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EDITORIAL

“AND AFTER UNIONS ARE CRUSHED—WHAT THEN?”

By DANIEL DE LEON

A FEW months ago the Detroit, Mich., *News* posed the question that heads this article, and answered it with a shiver. Subsequently, on July 16, the *Michigan Union Advocate* of the same city took up the same question and, in contrast to the *News*, answered it with a shout and a hurrah.

This is matter for neither shivers nor hurrahs.

As to the Detroit *News* its answer to the question is obviously tipped by the teachings of the one time illustrious hired man of the Standard Oil, Prof. Green Goods, alias Prof. George Gunton. The burden of the Professor's song was that the capitalists should fondle the Unions, of course he meant the Gompers Unions. He could not sufficiently hint upon how useful such Unionism was to the employers, or how dangerous the situation it would be if the Unions were to disband. The double sense in the Professor's teachings ingratiated him with unthinking workingmen who understood him to favor Unionism in the workers' interest. In line with these views the Detroit *News* shivers at the thought of the “greater dangers,” than the capitalist Union smashers apprehend from Unionism, in case the Unions were crushed. The *News* apprehends revolution with many r's.

The *Michigan Union Advocate*, on the other hand coolly answers the question with the theory that after the Unions are crushed, then the workers would become political Socialists, hurrah!

Both the *News* and the *Union Advocate* are doing what the two peasants in the story did who discussed the color of the beard of the King who turned out to be a Queen.

The Union will not be crushed.

If the social development under capitalism were, or could be, the slow, alluvial

style of development that Chinese civilization, for instance, underwent, then, indeed, such an eventuality as the disappearance of Unions might be figured upon: but then the Unions would not be “crushed”: crushing presupposes suddenness of some degree: the Unions would then be insensibly undermined, and they would insensibly dwindle away till no vestige but some mystical tradition would be left of the thing.

The law of capitalist development tolerates no such imperceptible decline. Capitalism does not allow its victims time to accommodate themselves to any shrinkage. Soon as one kick downward is given, and before the kickee has lost the swelling of one kick, the next is administered. The rapid succession in which the kicks follow make forgetfulness impossible, acquiescence out of all question, an ultimate return to feudal slavery not to be figured with.

With regard to the Unions more in particular apart from the above general evolution, and by reason thereof, they are bound to be a permanently recurring social phenomenon. The very process of capitalism, which seeks to free itself from Unionism, constantly brings about and perfects the conditions that compel Unionism.

When Unionism first makes its appearance it is a very much misunderstood thing. It is misunderstood by those who join it: it is misunderstood by many who remain outside. Those who join it imagine they have built a dyke behind which they can enjoy security: those who remain outside, small property-holders, see in the thing a nuisance. The error incurred by both is the consequence of undeveloped capitalism. Capitalism takes charge of correcting the error. In the measure that Capitalism develops, the Union perceives that “dykes” will not do: by degrees the perception grows that the Union, though a temporary means of defence, must essentially be a means of aggression: presently the whole evolutionary scheme heaves in sight, and the Union perceives that it is the embryo of future society, the constituency of future Government. In keeping with the complete perception Unionism reorganizes itself.

In even step with the above development, the middle class elements, that at first looked askance at the Union, are hurled within its atmosphere by being hurled out of their own into the class of the proletariat. Arrived there, the broadened views

of the Union become theirs also.

Capitalist development brings home to the masses, first, the necessity of its overthrow; secondly, the how to accomplish the fact. To run rapidly through the process, skipping details—Capitalism sweeps away, with one and the same broom, the cobwebs of pure and simple Unionism and the cobwebs of pure and simple ballotism: Capitalism brings home the fact that the ballot alone, without physical force to back it, is a lure, and that the Union, alone without the propagandistic value of the political agitation implied in the ballot, is an eggshell. The long and short of the development is that Unionism cannot be crushed; that, even if it were, the rush to the ballot only, being a flying from the frying-pan into the fire, if such rush did take place, would lead to identical failure; finally that the combined forces of Unionism and ballotism are as clearly defined in the sociologic cards as the morrow’s sun is certain to rise.

Unionism crushed? Never. What will and is bound to disappear are the ill-constructed things that now pass for Unions, and their replacement with organizations so healthily sound in principle as to be healthily sound in discipline.

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

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socialists@slp.org