

EDITORIAL

MCNAMARA FROM TWO ANGLES.

By DANIEL DE LEON

ONE of the two angles from which the personality John J. McNamara is contemplated, the angle to which this office, in view of some otherwise inexplicable circumstances, still adheres, is that John J. McNamara is innocent, but sacrificed his freedom and character in order to save a brother's life. The other angle, that to which Mr. Gompers, together with the A.F. of L. leaders who issued from Washington on the 7th of this month a formal defence of their conduct toward the McNamara case, is that both John J. McNamara and his brother James B. are guilty, as they pleaded.

Giving, in this inquiry, the right of way to the Gompers angle of view, John J. McNamara, though steeped in crime, is presented by the said A.F. of L. authorities as a victim, more sinned against than sinning. Sinned against by whom? The A.F. of L. defence answers saying: "It is an awful commentary upon existing conditions when any one man among all the millions of workers can bring himself to the frame of mind that the only means to secure justice for labor is in violence, outrage and murder." Proceeding logically from his own premises of McNamara's guilt, whoever framed that sentence drew the correct conclusion, yet a conclusion that takes the A.F. of L. itself, together with its train-carrier, the Socialist party Officialdom and Press, into its sweep.

From responsibility for the exasperating, violence-outrage-and-murder-inciting social conditions of to-day Gompersism can not speak itself wholly free; indeed, Gompersism is a leading factor 'thereto.

Cumulating subterraneous gases may long be suppressed, but eventual explosion is inevitable. The cumulating sufferings of a rank-and-file that is constantly narcotized with false theories and falser hopes; the cumulating distress of a rank-and-file on whose eyes the blinkers of ignorance are kept harnessed; the cumulating

disappointments of a rank-and-file to whose ear the word of promise is perpetually sung, only to be as perpetually broken to their heart; the cumulating abjectness of a rank-and-file whose sense of self-reliance is systematically hamstrung; these rank-and-file-cumulative sufferings, distress and disappointments, on the one hand, on the other hand, the culminating tortures of the mind undergone by a Civic-Federationized and Militia-of-Christized leadership, an imitation Sisyphus, condemned to the Sisyphus-like work of compressing the hogshead means of the Labor Movement into the pint measure of the “Job Trust” known as pure-and-simple Craft Unionism;—when, furthermore, to these explosive gas-inciting factors is added the further factor of the *New Yorker Volkszeitung*—a paper that pretends to represent the German Social Democracy in America—glorying, as it did in its issue of September 2, 1910, for splitting in America the Socialist Movement which sought to emancipate the proletariat from Gompersism, glorying in the deed for the expressly stated sake of keeping Gompersism from shipwreck, while the Socialist party Officialdom’s and Press, at the same time that they act as train-carriers for Gompersism, queer Socialist Unionism in the mind of Gompersism by the bucketfuls of slander that they empty upon anti-Gompersism, and thereby confirm Gompers-Mitchellism in their fatal errors;—when all these factors are considered, then, indeed, the cumulated gases that they are bound to superinduce are an ample force to ignite into being the frame of mind which strains after justice through “violence, outrage and murder,” perpetrated either by individuals, acting in subterranean autonomy, or by riotous mobs, yielding to the impulses of mass-blind Fury, to the former of which manifestations Gompers-Mitchellism now unwittingly confesses, and to the latter of which manifestations, they being so numerous, the confession of Gompers-Mitchellism is superfluous.

The other angle from which the personality of John J. McNamara may be contemplated, the angle that proceeds from the premises of the man’s innocence and explains his plea of guilty to a minor dynamite offence with his anxiety to save his brother, in one way frees Gompers-Mitchellism and S.P. Officialdom and Press from blame, but condemns them in another.

John J. McNamara, supposed innocent, occupied in his prisoner’s cell no ordinary position. His was not the instance of a private citizen, a close relative of whom

being under the shadow of the gallows, sacrificed to a dear life his own character and freedom. In his prison cell John J. McNamara had no private character, no private freedom. The “character” he had in his keeping was the character of the Labor Movement, with which he was identified; the “freedom” in his keeping was the freedom of the human race. A man so situated may be tempted by Private Sentiment; but, with a man so situated, Private Sentiment will never carry the day over Public Duty; in the scales held by him a brother’s life will kick the beam—unless the atmosphere of the education that he received in the Movement unman and turn him into a poltroon. That was John J. McNamara’s fate.

The Martyr is not beef, dumb-driven to slaughter. The Martyr is a hero; and heroism is the last thing possible to be bred by a literature that is manufactured “to sell”; by a conduct that nurses the putty-face; by a system of reasoning that is the tight-rope-dancer’s; by a carriage that is the three-card-monte sharper’s; by a policy that is corrupt; by methods of conversion that presuppose those who are to be converted to be flies, to be caught with the sticky sweetness of the fly paper; by tactics that are Macchiavellian in their hypocrisy and slander,—as the literature, conduct, system of reasoning, carriage, policy, methods of conversion and tactics of Gompers-Mitchellism and S.P. Officialdom and Press, with hardly an exception, are to the Movement’s sorrow.

Whichever of the two angles from which the personality John J. McNamara is contemplated, in him Gompers-Mitchellism and S.P. Officialdom and Press stand pilloried. When both these sets now turn upon McNamara they but add insult to injury—the insult that ever befalls the dethroned Victim’s of the Base.

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