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EDITORIAL

## GOMPERS—DEBS.

By DANIEL DE LEON

**T**HROUGH one of those “accidents,” that go to prove there is nothing accidental on earth, the morning *World* of February 23 gave on its front page a word-and-picture synopsis of the reason why, here in America, with capitalism developed as in no other country, and with matchless opportunities for its overthrow, the class-struggle continues to give no manifestations other than such tragedies as the Philadelphia strike—workingmen breaking one another’s heads, and the capitalist riding the whirlwind.

The *World’s* synopsis consists of the pictures of Samuel Gompers and Eugene V. Debs, each picture festooned with a telegram sent to the *World* by each anent the Philadelphia affair.

Mr. Gompers’s telegram grinds the regulation organ of pure-and-simple Unionism; Mr. Debs’s telegram fiddles the regulation fiddle of pure-and-simple Ballotism, the latter all the more emphasized by a disconnected, and confused closing allusion to a “unanimous” Union.

The gist of Mr. Gompers’s tune is contained in the sentence: “Through this Union the strike of last year was won. From working anywhere from twelve to eighteen hours a day, for twelve to fifteen cents an hour, their hours were reduced [how much?] and their wages raised [how much?] to a point where they had something to live for”; and he proceeds to declare that the employers have “plotted” against that victory, hence the strike.

The gist of Mr. Debs’s fantasia is contained in the sentence: “Every time a policeman’s club falls upon the head of a striker, the latter hears the echo of his vote which he cast at the last election. The militia is called out to shoot workers and not capitalists. You don’t hear of any capitalists being shot in Philadelphia.”

Mr. Gompers’s hand-organ grinds false being out of keeping with the facts. The

striking Union won nothing that “gave them something to live for” last year. The significant vagueness of Mr. Gompers’s tune when its notes trill over the alleged decrease of hours and increase of wages denotes as much. The issue of last year’s dispute was not a victory, it was a truce; and the truce, useful as it was, was not a gain due to Unionism, pure and simple, it was a gain due to the POLITICAL POWER OF THE WORKERS. The strike in the early summer of 1909 was ordered shortly before the primary election of June 5. On the day before election the anxious politicians patched up a temporary peace between the contending parties, and the temporary peace afforded the Union an opportunity, which it immediately utilized, to “improve its fortifications.”

No less false, being likewise out of keeping with the facts, does Mr. Debs’s fiddle faddle. What the striker hears every time a policeman’s club falls upon his head is not a one-legged, a one-note echo. It is an echo made up of two notes—one note the note of Labor’s ballot cast last election for Capitalism; the other note, the equally important note, is the note of Labor being as DISORGANIZED ON THE INDUSTRIAL AS IT IS ON THE POLITICAL FIELD. We do not hear of capitalists being shot in Philadelphia, not simply because the capitalists voted for themselves, but because they are organized on both fields, industrially as well as politically. Let Labor cast its vote heavily as it may for a party of its own class, still will the policeman’s club fall upon its head with the regulation thud if Labor neglect to organize the physical force that its economic battalions are intended to equip it with, and that alone is fit to perform the revolutionary act—to seize the reins of government.

And there they are—one of them the most notorious figure on the economic, the other the most notorious figure on the political field—grinding and fiddling each his one-sided, lop-sided pure-and-simple capriccio, and thereby, instead of musical melody, producing a cacophony that is the fit orchestration to, as it is the best explanation of Philadelphia strike tragedies.

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