democratic candidate for President.

If the event comes about, Gompers in the Cabinet would have all the significance—bad, indifferent and good—of Burns in the British Cabinet.

The handing of a portfolio to Burns denoted a set purpose, on the part of the British ruling class in office, to corrupt the working class. It also denoted the existence (never doubted) of elements in the ranks Labor who could and stood ready to be used as means to corrupt their own class. It was a repetition of the manoeuvre applied by the Patriciate of Rome towards the plebs by means of the Plebs Leader. This instructive passage in history has been handled in full in the Socialist Labor Party pamphlet *Two Pages from Roman History*. Gompers with a cabinet job in America, would be what Burns is with such a job in England—just what the Plebs Leaders were when admitted to the role of wall-flower in the Roman Senate. In so far, the prospect held out by Bryan is a saddening one.

At the same time the dark cloud has its silver lining. Usurpers do not throw sops for sport. The Roman Patriciate, admitting Plebs Leaders to office, were in the plight of sailors in distress throwing tubs to the whale that distressed them. The modern Usurpers class is in identical plight. The “distinctions” conferred on the Burnses, and in prospect for the Gomperses, are tubs to the whale of Labor. That tubs are at all found necessary is proof positive that the capitalist mariner feels himself in distress, nor would he were not the whale behaving in “unlawful” way. This is the good feature of the promised cabinet office.

Labor, it so happens, is not a whale. It may be entertained with tubs for a

while, harpooned, and landed, and the oil extracted from its bladders—never!

The comparison between Labor and the whale ends with the tub. From that point on Labor enters into a new category, the category described by Edmund Burke—not the recent exposé of the speculations of the Republican candidate for Vice-President, but the great British statesman of the eighteenth century. So far from being a whale that can be put off with a tub, Labor is of that voracious nature that typifies Revolutionary Elements. The more it gets the more it wants; whatever it gets only whets its appetite for bigger slices; no slice is too big to satisfy its voracity. The throwing of tubs to Labor is “the beginning of the end.”

As an act, the admission of the Burnses and Gomperses to the dark-lantern parlors of Capitalist Cabinets is an act of corruption—pure and simple.

As a symptom, the admission of the Gomperses and Burnses to these dark-lantern parlors is a symptom that the end draws nigh.

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

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